



# MARINE CORPS Gazette

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MAY 2023

## Editorial: A Mix of Topics

This month, we present articles on a range of current topics of professional interest. As featured on our cover, the mix of subjects includes a view of the unique potential of the reserve component as a combat multiplier, titled “Achieving Operational Depth through Specialization,” by Maj Mark Capansky found on page 48. Our cover articles also highlight the winners and honorable mention essays from the 2022 Gen Robert E. Hogaboom Leadership Writing Contest. This annual contest asks authors to take an honest, realistic look at what leadership, either positive or negative, means to them and then articulate ways of being an effective leader of Marines. This year’s four winning essays approached the question from perspectives based on classical stoic philosophy and American history, and from more contemporary perspectives including the effects of artificial intelligence, and diversity, equity, and inclusion. These essays begin on page 57.

Other highlights this month include articles that continue to advance the professional dialogue regarding the Corps’ future force design, modernization and talent management efforts, and campaign of change. Critical articles include “The JGSDF’s Surface-to-Ship Missile Regiment” by LTJG Jeong Soo Kim on page 8, “Contested Logistics in the EABO Environment” by 1stLt Robert C. German on page 14 and “Discriminate by Competence—Nothing Else” by Capt Karl Flynn on page 25. These articles examine some of the conceptual underpinnings and required capabilities that drive the modernization campaign while offering alternatives to improve implementation. Perhaps more noteworthy in the ongoing discussion of modernization are observations and insights into what Marine units are accomplishing today to realize the vision of tomorrow. “Achieving Strategic Success through a Tactical Lens” by LtCol Brandon P. Mokris on page 39 describes the contributions to regional security the 22nd MEU and the Kearsarge ARG recently made in the role of a Stand-in Force for 6th Fleet, USEUCOM, and NATO. On page 44, “MALTESE DRAGON” by Col Chris M. Haar and Maj Greg Macias provides a report on the challenges and lessons learned by a Combat Logistics Regiment training and experimenting in a contested environment.

Some of the ideas in this month’s articles are deliberately controversial to prompt critical thinking and fact-based discussions. To better facilitate the exchange of ideas in a more intuitive and satisfying user experience, we are moving the forum for dialogue from the *Gazette* blog to the world-class platform for professional development and networking on the web, LinkedIn®. For those readers and MCA members who want to join in the discussion of articles from the *Gazette* and other topics of importance to the Corps, while building their profession networks and adding their thoughts to the dialog, follow us here: <https://www.linkedin.com/showcase/marine-corps-gazette>.



Christopher Woodbridge

### “A Different Approach for Similar Results”

■ MajGen Mullen’s article, “A Different Approach for Similar Results,” touches on the complicated issue of Marine Corps Recruit Training. The mythic status of recruit training is at odds with the realities of the professional, technically and tactically proficient Marine. I say this having attended recruiting training at San Diego (1969), having served as a Drill Instructor at Parris Island (1974–75), and having attended Officer’s Candidate School (WOBC) in 1976. For 30 years, I led civilian colleges, with alternating periods of policy involvement with joint professional military education (PME) programs and institutions. My experiences are not unique but should at least afford me a small place in a conversation of recruit training and PME.

Marine recruit training is mythic. Mythic structures become the expression of a social ethos that defines a person, organization, or culture. That can be a good thing until the myth becomes contaminated with a collectively shared story about supernaturally powerful beings whose adventures and interactions are set in some primordial chronotype, developing cult-like adherence. For far too long, Marines have had a shared devotion to the recruit training experience rather than to the actual Marine Corps and its historic accomplishments.

I have seen far too many Marines who viewed recruit training as the seminal event in their Marine Corps experience. The expedient discharge program of the 1970s was filled with young Marines who had done well in recruit training but were disappointed with the operating force to the point of acting out to obtain early release. Recruit training needs to prepare Marines for service within the operating force. This should be the initial first step in PME, and it will not erode the recruit training experience if the final weeks of recruit training were modeled on the rifle platoon.

The Corps’ current system of recruit training was developed in response to *levée en masse* national conscription beginning with the First World War. It is an extraordinary departure from how Marines had been onboarded and trained previously, and it resulted in an expanded Corps capable of augmenting the Army. However, the mission of the Marine Corps is not to augment the

Army. If the Corps is to remain a viable separate Service and not some homage to the past, it needs to ground itself in a system of Marine Corps PME. This starts with a fresh look at recruit training and how we prepare basic Marines.

**Dr. Michael E. Doyle**

### “WWII Defense Battalions”

■ Recent issues of the *Marine Corps Gazette* address the potential for war in the Pacific, and Capt W. McGee discusses landbased expeditionary advanced bases in the July edition. The situation preceding World War II was similar and provides a historical perspective. While preparing for a possible Pacific war in the 1930s, the Marine Corps established Defense Battalions that were deployed before the outbreak of war. A detachment of the 1st Marine Defense Battalion at Wake Island, the 1st, 3rd, and 4th Defense Battalions at Pearl Harbor, and the 6th Defense Battalion at Midway Island are notable examples.

### *The situation preceding World War II was similar and provides a historical perspective.*

I learned about these units while researching my father’s service in the 10th Defense Battalion, and references on Defense Battalions that may interest *Gazette* readers are provided below. The World War II Marine Defense Battalions are noted in the 2018 *EABO Handbook* (page 41) and might provide insights and ideas that are relevant to current planning for littoral, island, and shoreside operations.

References:

“Marine Defense Battalions, October 1939–December 1942.” 1002656626-maynard.pdf (unt.edu)

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1941.” Thomas-Holcomb-1936–41.pdf (fdlp.gov)

“Special Marine Corps Units of World War II: Special Marine Corps Units of World War II.” PCN 19000413200 (marines.mil)

*Expeditionary Advanced Base Operations (EABO) Handbook. Considerations for Force Development and Employment: Expeditionary-Advanced-Base-Operations-EABO-handbook-1.1.pdf* (mca-marines.org)

**Matthew A. Cronin**

### “Logistics Operations in a DDIL Environment”

■ I read the article on the use of Global Combat Support System-Marine Corps (GCSS-MC) in a denied, degraded, intermittent, and low-bandwidth environment with great interest. This challenge has existed since the beginning of GCSS-MC and has been an abject failure that resulted in two “acquisition breaches” over the life of the program. Thus, I applaud the continued work to solve this critical issue, but I think it provides an overly optimistic view that the current efforts will yield positive results. If there is one thing we have learned after nearly a \$1 Billion investment in this program, nothing has ever been delivered as promised (sadly). However, even with such horrendous past performance, we continue to invest and try to make it work on the “backs of our Marines.” It is time we recognize that the GCSS-MC foundation of the Oracle Enterprise Resource Planning system is not able to meet the requirements of the future operating environment. Unequivocally, it has struggled to meet the basic functional requirements of the past, so why do we continue to think it will meet the even more arduous requirements of the future? We need a new logistics system strategy and should stop trying to put lipstick on a pig.

**K. J. Stewart**

### Correction

“Modernizing MARCORLOGCOM” by Maj J.R. Thomas in the March edition should have also credited the staffs of MARCORLOGCOM, Depot Maintenance Command, Force Storage Command, and Blount Island Command.

Letters of professional interest on any topic are welcomed by the *Gazette*. They should not exceed 300 words and should be DOUBLE SPACED.

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# The Three Silent Assumptions in *FD 2030*

Are they valid and necessary for planning?

by Col Gary Anderson (Ret)

One of the most curious things about the Commandant's *Force Design 2030* (*FD 2030*) document is its lack of clearly stated assumptions up front. Beginning with The Basic School, all Marine Corps officers are taught to try to either minimize assumptions if possible or state them up front in any plan if assumptions remain because, if an assumption fails, the plan will have to be changed. One of two things has happened. First, the Commandant may believe that the plan is so perfect, that every assumption has been examined and validated. Therefore, no branch plans are needed. The second possibility is that assumptions were not examined. Neither is reassuring. In essence, there are silent assumptions inherent in *FD 2030*. This article discusses three silent assumptions that I argue should have been examined in preparation for *FD 2030* with branch plans prepared in the event of failure. The three assumptions reside at the strategic, operational, and tactical levels of war.

## Strategic

*FD 2030* is based on the silent assumption that the Chinese will be deterred or strategically impacted by the threat of Marines moving from atoll to atoll and islet to islet in the first island chain of the South China Sea using anti-ship missiles to sink Beijing's warships. This is based on the sub-assumption that these ships are key to overall Chinese strategy. I argue that is incorrect. I have spent many years studying Chinese doctrine in preparing to play their part in war games. They are committed to an anti-access/area-

**>Col Anderson was the Director of Marine Corps Wargaming and the Chief of Staff of the Warfighting Lab. He currently lectures on Alternative Analysis (Red Teaming) at George Washington University's Elliott School of International Affairs.**

denial strategy that would keep the U.S. Navy out of their area of influence in a conflict. Her surface ships are viewed as essentially auxiliaries. She would certainly use amphibious ships in any Taiwan invasion, but that will likely be a one-time blitzkrieg attempt used only if she cannot intimidate the Taiwanese into surrender. In this case, *FD 2030* would be irrelevant. Her surface combatants are likely catspaws to distract U.S. attention. I have never seen any indication that Beijing envisions

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**... if an assumption fails, the plan will have to be changed.**

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a naval engagement such as Trafalgar or Midway at sea in which the Marine Corps could participate in a meaningful way. Even if a future naval Indo-Pacific commander saw such a battle looming, he would be far more likely to choose attack submarines as his main effort than risk stand-in forces flitting from islet to islet blithely while firing off anti-ship missiles. For their part, the Chinese appear to be ignoring *FD 2030*

as a significant threat. If they did, they would be protesting loudly. Either they think they can counter it with relative ease or are laughing behind their hands going on the precept of letting one's enemy alone if he appears to be doing something foolish.

## Operational

A second silent assumption is that any conflict in the Indo-Pacific region that involves the United States and China will necessarily be naval in nature. In his defense of *FD 2030* in the December *Marine Corps Gazette*, Gen Berger mentions hybrid warfare and grey-zone warfare as potential Chinese strategies in the Indo-Pacific, which include the possibility of Chinese-sponsored insurgencies in target countries. I find this curious because the precision-strike Marine Corps that he is building is ill-suited to such situations. Insurgencies require more infantry, not less. Few insurgents present the kind of targets that match precision capabilities. The assumption that the kinds of slogging jungle campaigns needed for counter-insurgency operations can be left to the Army is dangerous for the future of the Corps. Gen Berger obviously desires to make the Indo-Pacific a Marine Corps theater, but that could well be undercut if the Army shows better capability to take on jungle combat in places like the Solomons or the dense urban canyons of Asia's mega-cities.

The Solomons present a good hypothetical example. Guadalcanal was where the Marine Corps first made its strategic mark in World War II. China is making inroads there with Prime Minister Manasseh Sogavare who has



delayed democratic elections and appears headed toward becoming a Chinese-leaning autocracy. However, he also appears to be corrupt enough that he might well be overthrown by a popular uprising or a fair election. In that case, China might well sponsor an insurgency designed to place him—or another Chinese ally—in power. The United States would likely support any regime dedicated to free elections. The Solomons do not have a standing military establishment and might well require U.S. forces to help suppress the insurgents. Which Service would the Indo-Pacific commander choose to lead the long-term counterinsurgency campaign in the jungles of Guadalcanal or Tulagi? Would it be the Marines who have divested themselves of both infantry and the ability to logistically support a long-term ground capability for sustained jungle warfare or the Army with much more robust infantry formations and sustained ground logistics capability to support them? If I put myself in the position of a future Indo-Pacific combatant commander, the Army would be my force of choice. Will *GUADALCANAL DIARY II* be written by a soldier?

### Tactical

At boot camp and The Basic School, all Marines are told, “Don’t bunch up; one grenade could get you all.” A third silent assumption of *FD 2030* is that moving Marines from islet to islet in the South China Sea will lessen their profile. In this day of near-persistent overhead surveillance by unmanned



*Guadalcanal in 1942, future conflict in INDOPACOM could involve a protracted land campaign. (Graphic by LCpl Leighton Winslow.)*

**... it is always possible that these silent assumptions may prove valid.**

aerial vehicles and space-based assets, that is a very dubious assumption. Leaving a high concentration of valuable assets in a very small place—even for a short time—is a dangerous proposition. This would be particularly true if the Marines were causing harm to Chinese plans or had upset them. Beijing has tactical nukes and advanced thermobaric weapons. If the Russo-Ukrainian conflict has taught us anything about modern warfare, it is that a concentra-

tion of targets in one place is a very bad idea.

For example, let us look at Wake Island. Under American control, Wake could have been a significant thorn in the side of Japanese operations in the Central Pacific during World War II. The Japanese assaulted it at a considerable cost because they wanted it as an advanced base of their own. If the Japanese had not considered Wake necessary for future operations and had possessed nuclear weapons, given their ruthlessness, there is no doubt in my mind that they would have turned the island into a smoking sea of glass and moved on. We should note that the Chinese need none of the islets in the first island chain to achieve area denial.

### Conclusion

Again, it is always possible that these silent assumptions may prove valid. It is also possible that the Chinese will be deterred by *FD 2030* to a point where war never occurs in the Indo-Pacific region and that the Chinese will never force a situation where sustained land jungle or urban combat is needed. In that case, the tactical assumption will never be tested. One can never prove the negative case. However, if the capabilities given up for *FD 2030* implementation cause the Marine Corps to be less capable or incapable of contributing effectively to a future conflict, our Corps may be in great trouble indeed.



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# The JGSDF's Surface-to-Ship Missile Regiment

A model for Marine Corps anti-ship fires

by LTJG Jeong Soo Kim

## **F**orce Design 2030's Focus on Anti-Ship Warfare

One of the most crucial capabilities being introduced in the Marine Corps in *Force Design 2030* is anti-ship missile capability. This fundamentally changes the nature of Marine Corps forces from one that exploits the Navy's dominance of the sea to one that adds much-needed maritime lethality against increasingly capable competitors' maritime forces. In achieving this goal, the Navy-Marine Expeditionary Ship Interdiction System (NMESIS), an unmanned naval strike missile (NSM)-armed joint light tactical vehicle, is being hailed as the centerpiece in this change in operational concepts.

NMESIS, when fielded in large numbers, will be a lethal, survivable, and risk-worthy asset. Dispersed deployment and emplacement will force adversaries to tread with caution even in waters close to home. However, even a system as advanced and risk worthy as NMESIS has risks inherent in its design and development. The Marine Corps must hedge its bets to mitigate NMESIS's limitations and reduce the risk of lacking anti-ship firepower if the NMESIS suffers delays in its development and deployment. An effective hedge is to deploy a legacy system in large numbers to bridge the transition to NMESIS and supplant its weaknesses.

An affordable component of this risk-mitigation strategy for the Marine Corps is to learn from allied militaries that have utilized groundbased

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anti-ship missiles to defend their vital waterways against hostile surface combatants. One starting point in developing capable surface-to-ship missile capabilities is the Japan Ground Self Defense Force's (JGSDF) Surface-to-Surface Missile Regiments (SSMR), which bring enormous anti-ship firepower with a relatively small personnel footprint. When paired with anti-ship missiles deployed on ships and aircraft, even legacy groundbased missile launchers can significantly increase missile salvo sizes while minimally taxing the maritime and aerospace industrial base that is currently straining to grow the force. Furthermore, standing up legacy missile-equipped SSM units will quickly grow a cadre of Marines trained for anti-ship warfare who can more effectively employ the most advanced anti-ship tactics, techniques, and procedures upon the full introduction of the NMESIS platform.

### **Risks and Limitations of NMESIS**

While the NMESIS platform will be the future of the Marine Corps' anti-ship missile program, it does possess risks and limitations that must be

consciously mitigated with complementary missile platforms and units that employ them. Currently, the Marine Corps' primary platform tasked with anti-ship warfare is its rocket-artillery community, equipped with the M142 HIMARS. While an excellent weapon platform, the HIMARS is designed to provide airmobile multiple launch rocket system capability to the Army's strategically mobile forces such as the Stryker Brigade Combat Team. Firing a family of M26 rockets and Army Tactical Missile System surface-to-surface missiles, they are not inherently anti-ship platforms, and suboptimal solutions until NMESIS platforms are fielded.

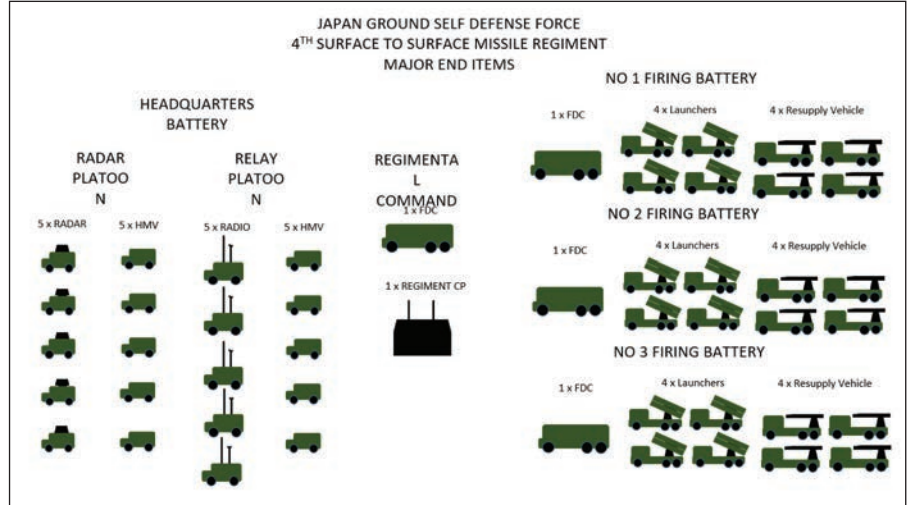
While the conversion of tube artillery battalions to rocket/missile artillery is a significant doctrinal shift, it does not significantly change the fact that the People's Liberation Army (PLA) Navy has a quantitative and possibly a qualitative parity to our naval forces forward deployed in the Pacific. With the NMESIS anti-ship platform still undergoing testing and evaluation and has yet to be deployed and integrated into our force structure, it is the U.S.-

allied maritime forces that are playing catch-up. With NMEMSIS optimistically planned to be introduced in 2023 and its full deployment even a number of years away, we need to quickly field additional anti-ship platforms in sufficient volume to fill the significant and persistent anti-ship capability gap that exists.

The NMEMSIS design in its current form relies on stealth, concealment, and an element of surprise to deliver a stealthy missile at an enemy ship. The relatively small joint light tactical vehicle base is limited to two NSM missiles per NMEMSIS platform, and even an eight-launcher battery will be limited to a simultaneous salvo of sixteen missiles. While this stealth-focused tactic of launching advanced NSM at unsuspecting enemy vessels is lethal, it has inherent design flaws. While the first “surprise” salvo may be effective, advanced anti-air systems and a well-trained crew of even frigate-sized surface combatants could be able to defend against follow-on strikes. While the ideal tactical outcome is to defeat enemy ships with as few missiles as possible, the ability to overwhelm the enemy’s air defense systems with a saturation strike of anti-ship missiles is absolutely necessary and is a mission that the NMEMSIS is ill-designed for. While legacy missile systems may lack stealth, they can complement the NMEMSIS platform by giving the naval commander the ability to launch a saturation strike against an adversarial naval task force.

**JGSDF’s Surface-to-Surface Missile Regiment**

One of Japan’s largest security risks during the Cold War was that of a Soviet naval breakout into the Pacific Ocean. Furthermore, during the Cold War, Japan did not yet possess the economic power to deploy a large, sophisticated fleet to meet and defeat the Soviet Pacific Fleet. Therefore, it turned to deploying anti-ship missile regiments in Hokkaido, threatening any Soviet naval vessels attempting to break out into the Pacific Ocean via the Japanese Home Islands. Much like the forward-deployed American naval forces facing off against Chinese forces in the West-



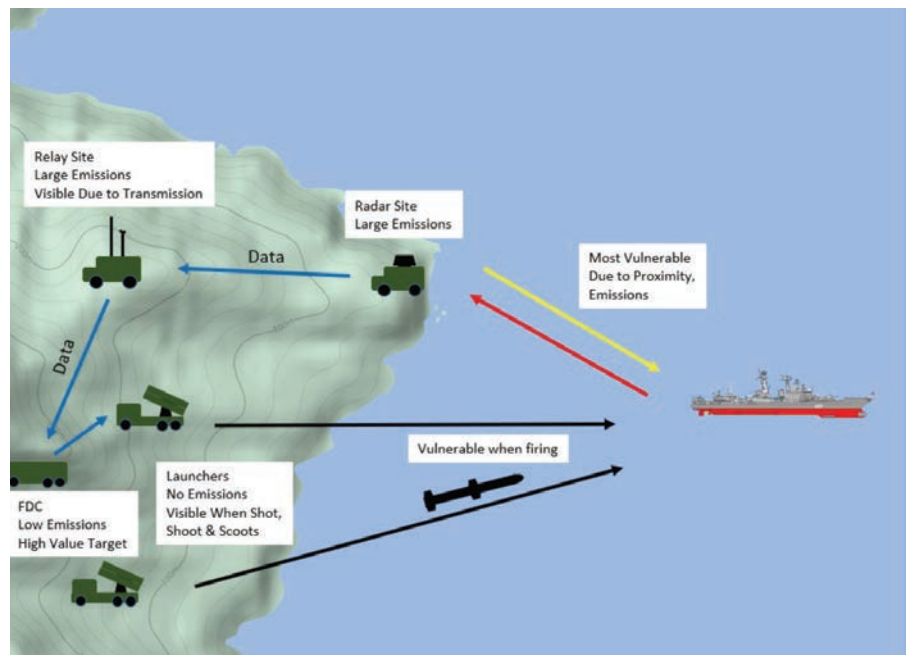
Major end items for a three-battery anti-ship missile regiment. (Graphic provided by author.)

ern Pacific, Japan had to prevent a naval breakout of a more superior naval force and turned to groundbased anti-ship missiles to solve this problem.

The primary unit tasked to conduct this mission is the SSMR. These are battalion-sized units primarily equipped to fire the Type 88 surface-to-surface missile, a missile roughly equivalent to the American Harpoon missile. A regiment consists of three to four firing batteries, each consisting of four launchers equipped with six missiles and reloading vehicles. The headquar-

ters company element consists of radar vehicles capable of discovering the approximate location of enemy vessels and radio relay units capable of relaying information to the firing units. The Type 88 missiles are equipped with tracking radars, enabling them to search for and guide onto maritime targets independent of external targeting data.

When tactically deployed, the launching batteries will be deployed from hidden firing sites away from the coastline with only small radar vehicles forming a picket in the coastline.



Employment of SSMR against naval targets, protecting firing batteries from detection from enemy warships. (Photo provided by author.)

Upon firing, the batteries shift to an alternate hidden resupply site to receive their reloads. Each battery headquarters consists of one fire direction center vehicle which can receive sensor data from regimental surface radar vehicles as well as Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force patrol aircraft. Data link is domestic but does not feed it fire-solution quality data. The data simply informs the general area of the enemy vessel, and the onboard sensors on the Type 88 missile execute the terminal guidance.

### Stationed at Vital Chokepoints

The JGSDF deploys a total of five SSMRs. Three (1st, 2nd, 3rd) are stationed in Hokkaido, subordinate to the Northern Army's 1st Artillery Brigade. These units are a legacy of the Cold War when Japan's largest threat was a Soviet naval breakout around Hokkaido, and incursions involving the Sakhalin islands. One (4th) SSMR is stationed in Hachinohe on the northern half of Honshu Island. They are tasked to de-

ments allow the JGSDF to persistently project lethal firepower onto vital maritime chokepoints independent of ship and aircraft maintenance conditions and stand constant vigilance against any naval incursions.

### Legacy Missiles are Deadly

The recent sinking of the Russian Cruiser *Moskva* and a cargo ship dispatched to resupply Snake Island by Ukrainian anti-ship missile batteries demonstrated the effectiveness of even legacy anti-ship missiles fired from groundbased positions. Reports indicate that only two missiles were fired at the *Moskva*, falling far short of a saturation strike typically thought of as required to sink a well-defended cruiser such as the *Moskva*. As impressive as the Ukrainian force's tactical feat might be a JGSDF SSMR could inflict far more damage against naval targets with its large number of launchers.

A 3-battery SSMR has the ability to fire up to a 72-missile salvo at the

close-in weapon system cannot physically defend against a salvo of 12 or 24 missiles. With multiple launchers, batteries, and regiments coordinating their fires, legacy missile-equipped units can overwhelm even the more robust Type 54A Frigate (even if it is armed with a full 32 vertical launching system cells of air-to-air missiles and a close-in weapon system). Even a full surface action group of Type 52D and Type 54A primary surface combatants would be hard-pressed to defend against a four-battery regimental salvo firing 96 missiles simultaneously.

Even if an advanced PLAN surface action group was to successfully defend against such a strike, the initial strike will inevitably deplete a fleet's defensive missile magazine. Groundbased legacy missile batteries deployed in the first island chain practically form a blunting layer, chipping away at the adversarial fleet's magazine of shield missiles. A PLAN naval task force depleted of its defensive missiles will be significantly more vulnerable to tactical aircraft, surface action, and carrier strike groups lurking outside the first island chain armed with fresh magazines of missiles. A competent PLAN admiral would refuse to attempt a naval breakout with a depleted magazine and will not attempt a naval breakout, and an incompetent PLAN admiral who attempts to do so would pay dearly for that tactical blunder. Therefore, even a groundbased legacy missile system would force the PLAN to fight for every inch inside the first island chain and enable U.S.-allied forces to dominate beyond the first island chain.

