



# Lightning Over Water: Sharpening America's Light Forces for Rapid-Reaction Missions

*John Matsumura*

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The fundamental strength of today's Army lies in its ability to fight and win a major theater-level war, and this capability exists through a deliberate intent to field the most capable mechanized force possible. It is easy to argue that the Army leadership succeeded, since no anticipated enemy force can match the firepower and maneuver capability of a combined arms mechanized U.S. force, equipped with the M1-series Abrams main battle tank, the M2-series Bradley infantry fighting vehicle, and the AH-64 Apache attack helicopter. Nonetheless, as the world continues to thaw out from the imposed stability of a bipolar superpower rivalry, the likelihood of major theater-level war is giving way to increased numbers of smaller regional conflicts and crises. New crises and conflicts are continuing to emerge around the world, and as the frequency of such events continues to increase, so does the need to adjust the U.S. capability for direct response to, and intervention within, these situations. This book represents a compilation of research drawn from numerous studies conducted in the past few years on the topic of improving light air-deployable forces. The focus is on new operational concepts along with the underlying enabling technologies. Three very different means for improving rapid-reaction capability are considered and analyzed in detail, with both strengths and weaknesses included in the assessment. A framework that addresses the process of designing such a force is incorporated.



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