

# Warrior Defined

A re-affirmed meaning on today's battlefields

by MajGen Jason Q. Bohm

***"We joined the military to become Warriors, but that definition is changing."<sup>1</sup>***

***—U.S. Marine***

In his book, *Wired for War: The Robotics Revolution and Conflict in the 21st Century*, P.W. Singer asserts that we are on the cusp of a revolution in military affairs. Unmanned systems, robotics, and artificial intelligence combine to change the modes, manners, and character of war, and with it, one may imply the very definition of a "warrior." The Marine Corps is at the forefront of leveraging technology for military advantage while denying its advantages to our adversaries. The Commandant has challenged all Marines to share their ideas of innovation as the Marine Corps follows a deliberate campaign of learning, testing, evaluat-

**>MajGen Bohm is the Commanding General of Marine Corps Recruiting Command.**

ing, and developing technologies to best support today's mission while defeating our enemies well into the future.

The proliferation of unmanned systems and robotics on the battlefield changes the way we fight. Many tasks once performed by man can now be performed by machines that do not bleed, eat, or require sleep. The employment

of these machines also redefines who fights our future battles—or at the very least what attributes and skill sets we seek in those who fight. Likewise, near-peer competitors who also seek to utilize these technological advances have increased our sense of urgency to achieve quick results before the next major conflict. The acceleration of technological advantage on the battlefield and the changing nature of the threats we may face can begin to chip away at our Marines' understanding of their role as warriors on tomorrow's battlefields. The time is right to reaffirm our understanding of what it means to be a warrior.

All Marines are imbued with a common belief and warfighting ethos that "Every Marine is a Rifleman." This basic concept, forged at Marine Combat Training and The Basic School, reinforces the fact that all Marines are indeed warriors. The Marine Corps is a warrior class defined by its battles won. What sets us apart, however, is our willingness to continuously evolve to prevent becoming just another chapter in a history book. As we embrace technology, we must zealously preserve those tried and true attributes that set us apart as warriors—as Marines. No Marine would debate this truism. However, some of us, as the previous quote indicates, now question how we define our warrior attributes in today's high-tech world. As the Marine Corps pursues technological advantages to remain relevant, it must reaffirm those qualities, which it expects of its warriors both today and tomorrow.

*Marine Corps Doctrinal Publication-One (MCDP 1), Warfighting*, states, "our approach to the conduct of war derives from our understanding of the nature of war."<sup>2</sup> War is a human endeavor. However, some doubt that it



**The employment of robotics and unmanned systems like the RQ-11B Raven may change the character of war and how Marines fight. (Photo by Sgt Andy Martinez.)**

will remain so. Security analyst Christopher Coker believes we are on the cusp of post-human history. He states, “First you had human beings without machines. Then, you had human beings with machines. And, finally you have machines without human beings.”<sup>3</sup> Singer warns that

wars using these new technologies are looking less like war as we once knew and understood it. The old definitions and codes don’t fit so well with the realities brought on by our new technologies of killing.<sup>4</sup>

Author John Keegan refers to it as “the impersonalization of battle” in which advanced technology not only allows the physical separation of warriors like never before, but now imposes a sort of psychological distance and disconnection.<sup>5</sup>

While the character of war is clearly changing with the onset of new technologies, we must guard against diminishing the human dimension of being

a warrior. Although the day may come when autonomous robots fight our battles as depicted in movies like *Star Wars* and *iRobot*, that day is not today. What does exist today, and will continue to evolve, is the teaming of man with unmanned machines. This phenomenon has been occurring for some time. Unmanned systems are resupplying forward deployed forces. Drones, controlled by pilots thousands of miles away, engage enemy targets without risk to man. EOD technicians use robots to dismantle improvised explosive devices. Marines use robots to look around walls and into rooms without putting themselves in harm’s way, and the Marine Corps and other Services continue to experiment with more.

Regardless of what tools we provide our warfighters to become more effective and lethal on the battlefield, we must continue to instill the indelible core values of honor, courage, and commitment, which are, and will continue to be, the

foundation of the ethos that defines our warriors in the Marine Corps.