Another effective tactic that legacy anti-ship missile systems can be utilized for is to serve as decoys and enable stealthier and more expensive missile systems to hide in a coordinated strike. Light and unmanned platforms such as the NMESIS can be deployed on uninhabited islands, while more traditional SSMR-like batteries and regiments can be deployed to more established garrisons. An NSM launched under the veil of a massive legacy missile strike would only enhance the survivability and lethality of these more modern missiles, and potentially divert advanced

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## Groundbased legacy missile batteries deployed in the first island chain practically form a blunting layer ...

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fend and deny the Tsugaru Strait—a 50-mile strait that divides Honshu and Hokkaido. This maritime terrain recently became a point of interest when a Sino-Russian naval task force sailed through it in order to exercise in the Pacific.

The last and the most robust of the regiments is the 5th SSMR stationed in Kumamoto on the southern island of Kyushu. Four batteries are based on the mainland, and three geographically independent batteries are stationed in the outlying islands in the Ryukyu islands. These expansions are fairly recent, as a battery was stood up on Miyako Island in 2021 while in 2022, an additional battery will be stood up on Ishigaki Island, both strategically located between Okinawa and Taiwan. The deployment of these SSMRs, and especially the 5th SSMR, forces the adversary into a tactical conundrum. These missile regi-

regimental level, and independent batteries deployed in the Ryuku Islands can fire up to 24–36 missile salvos. Even though the Type 88 missiles are contemporaries to the AGM-84 Harpoon, currently being phased out in favor of the Long-Range Anti-Ship Missile and NSM, they are nonetheless extremely lethal against all but the most advanced anti-air warships and will fill a critical tactical role in defeating advanced anti-air defense systems.

Even though traditional anti-ship missiles such as the Type 88 and the Harpoon are not stealthy nor supersonic, as long as they can guide themselves onto an enemy vessel, the adversary must expend missiles and countermeasures to intercept and destroy them. For example, regardless of how subsonic and unstealthy an anti-ship missile is, a Type 56 corvette with an 8-cell RAM-like short-range missile launcher and a

electronic warfare and anti-air missile resources away from intercepting the more expensive and stealthy missiles.

It is true that the range (200km) of the currently deployed Type 88 and Type 12 missiles is inferior to their PLAN counterparts (4–500km). However, this does not necessarily make the JGSDF SSMR tactically obsolete. With a 200km range, they can form a hard defensive shell to deter a naval task force from consolidating around the Ryukyu Islands. In conflict, even a relatively short-ranged 200km range from the Ryukyu island garrisons can deny the PLAN nearly 20 percent of the East China Sea for all but the most lethal of naval task forces. More importantly, even the relatively short 200km range of even the legacy groundbased Type 88 missile can provide lethal anti-ship coverage to any potential breakout routes alongside the East China Sea.

### Emerging Missiles Will Make These Sites Even More Lethal

Pairing these island-based missile sites with modern missiles and additional defensive capabilities are potential game changers in maritime combat. The JGSDF is currently poised to introduce a Type 12 (modified) missile by 2025 that will improve the range of



**200km range can deny major breakout routes from the East China Sea. (Photo provided by author.)**

the SSM batteries. This combination of island-based anti-ship and air missile launchers enables enormous tactical synergies and creates a number of modern *stone frigates* able to duel advanced surface and air combatants in a naval incursion. Granted, these island missile bases do not have the same strategic mobility, maneuverability, and flexibility as traditional naval fleet assets. However, groundbased anti-ship missiles can help facilitate a naval “hammer and anvil” operation, being the blunting

trained with and exchanged tactics, techniques, and procedures with the 4th SSMR based out of Hachinohe as a part of Exercise RESOLUTE DRAGON. While exercises are excellent opportunities to exchange tactics, techniques, and procedures, the Marine Corps must establish more permanent relationships with the JGSDF anti-ship missile community especially as the Marine Corps enters the ship-killing business.

Another advantage of anti-ship missile units is their relatively light personnel footprint compared to other traditional Marine Corps operational units. A 6-launcher independent battery stationed in the Ryukyu Islands is manned with less than 60 personnel, and a full 3-battery regiment with organic radar and radio relay capability fights with a full complement of 250–300 (the 4th SSMR officer did not disclose their full-strength number, just the number of personnel that his unit is normally staffed at). Even if the Marine Corps directly copies SSMR’s 1990s vintage organization, more than three SSMRs (deploying over 200+ missile tubes) can be staffed at the manning level of one traditional 900+ personnel infantry battalion. Taking into account significant improvements in automation occurring between the 1990s and today, a Marine Corps SSMR could potentially deploy the same number of missiles with fewer personnel. In an era

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## ***The JGSDF’s SSMR provides an excellent model in which the Marine Corps can further refine to ... project firepower seaward.***

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the anti-ship missile to 900km, extending the reach to the entire East China Sea from its Ryukyu garrisons. This development will practically create a missile dead man’s zone inside the first island chain where PLAN ships will be in danger of receiving lethal anti-ship missile fire the moment they pull out of their homeport and away from their territorial waters.

The JGSDF has further stationed anti-air missile batteries, and plans stand up an electronic warfare unit in the Ryukyu Islands in conjunction with

anvil force while traditional naval air, submarine, and surface combatant elements serve as the hammer, providing decisive striking power.

### Viability of Marine Corps Units Modeled after the JGSDF SSMR

The JGSDF’s SSMR provides an excellent model in which the Marine Corps can further refine to establish and deploy ground forces that project firepower seaward. The Marine Corps seems to be aware of it; in December 2021, an III MEF HIMARS unit



**Establishment of the 303rd Independent Anti-Ship Missile Company. Note the full strength of 41 personnel to operate the battery.** (Photos provided by author.)

when the Marine Corps is facing negative end-strength requirements while adding lethal maritime firepower, we cannot simply ignore JGSDF's unit structure that allows over 200+ anti-ship missile tubes to be deployed at the personnel cost of one traditional infantry battalion.

Lastly, between the DOD and the defense industry, there is relatively less research, development, and integration that must be performed before such units can be deployed. As the DOD transitions from its venerable Harpoon to the next generation of anti-ship missiles, large stockpiles of Harpoon missiles can be transitioned from shipborne and airborne to landborne service. While not currently deployed with current U.S. forces, such vehicle-mounted anti-ship missile systems are built by domestic defense firms for service abroad, as seen in the foreign military sale of 100 Harpoon Coastal Defense Systems to Taiwan and military aid to Ukraine. Furthermore, Taiwan is not the first country to integrate the Harpoon into a vehicle-mounted launcher, as the Danish Navy has relied on vehicle-mounted Harpoon launchers to protect the Danish Straits against Soviet naval incursions. Simply put, the investment to field such Harpoon-based launchers have already been performed to fulfill foreign military sale requirements, and the Marine Corps can tap into large, existing ordnance

stockpiles to quickly field a Marine Corps SSMR.

### Challenges Ahead for Deploying Marine Corps SSMR

Large munitions stockpiles and existing know-how in building ground-based missiles do not mean there is no significant legwork to be performed by the Marine Corps to deploy SSMRs. Standing up entirely new capabilities within a military organization is never as simple as assigning equipment and weapons to Marines and holding a ceremony. Training pipelines for both junior and senior Marines and leadership must be established most likely with the assistance from other DOD and foreign military organizations that have conducted the groundbased anti-ship mission for decades. Units must then train in coordination with one another. Composite exercises must be held to demonstrate and rehearse the Marine Corps SSMR's ability to strike in coordination with Navy surface action and carrier strike groups, naval, Air Force tactical aircraft, and even the Army's Multi-Domain Task Forces.

Firing overwhelming, coordinated missile salvos will not be the only skill needed to be mastered by a Marine Corps SSMR. Such units will need to master skills in the defense, such as shoot-and-scoot tactics that could break the adversary's kill chain, deploying convincing decoys, and even emplacing

ordnance stockpiles that would enable follow-on strikes. Deploying an SSMR should not be the end goal; rather, it is only a piece of the puzzle of establishing a ship-killing enterprise in the Marine Corps. Leaders should not forget that sinking advanced naval combatants only succeeds when multiple supporting systems work in concert with each other.

Operationally, the assurance of a persistent anti-ship firepower inside the first island chain could also give U.S. maritime forces commanders a false sense of security and lead to complacency and a decline in large-scale joint maritime deployments in the region. These powerful, albeit immobile, groundbased missile units will be vulnerable to naval encirclement when not properly supported by a complex web of surface, air, and subsurface platforms. Deployment of these units in the Western Pacific should not be a crutch to divert commitment elsewhere. After all, such groundbased anti-ship platforms are means to bolster a forward-deployed maritime force that is currently quantitatively and even qualitatively inferior compared to our PLA counterpart. The Navy must be in lockstep in supporting and reinforcing the inherent weaknesses of groundbased anti-ship missile units.

A significant concern of deploying operationally static missile batteries is the ease with which the adversary can detect and target these units. While anti-ship missile-based EABs are more vulnerable to detection and targeting, their operationally static nature is largely dictated by the battlespace, not the organization of the unit itself. With advances and proliferation in satellite imagery, it is simply unviable for any units equipped with ship or aircraft killing weapons to hide from all methods of detection. For example, commercial satellite firms regularly give day-by-day battlefield updates on tactical vehicle positioning and losses in Ukraine to the unclassified internet. Advanced satellites employed by peer military powers such as China can certainly provide information at par or even better than their commercial counterparts.

It is reasonable to state groundbased anti-ship fires alone is inherently more vulnerable to surveillance and detection. However, such weaknesses can be mitigated by integrating anti-ship fires with anti-air and electronic warfare units, exactly as the JGSDF has done in the Ryukyu Islands. Anti-air missile batteries can prevent drones as well as tactical and patrol aircraft from approaching and targeting anti-ship missile batteries, forcing the adversary to expend expensive satellite reconnaissance assets to provide such targeting information. Electronic warfare units can prevent targeting data from reaching the adversary's command and control nodes and even offer soft-kill capabilities to munitions already headed for the SSMRs. This concept of integrating multiple mutually supporting capabilities is no different than combined-arms operations that are at the core of Marine Corps operations. After all, even the venerable Marine infantry is ineffective

without a constellation of supporting units that enable combined-arms operations.

Lastly, groundbased anti-ship fires are a mission set that our partner nation militaries have conducted and honed for decades. Despite the typical international military relationship where U.S. forces constitute the senior partner, we need to understand that the Marine Corps would consist of the junior partner in the relationships required to stand up effective groundbased anti-ship capabilities. Future anti-ship fires leaders should be dispatched to attend both basic and advanced courses hosted by the JGSDF and other partner nations that deploy groundbased anti-ship fires.

### Conclusion

Between the investments in the NMESIS platform and the unit reorganization, the Marine Corps is serious about bringing significant maritime-strike capabilities to the Western

Pacific. However, the current path in transitioning directly from HIMARS to NMESIS possesses a number of vulnerabilities and challenges that must be mitigated. One way in achieving this is looking to partner forces like the JGSDF, which have successfully deployed groundbased anti-ship missiles for decades and can allow the Marine Corps to quickly learn and contribute to the maritime firepower in the Western Pacific. Standing up even Harpoon-equipped anti-ship missile units modeled after the JGSDF's SSMR will add large amounts of anti-ship firepower in the Western Pacific. Combined with surface, submarine, and air platforms, these units will be a persistent and resilient combat platform in which the maritime component commander can utilize to deter or if required to sink naval threats.





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# Contested Logistics in the EABO Environment

A present look and way ahead

by 1stLt Robert C. German

As the Marine Corps works on applying the ideas of Expeditionary Advanced Base Operations (EABO) to sea denial and sensing across island chains in the Western Pacific, one critical component remains uncertain: logistics and sustainment. In a recent *U.S. Naval Proceedings* podcast, when asked what the Marine Corps still needs help on concerning *Force Design 2030*, the Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps, Gen Eric Smith, remarked, “Where we always have to work is logistics, that remains the pacing challenge.”<sup>1</sup>

The current supply chain is not responsive enough to support disbursed forces in the Western Pacific, and these challenges will only be exacerbated by greater distance and less infrastructure. The Marine Corps needs to find a way to adapt its systems to do so or adjust its business practices to provide sustained support. Looking at data from the Marine Corps supply and maintenance system (Global Combat Service System-Marine Corps [GCSS-MC]) for units in the weapons engagement zone (WEZ) can provide framing for this assessment. Evaluating supply and maintenance chains is relevant to every Marine occupational specialty, especially to the individual rifleman. Sustaining that Marine will be more challenging than ever. While Gen Smith was serving as the commander of the Marine Corps Combat Development Command, he commented that when considering logistics in a distributed environment everyone should be thinking, “need less.”<sup>2</sup> With that being said, each asset is of even greater importance. The days are gone of fleets of HMMWVs and Seven-

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Tons at a commander's disposal. Logistics assets within the Marine Littoral Regiment and in the WEZ will be few and far between. Neglecting the supply chain and maintaining these assets is a risk, and the data below highlights several processes that are vulnerable and worth consideration.

When items are ordered in GCSS-MC, the user assigns a priority code which tells the U.S. Transportation Command (USTRANSCOM) the urgency of need for that requirement. The priority codes are associated with a force/activity designator (FAD), which is determined by a unit's geographic location and proximity to a threat or enemy. Almost all of III MEF is poised to respond to a crisis in the Western Pacific and therefore has a FAD of II as depicted in Figure 1. This means units can order an item with a priority of 02 (highest priority), 05, or 12 (lowest priority).

Force/Activity Designator	Urgency of Need Designator		
	A	B	C
I	01	04	11
II	02*	05*	12*
III	03	06	13
IV	07	09	14
V	08	10	15

\*Designators used in data

**Figure 1. Designators used in data.** (Figure provided by author.)

What next determines how fast the part arrives is the source of supply (SOS) which fulfills the requisition. By looking at SOS and priority code, it is possible to analyze how well the Marine Corps supply systems perform and how impactful priority codes are in reducing wait time. The USTRANSCOM-approved time definitive delivery standards set a goal of delivering an 02 item to Marine units under U.S. Indo-Pacific Command in eleven days (not considering backorders or delays from the SOS).<sup>3</sup> USTRANSCOM does not rely solely on the priority code, though, because what actually determines if the item goes by ship or air is the required delivery date (RDD) inputted in GCSS-MC. Even if a maintainer makes a part 02, if they leave the RDD spot blank in GCSS, it will appear to USTRANSCOM as a low priority.

Using an ordinary least squared regression (a data science practice often used by economists), it is possible to parse out not only the expected wait time from a source of supply but also how much the priority code reduces wait time. An advantage of using the ordinary least squared model versus simply averaging the wait time for each variable is the “ceteris paribus” feature or “all else being equal.” This serves to isolate the effects of each variable from the others. This gives a more accurate estimate and thus allows for an accurate



evaluation of the efficiencies or inefficiencies of a supply system.

Table 2 summarizes the results of the regression and displays the wait time measured in days for each SOS that had more than 200 requisitions in III MEF over one year and the effect that assigning a priority 02 or 05 had on wait time. Overall, the data included 244,910 requisitions in III MEF over the last year from 6 different SOSs. There are two supply management units (SMUs) in III MEF, one on Okinawa and one on Oahu, these on-island warehouses are the first stop for units requisitioning parts and supplies based on enterprise business rules; they are grouped together as one SOS for analysis. The right-most column shows the percent of requisitions filled by each SOS.

are only expected to come in around two days faster than a priority twelve item across all SOSs.

The results illustrate that there is little to no difference in 05 and 02 priority requirements in terms of wait time. Commanders often request weekly or

***There exists a plethora of solutions to these logistic problems.***

daily updates on their 02 requirements; generally, they are almost identical to the 05 ones in terms of wait time. 02 priority requirements are defined as

that the supply chain is a limiting factor. The tentative EABO manual specifically mentions how “distributing maintenance forces must be complemented by efficiency and responsiveness in the supply chain to ensure maintainers have timely access to repair parts, enabling them to restore equipment to a mission capable status.” Based on the data of requisitions in III MEF, distributing forces will have a hard time meeting this mission-capable status. Waiting over fourteen days in a contested environment is untenable; the deadlined asset will be a target well before the part can reach maintainers. Even if some of the results from above are truly from an improper RDD and priority combination, this still is a cause for concern given that the systems and pressure personnel will be under much greater pressure in the first island chain. In the status quo, units will have to anticipate lengthy wait times or construct highly comprehensive class IX resupply blocks in order to continue to operate effectively, both of which go against EABO principles.

There exists a plethora of solutions to these logistic problems. For one, automation of the correct combination of priority and RDD in GCSS would prevent one of the issues identified above. This is a simple coding switch in GCSS-MC that would prevent a Marine in the WEZ from accidentally getting his part sent via ship versus air. A more advanced and data-science-related solution is developing technology to determine supply needs in advance, this is currently being done with the Condition Based Maintenance Plus (CBM+) program. CBM+ involves placing sensors in military equipment like the Joint Light Tactical Vehicle (JLTV), these sensors can then track a vehicle over its lifetime and use data science to predict part failures or prevent catastrophic failures.<sup>6</sup> After data is collected, it can be “transformed via machine learning applications to develop predictive insights, which are then pushed to software-driven dashboards that can be used by maintainers and operators to make decisions based on evidence of need.”<sup>7</sup> The more time and data the system receives, the more accurate the predictions will become

Source of Supply	Priority 02 Wait Time (days)	Priority 05 Wait Time (days)	Priority 12 Wait Time (days)	Percent of Requisitions for III MEF (%)
AKZ (Army Tank Automotive Command)	40.7	42.0	48.9	0.1
B14 (Army Armament and Chemical Acquisitions Agency)	47.1	48.4	55.3	0.2
B16 (Army Communications-Electronics Command)	63.2	64.5	71.4	0.1
GSA (General Services Administration)	63.2	64.5	71.4	0.3
MK1/MR1 (Hawaii and Okinawa SMU)	0.6	1.9	8.8	69.2
SMS (Defense Logistics Agency)	22.9	24.2	31.1	30.1

**Table 2.** (Table provided by author.)

The most important results come from the two SOSs that filled 99 percent of the requisitions, which were unsurprisingly the SMUs and the Defense Logistics Agency (DLA). The SMUs are obviously performing the best, and even their priority twelve wait time is likely skewed by the rest of the SOSs and averages much lower (around four days). If the on-island SMUs do not have the item being requested, it is most often filled by Defense Logistics Agency. What is important to note though is that the wait times for Defense Logistics Agency are greater than two weeks even for 02 priority requisitions. Another interesting point is that 02 requisitions

those without which “the requiring force is unable to perform assigned operational missions.”<sup>4</sup> FAD II is also the FAD used by units “engaged or assigned to combat zones.”<sup>5</sup> This implies that units in combat roles dislocated from the United States who need a part not stocked by a nearby SMU could expect to have the same wait time of over two weeks for their high priority requirements. Now, as mentioned earlier, some of these delays could be a result of not inputting the correct RDD correctly that then leads USTRANSCOM to assign a lower priority.

How does this apply to littoral logistics operations? For one, it is evident

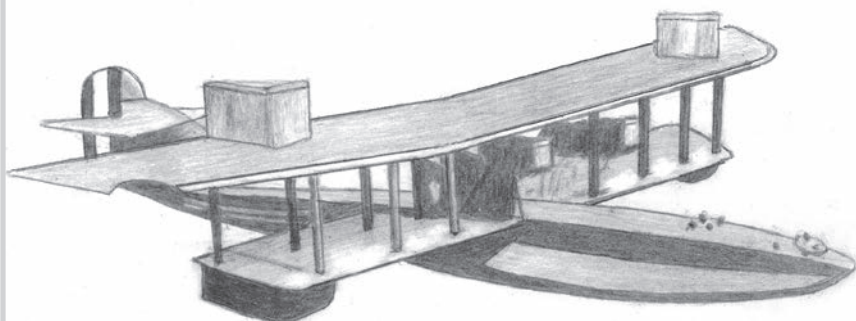
# F-5L FROM THE PHILADELPHIA NAVY YARD

Written and Illustrated by **DIANE S. SEGAL**

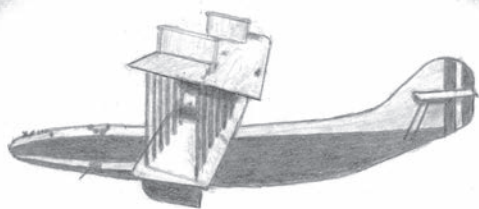
Dedicated in loving memory to my mother,

**DOROTHY M. SEGAL,**

for her service to the Navy Department, Bureau of Aeronautics, Naval Air Experimental Engineering Command, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, as a civilian during World War II. Her work involved assisting in the preparation of confidential reports on radar, loran and sonar.



DIANE S. SEGAL



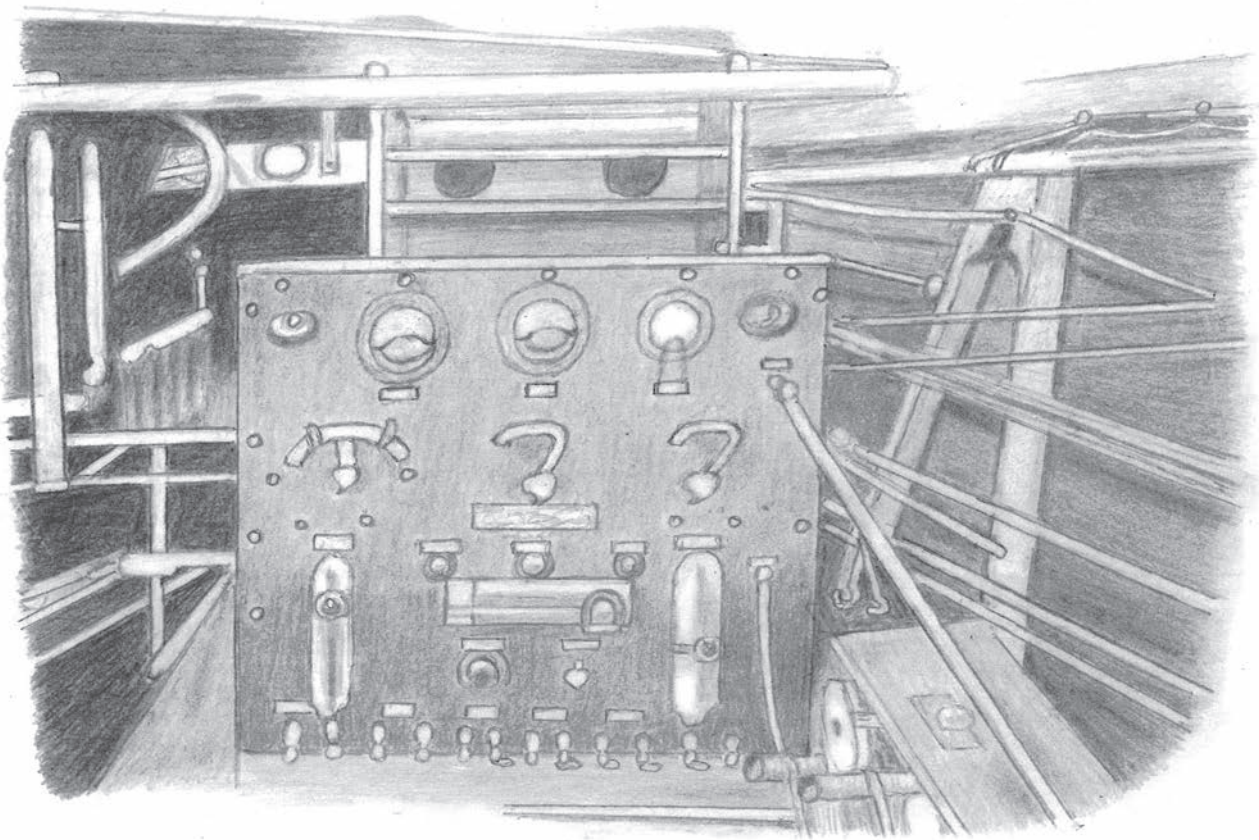
DIANE S. SEGAL

The Navy patrol flying boat was the F-5L and during the 1920s was the standard which was suited. It had a development history that was most convoluted.

The F-5L was developed by John Cyril Porte at the Seaplane Experimental Station in Felixstowe, England, during the First World War where it had its creation.

American Glenn Curtiss wanted to build a transatlantic flying boat as a project prewar. Porte, a former British naval officer and acquaintance of Curtiss, experimented with Curtiss flying boats to give the Royal Navy more.

And so came the F-5L, the "F" standing for Felixstowe, where it originated. A twin engine pusher biplane flying boat is how it was designated.



Radio transmitter in F-5L from the Naval Aircraft Factory, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

DIANE S. SEGAL

The F series flying boats, similar to the H-16, were a joint British and American development. Then on to the Naval Aircraft Factory at the Philadelphia Navy Yard they went.

At the Naval Aircraft Factory there were further modifications. British engines that were used were changed to American ones which had their own specifications.

There were 2 Liberty L-12A V-12 water-cooled piston engines, 400 hp each. There was a range of 830 miles for its reach.

Operated by a crew of four, 90 mph was the maximum speed. This fulfilled the mission's need.

Six to eight 0.3 inch machine-guns on flexible mounts were the armament. This helped the F-5L wherever it went.

902 lb bombs were also on the F-5L to provide the bomb load. To the proper target they would go to explode.

The F-5L had a radio transmitter and radio waves it made. Then data could be sent with an antenna as an aid.

