

The Tactical MAGTF Integration Course

A battalion staff training planned approach

by Maj James R.R. Smith & Chris D. deVries & Capt Gene A. Harb

The Operations and Tactic Instructors (OTI) and Intelligence and Tactics Instructor (ITI) Courses administered by Marine Corps Tactical Operations Group (MCTOG) train Marines to lead staff planning for tactical operations. This two-month crash course in the conduct and execution of the Marine Corps Planning Process is an opportunity for officers and chiefs in the key operations and intelligence billets to take some “sets and reps” in a consequence free environment. The Tactical MAGTF Integration Course produces officers and SNCOs comfortable with manipulating the planning process for tactical value.

The greatest beneficiary of the TMIC course is the battalion commander who sent the Marine to the course. TMIC prepares Marines to train a staff with shared understanding of the environment and adversary in order to shrink the commander’s decision-making cycle. During the course, individual students learn a great deal from the staff, the exercises, and each other. This learning can have its most profound effect if the battalion commanders employs OTI and ITI graduates to facilitate training once graduates return to their parent unit. This requires battalion commanders to prioritize battalion staff battle training. Dedicating “Mental Mondays” or “Tactical Tuesdays” with a four-hour training block may seem like a monumental sacrifice, but consistent staff training in the execution intelligence preparation of the battlefield, problem framing, and course of action development can turn these cumbersome events into staff battle drills that reduce

>Maj Smith is an Assault Amphibian Officer and Latin American FAO. He has deployed in support of Operation IRAQI FREEDOM, Operation ENDURING FREEDOM and the 31st MEU. He currently serves in 3d MarDiv.

>>Maj deVries is an Infantry Officer. He has deployed with 1st Bn, 4th Marines; 3d Bn, 1st Marines, and previously served with Marine Security Force Battalion, Bangor, WA. He is currently the Assistant Battalion Inspector Instructor and Operations Officer at 1st Bn, 25th Marine Regiment.

>>>Capt Harb is an Infantry Officer. He previously served with 1st Bn, 3d Marines. He is currently the Mountain Operations OIC at the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency.

friction at integrated training exercise, MEU certification exercise, Marine Corps Combat Readiness Exercise, and real-world missions.

TMIC’s contribution to the fleet is preparing Marines to conduct unit-level

training through intellectual wargame exercises. Basic and analog in nature, the tactical decision games and *Kriegsspiels* (German for “wargame”) which TMIC utilize are simple and effective training tools to coalesce a staff into an effective



Wargame exercises are effective training tools that can help staff coordination. (Photo by LCpl Jacob Wilson.)



Sending officers or Marines to TMIC can benefit the battalion during live fire or force-on-force training. (Photo by MGySgt Jamie P. Myers.)

team. Maps, acetate, a scenario, and three to four hours are all it takes to effectively exercise the collective mental muscle of a battalion. Battalion commanders struggle to find staff training time because of competing home station requirements, administrative tasks, limited field time, and restricted training resources. TMIC graduates offer a solution. Battalion PME's (when they do happen) are traditionally historical or career focused discussions. OTI and ITI trained Marines provide a more fruitful PME option.

Kriegsspiels provide a force-on-force training environment without expensive simulation systems or complex training support requests. Battalions must leverage these training tools to answer the Commandant's requirement for more dynamic and interactive training. OTI and ITI graduates can provide training value for battalion staffs without the requirements for training areas, range safety officers, or subordinate Marine units as maneuver elements. Utilized effectively, OTI and ITI-led training events can gather and train battalion leadership while simultaneously giving time back to the Marines to conduct small unit leader actions.

Commanders at the battalion level must send officers and SNCOs to the TMIC course and then prioritize battalion staff training when they return. Allowing a key billet holder to attend

a six- to eight-week course is a sacrifice battalion commanders must be willing to accept. Executing the course in conjunction with PCS orders is ideal, but commanders should prioritize sending Marines in their first twelve months with a command because the return on investment cannot be overstated. Sending post-company command captains before they fleet up to an operations

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officer billet will effectively bridge the experience gap between platoon employment and battalion tactics and is a perfect time to send a seasoned captain to TMIC.

Training a battalion staff to function and operate as a unit is difficult and cumbersome but is the responsibility of the commander. OTIs and ITIs can help. Battalion-level billets are in constant flux and the requirements of daily staff work (meetings, emails, dental readiness reports, Global Combat Support Systems-Marine Corps, Department of Defense Readiness Reporting System, and Marine Corps Training In-

formation Management System reports) can all seem more immediately pressing. It is the commander's responsibility to set priorities and allocate training time accordingly. It becomes far too easy for a battalion staff to focus on facilitating and overseeing company and platoon tactical training and neglect the collective battalion functions. The trigger pulling actions of squads are easy to quantify on a training slide and Marines are comfortable with this training continuum because we have done it since basic training. But battalions and regiments are tactical elements too. Every level of command must be proficient at tactics. Providing Marines the opportunity to think creatively about tactical problems, develop a tactical solution, and test it against a reacting enemy is critical to an individual's and unit's development.

The commanders who leverage the existing training assets available via TMIC Course graduates will have a better-trained battalion staff and send better-trained individuals onward to other Marine units. Commanders who effectively train their staffs are taking care of the junior Marines who will execute the battalion's plan. They

are taking care of the Marine Corps by preparing staff officers and SNCOs to function in the dynamic planning environment. They are also setting the conditions in training to win in conflict. Commanders must prioritize attendance at TMIC and utilize the skills acquired in the course to better their battalions and the Marine Corps.

>Authors' Note: Maj Smith, Maj deVries, and Capt Harb recently completed TMIC 2-19 under the guidance of faculty advisor Maj Collings.