*Honor* is the bedrock of our character as warriors. It is the unquantifiable force that drives our ethical and moral behavior on the battlefield. Honor gives meaning to the human dimension of war. A commitment to being men and women of honor ensures warriors follow an uncompromising code of integrity, responsibility, and accountability. We risk degrading our honor by leveraging technology that undermines the human dimension of war. While the fiercest fighters on the battlefield, Marines are also men and woman of compassion. Marines must remain in touch with their humanity as technology makes killing more impersonal. War is not a video game. The consequence of warfare is human life. The decisions to withhold resources and services, degrade and destroy a capability, or kill must remain with men and women of honor. Warfare should not be relegated to a scientific



BRING US  
YOUR WORST.  
WE’LL MAKE  
IT YOUR BEST.

Follow us on social:



BRINGING  
LEGACY  
AIRCRAFT  
BACK TO  
MISSION-READY  
SHAPE

Learn more about  
Erickson’s Aircraft  
Maintenance Capabilities  
and Component Repair and  
Overhaul Solutions.

[ERICKSONINC.COM](http://ERICKSONINC.COM)



**Making Marines, America's warriors, requires demanding training in an environment of intense physical, mental, and moral stress to inculcate our ethos and core values. (Photo by Sgt Melissa Marnell.)**

equation that can be rapidly solved by technology. Technology is a tool that is to be leveraged to protect warriors and assist in their decision-making process. But men and women—possessing a firm foundation of honor—must maintain the overriding authority in applying the science and art of war.

*Courage* has always been at the heart of the warrior. Although physical courage was preeminent in years past, moral courage has grown in prominence today. Regardless of how advanced technology becomes, tomorrow's battlefields prom-

ating doubt in our own technologies. Just as in the past, mental, moral, and physical courage buttressed by a strong sense of honor will give our warriors an inner strength to persevere in difficult times, take action in the absence of orders, and overcome any challenge with which they are confronted on future technologically advanced battlefields.

*Commitment*, as defined by *MCDP 1*, is the value that establishes the Marine as the warrior and citizen others strive to emulate. Commitment is the intangible trait that bonds Marines together as

and the accomplishment of one's mission is a force multiplier on the battlefield that is difficult, if not impossible, for robots to replicate. It instills a resiliency within warriors that must be preserved. Augmenting this commitment with modern technologies will exponentially increase the effectiveness and lethality of Marines. However, we must guard against allowing technology to degrade this inseparable bond and commitment to each other. Technology risks further separating Marines as they focus more on screens and view finders, rather than the Marine to the left and right.

The Marine Corps is a people organization. Whereas other military forces may invest most heavily in ships, planes, and tanks—inanimate metal objects—the Corps has always invested first and foremost in its people: our most precious asset and bid for success. Teaming man with machine and the employment of autonomous systems leveraging artificial intelligence will undoubtedly increase the Marine Corps' warfighting capabilities. As technology improves, so too will the intelligence, fitness, and cognitive skills of our warriors along the training continuum and transformation process. Establishing a strong foundation and constantly reinforcing our core values and warfighting ethos throughout this process should leave no doubt in how the Marine Corps defines its warriors.

---

**Whereas other military forces may invest most heavily in ships, planes, and tanks—inanimate metal objects—the Corps has always invested first and foremost in its people; our most precious asset and bid for success.**

---

ise to provide ever increasing chance, confusion, and uncertainty. Information operations, intelligence, deception, jamming, decoys, cyberattacks, and other methods employed by our adversaries will instill uncertainty and fear, cut communications, and isolate individuals and small units while cre-

a warrior class. It makes Marines act beyond logic. Whereas robots and other unmanned systems apply binary equations to solve problems, commitment to one's fellow Marine and mission has often resulted in irrational and heroic actions that turned the tide of battle. Marines' commitment to *Semper Fidelis*

---

**Notes**

1. P.W. Singer, *Wired for War: The Robotics Revolution and Conflict in the 21st Century*, (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 2009).
2. Headquarters Marine Corps, *MCDP 1, Warfighting*, (Washington, DC: 1997).
3. *Wired for War*.
4. *Ibid*.
5. *Ibid*.