The Felixstowe F-5L was operational in the last months of the war and until 1928. Its principal contribution in the Navy service was truly great.

which goes to partially solving the current iron-mountain problem. It cannot be overstated how important this technology is to units like the Marine Littoral Regiment which will be more disaggregated and removed from sources of supply than ever before. Capturing this data will better inform not only the maintenance and supply requirements of current equipment but procurement for future programs of record. The Marine Corps must continue to invest in this program and similar initiatives. If done correctly, this could reduce the wait time to zero—where a maintainer has a part just before it even becomes an issue.

Another solution to this problem is looking at alternatives to established and expensive programs of record. There is a lot of discussion around 21st-century foraging as a way to get after this idea. The suggestion is to purchase local commercial equipment to use for logistical purposes. The upfront expenses might be high to purchase some used vehicles or assets, but the money and time saved in maintenance cycle costs could be tremendous. Vehicles like local pickup trucks, commercial construction, or engineering equipment offer several advantages within the WEZ. They are discreet, reasonably cheap, already exist there, and for the most part, the logistics networks to support them already exist. This strategy also allows leaders the option to abandon assets without the repercussions of losing millions of dollars in government equipment. This also goes along with the thinking mentioned in the tentative EABO manual, if you cannot fix it, get rid of it—which is much easier to do when you did not invest hundreds of thousands of dollars into each asset. One great counterargument to 21st-century foraging is that the local economies of the islands and countries will not be able to support these requirements for a large force (the total personnel within a single Marine Littoral Regiment is in the thousands). An offshoot of 21st-century foraging is to create equipment that is easier to throw away. Unarmored, cheap, simple equipment is one way to get Marines moving faster and support them easier. In an EABO environment, Marines

are less worried about an improvised explosive device than they are about a ballistic missile. In World War II, over a quarter of a million jeeps were made, and there was not much intermediate maintenance done on them because it was not worth it. If the jeep broke down and was more complicated than

preventative maintenance costs, modification instructions, and part replacements that the current system demands. These all might work reasonably well in garrison, but they are a huge investment of manpower and funding which is arguably too large to then be abandoned because a part breaks and there

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***The pace of battle against a near-peer threat will be much faster than it was in Iraq or Afghanistan.***

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a spark plug or a tire change, it could be disposed of wherever it lay. Last year the Marine Corps Commandant, Gen Berger, mentioned this same idea, asking, “what if it’s done its business in a year and we buy another one?”<sup>8</sup> This is the mindset that Marine Corps Systems Command and procurement specialists need to start asking themselves. If parts are hard to get, then a valid solution is equipment that needs fewer parts.

The EABO manual also offers a cruder solution hinted at above, that is, “If equipment cannot be repaired forward in an expeditious manner, then it should be evacuated, cannibalized, or abandoned.”<sup>9</sup> Again, evacuation is arguably the ideal scenario, but evacuating a principal end item like a JLTV requires more than just a simple tow (a single vehicle weighs up to 21,000 pounds). On an island within the WEZ, limited by narrow avenues of approach and poor maneuverability, it is far more likely the equipment would need to be destroyed and left. One JLTV has a price tag of around \$305,000; a single part like a power-control module can make the vehicle unusable, leaving that rifleman and his squad on the island with a giant metal target parked next to them. Units like the Littoral Logistics Battalion within the Marine Littoral Regiment rate only 13 of the D00457K JLTV variant, meaning losing one would decrease their readiness immediately by 8 percent, three of them gone puts them below 80 percent readiness (if we assume the rest are all in perfect condition). On top of that, the current maintenance cycle demands a huge amount of time and money; there are routine

is no chance of timely resupply. On top of this, the Marine Corps is fighting for every penny in order to invest and procure technologically advanced gear like Navy Marine Expeditionary Ship Interdiction System, a replacement for the aging assault amphibious vehicle fleet and littoral amphibious warships. All this equipment will be required to defeat an adversary like China but arguing for these funds in Congress will be much less convincing if the Marine Corps abandons the same equipment on an island a few years later. The Marine Corps needs to confront this issue and accept it as a likely reality. When U.S. forces left billions of dollars of equipment in Afghanistan last year, the public outrage was enormous and top military officers were called to testify about the losses. If the Marine Corps does not adapt quickly to sustaining equipment and procuring “throw-away” equipment as mentioned above, then leaders will need to be prepared to answer similar questions.

Overall, the supply chain system needs to adapt to find ways to deliver parts faster, or at least consistently apply priority codes to get urgent parts delivered more efficiently. This applies to the EABO but also the modern battlefield in general. The pace of battle against a near-peer threat will be much faster than it was in Iraq or Afghanistan. Supply choices might need to be reevaluated using data science as here to see which systems or vendors are working and which are not. Programs like CBM+ need to be prioritized and funded so we can start collecting data and predicting now. If the system is un-

able to adapt, then commanders and higher will need to understand that the support they expect; is not going to be there anytime soon. The Marine Corps is going to have to find a way to come up with smarter, more flexible ideas to keep equipment operating or start investing in equipment easier to replace. There will not be wrecker support or an intermediate maintenance bay available in EABO. If parts are not anywhere close for delivery, the logistics community is going to have to figure out how to prioritize what they need and find creative ways to get it to the forward-deployed Marine. That rifleman will be the one that we are letting down by not working through these problems and facing these realities now; if we do not plan, they will be the ones figuring it out for themselves.

#### Notes

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# Acquisition and Retention of Enlisted Talent

Improving identification, incentives and investment

by Capt Kevin N. Byington

In the recently published guidance for *Talent Management 2030*, the Commandant of the Marine Corps identified some universal truths about high-performing organizations. Most notably, “there is always a boat space for talent.” However, to make a boat space for talent, we must first identify it, incentivize it, and then invest in order to retain it. Our current incentive structure on both the recruiting and retention side does not identify, incentivize, or invest in talent, but it can be modified to link the organization’s needs to individuals who possess the talent we are looking for and improve recruiting and retention. With some adjustments to both the philosophy underpinning incentives and the practical execution of them in the recruiting and retention environments, we can overcome our current challenges and ensure that the Marine Corps has a healthy pool of talent for years to come.

The current model for enlistment rewards participation trophies to applicants in the form of bonuses and promotions to E-2 upon recruit training graduation but does little to incentivize talent. To achieve contract E-2, one need only have taken JROTC classes at their local high school. They do not have to hold a certain billet, have a certain grade, or submit any sort of performance evaluation; they just have to take the class. Other examples follow suit: Eagle Scout participation, Civil Air Patrol participation, etc. Another way we incentivize contract E-2 is by

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pushing poolees to give us recruiting referrals, which assist in the overall recruiting effort but is not an indicator of a future Marine’s talent. For applicants who hold a college degree, all we offer them is a promotion to E-2. What does the individual with a 99 on the ASVAB receive? Nothing—no

***What does the individual with a 99 on the ASVAB receive? Nothing ...***

bonus, no advanced promotion. What about a 1200 on the SAT? Nothing. What about the individual who has a 4.0 GPA with advanced placement or dual-enrolled college courses completed in high school? Nothing.

Our current bonus structure incentivizes certain military occupational specialties, regardless of the applicant’s knowledge, skills, ability, or aptitude. We incentivize jobs with bonuses while neglecting to determine if that specific applicant is the right talent we are looking for. An applicant who scores a 50 on the ASVAB and signs a 6-year contract

for the infantry receives a \$5,000 bonus, while the individual who scores a 99 on the ASVAB and signs a contract for cyber and crypto operations (which are critical skills) receives a \$2,000 bonus. This is not to downplay the importance of the infantry (the most important asset of our organization) but to demonstrate the mismatch between our stated priorities and our incentive structure. The entire DOD states that cyber capabilities are a tactical, operational, and strategic imperative, and we state that we must identify, acquire, and retain the most talented individuals; however, in both regards, our current incentive structure falls short.

We talk about a force of the future where a corporal or a sergeant is making strategic-level decisions in a distributed environment, far away from any guidance or mentorship of a gunnery sergeant or a captain. This corporal or sergeant needs not only the brawn necessary to lead Marines in combat but the brains and maturity necessary to make tempered, logical decisions in a vacuum in the absence of higher leadership. If we agree that intelligence and maturity are operational imperatives, then the next question is how do we recruit and retain that? The first step

is linking rewards with individuals and their desired traits.

I propose that we tie bonuses and advance promotions to individuals and those factors that are indicative of success, not to check boxes. 88 on the AS-VAB? \$3,000. Able to run a first-class PFT while in the DEP? \$1,000. Two years of college completed? \$2,000. 3.7 GPA in college? \$2,000 bonus. *Appli-*

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## ***We cannot afford to forego an applicant who has the mental qualifications indicative of a future strategic corporal or sergeant.***

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*cant, the Marine Corps has identified you as the right kind of talent we are looking for. Based on your performance as a civilian, we are willing to offer you \$8,000 to enlist in the Marine Corps, regardless of the job that you choose, with a guaranteed promotion to E-2. However, if you are willing to enter into the following fields (critical shortage of the current FY), we are willing to offer you an additional \$6,000 to enlist, for a grand total of \$14,000. While these amounts pale in comparison to what other Services can offer, it provides a unique bonus that recognizes and incentivizes the talent of individuals. It signals to the applicant that we value them and recognize their accomplishments as an individual, not as a number or a cog in the machine.*

Once we have a talented individual enlisted in the Marine Corps, how do we leverage our manpower system to retain them? We must train our career planners in the ways of recruiting by sending them to Basic Recruiter's Course to enable them to have the skills to sell Marines on retention by linking needs and motivators to what the institution can provide them. Ultimately, recruiters and career planners should be the same as far as skillset and mission. We cannot assign units and commanders a retention mission while not also giving them the skills to accomplish that mission. After the Marine Corps assesses its end strength, projections, and retention mission, career planners (and commands) should be held accountable

for their ability or inability to meet that retention mission.

In addition to that, we must continue to match retention incentives to individuals throughout the lifetime of their career. Every Marine should receive an offer from the Marine Corps before their reenlistment, providing a comprehensive benefits package and an offer to stay in the Marine Corps. The

conversation might go something like this: "Sergeant, now that we've identified that the Marine Corps can continue to meet your personal and professional goals, let's talk about what the Marine Corps is willing to offer you to reenlist. You have a college degree (\$5,000), you are a Tier I Marine (\$5,000), and are in a high-demand MOS (\$12,000). Additionally, you have a family to think about, so because you are a Tier I Marine we are also willing to give you duty station preference in addition to the \$22,000 bonus." How many Tier I Marines that have exited the Service in the last four years may have thought twice about their decision if they had received an offer like the one above?

Each command should be given a retention budget of monetary and non-monetary incentives that the career planner can leverage to maximize retention. *Your retention mission is X Marines in these MOS. In addition to your allocated college degree monetary incentives and Tier I/Tier II monetary incentives, you have \$30,000 in discretionary incentives, 6 duty station preference incentives, 4 special school incentives, and 2 early G.I. Bill dependent-transfer incentives. Go accomplish your mission, career planner.* At that point, let non-commissioned officers and staff non-commissioned officers do what they do best and apply their ingenuity, creativity, and initiative to meet that mission.

How many Tier I Marines work hard and continue to seek personal and pro-

fessional growth, receive nothing for it, and watch Tier III Marines in the "right MOS" get a reenlistment bonus or watch a poor-performing Marine receive duty station preference simply because they volunteered for recruiting duty? The incentives are not tied to performance and hard-charging Marines in the "wrong MOS" watch this and interpret it as a signal that the Marine Corps does not value them. Why would I stay in this organization if no matter how hard I work or improve myself, I will receive little to nothing while I watch demonstrably worse Marines receive bonuses and preferences? If we cannot address the perceived unfairness inherent in our current incentive structure for retention, we will continue to attrit quality Marines who exit for other opportunities.

There are many voices who disagree with this approach. Mirroring their own experiences, some suggest that Marines should be intrinsically motivated to serve, should not expect a bonus or rewards for it, and should be satisfied with the fact that they are a Marine. While I genuinely hope that every Marine has that same fire inside them for being a part of this organization, the reality is that times are changing and the youth of today has different needs and motivators than that of generations past.

We cannot afford to leave talent on the table in the recruiting and retention environment. We cannot afford to forego an applicant who has the mental qualifications indicative of a future strategic corporal or sergeant. We cannot afford to continue to watch Tier I and Tier II Marines leave the Service because they receive no recognition, validation, or professional enhancement from bettering themselves in a high-density MOS. Ultimately, we cannot afford to continue doing business the way we have been for the last few decades. The Commandant of the Marine Corps has correctly recognized that, and I hope this article can provide a framework for what a future model could look like.



# Marines Love Dinosaurs

Why we need an HR department and the need to shed the 70s

by Col Nick Mackres USMCR

**W**e are justifiably proud to say that we take care of Marines, but we systematically take our Marines for granted. Great leaders will go out of their way to ensure the welfare of their Marines, so let us analyze what caused that error. Most likely, it was a systemic failure of not having a real human resources (HR) department. The amount of waste, inefficiencies, and costs is massive; by creating an HR department, we can claw back hundreds of millions of dollars per year and reallocate to other areas to invest.

If the Marine Corps were a corporation, with its 210,000 personnel, we would be the 30th largest Fortune 500 company.<sup>1</sup> I assure you that large corporations have great HR departments and the top executives all have a paramount interest in the efficiency of their personnel since it is usually the largest expense in a company.

Improving our combat efficiency or purchasing technologically advanced combat systems (next-generation upgrades, modernizing weapon systems, other billion-dollar projects) does not matter if we cannot do the most basic thing for Marines' HR issues/management. When Marines separate (either end of tour or retirement), they quickly see how inefficient and unprofessional the Marine Corps is with respect to payroll, benefits, onboarding/offboarding, computer systems, training, compliance, etc. Many know this already and complain it is useless and lost into the ether of the Corps as noise. Unfortunately, we have a poor culture of seeking improvement in systems, policies, and procedures above our pay grade, causing a helpless feeling in a system based on a strict hierarchy.

I understand HR may not seem important (many comedies make fun of

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HR), but I assure you the investment will be worth many folds over decades to come vice a piece of equipment to show in a museum. HR is not viewed as a cost of doing business, but those with highly-efficient systems are greatly rewarded in the markets, and of course, reward their personnel. Without efficiency, we will not survive budget cuts with the outpacing cost of pensions and benefits increasing over time, the power competition between Services, other government agencies, and the taxpayer demanding more for less.

We would never survive in the corporate world with a 75 percent attrition rate every four years.<sup>2</sup> This substantial turnover would cause a chief executive officer to be relieved for cause, the markets would punish the public company, and the negative media would be very damaging to the brand.

We can consolidate and think of our operations and financing as a collective whole just like corporations have done half a century ago. Unfortunately, we continue to operate with major subordinate commands having their own budgets, audits/inspections, disaggregated functions (i.e. admin sections), and the waste that comes from within. This practice is equivalent to having different divisions in a corporation with their own profit and loss statements while not caring about one another and the company as a whole. There are business discussions, half a century old, discussing these issues fomenting the

impetus to consolidate and think as a global company. Companies that did not do that by the 1980s were gobbled up in massive mergers and acquisitions. Nobody survives thinking like this due to the waste and abuse of shareholders (i.e. taxpayers in our case). Ideally, there would have been a hostile takeover decades ago to fix these matters, and the acquiring company's chief executive officer would be hailed as a genius for doing a common-sense approach.

As Marines, we are constantly under threat of consolidation by the Army; however, we continue to be inefficient with the most costly item in our budget, personnel, and benefits. Fortunately, the Army is not efficient either, but what would happen if they figured this out? How easy would it be for the Army to say they have a far superior HR department, process, and procedures and can provide billions of dollars in savings to the taxpayer by absorbing the Marine Corps as one of their branches?

Disaggregating budgeting, HR, and profit and loss is a whole complete redesign of what must be done. Cost accounting for the total compensation package per Marine per MOS per locale compared to unit effectiveness must be accounted for. Not only would we save billions of dollars to invest in the proper personnel and equipment that we need for the future but also raise morale and efficiency throughout the Corps and even greater envy from the other Services.

We need a real HR department, partnered with a corporate experienced chief financial officer, to give us information and help guide us to what we should be, not what we are. As a Marine, I have had many pay issues that have taken up to half a year to fix. I can only fathom what such an impact would be on a young Marine with a family. This



is not a one-off case, this is a systemic problem that we all know as commanders, platoon leaders, and NCOs—and there is plenty of proof with climate surveys stating the number one issue is *pay*. In the civilian sector, such a pay issue would be solved by the next pay period (two max); if not, people would start leaving your company or personnel would be fired.

Abusing Marines of their pay is not what we should do, and we continuously do it time and time again while wasting time on investigations and request masts. We must attack the root core of the problem: we do not have a real synthesized and organized HR department.

In the civilian sector, administrative and pay issues are not tolerated. I am embarrassed to say that I have a far superior HR department for a school district with 500 staff members and at a far less cost than the Marine Corps has with 210,000 personnel.

There is a great discussion on talent management, but before we try something well-meaning, we must ensure we have a strong base. If we cannot have proper systems and a real HR department to even *crawl*, how can we talk about *running* a talent management program?

This will be a multi-year project due to the many policies, systems, personnel, and structural changes required.

- Year 1:
  - Start consolidating installation personnel administration centers, consolidated personnel administration centers, etc.
  - Formulation on integrating and improving systems.
  - IT improvements; software/hardware/website.
  - Hire HR director and chief financial officer, as a professional service with an evaluation matrix. Expect to pay 500k to 1m dollars each per year. One-year contract with three one-year extensions.
- Year 2:
  - Continue integration, improvement, consolidation.
    - Recruiting Command.
    - MOS selection at entry, boot camp, and TBS.

- Start conversion of some admin Marines to contractors/government service employees at all levels (regimental, installation, regional, national).
  - Use savings to procure more efficient systems.
- Launch new HR IT systems.
  - Start decommissioning old systems.
- Year 3:
  - Start integration of other departments—anything involving personnel recruitment, professional development, benefits, retention for total talent management, i.e.:
    - Healthcare/Tricare.
    - Daycare/Childcare.
    - Marine Corps Community Service.
- Year 4: Complete integration and refinement to Fortune 500 Level.
  - Decision making on salaries, bonuses, manpower levels, benefits, and other items for true talent management.

These changes can be run in parallel and not sequential using Scrum and Agile Management, not only to save money but also to save time.<sup>3</sup> As we get better with Scrum, it will relate to happiness and satisfaction, which will push for a higher-quality Marine and retain talent. Talent management is about autonomy in choosing your own destiny within the Marine Corps. Obviously, the needs of the Marine Corps should take precedence, but we say it too often and possibly use it as a means of pushing one's own agenda on someone else. Marines currently have little control over their destiny and where they want to go in the big proverbial sandbox. Throw in the complexities of life with families and school-age children, changing jobs and locales cause great stress. There are jobs we need to be done for the long term which would be reviewed by a real HR department for outsourcing or to be filled by someone who is content not to be promoted. Alternatives to the “up or out” system must be considered for specific positions/jobs.

An HR department would take into consideration our Marines' time and seek better systems, formflow, and better computers vice wasting an employ-

ee's time. An HR department would know the cost of Marines by MOS and locale, which probably ranges between 50 to 100 dollars/hour with salaries/benefits/burden. How often do we compare one unit to another with respect to their mission capabilities readiness and cost to achieve those metrics? A chief financial officer would take these costs into account and sanction/authorize incentives and programs to improve the Marine Corps as a whole.

For example

- Computers: slow computers are not tolerated that waste many man-hours per person. Spending a little bit more money will pay itself off within one year.
- Formflow: using paper for administrative work would almost entirely disappear. The incredible amount of time wasted on system authorization access requests, reenlistment and special duty assignment packages, and check-in/check-out would be greatly reduced.

An HR department would take advantage of corporate knowledge, one distinct website with consolidated information, pay and benefits handbook, compliance management, career enhancement/advancement, and opportunities. The etcetera is not meant to be a catch-all or a copout, but it is too much to put in one sentence. I alone have typed 45 pages of items to correct (submitted to the Talent Management Strategy Group), and I am sure that a quarter million Marines can greatly expand upon the systems and issues we must fix within the Marine Corps. Unfortunately, without an HR department to synthesize, fight, and correct these issues, we cannot progress from the 1970's system that we have. Do you know what 3270 is? It is an IBM computer built in 1971, and we use an emulator to make our software function.<sup>4</sup> We literally dumb down our computer systems to a 1971 version.

We are fortunate as Marines that there is no board of directors or shareholders to hold us accountable or sell us off to the Army. Unfortunately, this leads to complacency and no forcible outside thinking on improvements. Civilian companies must adapt or die,

and with the Marine Corps, we literally have lives at stake and cannot afford to fall short. We must innovate and think outside the box from within our structure.

How can we sustain a prolonged fight with a peer competitor in today's fast and efficient environment when we cannot even get the basic employer-employee functions accomplished that any "mom and pop" start-up figures out within the first two years? How easy would it be for a peer competitor to exploit our archaic personnel and payroll systems and what would it mean to our fighting force knowing their spouses cannot make the mortgage payment or pay the bills for their children?

We are very good at leadership, organizational skills, planning, and execution yet abysmal at the fundamental need to take care of Marines with respect to payroll, personnel, benefits, and other HR functions. Let us get this last piece in the right place, save billions of

dollars, and make the world's finest fighting force even greater.

It is going to be expensive and painful to adjust, but it must be done. We must strive to be the most efficient at making our enemies succumb to our will. We have squandered an incredible amount of money with one faulty system built on top of another. We have so many additions to our original building that it is no longer remodeling or adding something else. We must knock down the entire building. Fortunately, there are dozens of multi-billion-dollar companies already offering incredible products and thousands of skilled employees who can solve our problems. The biggest hurdle we have is not funding and prioritizing but looking internally and being bold and daring to move beyond hubris.

Notes

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## The LtGen Bernard E. "Mick" Trainor Military Writing Award

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# Discriminate by Competence— Nothing Else

Combat effectiveness as the only metric

by Capt Karl Flynn

In their July 2021 article, “Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion: Why this is important to the Corps as a warfighting organization,” LtGen David Ottignon and BGen Jason Woodworth propose various methods to improve diversity, equity, and inclusion in the Marine Corps.<sup>1</sup> The article claims its proposed methods are intended to seek improved combat efficacy, but it fails to explain how exactly the methods will support this goal. Other goals laid out in the article are even at odds with this, specifically the promotion of Marines based on racial discrimination. The arguments they present to support this proposal are self-contradictory and based, at best, on flawed assumptions. Further, the proposed promotion policy would be unnecessarily damaging to the Corps for a multitude of reasons ranging from the erosion of self-confidence of Marines promoted based on discriminatory policies, lack of trust and cohesion among their subordinates, and risking the exclusion of the best Marines for the sake of meeting diversity quotas.

Beyond the specifics, the premise of the article is self-contradictory. At the conclusion of the article, the authors write, “Everything to do with diversity, equity, and inclusion must answer two questions: does it make the Corps more lethal and effective and are we creating an atmosphere for our Marines to excel?”<sup>2</sup> The former half of the sentence is spot on: the Marine Corps should assess everything by its effects on lethality and combat effectiveness while also striving

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to enable individual Marines to succeed. However, the notion that the principles of equity and inclusion themselves are important to the Corps as a warfighting organization (as stated in the subtitle of the article) is fundamentally contradictory with any organization that seeks to win in combat. This being the case, the authors never once explain how their proposals will achieve exactly what they claim to be seeking, namely increased lethality and effectiveness.

The Marine Corps is by its nature inequitable and exclusive, not based on race or gender, but on competence. It must remain this way, provided there continues to be equality of opportunity for any qualified individual who seeks to join its ranks. High-performing Marines who produce results are not—and should not be, for the sake of the Corps—treated equitably when compared with lower-performing Marines who do not. They should be selected for retention and promotion to be included in roles of higher responsibility while those performing at a lower level should be excluded. Marines are, and should continue to be, judged based on these merits alone independently of their gender, race, or any other irrelevant immutable trait. This practice should be self-evidently desirable to any leader of

an organization whose consequences for failure include the deaths of America’s sons and daughters and defeat on the battlefield.

The contradictory nature of the article is further illuminated by a story from the opening section titled, “Why Diversity Matters.” In it, MajGen Turner, who commanded Task Force Southwest from 2017 to 2018, recounts a counter-intelligence/human intelligence Marine who was able to locate a Taliban commander three months after arriving in theater who had eluded the task force for ten years. The final paragraph of the article references this Marine and states,

Marines, like the young Marine described by MajGen Turner—who performed to standard, added lethality, and demonstrated competency—ultimately become the high achieving Marines who move on to greater roles and responsibilities, not because of gender or ethnicity but because of what they bring to the fight.<sup>3</sup>

This is quite obviously correct, and it is diametrically opposed to promotions based on racial or gender discrimination. The Marine from the story performed well and produced results. Her race and gender are entirely irrelevant: the results she produced are all that matters. Any reasonable person would want to judge people based on the merits of their performance exclusively, not their gender or race.

Another one of the article’s more significant problems is that the term, “equity,” as used by the authors is never

explicitly and clearly defined. If the authors mean judging Marines equally with regards to “race, creed, color, gender, sexual orientation, or national origin,” as they seem to imply in paragraph fourteen, this is already a well-established practice and part of the culture of the Marine Corps. However, if this means equally retaining and promoting Marines specifically because of their race or gender, the idea of equity is harmful for a variety of reasons. This is, however, exactly what the authors seem to be seeking. Referring to gender and racial diversity, they write, “If we are doing it right, and we promote and retain equitably across the force, the brigadier general officer population in 2048 should mirror the second lieutenant population of today.”<sup>4</sup> Equitable promotion to achieve diversity would change a Marine’s race and gender from being irrelevant to being treated as their single most important qualifications. Furthermore, the article offers no explanation as to how this would make the Marine Corps better at fighting and winning wars, which it claims is its purpose. Worse, it presents obvious problems that would harm combat efficacy. One such example would be that if there are a disproportionate number of high-performing Marines of *any* given race or gender, the practice of equitable promotions will exclude those high performers simply to ensure the equity-mandated quotas are met. Not only is this unjust and anti-meritocratic, but it would also deprive the Corps of some of its best personnel, whatever their race or gender happens to be.

