



United States Marine Corps  
Professional Reading Program

**First to Fight Parts II & III Discussion**

**1. Identify LtGen Krulak's mission (task and purpose) in writing this section?**

In Parts II and III, Lieutenant General (LtGen) Krulak writes about some of the men whose vision, ingenuity and problem-solving revolutionized “operational techniques and material development” (p.69) for the Marine Corps as well as its sister services. The author highlights the individuals and the difficulties they underwent for three reasons. The first is to instill a sense of vigilance in the reader, to remember the work of these men. Secondly, to “keep the pioneering spirit alive because it is very near to the heart of what the Corps is all about.” (p.119) Thirdly, he notes how common generalizations can become when those in the “military world” (p. 71) fail to recognize the facts, or reality, behind our present day capabilities, techniques, and requirements. For example, he mentions General Eisenhower's opinion of how simple an amphibious landing is to execute. Such uninformed opinions, when applied to current operations pose a threat to mission success, the welfare of our troops, and in the author's opinion, possibly the future of our Corps as we know it.

In *The Innovators*, the author tells the story of the development of amphibious doctrine and how it came to be our primary mission as a service. From Lieutenant Commander William F. Fullam to Commandant Gen John A. LeJeune to Mr. Andy Higgins, the men highlighted in Part II are there because they are the why and how of the Marine Corps' amphibious doctrine and its ultimate success in WWII. In *The Improvisers*, LtGen Krulak focuses on the ingenuity and improvisation of Marines and the resulting round the clock close-air-support capability that proved essential in Korea. Chapter 8 chronicles the author's personal experience in the lead up and execution of the amphibious landing at Inchon.

**2. What part of the book was the most effective in accomplishing LtGen Krulak's mission? What part of the book was least effective?**

Chapter 8 proved most effective. The story of Inchon and how the Marine Corps came to be assigned an amphibious landing at the most undesirable location under a shortened timeline with very little in the form of assets or input to the planning process is enough to make any Marine sit up and take note. LtGen Krulak effectively illustrates the vigilance and vision required by all involved as well as of the factors that hindered and helped make the operation a success.





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**3. The part of the book that is most relevant to what I/we do is:**

As a Marine leader, the most relevant part of *The Innovators* and *The Improvisers* was learning about the men and what they went through in the development of amphibious doctrine, close-air support and the culminating test at Inchon. Additionally, the behind the scenes struggle for combatant authority of forces maintains the “sensitive paranoia” mentioned in Part I. The perspective LtGen Krulak provides as one who experienced these doctrinal developments and the Korean conflict at such a personal level is remarkable. He instills a sense of awareness upon the reader. It is incumbent upon all of us to remember how our Corps has come to be what it is today and to be our own best problem-solvers for future innovations.

**4. Identify LtGen Krulak’s specific and implied conclusions.**

In the *Innovators*, LtGen Krulak notes that in the absence of those who would wish to provide for the equipment and techniques necessary for the Marine Corps to accomplish its mission, Marines themselves will have to be the innovators. This is essentially, as it should be, since Marines know what Marines need.

*“The Marines’ combatant function was and is unique. Nobody has ever been interested in providing the necessary operating techniques or hardware for them, so they have had to do it themselves.” (p. 67)*

*“...in the face of apathy and sometimes opposition from within their own ranks, the Marines were determined that there must be a family of mechanisms that would be able to carry them, their weapons, and their equipment through the seas and the surf and deliver them face-to-face with the enemy on his own shore. That those mechanisms materialized was a product of stubborn faith...the prime ingredient in the innovative quality that has become such a vital part of the Marine personality.” (p.110)*

In the *Improvisers*, LtGen Krulak states, *“Improvisation has been a way of life for the Marines...(b)ut few improvisations are more impressive than their figuring out how to drop bombs accurately in the dark or their contriving to land at Inchon, Korea, in 1950 without the forces, means, or time to do the job.” (p. 111)*





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He further concludes that the improvisations that resulted in success at Inchon were ultimately made possible by the cooperation and teamwork across services by Gen MacArthur, LtGen Shepherd, Commandant Cates, Gen Smith, Admiral Doyle and even President Truman.

**5. With respect to LtGen Krulak's conclusions (either specified or implied), I/we accept or agree with the following:**

I agree with the author that it is necessary to constantly review our processes, techniques, equipment and training to see if we could be doing something better. I also agree that in many cases, it is the end user, the Marine, who may have the most innovative ideas. And usually it will take an element of cooperation to make such new ideas a reality.

**5a. With respect to LtGen Krulak's conclusions (either specified or implied), I/we do not agree with the following:**

N/A

**6. This book made a favorable impression on me and it will change the way I approach:**

Generalizations. If we forget or disregard history, or fail to inform ourselves on the present, the more general statements, assumptions and opinions become factual.

**6a. This book made an unfavorable impression on me for the following reasons:**

N/A

Submitted by: A-M Theriot