Aside from unnecessarily bleeding off high performers, implementing the practice of racial and gender diversity quota-based promotions would have much farther-reaching effects. If the authors had their way and their practices to “do things right” were implemented, what would this say to the Marine officers who were promoted by these criteria themselves? They would understand that they may not have been promoted because they were the best among their peers, but rather that they were promoted primarily because of the color of their skin or their gender so the

Marine Corps could achieve a diversity quota for the rank of brigadier general. This would undermine the success of these officers as it would corrode their self-confidence. Furthermore, this would have severe ramifications for the Marines they would be charged with leading. They, too, would know all too well how officer promotions were restructured. What would inspire more confidence in Marines preparing to cross the line of departure: knowing their superiors were selected exclusively on the merits of their performance or primarily because of the color of their skin and gender? To ask the question is to answer it. This would have a catastrophic impact on the faith and trust of their subordinates as well as their unit cohesion.

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***... gender discrimination is already harming the credibility of female Marines.***

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Unfortunately, gender discrimination is already harming the credibility of female Marines. Consider the experience relayed to me by a high-performing female Marine officer in a combat arms unit. Her command held a competition for who could achieve the five highest PFT scores. She ran a perfect score of 300. However, since female standards are significantly lower than male standards, her unit discounted her score and considered the scores of only male Marines. At first glance, this makes obvious sense: for the 21–25 age bracket, a female Marine can earn a perfect score with 11 pullups, 105 crunches, and a 21-minute run time. For a male Marine in the same age bracket, this performance would have earned a 234.<sup>5</sup> What her command failed to realize was that while she earned a 300 by female standards, she performed so well that she earned a 287 by *male* standards. This score would have placed her in the top five. Thus, because of the lower standards for females, an objectively

high performer was overlooked due to her gender.

This perception also exists on a larger scale. If a male and female Marine perform the same number of pullups, crunches, and run at the exact same time, the female Marine receives a higher score. All other considerations being equal, this will lead to her being evaluated as performing higher than her male counterpart even though objectively they performed at the exact same level. This handicaps the credibility of females. Physical demands of combat are universal, not gender dependent, yet the Marine Corps’ physical standards are different based on gender.

When the authors go on to explain the specifics of their proposed policy, they still fail to make the connection to how it would make the Marine Corps more combat effective. In the section titled, “Where We Want to Go,” the authors write, “The goal then is to get to a point where when we compare the diversity of a cohort at entry with the same group at various points along their career path; we would ideally see the same diversity percentage throughout.”<sup>6</sup> Why is promoting officers to maintain the same proportions of race at any given rank ideal? Nowhere in the remainder of the section, nor anywhere else in the article, for that matter, do the authors explain how mandated diversity quotas improve combat efficacy in any way.

While equity and inclusion should be shunned by the Marine Corps, it should not be misconstrued that doing so is in any way mutually inclusive of racial or gender discrimination. The key difference between this and the author’s proposals is the issue of prioritizing diversity for its own sake over meritocracy (as the authors explicitly seek to do), which is founded on the practice of racial and gender discrimination. A meritocracy on the other hand does not judge individuals by their gender or race, only by the merits of the results they produce. The Corps should not use race or gender as a metric for inclusion, but this does not also mean that it should be used for exclusion. Quite the contrary. Just as discriminating by race or gender for recruitment, retention, and promotion is totally devoid

of reason and would hurt the Naval Services, foregoing recruiting from any given population based on these immutable traits would mean the Marine Corps would miss out on having immensely talented and capable people join its ranks.

While racial and gender diversity are not the Marine Corps' goals, this is not to say that diversity in and of itself is a bad thing. Purely viewed through the lens of combat proficiency, it is completely irrelevant. No officer looks at their sailors and Marines and says, "I need more of X ethnicity in my unit to succeed in combat." They do not and should not care about their subordinates' skin color or gender but rather their technical and tactical proficiency, physical fitness, and moral character. They could be entirely male or female, or white, black, Hispanic, Asian, or any combination of these or any other ethnicity so long as they are best suited to fight and win in combat. None of this is to say that real instances of racial or gender discrimination should be ignored—quite the opposite. The military recognizes the importance of equality of opportunity, and every military command is required to have an equal-opportunity representative. If unjust discrimination occurs, an equal opportunity complaint should be filed, and a command investigation should be immediately initiated to hold those responsible accountable.

The exact issue of mandated diversity was identified and addressed in the *Gazette* article, "The 'Diversity' Myth," by CWO 4 Jeff Rhea. He uses the example of CAPT Kates, former commander of the USS *Benfold*, who assumed command when the ship had all white male officers. The captain believed that this was wrong and that he should achieve diversity in the officer population proportional to the enlisted sailors on the ship. CWO 4 Rhea gives two reasons why this reasoning is flawed:

*One.* He had become that which he outwardly abhorred: a sexist and a racist. He sought to staff his ward room with diverse officers (as Capt Kates puts it) and women on the misguided notion that they represented the much-celebrated diversity. Selecting

people based on race and assuming things about them makes him a racist, no matter how noble his intention ... *Two.* If all of his officers, regardless of race or gender, held the same life experiences, training, and same thought processes, then he did not have diversity at all. *It is diversity of thought, skill, and perspective that is the leadership imperative; not diversity of race, ethnicity, genealogy, or gender for its own sake. It is the content that matters, not the package.*<sup>7</sup>

The authors of "Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion" use this exact same flawed reasoning to support their proposals. No matter how it is framed, or for whatever noble goal it purports to seek, discriminating by race and gender is racist and sexist. This is quite obviously wrong and is plainly stated as being unacceptable practice in the Secretary of the Navy's guidance.<sup>8</sup>

Later in his article, CWO 4 Rhea also explains the paradox of avoiding prejudice by mandating the pursuit of diversity. He explains,

The real reason for most organizations to pursue diversity is to prove a negative. They simply seek to prove that they are not prejudiced against one group or another. This, too, is folly. One cannot prove a negative. By hiring someone who is \_\_\_\_\_ (fill in the blank) in order to prove one is not prejudiced does just the opposite.<sup>9</sup>

Racial discrimination for or against *any* race is prejudiced. Selecting or foregoing selecting someone because of their race or gender in order to prove that the selection process is not prejudiced is self-defeating.

While it mainly focuses on achieving diversity through quotas, the article "Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion" does also address the issue of the potential for existing prejudice in existing retention and promotion practices. However, some of the studies were not completed at the time the article was published and no example of any completed study given by the article provides proof of any racial discrimination occurring. The authors explain a statistical analysis of fitness reports, the results of which, "will be used to identify if any bias exists, which can answer questions on

demographic trends in performance evaluations and to inform potential improvements in the performance evaluation system."<sup>10</sup> Assuming that the study does indeed discover that a bias in fitness report evaluations exists, the proper solution to the problem would not be to just promote equitably. That would be treating a symptom, not the root cause of the hypothetical bias itself. The proper solution would be to find and eliminate the source of the bias in the first place to ensure everyone is evaluated fairly, regardless of race or gender.

Another study on the process of promotion boards cited by the article conducted a similar analysis. The authors explain how a study of the conduct of promotion boards concluded the process is sound but draw unclear conclusions from this result:

The Marine Corps has also worked hard at studying its current promotion board and selection processes to determine if, and to what extent, barriers exist for minorities and females. We rely on data to examine trends in multiple categories, and we will continue to do so. We continue to examine the processes and procedures used to conduct all boards—from board membership and precepts to the use of photographs and communications with the board, the indications are that the *process* of our boards is sound, but the *results* are varied: in some instances, results show positive trends, while in other results, there are disparities. In this process, we identified the need to dig deeper into our primary system for measuring performance, fitness reports.<sup>11</sup>

Once again, the authors do not explain what exactly they mean. They say the process of the board is sound, which presumably means free of gender or racial bias. They then state that the results of the board are varied with some positive trends and some disparities without explaining what either of those two terms means in this context. This begs the question: if, presumably, they did indeed mean that promotion boards are free of bias, why exactly do they need to dig deeper into the system as it currently exists? Is a promotion board not free of racial or gender bias ideal?

What does the phrase, “the results are varied,” mean? Varied by what? What constitutes a positive trend versus a disparity? Once again, there is no explanation of what the authors mean by any of this, or more importantly, how any of it pertains to making the Marine Corps more lethal.

When it comes to gender specifically, the article is equally muddled and self-contradictory. In the second paragraph, the article states, “We are not striving to achieve representational parity with the demographics of the Nation.”<sup>12</sup> In the remainder of the paragraph (or anywhere else for that matter), the authors do not actually explain what it is they *are* striving for in terms of the demographics of the Marine Corps when it comes to gender. This creates significant ambiguity in the statement, “Enlisted female Marines fare equitably at promotion on the whole, and the service is working to understand propensity in the eligible population to increase the percentage of females.”<sup>13</sup> If the goal is not to match the demographics of the United States, then *to what* should the percentage of female Marines be increased? Furthermore, what is the purpose of increasing the number of female Marines in the first place? The authors offer no explanation as to how such an increase would support their goals of increasing combat efficacy, which they claim is the reason behind everything they propose regarding diversity, equity, and inclusion. Just as would be the case with quota-based officer promotions, actively seeking to recruit and retain female enlisted Marines for no other reason than their gender would have profoundly negative effects for the same reasons.

The four lines of effort outlined by the authors intended to achieve diversity, equity, and inclusion are also vague and illogical. The first line of effort states that Marine Corps recruiting should strive for, “equity in the recruiting process.”<sup>14</sup> Line of effort three is strikingly similar, specifically seeking, “the strength gained by equitable treatment of all.”<sup>15</sup> Since the authors never actually explained what equity means with regard to recruiting, retention, and promotion means, the context of these

lines of effort is unclear. What does this mean practically speaking for recruiters? Should they be expected to treat everyone with equality of opportunity as they are already required to do? If it does, why would this need to be explicitly stated? Are the authors implying that recruiters are not providing equality of opportunity? Again, the authors rely on empty platitudes that do not actually mean anything specific to support their argument.

The second and fourth lines of effort have the same issues, though they focus on talent management and command-ership, respectively. Line of effort two involves, “identifying the professional abilities and personal desires of the individual Marine, balancing those needs against those of the Marine Corps, to achieve the best outcome.”<sup>16</sup> Line of effort four focuses on the role of commanders, specifically to “implement inclusion by providing each Marine targeted opportunity to reach their full potential as professional warfighters.”<sup>17</sup> With no context as to what this means in practical terms, it raises the question as to whether the authors are implying that Marines are not already doing this. If this is indeed their assumption, what do they believe is occurring at present? That existing talent management practices ignore the abilities and desires of individuals and fail to balance them against the needs of the Corps or that individual Marines are being denied opportunities to reach their full potential? The authors give no examples of this occurring, so the exact meaning and intent of these lines of effort are impossible to discern. In fact, as discussed earlier, the studies that had been conducted at the time of the article’s publishing indicated that there were no barriers to Marines based on race or gender.

The Marine Corps must stay a meritocracy. Discriminating on competence, not race or gender, is and should remain its practice. The principle of discrimination on any other grounds, especially the immutable traits that are one’s gender and race, is unjust and anti-meritocratic. Such a policy would have disastrous effects for the retention of the most competent Marines who would be

edges out by quotas, the self-confidence of those who had been selected, and the trust and cohesion of the units they would be charged with leading. The Marine Corps’ culture does recognize that diversity of thought and ideas is critical to success, but it must reaffirm that race or gender has nothing to do with the way someone thinks or performs. Therefore, the Corps should not seek to enact any policy that prioritizes racial or gender diversity for their own sake instead of recruiting, retaining, and promoting based on the merits of an individual’s actions alone.

Notes

1. David Ottignon and Jason Woodworth, “Diversity, Equity & Inclusion,” *Marine Corps Gazette* 105, No. 7 (2021).
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. Headquarters Marine Corps, *Marine Corps Order 6100.13A CH-2* (Washington, DC: December 2019).
6. “Diversity, Equity & Inclusion.”
7. Jeff Rhea, “The ‘Diversity’ Myth,” *Marine Corps Gazette* 99, No. 3 (2015).
8. USNI News, “SECNAV Del Toro’s Strategic Guidance to Navy, Marine Corps,” *USNI News*, October 11, 2021, <https://news.usni.org/2021/10/11/secnav-del-toros-strategic-guidance-to-navy-marines-corps>.
9. “The ‘Diversity’ Myth.”
10. “Diversity, Equity & Inclusion.”
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid.
13. Ibid.
14. Ibid.
15. Ibid.
16. Ibid.
17. Ibid.



# Talent

## Managing Marines or systems?

by LtCol Antonio Borrego & Maj Andrew Butler

***“Our organization, processes, and approach to personnel and talent management are no longer suited to today’s needs and incompatible with the objectives of Force Design 2030.”<sup>1</sup>***

**—Talent Management 2030**

***“While the needs of the Marine Corps are always paramount, we cannot afford to push the most talented young officers out the door after investing years in their leadership development, education, and training. We can do better.”<sup>2</sup>***

**—Talent Management 2030**

**T**he Marine Corps’ talent management systems should work for the Marine Corps and not the other way around.

Put differently; the Marine Corps manages systems instead of people. The Marine Corps systems, specifically the Performance Evaluation System, should enable Headquarters Marine Corps to identify talented Marines and provide them with focused career management. In the case of these select Marines, what is good for the Marine is often good for the institution. This approach will give the Marine Corps an edge in retaining its homegrown top talent. Additionally, it bucks the notion that all Marines are identical and interchangeable.

The idea that Marines are more or less identical is in direct contrast to reality. The notion ignores the obvious truth that Marines and talent exist across a spectrum (e.g., poor, good, better, and best). Therefore, a general consensus can be appreciated that not

all Marines are the same, and we want to retain the best Marines we can—not at any price, but to retain Marines to the best of our abilities. Then what should stand to reason is our top talent should be treated differently. The question is how?

The Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps described talent management in terms of the hit television series *American Pickers*.<sup>3</sup> To paraphrase the idea, the Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps said we should approach Marines similarly to how the pickers approach the most coveted items on the show. When the pickers see something

they want, they ask what it would take for the individual they are engaged with to part with the item. Typically, the first response is they will not part with the item, but the pickers often say, “yeah, but if you were to part with it, about how much?” At that point, a price is known, and negotiations can occur. In the words of the Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps, this is similar to how Marines could be approached. If we ask a top talent Marine to stay in, we should understand their price, and if the price is too high, then the Marine Corps can pass; however, if the Marine is asking for a reasonable accommodation, then we now know the price, and like *American Pickers*, let’s see if we can make a deal.

The trick to this statement is finding the crop of Marines the Corps should expend its resources engaging with and then how do we engage with them?

### Engaging with Top Talent

In the late 2010s, a top one percent officer asked the Service for an opportunity to serve close to home in Baltimore so that he could be near family and attend to a serious family issue. The Service asked him to apply for the CCLEB (Captain PME Board), and he was unsurprisingly selected for Naval Postgraduate School. He petitioned Headquarters Marine Corps again to be offered the opportunity to serve close to family. The Service had options with plenty of billets in Quantico, the Penta-

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gon, and other bases in the Northeast. Still, the decision was made to deny him service in the National Capital Region. An advocate of his asked his monitors what they would do if he told them no. The response from the monitor was that they would simply move onto alternates.

The advocate asked the monitor to consider moving the alternates, and the monitor noted they could not because it would violate the policy. The advocate spoke with the monitor's boss and received an identical answer. The institution's system could not recognize that it would utilize the alternate regardless. As a result, the system managed the personnel inflexibly and arguably recklessly.

In the end, the officer transitioned out of the Marine Corps; an alternate went to Naval Postgraduate School. The Marine Corps lost an easy opportunity to retain the top one percent of talent because the institution managed the system instead of the talent.

Many of the flaws in the above story are apparent, but what is not clear is a talent system that could identify this Marine and put his issues in front of the proper decision authority with the correct information to solve the issue.

### Getting Systems to Work for the Marine Corps

***The core objectives of all modern personnel management systems are to recruit individuals with the right talents, match those talents to organizational needs, and incentivize the most talented and high-performing individuals to remain with the organization.***<sup>4</sup>

The Marine Corps has robust manpower management systems; however, we need to modify or utilize them to benefit our sharpest volunteers. The first step is determining who the top talent is and then managing that talent more carefully compared to our regular populations. Once the Marine Corps knows who needs to be managed, the subsequent step is how and when communication with top talent should occur.

The why of this proposal seems simple: maintain the best at nearly any cost. Furthermore, this is the guidance provided by the Commandant in *Talent Management 2030*: "There is always a

ple exist within the bottom 90 percent and are competitive for positions such as command, promotions, and duty stations. However, their talent is a little more interchangeable and, therefore, not the talent that must be managed as closely by the Marine Corps.

### How Should We Identify Top Talent?

We should identify top talent within the systems we currently have. An update to the automated performance evaluation system could use known variables to determine what level or number of individuals we wish to include. It could provide an output to multiple systems (think WebMass,

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***The Marine Corps has robust manpower management systems; however, we need to modify or utilize them to benefit our sharpest volunteers. The first step is determining who the top talent is and then managing that talent ...***

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boat space for talent. High-performing Marines are identified and actively retained, regardless of military occupational specialty (MOS)."<sup>5</sup>

### Who is the Top Talent?

For this, we can consider the top talent within the Marine Corps to be the top ten percent based on the current fitness reporting system. However, there are several ways these Marines can be delineated among categories, rank, enlisted, officer, rank within the categories, observed time, etc. Additionally, the parameters can expand and contract (e.g., 5 percent, 10 percent, 20 percent) above, below, and everything in between. Resources will likely dictate the parameters.

### What About the Other 90 Percent of the Marine Corps?

Just because you are not in the top ten percent does not mean that you are not important, but it does mean that you need to compete within the bounds of the general population system as it currently exists. Ideally, qualified peo-

ple exist within the bottom 90 percent and are competitive for positions such as command, promotions, and duty stations. However, their talent is a little more interchangeable and, therefore, not the talent that must be managed as closely by the Marine Corps.

### How Do We Engage with the Top Talent?

Actively. Top talent is the single greatest asset of the Marine Corps. Monitors should purposefully and actively stay connected with top talent. Top talent should expect a semi-annual call from their monitors to discuss their interests while getting to know them personally. The calls should increase in regularity as a new set of orders nears. Monitors should treat every top-tier Marine like American Express treats platinum members.

### How Do We Meet the Talent Where It Is At? (Use Within Willingness.)

We owe top talent every option possible. Leave no stone unturned or opportunity not fully understood. Monitors



should contact top talent *before* programs are made available to everyone else. If an imminently qualified officer wants to be a battalion operations officer, attend a Naval Postgraduate course or resident school, serve in Germany, or attempt to receive a doctorate, the institution should strive to meet his professional goals.

### Conclusion

We currently manage systems and not people. Not every Marine is the same. We need to institutionally and systematically recognize that there are different levels of talent. We control our systems and processes. The institution should consider creative ways to mold these systems and update processes to focus on retaining the best who have volunteered to wear the Marine Corps uniform. Minimizing or halting the loss of top talent will invariably make the Marine Corps a better, deadlier force.

***“While our service never seeks change for change’s sake, we have always embraced it when change had the potential to improve our lethality and effectiveness.”<sup>6</sup>***

mil/Portals/142/Users/183/35/4535/Talent%20Management%202030\_November%202021.pdf?ver=E88HXGUdUQoiB-edNPKOaA%3d%3d.

2. Ibid.

3. Staff, “You Have to Move Fast’ with Force Design 2030, Marine Corps Official Says,” *Defense News*, 2022, <https://www.defensenews.com/video/2022/09/07/you-have-to-move-fast-with-force-design-2030-marine-corps-official-says>.

4. *Talent Management 2030*.

5. Ibid.

6. Ibid.



### Notes

1. Gen David H. Berger, *Talent Management 2030*, (Washington, DC: November 2021), <https://www.hqmc.marines>.

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# Break the Pendulum of EPME

Advancing the intellectual education of enlisted Marines

by GySgt Chase McGrorty-Hunter

The ever-changing character of war necessitates intellectual thinkers who can cope with the rapid advancement of the means and methods of waging war that the Marine Corps faces today. The Commandant and senior leadership often reverberate the sentiment that the Marine Corps' most decisive edge in competition against the Nation's adversaries is the minds of its Marines.<sup>1</sup> It is with this understanding that the individual is the organization's center of gravity, that this article aims to address what may be the critical vulnerability of the organization if proper attention is not given to it: professional military education (PME).

Over the last decade, enlisted PME (EPME) has made its most momentous change. In an effort to accredit enlisted education similarly to most mid- and high-level officer training, the Marine Corps embarked on an arduous journey to redefine what enlisted education would entail. Slowly throughout the 2010s, Marines attending their resident schools through the ranks began to see the figurative pendulum of curriculum swing from things like close-order drill and uniform inspections to analytical writing and critical thinking. The ever-present and often reiterated end state was that academic institutions would one day accredit EPME to the extent that any enlisted Marine who would traverse the EPME continuum throughout their career would be awarded an associate's degree by the time they have made it to the staff noncommissioned officer (SNCO) ranks.

Unfortunately, EPME has been chasing a carrot for years that it has yet to get

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a chance to eat. Although unfulfilled, this challenge that EPME undertook was worthwhile as it upped the bar for enlisted education, which for decades had stagnated to become a bootcamp refresher, with a base level of tactics instruction, and an overabundance of physical training. This modernization has introduced classes to resident EPME, such as ethical decision making, warfighting philosophy, and systems-based thinking. This drastic swing from typical Marine Corps-style training towards a more academic education has resulted in a counterargument that the pendulum of EPME has swung too far from historical tradition to try to become the unattained vision of academia. This belief that there needs to be a shift back in the direction that EPME came from has support from many senior enlisted leaders.

This article acknowledges that proponents for and against the changes in EPME have some validity to their arguments but makes the claim that they are both ultimately unfit solutions for what the Marine Corps needs to be effective today and into the future. The argument for which way the pendulum needs to swing has missed the point that the current pendulum is inherently flawed in fulfilling its ultimate role, which is to prepare the enlisted force to face the Nation's enemies in a rapidly evolving, modern battlefield.

Because of this changing character of war, the organization cannot allow for the stagnation of its flagship courses that teach the majority of its force. This article addresses the viewpoint of proponents who would seek to take EPME back in time, challenges some of the current structure of EPME, and outlines proposed changes to progress the enlisted education process.

## The Way is Forward, Not Back

Advocates for bringing back some of the roots of EPME and distancing it from its current academic focus argue that the Marine Corps is a warfighting organization, and as such, there should be an inherent focus on the traditions of the Corps. At face value, a proposal like this sounds like common sense as they aim to swing the pendulum back to what EPME has been known to be from its inception until the last decade. Unfortunately, the plan to do that is bleak when examined, as many senior leaders echo a sentiment of bringing back a curriculum that reincorporates topics such as drill and uniform inspections.

In a 2022 podcast with The Krulak Center, SgtMaj Black, 19th Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps, discussed some of his views on where EPME stands and where he believed it needed to go. Opening with a sentiment that the enlisted force is constrained by time

due to gapping billets to allow enlisted Marines to attend resident PME, he continued by stressing the importance that the organization make the most of the short time that enlisted do get at their PME schools, roughly 23 weeks in an entire career from E-1–E-9 versus the approximately two academic years for an officer from the ranks of O-1–O-5.

This conversation began promising but took a disappointing turn when questioned more specifically on his views toward some of the more revolutionary curriculum changes in recent years regarding the introduction of strategic wargaming at the Gunnery Sergeants Advanced School. His response initially brought up discrepancies in the current fitness report system, insinuating that these issues are resulting on behalf of the enlisted force while continuing to say,

conducting wargames and competing with our senior officers is not a leadership principal nor is it a leadership trait. If time is a factor and time is a constraint, your question is, what would I do? I would get rid of all that wargaming and make sure Gunnery Sergeants understood the PES (Performance Evolution System).<sup>2</sup>

He immediately acknowledged that it was not an answer that the audience member who asked likely wanted to hear.

Although this was a candid conversation between the Sergeant Major and the crowd, being that he holds the senior position for the enlisted force and, therefore, the most sway in where enlisted education will go, this type of thinking deserves challenging. In 2019, Gen Berger released his *Commandants Planning Guidance* which described his vision for modernizing the force under his tenure. Within the 23 pages of text, he referred to wargaming 35 times. He described it as, “[e]ssential to charting our course in an era of strategic fluidity and rapid change will be the effective integration of professional wargaming in force design, education, and training.”<sup>3</sup> With enlisted Marines comprising 89 percent of the force, 150,592 of the 169,456 Marines, it is hard to fathom that he was only speaking to the importance of wargaming remaining at

officer PMEs like Command and Staff, Expeditionary Warfare School, and the School of Advanced Warfighting.

Later in the podcast, SgtMaj Black commented that the role of EPME is to teach what the fleet needs, not what the academic institutions think the fleet needs. He mentions that a “Marine Corps wide assessment was conducted on all EPME curriculum which was then briefed to the EDCOM general.” The results of this curriculum review mentioned integrating drill and uniform inspections back into the curriculum at places like the Staff Non-commissioned Officers Academies. The argument made by many who support this change is that drill teaches disci-

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**... is there not a more effective way to teach discipline and attention to detail ...**

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pline, and uniform inspections teach attention to detail, both of which are vital to success on the battlefield. Although those sentiments have some validity, is there not a more effective way to teach discipline and attention to detail to members of an elite warfighting organization than to revert to customs that originated as a tactical necessity to first- and second-generation warfare?<sup>4</sup>

In his January 2023 *Gazette* article “Drill Baby Drill!” LtCol Drake elaborates on the type of discipline that comes from drill,

Units such as JSOC (Joint Special Operations Command) rely on a system based on intrinsically motivated discipline (i.e., discipline from personal desire). The Marine Corps drill model instead favors extrinsically motivated discipline—obedience to requirements imposed by leadership with punishment if not obeyed.<sup>5</sup>

Instituting archaic means to seek the desired outcome of having disciplined, critical-thinking, small-unit leaders will not work in the state of competition the

Marine Corps is in with the Nation’s adversaries.

### **How Minds are Challenged Matters**

For any doubts expressed about where EPME is currently, there is little doubt that the current curriculum is more robust and, therefore, more mentally taxing than in previous years. This change has been long warranted, and it is much needed if the Corps expects to have intellectual thinkers capable of adaptation in the face of adversity on the future battlefield. How the academic institutions mentally challenge the minds of the Marines attending their schools matters, and this is where improvement beckons to be made.

A Marine attending the NCO and SNCO-level resident schools will spend a preponderance of their time mentally fatiguing themselves over their ability to adopt *Chicago Manual of Style* writing to pass their essays, which make up the most significant part of their grades. No argument is being proposed against the importance of the ability to articulate thought in both the written and the spoken word. However, when that emphasis on academic writing comes at the cost of developing warfighters, the institution crosses a dangerous line.

Until the *Chicago Manual of Style* begins to lend a decisive advantage on the battlefield, Marines need to focus on what makes a professional in arms. The Marine Corps needs to get its enlisted to expend their mental energy where it matters most, on issues critical to the conduct of warfare. Because of this, EPME needs to reenergize its warfighting curriculum to no longer focus solely on lessons of history but to forecast and institute a more revolutionary curriculum that will capture the role of Marines in the future to a greater extent.

Classes designed to teach Marines about great-power competition, naval-warfare integration, and current initiatives such as *Force Design 2030*, can lay the base for what can then be developed further through rigorous exercises in mental agility. In this pillar of coursework, wargaming will codify group understanding of strategy on a larger scale. Furthermore, catered toward in-

dividuals, decision-forcing case studies and tactical-decision games need to be created to place Marines into the hypothetical forecasted situations that they may one day face.

The first time that a Marine has to weigh a tactical decision with strategic ramifications should not be on a desolate island in the enemies' weapons engagement zone, it should be in the classrooms of the Marine Corps academic institutions.

**Time is the Constraint; Make it Count**

To elaborate further on the reality expressed by SgtMaj Black that time will continue to be the constraint that most affects EPME's ability to change, it is imperative that the small amount of time that does exist in the schedule

weeks allotted to attend their resident PME. Those 25 training days are all that is present for the faculty at academies to develop these young leaders' minds. Although it is not only at resident PME where intellectual growth occurs, it is these institutions of formal education that are best primed to rapidly impart knowledge that will develop these Marines in a condensed timeline. Therefore, the focus of this limited time must be placed on what is most advantageous to achieve that endeavor.

**The Need to Move Fast**

Like many aspects of a large organization, the structure of PME has a bureaucracy that frequently results in a process that is defined more by stagnation than innovation and rigidity more than fluidity. In many cases, systems

essential truth that *change is a medium of advantage in war*. The greater the change, the wider the aperture for generating new advantage. A warfighting organization that is not constantly adopting, adapting, or initiating new means and methods of warfare is standing still, and most assuredly will be passed by more ambitious, creative, or sinister forces.<sup>7</sup> Gen Berger displayed this mindset in his willingness to shift the organization, even in the face of opposition.

With a Commandant at the helm who embraces bold initiative and a bias for action, the organization is uniquely positioned to make rapid development where needed. In this same sentiment, the proverbial shackles need to be removed from the curriculum development process that results in material that atrophies by the time it has made its way in front of students.

A focus needs to be placed on educating the enlisted force on not only what the strategic focus is for the United States but also what role the Marine Corps plays in that arena. What a shame it is that Marines, especially those in positions of leadership being the NCO and SNCO core, could leave their resident PME without at least a conceptual understanding of great power competition and how the Marine Corps will serve the nation to counteract revisionist powers. As it stands now, the enlisted force still needs formal education that introduces them to the concepts of great-power competition and how the Corps is using Expeditionary Advanced Base Operation, Stand-In Forces, Littoral Operations in a Contested Environment, and other operational methods moving forward to serve U.S. strategy and support the Joint Force.

The argument presented is not to create a mirror image of schools like those officers attend to create naval officers out of the enlisted force but to ensure that the enlisted force can at least speak the same language as those they are entrusted to advise. One need not look any further than the disparity in how officer and enlisted education teach doctrine to see why it is essential to educate the enlisted force on these subjects. A young lieutenant leaving

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**... the proverbial shackles need to be removed from the curriculum development process that results in material that atrophies by the time it has made its way in front of students.**

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be capitalized on most appropriately. It is because of this understanding of limited training time, that the argument presented opposes the implementation of more physical training, drill, or uniform inspections, not because these things do not have a place in the Marine Corps at all.

Few Marines would argue that two weeks should be taken out of Expeditionary Warfare School to teach the officers how to build a company physical training plan, or that a week of Command and Staff should be dedicated to teaching future battalion commanders how to hold a battalion uniform inspection. These notions seem laughable when put into this context, so why then is it not laughable when compared to how these timelines correlate to a similar percentage of actual teaching time at places like Sergeants, Career, and Advanced Schools?

A sergeant for example, who will likely serve in that rank for a period of three to five years, will have only five

like this bear a level of assuredness that all the checks and balances will be in place to filter through proposed changes in the interest of what is best for the institution. This article does not argue that the system is inherently flawed and cannot cope with today's landscape, but that change needs to happen at a rate that will be uncomfortable to many within that system currently. In addressing warfighting, the Commandant stated in his planning guidance, "We will succeed by continually challenging the status quo and asking ourselves—is there a way to cause a better outcome?"<sup>6</sup> Analyzing this commander's intent, it is hard to draw any other conclusion than for the members of the Marine Corps to own the challenge of instituting change.

When speaking on some of the initiatives being implemented under the umbrella of *FD2030*, retired Col Art Corbett stated, "institutions dedicated to deterring and waging war must be similarly dynamic and recognize the

The Basic School will better understand the Marine Corps warfighting philosophy *MCDP 1* than many SNCOs. This is not a slight at the enlisted ranks but an example of how the differences can matter. Many enlisted Marines have operated efficiently for years without ever understanding the underpinnings of *MCDP 1* and enlightening themselves in the concepts of maneuver warfare. But that does not negate that this ignorance presents an opportunity gap to the organization. In this same regard, it is acknowledged that many enlisted can be successful on the future battlefield employing EABO against a peer adversary without truly grasping what the operational concept is, but how much more effective could they be if they did have that understanding? It is in this disparity between what is needed to exist as a warfighter and what the true potential of the individuals could be that the entirety of this article aims to address.

Orienting EPME to adequately address the most pressing issues Marines

will face in the next decade is essential to ensuring that the Marine Corps is poised to have the breadth of knowledge and skill needed to employ its future operational concepts and compete with peer adversaries. The Nations' adversaries continue to rapidly close the gaps in technology and therefore capability. Subsequently, it is in the interest of national security that the Marine Corps seeks to ensure that its center of gravity, the individual Marine, continues to develop at a rate much faster than historically known or else risk having this decisive advantage crumble when it is needed most.

#### Notes

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# The Role of the Individual in Professional Education

Tips on how to advance life-long-learning for the military professional

by Col Marc F. Riccio (Ret)

*“Learning is an institutional priority and a professional expectation for all Marines. Continuous, disciplined, and progressive learning is necessary for warfighting readiness.”<sup>1</sup>*

—Gen David H. Berger, MCDP 7, Learning

True professionals actively seek out opportunities to expand their knowledge and understanding of their chosen professions. The Marine Corps’ episodic and infrequent occasions for professional military education, either resident or distance education, for our officers and staff non-commissioned officers is not enough. If we are to remain ahead of our global competitors and potential future adversaries, we must adopt, encourage, and enforce a culture of lifelong learning that expands far beyond Service-provided PME. As Frederick the Great counseled us, “Whoever wishes to master the art of war must study it continuously.”<sup>2</sup> This article seeks to provide recommendations on how individuals can establish habits of lifelong learning in their lives and daily routines as leaders.

Advancing the education of a professional workforce is a critical element



Resources for lifelong learning abound: books, periodicals, blogs, and wargames can all be used for self-education. (Photo provided by author.)

in any successful organization. Webster defines the term professional as: *of or engaged in a profession (such as the profession of arms)*. It goes further to define a profession as *an occupation requiring advanced academic training in medicine, law, etc.* It is no less true in

the military profession. To that end, the Marine Corps as an institution has valued education as a force multiplier for decades dating back to the 1920s and MajGen J.A. Lejeune. According to Lejeune, “the military education of its officers is essential to the efficiency of a military organization.”<sup>3</sup>

It is clear that to be a professional means to be educated in one’s chosen profession. This education is predominantly achieved through formal schools and formal courses of instruction like law school or medical school. For our Marines, the equivalent would be a MOS-producing school like the Infantry Officers Course/School of Infantry for infantrymen or Fort Sill for our ar-

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tillerymen. But for true professionals, education does not stop here; rather, this is just the beginning. Doctors and lawyers do not stop learning when they graduate from medical school or law school. Throughout their careers, they attend advanced schooling and training in their chosen fields because their professions do not remain static. To remain proficient and relevant, they must seek out and constantly develop their knowledge of their chosen fields. The same is true for Marines. For both our officers and enlisted Marines, we are expected to complete grade-appropriate PME either in resident schools or via a distance program as we progress in our careers. These opportunities occur intermittently over the course of a 20–30-year career. My argument is this is not enough. To be true professionals, we cannot rely solely on milestone-driven PME requirements. As our Commandant stated in *MCDP 7*, “As Marines rise in rank and position, continuous learning and developing our professional skills are a professional expectation.”<sup>24</sup> Therefore, if we believe that we are true professionals in the profession of arms, we must do more. We must strive to be lifelong learners who are always learning and studying. The Commandant goes on to say in *Training and Education 2030* “that to maintain our intellectual edge, in addition to increasing the rigor and relevance of our formal PME programs, we will also *reinforce the culture of life-long-learning*.”<sup>25</sup> So what does a culture of life-long-learning look like? The remainder of this article will offer some suggestions on what that culture might consist of and how we as leaders can reinforce it.

Over the course of my combined 39 years of government service, I have developed several habits of life-long-learning that may be helpful for others that are seeking to expand their educational horizons beyond the confines of intermittent formal PME and are seeking to build a culture of life-long-learning in their lives and their commands. This article lays out four areas that I have found to be integral to any lifelong learner endeavor. There are likely others, but these are the four that I have found most useful and productive in

my professional life. They are *Read, Study, Write, and Model*.

### Read

As Gen James Mattis is quoted as saying in his recent book *Call Sign Chaos: Learning to Lead*, “if you haven’t read hundreds of books, learning from others who went before you, you are functionally illiterate—you cannot coach and you cannot lead Marines.”<sup>26</sup> The point here is, if you are not a big reader, start now and develop a disciplined reading plan. You should be reading something every day. Find something that interests you and dive in. Periodicals and professional journals are a good place to start. *The Early Bird* (<https://www.defensenews.com/ebb/>), *War on the Rocks* (<https://warontherocks.com/>), the *Marine Corps Gazette* (<https://mca-marines.org/>), and the *Proceedings* (<https://www.usni.org>) are just a few examples. When it comes to choosing what books to read, there are

plenty of recommended reading lists that you can choose from: The Commandant’s Professional Reading List, ADM James Stavridis’ *The Leadership Bookshelf*, or Gen Mattis’ list of his top 25 books. Whatever option or combination of options you choose, I encourage you to just start.

### Study

It is not enough to just read—you need to take on habits of study. Once again, drawing on the wisdom of Gen Mattis who wrote, “There is no substitute for constant study to master one’s craft.”<sup>27</sup> True learning and comprehension come from digging deeper into the topics you are reading and spending time studying the topic. Find a topic you are interested in and research and study that topic in more detail—whether it be related to your MOS or a geographic area of interest or a historical event or figure. By diving deeper into that topic, you will find yourself gravi-

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tating toward reading additional books and articles on the topic. This process of study—reading and analyzing multiple sources of information—will develop your critical-thinking skills and give you a broader picture and understanding of the topic. Some examples of my own recent study are on topics as far ranging as Gen George Washington’s wartime leadership, to the concept of maneuver warfare, to the 1781 naval Battle of the Capes between the British and French navies. Every one of these personal studies started out with just one book or an article which piqued my curiosity and interest, ultimately leading me to seek more resources on the subject. This habit of “constant study” will hopefully lead you to my next recommendation.

**Write**

I invite you to not only read and study but also to write. Writing helps you to organize your thoughts and allows you to put them down on paper logically and persuasively. Your writing does not have to be published in a professional journal—although I encourage all to aspire to do that—an alternative is to keep a private journal of your writings. Either way, the act of writing your thoughts and arguments down is a skill that needs to be exercised and continually developed. As you become more senior and fill more senior billets/assignments, writing effectively, efficiently, and concisely will become imperative. Col James C. Breckinridge spoke to this in his 1929 *Gazette* article. He said that “our work (our written work-authors emphasis) should be measured by Brevity (+) Clarity (+) Decisiveness.”<sup>8</sup> This is good advice, as all of your future bosses will expect and assume on day one of any future assignment that you are a competent writer. As one of my mentors once told me many years ago after kicking my information paperback for a third time, “Colonel, remember *hard writing makes for easy reading.*” The lesson here is to not wait until you are a senior field-grade officer or senior staff non-commissioned officer and have your papers graded by a flag officer or senior executive to learn how to write effectively.

**Model and Mentor**

Part of building a culture of life-long learning is to model and mentor to your peers and your junior Marines the behavior of a mature professional. *MCDP 7* tells us “Marines must lead by example in seeking learning opportunities for themselves, as well as for their Marines.”<sup>9</sup> Encourage others to be lifelong learners at every opportunity. Share with your peers and Marines articles and books that you are reading or have read that might be of interest to them. Talk to your Marines and encourage them to seek PME opportunities—which also means that when those opportunities arise, find a way to let them go. It also means providing guidance and encouraging your Marines to seek out opportunities that broaden their learning horizons above and beyond grade required/recommended PME. Seek out and inform your peers and subordinates about more “non-traditional” learning opportunities. Some examples are the Marine Corps Universities Continuing Education Program (an index of courses offered can be found at <https://www.usmcu.edu/cdet/continuing-education>), the Marine Corps Virtual Classroom (an index of courses offered can be found at <https://www.usmcu.edu/CDET/cepMVCV>), local organizations like the Lejeune Warfighting Society and numerous Wargaming Fight Clubs such as the Marine Corps University Fight Club (email: [mcu\\_fight\\_club@usmcu.edu](mailto:mcu_fight_club@usmcu.edu)) and the U.S. Army Fight Club (<https://www.usafight.club>) just to mention a few. Like anything else associated with leadership, leading by example always inspires others to action.

A knowledgeable professional (Marine) who is well versed in theory, doctrine, tactics, and history is much better equipped to lead Marines on the modern battlefield—that is just a fact. Education (formal and informal) builds a leader’s critical-thinking skills, ultimately making him a better decision maker. We know that future battlefields will be complex and multi-layered. Leaders at all levels will need to be able to synthesize and interpolate a large amount of information in a short

period of time. Education helps leaders gain and flex their critical-thinking skills. In the words of Col Breckinridge, “We need officers (SNCOs and NCOs—authors emphasis) who are trained to reason briefly, clearly, decisively, and sanely. Above everything they must have complete faith in their own ability to master whatever they may be confronted with.”<sup>10</sup> Formal PME can go a long way towards fulfilling this requirement, but it is my assertion that it takes more than episodic periods of formal education over the course of a Marines 20–30-year career to form true professionals. In the voids between these opportunities for formal PME, Marines must take on the mantle and advance the culture of life-long learners. The *Read, Study, Write, and Model* is a recommended formula for building that habit of lifelong learning that is the hallmark of professionals.

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# Achieving Strategic Success through a Tactical Lens

How the USS *Kearsarge* ARG and 22nd MEU conquered strategic objectives through the instruments of national power

by LtCol Brandon P. Mokris

It has been more than twenty years since Sixth Fleet (C6F), which falls under European Command, has seen an Amphibious Readiness Group (ARG) with embarked MEU deploy and remain within their area of operations (AO) for the duration of their seven-month deployment. Traditionally, in the past twenty years, MEUs have deployed from the eastern United States and transited through C6F AO and into Fifth Fleet to support operations in the Middle East.

The USS *Kearsarge* (KSG) ARG consists of the flagship Wasp-class amphibious

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ious assault ship, USS *Kearsarge* (LHD 3); San Antonio-class amphibious transport dock ship, USS *Arlington* (LPD 24); and Whidbey Island-class dock landing ship, USS *Gunston Hall* (LSD 44). Embarked across all three ships are 2,400 Marines and sailors, making up four sub-elements of the 22nd MEU: CE, GCE, LCE, and ACE. They

bring with them an array of fixed-wing, rotary-wing, and tilt-rotor aircraft, as well as Light Armored Vehicles, Joint Light Tactical Vehicles, combat service support vehicles, and a mix of counter UAS and Low Altitude Air Defense systems.

ARG/MEUs provide military commanders with a wide range of flexible, adaptable capabilities including maritime security operations, expeditionary power projection, strike operations, forward naval presence, crisis response, sea control, deterrence, counterterrorism, information operations, security cooperation and counter-proliferation, and humanitarian assistance and disaster relief. MEUs are often referred to as America's 9-1-1 force or crisis response, able to respond to any crisis or contingency within 48 hours. Although still able to respond to a crisis as required, the KSG ARG/22nd MEU postured itself more as an integrated deterrence platform focused on the great-power competition by positioning itself in the Baltic Sea.

The KSG ARG and 22nd MEU deployed to the C6F AO in March 2022, less than a month after Russia invaded Ukraine. The original deployment schedule had the KSG/ARG conducting exercises in the Norwegian Sea, Baltic Sea, Mediterranean Sea, and Black Sea. In response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Turkey placed a ban on all warships attempting to sail into the Black Sea from the Mediterranean Sea. As a



Marines with Golf Company, BLT 2/6, 22nd MEU, participate in a live-fire range in Setermoen, Norway. (Photo by Cpl Yvonna Guyette.)

result, the KSG ARG and 22nd MEU conducted exercises in the Norwegian Sea (NORTHERN VIKING—Iceland, Norway bi-lateral exercise—Tromso, Norway), Mediterranean Sea (ALEXANDER THE GREAT—Greece, EFES—Turkey, AFRICAN LION—Tunisia), and the Baltic Sea (Exercise SIIL [HEDGEHOG 22]—Estonia, BALTOPs—Latvia/Poland/Sweden, Finland Bi-lateral Exercise, Sweden Bi-lateral exercise, SIMPLE STRIKE—Latvia).

In addition to the landing force exercises, the KSG ARG participated in multiple maritime exercises to include air-defense exercises, passage exercises, photo exercises, subject-matter-expert exchanges, and small-boat exchanges, and a Finnish fast-landing craft (U600/700) conducted well deck operations in the USS *Gunston Hall* (LSD 44), an operation that had never occurred before. Finally, the KSG ARG and 22nd MEU conducted more than 25 port visits (PVST) in 19 countries across the C6F AO. In the Baltic Sea and the Norwegian Sea, the KSG entered ports to include Tromso, Norway; Tallinn, Estonia; Helsinki, Finland; Stockholm, Sweden; Klaipeda, Lithuania; and Riga, Latvia—ports that had never seen a military warship of that size in their history.

During the PVSTs, multiple key leader engagements (KLEs), ship tours with static displays and receptions were held with over 150 high-level officials attending to include ambassadors, ministers of defense, chiefs of naval operations, and prime ministers of their respective countries. These were all engagements intended to reassure the United States' commitment to our NATO allies and partners.

The instruments of national power (diplomatic, informational, military, and economic) are meant to support national objectives identified in the U.S. National Security Strategy. The Department of State, military, and commerce all play an important role in applying the necessary resources and means to support the execution of the four instruments of national power. How then can an ARG/MEU on a seven-month deployment effectively plan for and implement the instruments

of national power into their overall voyage plan and ensure the impacts are in support of national strategic objectives?

### Diplomatic

The *Britannica Dictionary* defines diplomacy as “the established method of influencing the decisions and behavior of foreign governments and peoples through dialogue, negotiation, and other measures short of war or violence.” If there ever were a distinct and deliberate sign of diplomacy or a *method of influencing decisions*, it occurred dur-

showcasing the vast array of capabilities embarked on the ship.

In early August, KSG conducted a PVST in Helsinki just over 100 miles from the Russian border, followed by a two-week, bilateral exercise with the Finnish military forces. This was just under two months after Finland announced it was joining NATO. Additionally, KSG ARG sent the USS *Gunston Hall* into Helsinki just weeks after their announcement to show our commitment again to our allies and partners.

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## **Coming just two weeks after Sweden announced its decision to join NATO, USS Kearsarge pulled into the center of the downtown harbor in Stockholm.**

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ing the KSG's PVST in Stockholm. Coming just two weeks after Sweden announced its decision to join NATO, USS *Kearsarge* pulled into the center of the downtown harbor in Stockholm. Imagine, a seven-hour transit from the Baltic Sea to the center of the harbor in Stockholm, navigating through the hundreds of islands in and around Sweden, a feat never attempted by a military ship of this size: an American warship, 845 feet in length and 140 feet wide, the USS *Kearsarge*, the big mighty “3” shimmering off the sunlight as it makes its final approach into the harbor. Immediately, thousands upon thousands of Swedish residents and tourists alike swarmed the harbor walls to get a view and take pictures of the massive warship.

As if the ship in the middle of the harbor was not enough of a show of commitment and assurance to Sweden, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, GEN Mark Milley; the Supreme Commander of the Swedish Armed Forces; the U.S. Ambassador, Erik Ramanathan; and the Prime Minister of Sweden, Magdalena Andersson, held a press conference on the flight deck of USS *Kearsarge* alongside senior leaders of the KSG ARG and 22nd MEU with the backdrop of Marine Corps and Navy aircraft and vehicles displayed,

In late August, KSG conducted a PVST in Klaipeda, Lithuania, and here held a reception in the hangar bay of the ship, with more than 200 attendees, most notably U.S. Ambassador, Mr. Robert Gilchrist; Minister of Defense, Arvydas Ansauskas; Chief of Defense, BG Mindaugas Steponavicius; Commander of the Lithuanian Navy, CAPT Giedrius Premeneckas; and Mayor of Klaipeda, Vytautas Grubliauskas. Again, KSG set up ship tours and static displays to show the capabilities and combat power the ARG/MEU force can bring in response to any conflict or crisis. Additionally, during the PVST, KSG ARG/22nd MEU conducted a pier-side media event that brought in nineteen media outlets.

In Norway, USS *Kearsarge* and USS *Gunston Hall* participated in a bilateral exercise with the Norwegian military in the northernmost county, bordering Russia. During this time, the KSG conducted a PVST in Tromso, Norway—another port that had never seen a military warship of this size. During the media event held pier-side, three members of the mayor's office, two local newspapers, and one RV station were in attendance.

During the port visit in Tallinn, after completing a bi-lateral exercise with the Estonian Military, the KSG ARG/22nd

MEU held a press conference again on the flight deck of the USS *Kearsarge*, in which the Prime Minister of Estonia, Kaja Kallas, spoke to the media and then received a ship's tour and viewed the static displays.

In July, during the USS *Arlington*'s mid-deployment voyage repairs PVST in Rijeka, Croatia, they hosted distinguished visitors for a ship's tour and static display as well as provided statements to the media. During this visit, Marine Corps BGen Andrew Priddy, CG of Task Force 61/2; Croatian Navy ADM Robert Hranj; Chief of Defense for the Republic of Croatia, Mark Fleming; Charge d'Affairs of the Embassy of the United States in Croatia; and Marko Filipovic, Mayor of Rijeka, Croatia, were all in attendance for the ship tour and media event.

In Riga, one of the KSG's last port visits, they hosted a key leader engagement, which included static displays, ship tours, and lunch for a host of ambassadors and high-ranking dignitaries. Those in attendance included ambassadors and their spouses from the Slovak Republic, Hungary, Kingdom of Spain, Greece, Czech Republic, Georgia, Slovenia, Republic of Korea, Estonia, Netherlands, France, and Ukraine; Defense Attachés from the U.S. Embassy in Riga, Canada, Kingdom of Netherlands, Republic of Poland, Sweden, Germany, Hungary, and the Czech Republic; Army Attaché and Deputy Chief of Mission for U.S. Embassy in Riga; Charge d'Affaires for Embassy of the Republic of Italy and the United Kingdom; Head of Chief of Defense Bureau, Chief of Defense, Chief of Staff, Commander of Logistics Command, Commander of Staff Battalion, Commander of National Guard, and Chief of Staff of the Naval Forces for Latvian National Armed Forces. After the visit, U.S. ambassador to the Republic of Latvia, John Carwile stated, "The USA is a long-term strategic partner and ally of Latvia, playing an important role in strengthening the security and stability of Latvia and the Baltic region."

Port visits are not just about key leader engagements and media events though. During their Riga port visits, both the USS *Kearsarge* and USS *Ar-*

*lington* hosted Ukrainian refugee children and their mothers and provided them ship tours, static displays, and the opportunity to interact and ask questions to the Marines and sailors on board. A small event that will have everlasting impacts on the children, their mothers, and the Marines and sailors who supported it. Additionally in Poland, KSG ARG participated in five community-relations events including painting of schools and orphanages, a basketball tournament, and reading to the children.

From the diplomatic perspective, the KSG ARG and 22nd MEU were successful in reassuring the commitment and dedication of the United States to our allies and partners. In total, the KSG ARG and 22nd MEU conducted over 25 PVSTs and 20 operations, activities, and investments (OAI) across the European Theater—thus maintaining the theme of assurance and commitment to our allies and partners.

### Informational

*Joint Doctrine 1-18* states that communication synchronization entails focused efforts to understand and engage key audiences to create, strengthen, or preserve conditions favorable for the advancement of national interests, policies, and objectives. It actively engages key audiences with coordinated programs, plans, themes, messages, and products synchronized with the actions of all instruments of national power.

Every time KSG ARG and the 22nd MEU conducted planning in support of an exercise or PVST, communicating the message and capturing the themes which resonated in the bilateral training was always at the top of the priority list. Many times, throughout the planning process, it was emphasized, "if you don't get the picture or you don't articulate the messaging and themes between the two nations," then it is as if it never happened.

The strategic communication/public affairs team across the KSG ARG and 22nd MEU was pivotal in the communication synchronization across the force to ensure the right message, the right photo opportunities, and the right media engagements/KLEs were

understood by all and capitalized upon throughout the deployment. From the tactical lens of the overall sight picture, the ARG/MEU force was extremely successful in actively engaging key audiences to advance the interests and objectives of their higher headquarters focusing on themes of reassurance and commitment to our NATO allies and partners. As seen in this article, every exercise and OAI had a communication and messaging theme that supported the synchronization of all instruments of national power to meet key strategic objectives.

### Military

The military instrument of national power plays a critical role in providing a forward-deployed force capable of integrating the other instruments of national power into a cohesive, coordinated plan that supports higher headquarters' strategic objectives. Security cooperation is a key characteristic of the military instrument of national power. *Joint Doctrine 1-18* defines Security Cooperation as:

sets conditions that prevent conflict, shape the security environment, compete for influence below the threshold of armed conflict, and prepare US forces to respond to contingencies. Security cooperation includes military engagements with foreign defense and security establishments, DOD-administered security assistance programs, combined exercises, international armaments cooperation, and information sharing and collaboration.

The KSG ARG and 22d MEU are specifically designed to provide security cooperation through OAI's, key leader engagements, and PVSTs.

In early April, KSG ARG and 22nd MEU participated in a bi-lateral exercise with Norway to reassure our NATO allies through military-to-military exchanges and spent over 30 days above the Arctic Circle, exhibiting the wide range of capabilities of the KSG ARG/22nd MEU force while operating in an unforgiving environment. Additionally, the Marines and sailors conducted ship-to-shore operations at a beach landing site in the vicinity of the port in preparation for the follow-on

exercise. This was the first time in history that Landing Craft, Air Cushions had ever landed in Troms and Finnmark County, the northernmost county in Norway.

In May, the KSG ARG/22nd MEU participated in HEDGEHOG 22, followed by a port visit in Tallinn, Estonia. During the exercise, the 22nd MEU conducted an amphibious assault of over 500 Marines and sailors and over 50 vehicles on Saaremaa Island followed by a movement to contact to seize a coastal defense cruise missile (CDCM) site. The island was defended by the Estonian military during the exercise which was described as one of the largest exercises ever conducted in Estonian history. KSG ARG and 22nd MEU conducted a media event ashore during the amphibious assault to showcase the quick and efficient manner in which a MEU can phase combat power ashore.

In August, the KSG ARG/22nd MEU participated in a Finland OAI alongside the Finnish Navy and Naval Infantry. The exercise consisted of U.S./FIN combined amphibious raids using Finnish U700 fast landing craft, U.S./FIN air defense/maritime and aviation interoperability, U.S./FIN reconnaissance exchanges, explosive ordnance disposal, and medical interoperability as well as U.S./FIN military-to-military exchanges, resulting in one of the largest exercises

conducted in Finnish territory in many years. During this, Marines were able to hone their expeditionary advance base operations skills by learning from the Finnish Navy and naval infantry as they conducted missions across the islands of the archipelago.

*Practice makes perfect* or *training creates muscle memory* are common phrases we hear in the military on how to sharpen our skills. The same applies when working with our allies and partners. CAPT Tom Foster, CO of USS *Kearsarge* stated,

Deterrence requires that forces doing the deterring are able to operate together quickly and flawlessly in a contingency. These operations with our Baltic Allies are strengthening those skillsets. Planning, communicating and executing together in peacetime ensure that, if we are called to respond, we are ready.

For countries like Finland and Sweden who are joining NATO, it is imperative that forces such as the United States work side by side during peacetime to create that muscle memory for when it matters and when called upon to respond. That is exactly what the KSG ARG and 22nd MEU have aimed to achieve this entire deployment.

In addition to Norway's bi-lateral exercise, Hedgehog 22, and the Finnish bi-lateral exercise, the KSG ARG/22nd MEU participated in more than seven other large-scale exercises and more

than ten smaller-scale OAIs throughout the duration of the seven-month deployment. They included exercises/OAIs in Iceland, Poland, Sweden, Lithuania, Latvia, Denmark, France, Tunisia, Greece, Turkey, Croatia, and Spain—just to name a few.

In terms of the military instrument of national power, the KSG ARG/22nd MEU has been successful in establishing, building, and maintaining relationships across the C6F AO, participating in more than twenty exercises/OAIs in nineteen countries, six of which border Russia or Russian territory. Through security cooperation, the KSG ARG/22nd MEU continues to reassure the U.S. commitment to our allies and partners in the AO.

### Economic

Economic impacts are not always immediately recognized but can have lasting positive impressions on nations on the receiving end. The KSG ARG and 22nd MEU contributed to the economic stability of every nation they visited through exercise support, contracts to sustain the ships while in port, and by encouraging the Marines and sailors to go out into the local community and spend money. In Alexandroupoli, Greece, a city of just over 58,000, USS *Arlington* conducted a port visit where they consumed all the eggs in the city. In Riga, both USS *Arlington* and USS *Gunston Hall* conducted simultaneous port visits to the city of just over 630,000. USS *Kearsarge*, a ship with over 2,400 Marines and sailors conducted two back-to-back port visits to Tromso, a city of just over 71,000. There are roughly 5,000 Marines and sailors that make up the KSG ARG/22nd MEU across the three amphibious ships. These ships require large amounts of replenishment to include fuel, food, and cargo—which is purchased within the region they are operating. The feeding of thousands of Marines and sailors while embarked on the ships helps support the allies and partners in the region. In total, KSG ARG and 22nd MEU conducted over 25 PVSTs in 19 countries throughout the C6F AO.



**Marines with the 22nd MEU work with Norwegian troops to meet tactical objectives during a combined-level brigade attack in Setermoen, Norway. (Photo by Cpl Yvonna Guyette.)**



**USS Arlington (LPD 24) arrives in Rijeka, Croatia. (Photo by PO1 John Bellino.)**

### Summary

Instruments of national power are meant to work in synchronization with each other to meet national objectives. However, if one instrument fails to meet its objectives, it becomes increasingly more difficult to reach strategic success. For the KSG ARG/22nd MEU, the

KSG ARG and 22nd MEU were mentioned over 2,500 times across multiple information platforms.

Information drives decisions and therefore must be deliberately planned and executed in each mission and objective of the ARG/MEU. Guidance and direction must be provided by higher

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## ***... knowing how information is produced and what impacts it can have on a community arms Marines and sailors with the right set of tools ...***

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information instrument was the most crucial to the success of their mission. At the tactical level, information operations with regard to messaging, KLEs, and media engagements were extremely successful. KSG ARG and the 22nd MEU conducted 28 media events, 37 key leader engagements, 65 press releases, and over 25 articles written by the strategic communications/public affairs team over the seven-month deployment throughout the C6F AO. In BALTOPs alone, there were over 4,000 articles written mentioning BALTOPs, with just under 1,000 referencing the KSG ARG or 22nd MEU. Additionally, in the two weeks covering BALTOPs,

headquarters while providing direct support to broadcast the successes and accomplishments of the ARG/MEU force. Training must occur so that, as Marines and sailors are interacting with allies and partners, they understand the impacts their actions have on the overall environment. Information coordinators are trained to teach information literacy. The Association of College and Research Libraries defines *information literacy* as a “set of integrated abilities encompassing the reflective discovery of information, the understanding of how information is produced and valued and the use of information in creating new knowledge and participating

ethically in communities of learning.” Ultimately, knowing how information is produced and what impacts it can have on a community arms Marines and sailors with the right set of tools to execute the initiatives driven by the instruments of national power.

Information coordinators have the skillset and ability to conduct actual assessments before, during, and after events supported by the KSG ARG or 22nd MEU. Assessments such as economic impact studies on ports and cities in which the ships visit. The general concept is this would show/advertise the ARG/MEU impact in ports—trying to showcase a correlation between their presence and an increase in the local economy. In addition to KLEs and media events, information coordinators can send out text messages with directed questions such as, “do you like that Americans are here?” This helps provide realtime statistics on the impacts an exercise, OAI, or port visit can have in one city or country.

By doing this, you not only continue to reassure allies and partners of the commitment of the United States but also provide physical proof to the United States of the impact and influence one force can have across a theater. It must be written into higher headquarters objectives to make information operations, specifically showing the strategic impacts of the ARG/MEU force, an integrated deterrence platform, a priority or else you risk missing a great opportunity to advertise the remarkable and deliberate impacts felt across the C6F AO.

*> Author's Note: Special thanks to 22nd MEU COMMSTRAT.*



# MALTESE DRAGON

Experimentation in Pacific sustainment

by Col Chris M. Haar & Maj Greg Macias

## Twentynine Palms, CA

From 15 to 26 August 2022, the Marines and sailors of Combat Logistics Regiment 3 (CLR-3), WORKHORSE, assumed a new set of roles and responsibilities as they fought their way through MALTESE DRAGON: a Service-level wargame sponsored by the Marine Corps Warfighting Laboratory and hosted by Marine Corps Logistics Operations Group. Together with the staff of Marine Corps Installations Pacific and personnel from the 3d Landing Support Battalion, 3d Transportation Battalion, 3d Medical Battalion, and 1st Supply Battalion, the team aggregated for a singular purpose; to stress test the future operating concept of the Marine Logistics Support Group–Okinawa (MLSG-O) as the logistics entity responsible for both the six functions of tactical logistics and the seven portfolios of installation management. As part of the Marine Corps’ campaign of learning, a diverse team of professional logisticians set their minds ahead in time to 2030 as they readied themselves to transition from compe-

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**>Maj Macias is an 0402 Logistics Officer and is currently serving as the Operations Officer for Combat Logistics Regiment 3.**

tion, through crisis, and ultimately to conflict. This article describes what they learned, the challenges faced, and their recommended areas for continued refinement.

### The Wargame

The WORKHORSE assumed the role of MLSG-O, an O-6 level command responsible for the command and control of three battalions collectively exceeding 6,500 Marines, sailors, and civilians. The battalions, headquarters battalion, regional support battalion, and installation support battalion, were staffed as response cells by Marines from Marine Corps Logistics Operations Group, 1st Supply Battalion, and several individual augments with niche expertise. 3d Landing Support

Battalion served the role of the future CLR-3, an O-6 level Headquarters that is adjacent to MLSG-O and does not have any identified down-trace units. The landing support battalion’s purpose was to serve as a tactical logistics demand in the first island chain as the WORKHORSE team sought to understand the implications of being responsible for both the installation and tactical sustainment. The installation experts at Marine Corps Installations-Pacific (MCIPAC) coalesced as the Marine Logistics Support Command–Far East (MLSC-FE), the general officer command that is intended to serve as a higher headquarters to the MLSG-O, MLSG-Mujuk, MLSG-Fuji, and CLR-3.

MALTESE DRAGON was layered over a logistics staff training exercise and followed a similar model to others administered by the Marine Corps Logistics Operations Group staff. The first week served as a planning exercise, during which the WORKHORSE staff was provided a base operations order, an equipment density list, and a list of personnel line numbers by grade and mission occupational specialty. The staff set to work, following a deliberate Marine Corps Planning Process cycle that culminated with the staff drafting an operations order and conducting a transition brief. The second week included four days of gameplay with each day representing a specific point in time separated by days or weeks from



**Combat Logistics Regiment 3 and 3d Transportation Battalion staff conduct problem framing during MALTESE DRAGON. (Figure provided by Cpl Alpha Hernandez.)**



**While filling his role as the CO, Marine Logistics Support Group-Okinawa, Col Haar receives a transition brief as phases of the wargame shift.** (Photo by Cpl Alpha Hernandez.)

each other. The goal was to apply the MLSG-O to the different set of stressors associated with different points on the continuum of conflict

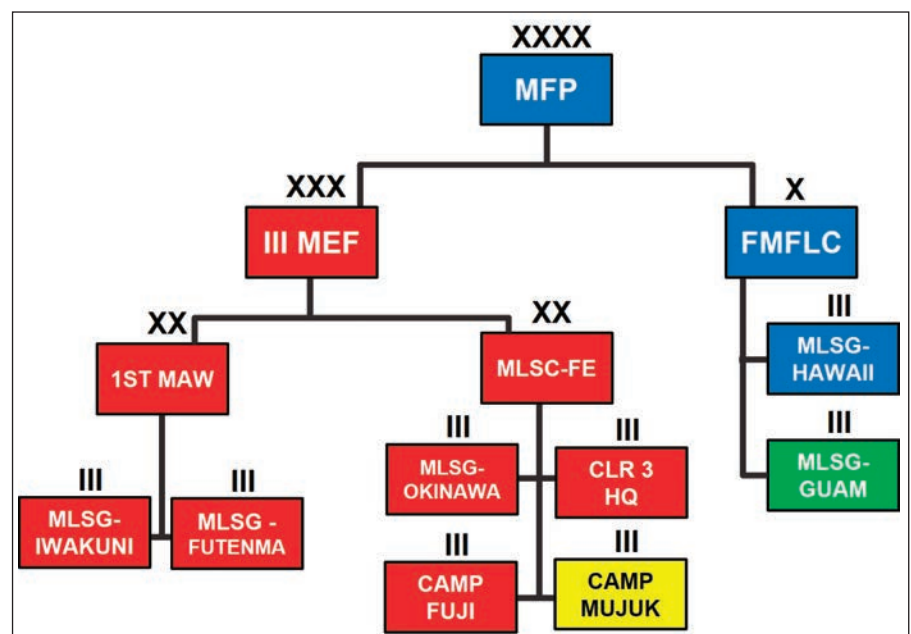
The commander's guidance to the WORKHORSE was clear, go all-in as the MLSG-O staff while building an understanding of the capabilities and resources available. Recognizing its bias as a tactical logistics provider, the team leveraged the expertise of the MLSC-FE as they built a common understanding. Within the bounds of what was achievable in two weeks, the CLR-3 staff set out to inform and refine concepts while training and increasing proficiency as a staff conducting a logistics staff training exercise.

### The Challenges

With over-the-shoulder guidance from Marine Corps Warfighting Laboratory and Capabilities Development Directorate, the team set out to identify a series of learning demands. Tantamount to after-actions, a learning demand captures an unresolved concern requiring further analysis. Throughout the course of the wargame, WORKHORSE staff identified approximately 40 learning demands. Though not all-inclusive, the preponderance of them fell into one of three categories: command relationships/authorities, capability/capacity shortfalls, and span of control.

Any staffer that has participated in an operational planning team or theater security cooperation exercise is likely to agree that a tedious amount of time is spent talking command relationships, and there is a reason for that. At the time of MALTESE DRAGON, a mission essential task list did not exist for MLSG-O. There are also no mission statements for MLSG-O, MLSC-FE, or the future CLR-3. Plainly put, it is difficult to assess your ability to do

a task you have not been tasked to do. Even more fundamental than the task list is an understanding of the concept of employment of a hybrid Marine Logistics Group and Installations Command. INDO PACOM has a complex Joint Enterprise Logistics Network that involves reliance on host-nation support, Defense Logistics Agency, joint assets, and numerous other entities. Staff bandwidth aside, understanding who is talking to whom gets complicated quickly. The staff made a series of assumptions about the task and purpose of the future formations; however, these must be validated as the Service takes a full 30-inch step forward. Tactical logistics aside, the Defense Planning Review Initiative and *Force Design 2030* converge as well as which units assume camp commander responsibilities and the relationship of those commanders to the MLSG-O CO is a serious consideration. Certainly not least is the line and block chart itself. MLSGs Okinawa, Fuji, and Mujuk are currently planned to be adjacent units. MLSG Futenma and Iwakuni are set to fall under the 1st MAW. MLSG Guam and Hawaii fall outside III MEF entirely, under the FMF Logistics Command, the future of 3d MLG structure. The lowest com-



**Logistics and installation support command structure for Marine Forces-Pacific.** (Figure provided by author.)

mon echelon of command is Marine Forces Pacific.

The second recurring theme discussed throughout MALTESE DRAGON was the capability and capacity requirements; capability refers to what MLSG-O can do and capacity as how much of that it can do. The gradual transition from the current MLG/MCIPAC model to the MLSC-FE includes a net reduction of 700 billet identification codes: people. While *more with less* is a common Service axiom, we mean being judicious with our resources; we cannot in fact do more or even the same. What can be done is to focus on specific mission-essential tasks while divesting other functions. Practically, what the WORKHORSE staff found was a heavy reduction in active-duty enablers; tactical lift, medical capabilities, and explosive ordnance disposal are examples of drastic capacity limitations. The missing ingredients to do a true assessment were the mission essential tasks list and an understanding of the intended concept of employment to sustain the advanced naval base. Intuitively, we know we are talking about a joint fight and that there will be a larger operational logistics network to tie into with mutually supporting units. What was not clear was how the MLSG-O and by extension the other MLSGs tie into that network.

While our civilian workforce is a huge asset, we cannot make the assumption those people will be willing or able to perform their roles under crisis conditions. Master Labor Contractors are the host-nation employees that provide security at the Marine Corps Base Butler gates; they work in the mess halls and fill seats at the Installation Personnel Administration Centers. They are dedicated professionals who are an integral part of III MEF. What happens when through sabotage, fires, or information operations they are not able to come to work? As the WORKHORSE staff fought through this problem, the only viable answer considering the force reductions was to rely on transient units conducting their own reception, staging, and onward integration. Are units with distinct operational missions prepared to lose hundreds of Marines

and sailors to base defense and provide mission-essential services? The question is rhetorical at this point, but it does need to be answered, as does whether a battalion-level staff is equipped to manage those manpower challenges.

Finally, the sheer breadth of the responsibility that MLSG-O will be responsible for is cause for concern. Presently, there are six O-6 commanders that collectively comprise the same functions of MLSG-O: 3d Supply Battalion, Combat Logistics Regiment 3, Combat Logistics Regiment 37, 3d Medical Battalion, 3d Dental Battalion (3d MLG), and Headquarters and Services Battalion (MCIPAC). Installations Support Battalion alone is planned to assimilate 3,000 personnel, 70 percent of which is a civilian workforce. Below the commander level, the leader-to-led ratio similarly warrants a second look. As stated, the WORKHORSE staff were provided ranks and MOS; to the extent possible, they built battalions with task-organized companies and platoons but found MLSG-O fell drastically short of the company grade and staff noncommissioned officer leadership assigned to present-day formations. The mission set is also far broader for each respective staff than in a bifurcated installation and tactical logistics model. During a crisis event, the same staff may find itself trying to repair a runway, deploy tactical vehicles and utilities support, and try to manage commissary distribution—all with fewer resources.

### Start with the Requirements

Rather than starting with a list of people and things, refinement of the model should start with the things the MLSGs and MLSC-FE must do. If there is an installation support requirement, how many families and dependents are supported? What air/surface points of embarkation/debarkation is the MLSG responsible for? What can be covered by the Army or the Air Force? If we take a hard look at what functions can be divested, we can make informed risk decisions. We have a Joint Force and allies that can mutually support with some level of risk associated. What we cannot compromise is the resiliency of

the methods we use to aggregate and deploy a force. Heavy dependency on civilian employees or partner nations that may be legally unable to commit forces provides neither deterrence nor the ability to respond. What we cannot do is divest/reallocate combat service support and expect III MEF to be able to meet similar capacity requirements across all functions.

### Don't Solve a Complex Problem in Isolation

The execution of MALTESE DRAGON did what it set out to do, create an environment of learning that provided feedback to Headquarters Marine Corps with input from the fleet and installations. However, it ultimately tested one part of a course of action. Where continued work needs to be done is to understand how future formations interact and mutually support. For example, the concept has I MAW responsible for two MLSGs. If the problem is taken more broadly and if you put the MLSGs under a single staff and take the MAW out of the installation management business, you gain efficiency in major subordinate command-level staffs. The current and planned changes to the GCE in standing up Marine Littoral Regiments and the reduction in organic capabilities of the Marine Wing Support Squadrons equate to simultaneous capacity reductions across the MAGTF. A legitimate question we must ask ourselves as the Service makes cuts is who is picking up the slack? Putting one enabler under a microscope has value, but it is also only one part of a complex system.

### Bottom Line

MALTESE DRAGON did not disprove the MLSC-FE concept, but it also did not validate it. What it exposed is a series of concerns that require further analysis. If the Service makes a series of decisions that significantly changes how we man, train, and equip the stand-in-forces without holistically understanding the problem, we create significant risk. The multiple geographically separated camps on Okinawa create a series of complex issues. The future of Marine Corps logistics in the first island chain





Marines and sailors of the CLR-3 staff formed the base of the battlestaff through the wargame. (Photo provided by author.)

does not necessarily need to be able to do everything it does today, but it has to be able to do some specific critical capabilities. As we continue forward on the campaign of learning and force modernization, a series of wargames should focus both at the granular level—down to the twenty-foot equivalent units, repair parts, and similar aspects—but also look more broadly at the problem executing a rehearsal of concept. As LtCol Hooker, the Landing Support Battalion commanding officer put it, “how does a 5.56 round get from the ammunition supply point to the magazine of a Marine [in the first island chain]?” It is a question the Service must answer, even if it is not exclusively a Service solution.



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# Achieving Operational Depth through Specialization

Leveraging the reserve component

by Maj Mark Capansky

In January 2020, 1/25 Mar participated in Exercise NORTHERN VIPER alongside more than two thousand Marines and sailors from across 3d MarDiv and hundreds of Japanese Self Defense Force personnel. NORTHERN VIPER contained live-fire events and a significant force-on-force exercise, but its defining feature was the environment—participants navigated the mountainous, wintry terrain by snowshoes and cross-country skis and endured the winter weather of Hokkaido, Japan’s northernmost island, in squad tents pulled on sleds. Before the exercise, 1/25 Mar was tasked with providing a platoon-sized element to act as a winter-weather training cadre for their adjacent units. This tasking was not based on the battalion having an unusual number of graduates of Bridgeport’s Mountain Warfare courses or any other formal training but rather a reflection of the battalion’s New England origins. Since almost all members of the battalion were from the Northeast, the simple fact was that a higher percentage was accustomed to the environment than the rest of the nationally sourced 3d Mar. The reservist Marines were more likely to have experience with winter sports in their civilian lives and were accustomed to dealing with snow and the associated equipment on their regular drill weekends. The unit’s regional character made it uniquely prepared for the task.

The *Marine Forces Reserve Campaign Plan 2030* identifies three core prin-

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ciples to guide the focus of the reserve component: ready, responsive, and relevant. Reserve leaders must prioritize being prepared to mobilize in order to achieve these first two principles and provide the active component with augmentees and the capacity to surge forces and establish strategic depth. But

the reserves are also tasked with being relevant to the operation of the Marine Corps total force. As the Marine Corps undergoes sweeping changes laid out in *Force Design 2030*, the reserve component can ensure its relevance by embracing specialization and leaning into the attributes that make it unique.



***Drawing on the hometown experience from New England, 1/25 Mar has developed specialized skills in cold weather environments such as the Army Mountain Warfare Center in Ethan Allen, VT. (Photo by LCpl Kimberly Aguirre.)***

The reserve component should focus on three lines of effort: to position itself as a repository for specialized skills, a source of innovative and distributable support for the active component, and a test bed for smaller-scale, enduring experimentation. Doing so will help the Marine Corps' total force retain and further develop its operational depth—the ability to respond to a wide range of challenges with the versatility expected of the Marine Corps, even as it continues its transformative modernization process.

Emphasizing specialization within the Marine Corps Reserves is a low-cost, high-payoff proposition. The *Marine Forces Reserve Campaign Plan 2030* states that the reserve component must consider maintaining readiness for mobilization as its top training priority—once mobilized, units can receive intermediate-level training to prepare for their assigned mission.<sup>1</sup> The existence of this planned intermediate training should alleviate any serious concern about specialization rendering reserve units ill-prepared for operation when mobilized. The benefits in contrast cannot be overstated. The Marine Corps Reserve has many unique qualities the total force should embrace to maximize the component's relevance and ensure the Marine Corps retains those unique skills that can prove so vital in the right situation. The *Marine Forces Reserve Campaign Plan 2030* acknowledges this potential and specifies the development and sustainment of specialized skills as an enduring tenet of the reserve force. It gives several traditionally reserve-centric organizations as examples: Civil Affairs, Personnel Retrieval and Processing, Foreign Security Force advising, and others.<sup>2</sup> While this is an excellent start, the concept must be taken further and specialization should be encouraged and codified within the Reserves.

The earlier example of 1/25 Mar is illustrative and has historical precedent. The Army's Tenth Mountain Division can trace its origins to forward-thinking service members and patriotic civilians who saw the potential for mountain and winter combat in the Service's future, and so decided to introduce and

professionalize the skills found among winter-sport athletes for a military audience.<sup>3</sup> In its training and operation, the Marine Corps has consistently demonstrated a need for the unique skills associated with mountain warfare and winter-weather operation. 1/25 Mar makes use of many of these skills on a regular basis. There is a great deal of advantages and few negatives found in directing units that are naturally aligned with certain types of operations to codify

find itself participating in these other kinds of fights again. This is particularly true of the Marine Corps, which retains its focus on “global crisis response operations” in an era when hybrid conflicts may very well contain aspects reminiscent of older counter-insurgencies.<sup>4</sup> Historians and military professionals alike bemoaned the military's inability to retain the lessons learned during Vietnam and apply them to Iraq, Afghanistan, and other conflicts. Aligning

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***Aligning a reserve unit with counter-insurgency operations will ensure that these skills are retained at a tactical level and that someone is thinking about how to apply them ...***

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this relationship and lean into becoming masters of these skills. Reserve units are inherently regionally aligned in environments frequently quite different from those found around major Marine Corps installations, with access to unique training environments and regionally-aligned skill sets. The Marine Corps can choose to interpret this reality as a resource to be exploited rather than a limiting factor to be mitigated and in doing so open itself to a wide range of new skills and expertise.

The Marine Corps Reserve should encourage specialization in units that do not have clearly aligned regional specialties as a means of preserving and cultivating skill sets that may not be immediately applicable but have real potential for resurgence in a future fight. The Marine Corps has over twenty years of hard-earned experience fighting counter-insurgency campaigns and other forms of lower-intensity combat. This experience has limited overlap with more modern conflicts like Russia's war on Ukraine and the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh War, and the U.S. military is rightfully focused on preparing for the potential of this high-intensity, multi-domain combat that is a world apart from the experience of the past two decades. But few strategists would say the United States will never

a reserve unit with counter-insurgency operations will ensure that these skills are retained at a tactical level and that someone is thinking about how to apply them to the modern world when national policy requires an unexpected shift.

Some of these skills may not have a place in the types of operations reserve units are mobilized to execute in which case intermediate-level training will ensure reservists are trained to the appropriate standard. But others will undoubtedly prove vital to the Marine Corps' future fight, and the Service will benefit from the skills cultivated by the reserve component. By emphasizing its unique alignments and skills the reserves can not only serve as an institutional memory bank but also provide the active force with innovative support during training and operation. The reserve component should stand ready to operate in small detachments tailored to provide a larger active formation with its unique skill sets, either as trainers, enablers, or as the nucleus of a dedicated team. In this way, the reserves can ensure that it provides the active component with a relevant source of support even in times when whole unit activations are not necessary.

The reserve component should also specialize to provide the active compo-

ment with unique, innovative training support. The Army makes use of several designated opposition force units, including 1/4 Infantry Regiment at the Joint Multinational Readiness Center in Germany or the Eleventh Armored Cavalry Regiment at Fort Irwin, CA. These units are fully deployable combat units that specialize in providing rotational forces with realistic, challenging training oriented on a thinking enemy. The reserve component should emulate this example and assign units specific

Experimentation is central to the methodology behind *Force Design 2030*. The capital investment made in developing the Wargaming and Analysis Center confirms this sentiment, as does the employment of major exercises like the MAGTF Warfighting Exercise and Infantry Battalion Experimentation to test, validate, and reconfigure operational concepts.<sup>7</sup> The Marine Innovation Unit is one way in which the Marine Corps Reserve is uniquely qualified to assist with experimenta-

The Marine Corps Reserve can best serve the total force by embracing specialization and dedicating itself to assisting the Marine Corps achieve operational depth. This should be broadly aligned with the three lines of effort discussed here. The reserve component should act as a repository for unique skills, many of which will naturally align with reserve units. These unique skills should be employed to the benefit of the total force, and reservists should be task-organized to provide innovative support for their active-duty counterparts. Finally, reserve units should be employed to conduct sustained experimentation. The Marine Corps Reserve should play a vital role in sustaining the Corps' signature versatility.

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***The Marine Corps Reserve can best serve the total force by embracing specialization and dedicating itself to assisting the Marine Corps achieve operational depth.***

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threats to research and emulate in an enduring manner. These units could practice the tactics of their assigned threat force during the course of their typical training calendar and be employed during their annual training as dedicated, sophisticated oppositional forces intent on giving the training audience the best possible opportunity to learn and adapt. Much of the intellectual work done by Marine Corps leaders in the wake of the *38th Commandant's Planning Guidance* emphasized the centrality of a culture of continuous learning to battlefield success. *MCDP 7, Learning*, makes the value of organizations like the Army's opposition forces clear, "There is no substitute for fighting against a competent, realistic, thinking, adaptive enemy—even if that enemy is simulated by other Marines."<sup>5</sup> Reserve units assigned to specialize in providing these competent, adaptive threats would give the Marine Corps a chance to test new concepts against a perceived threat, receive feedback, and make adjustments as necessary, while also furthering a culture of continuous learning.<sup>6</sup>

The Marine Corps Reserve is uniquely situated to serve as a venue for prolonged, targeted experimentation in tactics and other concepts.

tion, but its emphasis on reserve-component Marines involved in advanced technology industries or academia misses other opportunities for innovation. The reserve component is not a good match for large-scale, fully funded experiments like the ongoing Infantry Battalion Experimentation or the older SEA DRAGON 2025. It is, however, a great place to test out smaller-scale ideas over prolonged periods. Reserve Marines tend to stay in the same unit for longer durations than their active counterparts. If the Marine Corps has tactical or operational ideas it would like to test over a period of several years, it will find that the reserves are uniquely well suited for the task. The options are nearly limitless. The geographically disparate nature of the reserves makes it an ideal candidate for experimentation in distributed logistics, and the tendency of reserve units to use Army or National Guard training facilities lends the Marine Corps Reserve to experimentation into inter-service operability. In these ways and many others, the Marine Corps can greatly expand its experimental sample size by viewing the reserves as an operationally relevant component of the total force and partner in the experimentation process.

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**Notes**

1. David G. Bellon, *Marine Forces Reserve Campaign Plan 2030* (Washington, DC: October 2021).
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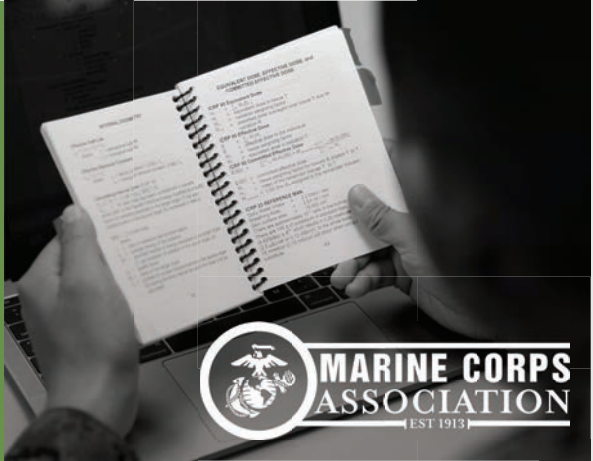
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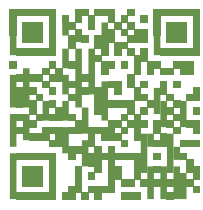
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# It's Time to Reevaluate Marine Aviation Maintenance

Every five years, in Marine Aviation, we lose two billion dollars, a squadron's worth of aircraft, and a platoon's worth of Marines due to mishaps. Where do we even start to reduce these losses?

by LtCol Glen J. Reukema

How the Marine Corps trains for and executes aviation maintenance is conducive to errors and mishaps. In the past two decades, the environment that aviation maintenance Marines work in has become vastly more complex. Modern aircraft are exponentially more technologically and structurally advanced, composed of high-technology composite materials, and run by intelligent computer systems interconnected to hundreds of diagnostic and tactical sensors. Modern aircraft are wildly more expensive; for instance, the F-35B is roughly twice as expensive as an F-18A. While maintainers are asked to maintain aircraft in a much more complex environment, the composition of their training and professional development has remained largely unchanged over the past twenty years. As a result, we have not laid the foundation for future success.

Aircraft maintainers are a squadron commander's most valuable tool to generate sorties. Commanders do not "own" aircraft, the supply of spare parts, or ground support equipment, but they do "own" their maintainers. Pilots execute flight hours and turn red blocks to green blocks on training charts, per *NAVMC 3500.14E*, under the watchful eye of the commanding officer, executive officer, operations officers, weapons and tactics instruc-

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**Commanders do not "own" aircraft, the supply of spare parts, or ground support equipment, but they do "own" their maintainers.**

tors, pilot training officers, and various instructor pilots, but they cannot fix an aircraft and keep it flying. Why do aircraft maintainers not have the same highly developed, tracked, and supervised training systems as pilots and aircrew? Aviation Safety Manage-

ment provides a pathway of training for young maintainers to develop their skills. However, teaching these advanced professional maintenance skills is left up to the individual units. This approach leads to an unacceptable lack of standardization, an ad hoc method

Mishap Class	Total Property Damage	Fatality/Injury
A	\$2,500,000 or more and/or aircraft destroyed	Fatality or permanent total disability
B	\$600,000 or more but less than \$2,500,000	Permanent partial disability or three or more persons hospitalized as inpatients
C	\$60,000 or more but less than \$600,000	Nonfatal injury resulting in loss of time from work beyond day/shift when injury occurred

**Current Navy/Marine Corps mishap definitions and reporting criteria.**

of training, and an unsustainable level of mishaps due to maintenance errors.

Table 1 below contains the ten-year average mishap rates across Marine aviation.

aviation mishaps into root causal factors: errors due to the maintenance of manned aircraft are the greatest number of mishaps within the Marine Corps.

Industrial Safety researchers like

and by following established policies and published procedures. The expectation is that maintainers will utilize these learned skills and procedures to carry out their daily tasks to provide

	FY-13	FY-14	FY-15	FY-16	FY-17	FY-18	FY-19	FY-20	FY-21	FY-22	10 Yr Avg
10 Yr Mishap Avg (A-D)	55.4	57.0	59.5	63.4	69.4	77.3	85.5	94.3	99.5	112.3	77.36
Deaths	0	1	19	14	20	5	8	0	0	9	7.5
Class A	9	6	8	9	12	6	8	3	1	8	7.0
Class B	7	10	10	8	19	10	24	17	12	9	12.9
Class C	40	46	48	59	66	67	62	55	71	77	57.5
Class D	17	14	34	37	37	37	44	40	59	52	34.8
Lost Days	963	258	379	94	599	516	58	213	305	222	360
Cost (Millions)	\$278.7	\$310.7	\$299.7	\$565.7	\$949.3	\$330	\$612.1	\$326.6	\$27.4	\$437.2	\$395.9

Table 1. Ten-year average mishap rates across Marine aviation.

### Understanding the Nature of the Errors is the First Step to Their Reduction

Errors or mistakes made during the execution of aviation maintenance are the greatest drivers of mishaps. (See Figure 1.) Errors are a normal consequence of the execution of labor. We rely on training, experience, and supervision to identify and fix mistakes usually seamlessly, but some errors will lead to mishaps. The greater the number of errors made the greater the opportunity for mishap. As systems and environments become more complex, the opportunity for people to make errors increases. Our maintainers must make hundreds of big and small decisions every day to complete maintenance actions and ensure aircraft are ready to fight. Marines are incredible problem solvers with the ability to execute in dynamic and austere environments. Marines are also people—so they make mistakes and they make more mistakes or errors when they are stressed, sleep deprived, under-trained, given conflicting priorities, and working in poor conditions. Figure 1 breaks down all Marine Corps

Todd Conklin have found there is often a divide between the perception of management and leadership on how work will be done and how “workers” do the job. Headquarters Marine Corps expects aviation maintainers to be trained to a basic standard when they leave “A” school. The maintainers then are expected to develop their capabilities through on-the-job training

flight-ready or “up” aircraft. However, in reality, they do their work very differently. We know that because they have told us so in detail.

The National Commission on Military Aviation Safety (2020) and the individual survey responses from the 2022 Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps-directed safety stand down, together with Risk Management Informa-

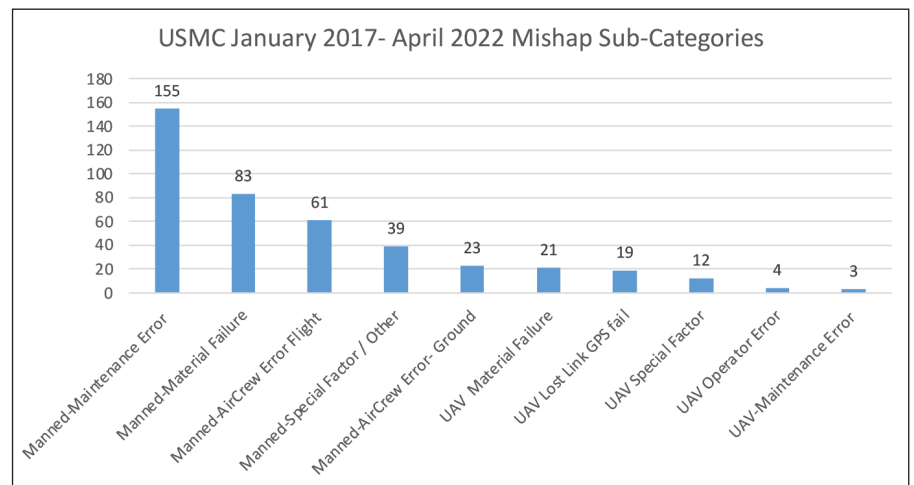


Figure 1. Breakdown of Marine Corps major aviation mishap root-cause factors. (Figure provided by author.)

tion (RMI) data, describe how work is actually performed. Marines face extreme pressure to complete the flight schedule. *Shortcuts and workarounds are not just standard but are expected to complete the job.* When maintainers were asked to describe the challenges they face, lack of adequate training, poor availability of parts and ground support equipment, and excessive workload were the most common responses. Some telling quotes, from the Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps' safety survey, were: "If we did things by the book, nothing would ever get done," and "Changes (that would lower error rates) never stick in place. We always end up going back to our old ways of doing things because of the amount of pressure placed on us by maintenance control to complete tasks on schedule."

An extensive and detailed review was completed of all Class A, B, and C mishaps between January 2017 and April 2022. This study identified the primary causes of aviation mishaps (i.e., manned or unmanned aviation, maintenance error, aircrew error, material failure, special factors or acts of God, etc). The review revealed that two major classes of errors are the primary drivers of mishaps. First, there are maintenance errors. These errors occur during the execution of aircraft maintenance and cause damage to an airframe or system failure due to improper maintenance or injury to a maintainer. Second, there are aircrew errors. These errors are made by aircrews—including pilots, naval flight officers, aerial observers, and crew chiefs—and involve damage or injury. During this period, 361 major manned mishaps (Class A, B, or C) were reported. Of these, 155 were due to manned aircraft maintenance errors. Of these manned maintenance errors, 6 were Class A mishaps, 16 were Class B mishaps, and 133 were Class C mishaps.

Maintenance mishaps (155) were almost double the number of mishaps (83) caused by aircrew errors (Figure 1). Of the 83 aircrew-related mishaps, 11 were class A mishaps, 15 were Class B mishaps, and 57 were Class C mishaps. Aircrews experienced approximately half the mishaps, but those mishaps incurred higher rates of death, injury, and

damage cost. The higher severity level is due to aircrew operating at a much more significant energy level than maintainers. An aircraft operating at full power and altitude has an exponentially higher potential to create catastrophic damage as higher energy states equal more potential for damage. This is not the case when an aircraft is being repaired, refueled, rearmed, modified, or refitted on the deck.

Why do maintainers have higher rates of errors that lead to mishaps? Why do aircrew make mistakes that cause more serious damage at half the rate of maintainers? One line of thought is that aircrews spend much less time with the aircraft than maintainers. A pilot is fortunate to have fifteen hours of flight time per month. Most of those hours are scheduled in advance, providing aircrew the time to study, plan, and brief their flights—reviewing down to the smallest detail.

On the other hand, a maintainer can potentially spend hundreds of hours a month on aircraft. This amount of

contact time represents an extended period available for making errors. Additionally, their contact with the aircraft is under pressure to complete their maintenance actions quickly to meet operational requirements. A logical progression would suggest that less time spent maintaining the aircraft would result in fewer maintenance errors. Unfortunately, this way of thinking leads to the unhelpful outcome that if the Marine Corps performed no aircraft maintenance, there would be no flight hours, but the mishap rate would approach zero.

### **Aircrew and Aviation Maintenance Training are Separate But Not Equal**

Aircrews, especially pilots and naval flight officers, benefit from substantial and well-developed training syllabuses. Beginning in primary flight training, pilots are versed in detailed, in-depth, standardized training that involves all aspects of their development into aviation professionals. Their education starts with Naval Air Training and Op-

***The higher mishap rates in the Marine Corps are consistent with problems the Commission observed during site visits. These included low morale, pilots struggling to maintain enough flight hours for currency, over-stressed aircrew and maintenance personnel overloaded with additional duties, poor facilities, and a pattern of using shortcuts to keep aircraft flying.***

***In reflecting on the totality of its assessment, the Commission is particularly concerned with the increases in Navy and Marine Corps Class A mishap rates, especially Marine Corps Class A mishap rates. The higher mishap rates in the Marine Corps are consistent with Commission site visits where Marine Corps aviation units were some of the most over-tasked, over-stressed, and under-resourced units the Commission observed.***

***—National Commission on Military Aviation Safety,  
December 2020***



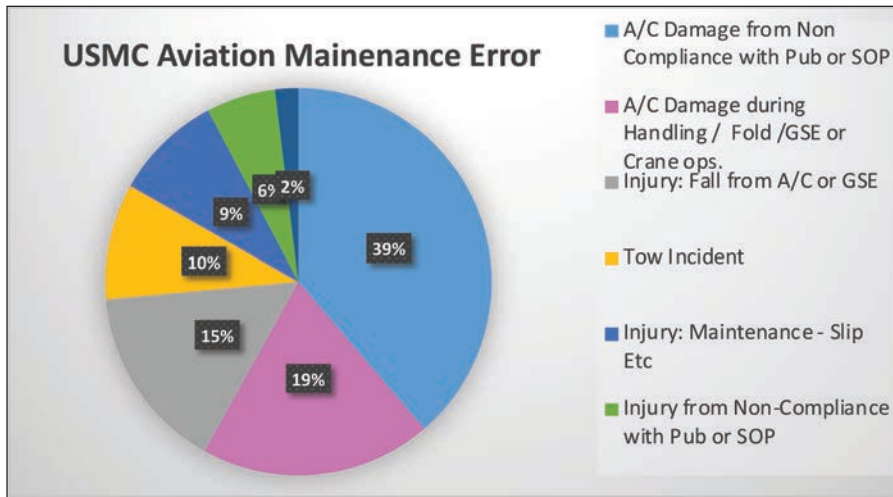


Figure 2. Breakdown of maintenance error mishaps. (Figure provided by author.)

erating Procedures Standardization fundamentals and aircraft systems and continues with crew resources management, detailed maneuver description guides, and tactical manuals. All these subjects are taught and mentored by qualified instructors, both inside and outside their squadrons, who are trained in how to instruct various profiles, tactics, and aircraft systems. Pilots and aircrew continue their professional development by earning instructor qualifications, whereby they learn to teach more complex skills. The ability to be a good instructor is foundational in the professional progression of any Marine Corps aviator.

In addition, training is evaluated by an outside organization such as Marine Aviation Weapons and Tactics Squadron One (MAWTS-1) or the Naval Air Training and Operating Procedures Standardization (NATOPS) model manager. Training and Readiness (T&R) manuals, NATOPS, and tactical manuals are constantly improved. The most talented aircrew are selected to attend the WTI course and become their unit's lead instructors, setting themselves up for promotion and command. This training model creates a culture of professionalism and improvement where errors or deviations from standard operating procedures are noticed and corrected.

Aircrews get the institutional focus in training, whereas maintainers must "figure it out." Aviation Maintenance training is based on an on-the-job train-

ing (OJT) model. Young Marines arrive from "A" School with a basic understanding of naval aviation maintenance. From there they are developed within the squadron, by their peers and seniors, who were trained by their peers and seniors, etc. A maintainer can work his way up to the highest levels of qualification while never leaving the parent unit. Additionally, maintenance publications are notoriously slow to be updated and improved from fleet input. This on-the-job training model is creating maintainers that are poorly trained, by no fault of their own. The proof is in our mishaps (See Figure 2). The Marine Corps is failing to execute with a standardized compliance to published procedures. From changing parts on aircraft to moving components with cranes, to towing accidents, our maintainers are figuring it out on their own as they go—and they have been doing it this way for decades. The lack of appropriate standardized education and training has finally come back to bite us. The National Commission on Military Aviation Safety found, "aviation and maintenance experience, the key to doing a job safely and efficiently, is declining" all the while our aircraft are becoming more complex and expensive, and there are fewer on the flightline.

### How Do We Improve our Maintainers' Ability to Perform Their Jobs?

*DO NOT WALK AWAY FROM THIS ARTICLE SAYING THAT*

*WE NEED TO HOLD MAINTAINERS ACCOUNTABLE.* If you infer that, you are missing the point. Marines understand the job is hard, the hours will be long, and their goals are challenging. Where we fail is that we have not set the conditions for their success, and they are executing with exactly the resources they have been given. Additionally, this is not a how-to guide to modernized Marine Corps Aviation maintenance. The answer to that question can only come from the duty experts themselves. This article's goal is to correctly describe the battlefield environment correctly, not point fingers.

### Make technical training HOLY.

Training for maintainers must be revered, referenced, and repeated. Up-to-date, standardized, informed education and training must be available to all maintainers. The training of maintainers must be made equal in importance to pilot training. Why does aviation maintenance not have a cadre of experts who teach in-depth, assess the abilities in-depth, and develop new expert maintainers like MAWTS-1 does with aircrew? This approach will require new squadron performance metrics. These metrics need to evaluate the ability to maintain safely and effectively "up" aircraft instead of metrics on the number of qualifications within a unit.

### Create a formal instructor syllabus for maintainers.

It is not only essential to understand how to maintain an aircraft, but it is also just as important to be able to teach those skills to others. Teaching is a skill in itself. It requires knowing your audience, delivering information in a professional manner, and understanding how your audience can best digest the information presented to them.

### Reduce non-MOS duties.

According to the National Commission on Military Aviation Safety,

Aircrews and maintainers are saddled with additional non-aviation duties that are more valued than their primary duties for purposes of promotion. A tally is needed of all the hours aircrew

and maintainers spend on non-MOS-related duties, and those tasks should be eliminated.

Erasing the additional non-aviation jobs would free up time to train for and execute MOS-related tasks.

*Enforce CNAF M-3710.7, Crew Rest Standards for Maintainers 8.3.2.1.1.*

The Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps-directed safety stand-down responses clearly highlighted the plight of overworked, stressed-out maintainers. Some forthright responses depicted maintainers working over twelve hours a day, with every indication that their schedules would continue indefinitely. This pace of work in a peacetime or garrison environment is unsupportable and unsustainable.

*Promote Aircraft Maintenance Officers (MOS 6002) to Marine Aircraft Group Commander.*

What? Are you kidding me? All Marine Aircraft Groups have a Marine Aviation Logistics Squadron (MALS) commanded by an aircraft maintenance officer. So, why can't the commander of a MALS be promoted to command the Marine Aircraft Groups? The requirement for aircrew training and flight hours would remain the same. Although it is a common argument that there would be a negative impact on aircrew efficiency, there is no overriding reason for their flight hours and output to fall off. Putting someone who knows what they are doing in charge of maintainers would improve maintenance policy, practices, and culture. In turn, these improvements would benefit the Marine Corps across the entire enterprise.

**Why the Marine Corps Should Prioritize Maintenance Training—Cost Savings.**

As aircraft age, increasing demands are placed on the maintenance community to fix the aircraft to meet required flight hour goals. These increased demands have resulted in sloppy work. A conservative estimate from Risk Management I data is that the Marine Corps loses no less than an average of \$100 million annually (dollar cost aver-

age from January 2017 to April 2022) due to aviation maintenance errors. (This estimate does not factor in losses in readiness due to aircraft damage or lost time caused by death or injuries to Marines.) That is a planeload of cash lost to mishaps.

**Why Marine Corps Should Prioritize Maintenance Training and Operational Advantage**

In our future fight, no one is disputing that air superiority depends on sortie generation. You only have to look at the headlines. Regarding the conflict in Ukraine, "(Russian) total sortie counts with some 300 tactical aircraft appear to have run from 200 to 300 sorties per day in theater, far less than comparable U.S. or NATO air operations." This sub-standard sortie rate appears to have contributed to the stalling of the Russian military advance.<sup>1</sup> Is the low sortie rate partly because poorly trained maintainers are unable to sustain "up" aircraft? If it is, then what are they doing about it? The failures of the Russian air force in the Ukraine air war are studied by our allies and by our adversaries. The enemy may catch on that improved maintenance increases the sortie-per-day rate.

The ability to source sorties depends on both the man and the machine. We have provided high-performance, state-of-the-art weapons systems (the machine) at the cost of billions of dollars. Unfortunately, we are developing our maintainers (the man) using only the same tools, equipment, and training approach as we have for the past twenty years.

**Why the Marine Corps Should Not Prioritize Maintenance Training.**

We have heard the arguments that this prioritization will cost money and time and require us to do things differently. The argument goes, *where do we even find the time? We must make flight hours.* Making maintainer training and professional development a priority is a major cultural shift for the Marine Corps. These Marines have been pressed to do more work for decades. All our commanders and senior enlisted leaders have been brought up

with the focus that more work hours make more flight hours. Changing the work paradigm will take a huge buy-in from FMF leaders, and it will cause a significant reduction in flight hours in the short term. Time and resources will need shifting, and the new work paradigm will require learning to increase efficiency and production. It will take hard work to develop MOS-specific training and implement this training program across the fleet.

**Take a Deep Breath, Face the Future, and Do Something New**

Better-trained maintainers result in more efficient work habits equating to more flight hours. Simply put, more efficient work equals more flight hours. Better-trained maintainers also mean fewer mishaps—and fewer mishaps equals less money lost and more aircraft available to fight. Smarter, well-trained maintainers will make our weapons systems more effective. We must be stronger if we plan to compete and win on the next battlefield.

The Deputy Commandant of Aviation wants "to get the offense back on the field," and is "tired of playing defense." Absolutely! The Marine Corps can significantly reduce its mishap rate, increase the number of flight-ready aircraft, and expand the ability to source sorties—and all this is achievable at a relatively low cost. However, we must change the way we treat aviation maintenance. We need to give aviation maintenance a more prominent seat at the table. By making this change, we can prioritize maintenance training which will increase the performance, expertise, and maintenance capability of those Marines who turn wrenches day in and day out.

**Note**

1. Mike Pietrucha, "Amateur Hour Part II: Failing the Air Campaign," *War on the Rocks*, August 11, 2022, <https://warontherocks.com/2022/08/amateur-hour-part-ii-failing-the-air-campaign>.



2022 Gen Robert E. Hogaboom Leadership Writing Contest: First Place

# Warrior Philosophy

The case for stoic leadership

by Maj Dilan Swift

*“A gem cannot be polished without friction, nor a man perfected without trials.”*

—Seneca

*>Maj Swift is an Infantry Officer currently serving in Marine Corps Advisor Company A. He is an active member of the Warfighting Society.*



**ADM James Stockdale. The modern warrior-philosopher.** (Photo: U.S. Navy.)

On 9 September 1965, the commander of Carrier Air Group 16 flew what would be his last mission over North Vietnam. After striking his target, North Vietnamese anti-aircraft artillery engaged his A-4 Skyhawk. Within seconds, engines failed, power was lost, and the pilot ejected over North Vietnam, certain of a grim fate—suffering. Most Marine officers know where this story goes, but many more junior Marines and sailors are unfamiliar. Then-Navy CAPT James Stockdale’s epic journey as a warrior-philosopher who survived seven brutal years as a prisoner of war is a foundational tale in officer training and education. Stockdale’s epic is used to introduce officers to the importance of philosophical education as the foundation for effective leadership and resilience.

For over 200 years, the Corps has forged leaders. From Marine Corps Recruit Depot to Officer Candidate School, and the Crucible to the Quigley, the Corps has perfected the science of unleashing leadership potential. Enlisted and commissioned officers are taught to embrace uncertainty, operate with minimal guidance, and embody time-tested leadership traits and principles

that allow them to lead in chaos. While these tools are appropriate for preparing leaders for war, they are insufficient in preparing leaders to face a new and growing crisis in peace.

The Nation’s youth are suffering, and so too are Marines. Existing leadership models are not enough to prepare leaders to mentor and coach the force through the growing rates of depression, anxiety, suicidality, and addiction that are now pervasive in American society. These struggles are especially acute in

the generation of young Marines currently joining our ranks. While the Corps is not intended to rectify society’s ills, Gen Krulak did charge the Corps with returning the country’s youth better for their service.<sup>1</sup> To counter these ills and build a more resilient and effective Corps, leaders should look to time-tested philosophical approaches to address this new crisis. Fortunately, a tried-and-true warrior philosophy has existed for two millennia that can aid leaders in navigating these turbulent times. Stoicism, a philosophy developed by the ancient Greeks and Romans, provides a universal grounding philosophy upon which the Marine Corps’ ethos of Honor, Courage, and Commitment can firmly stand.

*“It does not matter what you bear, but how you bear it.”*

—Seneca

## The Crisis

Each month, more Marines join the long list of American warfighters lost to their own hand. Such self-inflicted casualties have become an unfortunate norm in the Corps and society at large. Through training, leaders may be able to identify indicators of suffering, but they are largely unable to pinpoint or address root causes. Social media and smartphone usage, declining religiosity, social isolation, and the civil-military cultural divide are often blamed. While these issues pervade American society at large, Marine leaders at all levels must

address them daily. The statistics are sobering:

- Nearly half of U.S. teens report using the Internet “almost constantly” and 95 percent of teens have access to a smartphone (up from 73 percent in 2015).<sup>2</sup>
- Nineteen, sixteen, and fifteen percent of teens report using YouTube, TikTok, and Snapchat respectively “almost constantly.”<sup>3</sup>
- Rates of Major Depressive Episodes (suicide ideations, attempts, and deaths) rose 52 percent from 2005 to 2017 (from 8.7 to 13.2 percent of 12–17-year-olds).<sup>4</sup>
- 32 percent of teens and adolescents experience anxiety and depression from March 2020 to January 2022 (the cohort currently enlisting into the Corps).<sup>5</sup>
- Deaths of despair (alcohol, suicide, and drug overdose deaths) from 2013–2019 among white non-Hispanics without a four-year college degree (the vast majority of the Corps) increased by 41, 17, and 73 percent, respectively.<sup>6</sup>
- Despite a fifteen percent drop from 2020 to 2021, more than 500 Active Duty, Reserve, and National Guard suicides occur each year.<sup>7</sup>

While Marines are individuals who join the Service with their own unique characteristics, these statistics should be considered carefully. They paint a picture of the societal context from which Marines emerge, engage, and return at the end of their service. Through an understanding of the severity of the moment, leaders can fulfill Krulak’s leadership imperative of returning Marines as quality citizens. As a father guides a son, leaders can help their Marines and sailors navigate life’s turbulent waters by helping them develop a philosophical toolkit to serve as the foundation of personal growth and a fount of resilience.

### The Warrior Philosophy

Stoicism may seem to be in vogue to the casual observer. Promoted by popular philosophers like Ryan Holiday on social media (ironically)<sup>8</sup> and included in Gen Mattis’ personal reading lists,<sup>9</sup> Stoicism is an ancient philosophy that seeks to foster internal peace by divorcing individual emotion from external

**“You have power over your mind—not outside events. Realize this, and you will find strength.”**

**—Marcus Aurelius**



**The essential Stoic leader, Roman Emperor and warrior: Marcus Aurelius. (Photo provided by author.)**

circumstances. Stoicism does not seek to answer the metaphysical questions often pondered by religion but instead focuses on the practical—how to find internal peace in a turbulent world.

While Stoicism is the subject of extensive study, there are many easily-accessible principles relevant to modern leaders seeking to help Marines navigate through life’s challenges. First, one’s primary concern should be to “live according to nature.” That is, live in such a way that is in harmony with, and accepting of, the natural world.<sup>10</sup> Second, much as there is both rain and sunshine, some things in life are within one’s control

while others are not. Third, peace and freedom can be found in understanding these realities and *choosing* not to suffer from conditions outside of one’s control. As Marcus Aurelius advises, “there is never any need ... to trouble your soul about things you cannot control. These things are not asking to be judged by you. Leave them alone.”<sup>11</sup> This emphasis on *choice* is the operative element of Stoic philosophy. Individual resilience can be forged when this choice is mentally rehearsed and combined with reflection, meditations on morality, and confidence in one’s actions and acceptance of consequences.<sup>12</sup>

The applicability of this philosophical approach to life and leadership is recognized by many leaders but appears to escape many of the Corps’ junior members. Unlike the officers leading them, most junior servicemembers are never introduced to such practical philosophy upon which the traditional Marine Corps leadership traits and principles can be developed. Stoicism’s approach to dealing with life, be it personal or professional, equips individuals to observe, embrace, and endure life’s challenges. Stoicism teaches humility to accept fate, embrace trials, and grow from adversity. Stoicism, as Holiday writes, “provides much-needed strength, wisdom, and stamina.”<sup>13</sup>

### Adopting Stoic Principles as Marine Leaders

Marine leaders can offer much to their Marines by applying Stoic philosophical principles while addressing contemporary leadership challenges. Leaders should consider the continued study of Stoic philosophy, sharing Stoicism with their Marines, and, like Marcus Aurelius, living as Stoic examples to the best of their ability.

#### 1. Continued Study

Before leaders can share the timeless wisdom and practices of the ancients, leaders must seek to be studied and conversant in the language and foundations of history and philosophy. As a simple first step, Marine leaders should consider returning to the lessons they received during collegiate training as aspiring officers. The Stoic renaissance

is in full swing and interested leaders can easily find newly published translations of the ancient Stoic texts or more modern interpretations of the philosophy.<sup>14</sup> Another source of material can be found in ADM Stockdale's writings. His biopic detailing his Prisoner of War

## 2. Teach, Coach, and Mentor

There is an old saying that a parent's role is to "prepare the child for the road, not the road for the child."<sup>16</sup> Herein lies each modern Marine leader's challenge in such trying and chaotic times. After developing a foundational un-

derstanding of Stoic perspective on life. Modern leaders should be encouraged to follow suit; organize professional military education sessions; provide chapters or sections of pertinent Stoic literature as reading assignments; challenge Marines to think, write, and reflect on the material; and discuss the philosophy often in public and private. In so doing, leaders can infuse Stoic thought into their organizations to foster individual and collective resilience.

## 3. Live It

Finally, leaders must be the embodiment of Stoic principles. Studies and discussions are meaningless without concrete actions. Suffering Marines and sailors need leaders as positive role models who demonstrate mental and emotional resilience. As Marcus Aurelius exhorts in *Meditations*, "waste no more time arguing what a good man should be. Be one." Leaders, it is time to be the "good men" our Marines need.

## After developing a foundational understanding of Stoic principles, leaders should share this with those who need it most—our junior enlisted Marines and sailors.

experience *Courage Under Fire* and later reflections *Thoughts of a Philosophical Fighter Pilot* takes readers on his journey from stumbling across Stoicism as a graduate student, subsequent obsession, and utilization of Stoic principles while in captivity and beyond.<sup>15</sup>

derstanding of Stoic principles, leaders should share this with those who need it most—our junior enlisted Marines and sailors. Seneca embodies the example here. His *Letters from a Stoic* are exactly that—letters to a younger student in which he explains, extolls, and encour-

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**Reflect on your responsibility as a leader. Your position could be taken at any moment. This should generate gratitude and humility.**

Living out Stoic principles involves internal reflection and external behaviors. First, prioritize time to reflect on your leadership. Ask, how are you responding to external circumstances in your organization? Are you controlling what is yours, influencing what is possible, and accepting what you must? Reflect on your responsibility as a leader. Your position could be taken at any moment. This should generate gratitude and humility. Finally, seek to always behave with calm. Such composure will take time to develop but will create a culture of trust. If subordinates know how their leaders will react in any given situation, they will be more confident in their actions, measured in their risks, and forthright in communications.

**Conclusion**

On that fateful day in 1965, as ADM Stockdale ejected from his Skyhawk, he considered himself strangely fortunate. Unlike most pilots shot down over North Vietnam, he was, thanks to his extensive training in Stoic philosophy, *Amor Fati*—accepting of his fate. As he hung suspended under his parachute, looking down at the rice field below, he recalled thinking “five years down there, at least. I’m leaving the world of technology and entering the world of Epictetus.”<sup>17</sup> His imprisonment ended up as seven long years in the Hanoi Hilton, the notorious North Vietnamese prison in which Stockdale turned into a Stoic laboratory. Those seven years of torture, misery, pain, deceit, and suffering were made survivable and meaningful by a foundation of philosophical training. Modern Marines are suffering in their own unique ways today and Honor, Courage, and Commitment alone are simply not enough to “prepare them for the road.” Marine leaders can do much to forge the Stoic philosophical foundation upon which Marines can thrive.

**Notes**

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# George Washington's Grit

Lessons for today's leaders

by LtCol Stephen J. Kopach, USMCR

**G**eorge Washington was a visionary leader and uniquely qualified to accomplish the complex challenges put before him. He demanded exceptionalism from himself, his soldiers, and his nation and worked tirelessly to achieve his goals, whether winning in conflict or securing peace for a new nation. He was a man of exceptional talent, which he wielded to significant effect throughout his lifetime. Beyond talent, however, a critical trait set him apart from other remarkable individuals of his time. This quality was grit.

## Defining Grit

Esteemed psychologist and academic Angela Duckworth, who conducted extensive research on human perfor-

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a high level of natural grit based on hereditary factors, grit can be developed over time through internal and external stimuli.<sup>3</sup> By examining the events and experiences that molded George Washington, military leaders can derive lessons that can improve their grit. His example may enable leaders to harness their talents to accomplish long-term goals and achieve successful outcomes over time.

intellectual nor a yokel, but a typical, somewhat precocious boy.”<sup>5</sup> Psychologist Catharine Cox, who conducted pioneering research on intelligence and genius, judged Washington’s IQ to be around 140.<sup>6</sup> This is superior intellect, but he was not among the most brilliant of his generation. Thomas Jefferson and John Adams had IQs of 160 and 155, respectively.<sup>7</sup> When measured against other significant historical figures and among all other U.S. presidents, Washington is near the center of the pack.<sup>8</sup>

What sets Washington apart from his contemporaries is his possession and development of four psychological assets critical to grit. Duckworth identifies these as “interest, practice, purpose, and hope.”<sup>9</sup> These traits are not immutable. Duckworth notes, “One can learn to discover, develop, and deepen your interests. You can acquire the habit of discipline. You can cultivate a sense of purpose and meaning. And you can teach yourself hope.”<sup>10</sup> While Washington had a natural proclivity to these traits, he also deepened them over the years through study, experience, and reflection.

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***Beyond talent, however, a critical trait set him apart from other remarkable individuals of his time. This quality was grit.***

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mance, explains that grit—a combination of passion and perseverance—sets high achievers like Washington apart from those of equal talent and intellect.<sup>1</sup> She defines passion as “staying consistent on goals over time” and perseverance as “working hard and bouncing back from setbacks.”<sup>2</sup> While some individuals like Washington may have

## How Important is Talent?

Talent is a vital baseline determinant of exceptionalism, but it is only a starting point. Washington had many natural gifts from a young age. He was tall, athletic, and intellectually curious.<sup>4</sup> Despite being above average, however, biographer Edward Lengel describes him in youth as “neither an

### Discovering Interests and Following Passion

Discovering interests and following passions are critical components for developing grit.<sup>11</sup> Although cliché, doing what you love and loving what you do determines the level of commitment. Washington explored many topics in his adolescence but developed an early passion for the military. Detailed journals and notes from his school years suggest he enthusiastically sought to expand his knowledge through self-study and exposure through hands-on learning.<sup>12</sup> Lengel indicates that in his teenage years, Washington “attacked every subject with vigor, often drawing meticulous diagrams and taking notes” and only moved on to new areas after he fully absorbed the information.<sup>13</sup>

This period of discovery and broad exposure to many subjects allowed Washington to focus on areas that piqued his interest. The influence and mentorship of his half-brother Lawrence, who served in the British expeditionary army in the Caribbean, seems to have profoundly shaped his fascination with the military.<sup>14</sup> Washington’s early passion for armed service only deepened over the years after he took on command roles of increasing responsibility. Having identified military arts as a discipline of interest, Washington sought to master its many facets through dedication and effort.

### Practice, Discipline, and Hard Work

Practice and hard work were integral to Washington’s development as a competent military practitioner. Washington undertook efforts that deliberately pushed his limits to purposefully expand his capabilities. His efforts were akin to “deliberate practice,” a term introduced by Swedish psychologist K. Anders Ericsson, which describes “practice that focuses on tasks beyond your current level of competence and comfort.”<sup>15</sup> To harness talent, it is necessary to work diligently and focus over time toward improvement, particularly in areas of weakness. Ten years or 10,000 hours of such practice is the estimated threshold to achieve true expertise.<sup>16</sup>

Washington gained such expertise while conducting months-long survey-



*Statue of George Washington, located near Washington’s Headquarters at Valley Forge. A cast bronze copy of a marble statue by French sculptor Jean-Antoine Houdon. (Photo by author.)*

ing expeditions and military endeavors during the French and Indian War.<sup>17</sup> These missions were fraught with danger, hardship, and austerity that tested his mettle and pushed his physical and mental limits to exhaustion. His successive military campaigns and their associated challenges taught him valuable but often painful lessons that deepened his expertise.

Demanding and consistent effort is a critical component of the quality

practice needed to develop grit. Lengel notes that Washington “worked with almost superhuman stamina, organizational ability, and regard for detail.”<sup>18</sup> While in command of the Virginia Regiment and assembling the American Army in Boston, this level of effort was necessary to ensure the success of the fledgling enterprises.<sup>19</sup> At Valley Forge, Washington exerted himself to even further extremes in miserable conditions to hold the Continental Army together.<sup>20</sup> Washington emphasized to the company captains of his Virginia Regiment, “Discipline is the soul of an army. It makes small numbers formidable; procures success to the weak, and esteem to all.”<sup>21</sup> Difficult experiences served as a crucible, forging Washington’s natural talent into expertise. His soldiers came to admire Washington’s dedication, which proved instrumental beyond the American Revolution. His principles and a sense of purpose guided his efforts allowing him to direct his energies toward a greater goal.

### Purpose and Philosophy

A purpose or overarching philosophy to motivate actions is essential to developing passion. Duckworth notes, “A clear, well-defined philosophy give you guidelines and boundaries that keep you on track.”<sup>22</sup> It can help focus tasks and short-term goals toward a higher purpose. Washington’s purpose in his



*Muhlenberg Brigade Encampment, Valley Forge, 31 January 2022. (Photo provided by author.)*



early years was to establish himself as a man of good repute and eminence in society. According to historian William Sayen, “Washington strove to embody the manners and virtues of civility ... and honor. Honor comprised all that was most dear to gentlemen warriors of the eighteenth century: manliness, respect, valor, fame, and glory.”<sup>23</sup>

As Washington matured and dove deeper into the cause of revolution and armed conflict, he developed a deep passion for the ideals of liberty that would form the new nation he fought to conceive.<sup>24</sup> He maintained a strong conviction about the righteousness of the American cause. Washington’s short and long-term goals evolved with changing colonial dynamics and his personal circumstances, but his guiding principles never changed. The maxims he discovered in his youth while translating the *Rules of Civility & Decent Behavior in Company and Conversation*, such as honor and dignity, became the values he espoused throughout his life.<sup>25</sup> The values remained consistent whether he commanded soldiers, served in government, or worked as a private citizen to run a prosperous business.

### Hope and Optimism

Hope is the final but perhaps most consequential trait in determining a person’s grit. Hope involves an optimistic mindset and belief that efforts contribute to a better future.<sup>26</sup> Why persevere if efforts are trivial or in vain?

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## **George Washington’s grit—his perseverance and passion—was instrumental to his success as a military commander and leader.**

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George Washington maintained hope and resolve throughout the Revolution that American forces would triumph. He rarely openly displayed discouragement or pessimism. After the defeat at the Battle of Brandywine and other operational setbacks, Washington maintained a determined posture belying no outward projection of dependency.<sup>27</sup>



**Washington’s Headquarters Valley Forge, 15 October 2022. (Photo by author.)**

Washington’s optimism was anchored in action and the idea of progress. Lengel notes, “When frustration or boredom led him into a funk ... the prospect of battle or work could throw him almost instantaneously into a more optimistic frame of mind.”<sup>28</sup> His bias for boldness often led to stunning successes, as was the case in his Christmas crossing of the Delaware.<sup>29</sup> On other occasions, Washington’s desire to act led him to make rushed or imprudent decisions as was the case with his subse-

In his farewell address to the Army in November 1783, Washington expressed unbounded optimism for the new United States, stating, “It is universally acknowledged that the enlarged prospect of happiness, opened by the confirmation of our Independence and Sovereignty, almost exceeds the power of description.”<sup>32</sup> Washington’s overarching worldview was sanguine despite moments of struggle and self-doubt. He trusted in the ideals of liberty for which he fought and the men who toiled with him in the great struggle. Hope allowed Washington to persevere in the face of odds that must have appeared insurmountable at times.

### Key Takeaways

George Washington’s grit—his perseverance and passion—was instrumental to his success as a military commander and leader. His story teaches the value of grit as a character attribute in achieving successful outcomes in combat and life. Firstly, natural talent is important, but it is only part of the equation. Leaders should work to improve their own qualities of perseverance and passion and surround themselves with individuals exuding these qualities. A person with perseverance

works hard toward goals, is undiscouraged by setbacks, remains committed to completing tasks despite challenges and obstacles, and never gives up.<sup>33</sup> A person with passion maintains long-term interests, is undistracted by new ideas and projects, remains committed to set goals, and can focus on a project for multiple months or longer.<sup>34</sup>

Leaders can work to improve grit by focusing on the four key areas identified by Duckwork.<sup>35</sup> Regarding interests, leaders should explore, inquire, and gravitate toward topics that spark fascination. A person is more likely to stay committed to a goal if they have a vested interest. Practice, hard work, and experience are critical to building expertise and resiliency. Leaders should practice with seriousness and dedication, pushing beyond their comfort zones to seek self-improvement. To find purpose, it helps to have a personal philosophy to stay motivated while pursuing long-term goals. Finally, an optimistic mindset will allow a person to persevere through challenging times. Developing a hopeful outlook may involve spirituality, fellowship, or finding a cause greater than oneself. It may also involve lessons from historical figures like George Washington or contemporary leaders who inspire greatness.

**Conclusion**

George Washington shines as an example of the multiplying effect grit can have on natural talent. While not as singularly outstanding as many of his peers in characteristics such as intelligence, grit distinguished him from the rest. He worked hard to develop and deepen the character traits essential to grit by deepening his interests, working hard to improve areas of weakness, finding a higher purpose, and maintaining a hopeful outlook throughout his life, thereby strengthening his passion and perseverance. He was aware of the importance of these attributes, noting in a letter to Gen Philip Schuyler at the outset of the Revolution that “Perseverance and Spirit have done Wonders in all ages.”<sup>36</sup> Military leaders can follow Washington’s example to develop their own grit and foster a culture of grit. In doing so, leaders will maximize the

potential of their unit and improve the likelihood of successful outcomes on and off the battlefield.

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# “Hey Siri, Who’s in Charge?”

Preparing for leadership in the Age of AI

by Capt W. Stone Holden & Mr. Tramario Adams

**W**hat does it mean to be a leader when machines gain greater and greater autonomy? Artificial intelligence (AI) is challenging what it means for humans to be *in control*. Whether finding your way around town, driving cars, or even putting fires on target, AI-enabled tools create choices previously reserved for humans. The Marine Corps will need to grapple with the impacts of this technological shift, particularly as AI advances toward genuinely autonomous systems that may create leadership challenges.

Faced with technology developing even as it proliferates across civilian and military domains, the Marines Corps must now wrestle with the implications now or risk getting caught flat-footed. The Corps is a leadership-centric organization, priding itself on developing leaders at a more junior level than other Services while emphasizing strategic impacts that even the most junior leader can have on the modern battlefield.<sup>1</sup> As AI improves and emerges on battlefield platforms, it begs the question of how leaders will need to adapt to maximize the capabilities of this technology while mitigating its potential disruptive influence. As machines gain abilities that will one day approach that of a human in some respects, how does that change leadership dynamics? A great place to start is with the Marine Corps leadership traits, focusing on those likely to see the most impact from AI.

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## AI: Impacts Begin Now

Organizations are already developing and applying AI-enabled technologies to military systems.<sup>2</sup> In 2021, the former chair of the U.S. AI Council stated that AI is the most crucial part of the coming competition in the 21st century because it is a “field of fields,” or foundational technology, for so many other pieces of emerging technology.<sup>3</sup> The 2021 final report from the National Security Commission on AI stated, “AI-enabled capabilities will be tools of first resort in a new era of conflict.”<sup>4</sup> To prepare for these conflicts, the DOD “requested \$14.7 billion for science and technology programs,” \$847 million (or 6 percent) of which directly supported AI efforts.<sup>5</sup> The United States is rapidly moving toward an AI-integrated future.

Our strategic competitors share the importance of AI to their military and national security. The People’s Republic of China is investing heavily in AI development efforts. It may enjoy some advantages in this pursuit, derived from a top-down authoritarian structure that allows them to marshal resources and direct private and government collaboration.<sup>6</sup> The Chinese military is actively experimenting with AI, seeking to integrate it into their overall defense strategy at every echelon while gathering data to refine these initial efforts.<sup>7</sup> The People’s Republic of China is the most pressing concern for AI development, but Russia is also developing AI for military and national security purposes.

In 2017, Vladimir Putin responded to the publication of the People’s Re-

public of China's AI policy, stating, "Whoever becomes the leader in this sphere will become the ruler of the world."<sup>8</sup> The Russian security establishment sees the integration of AI into their armed forces as a critical component of their future military power.<sup>9</sup> They are willing to experiment with early capabilities, even creating a dedicated department within the Ministry of Defense focused on AI in 2021.<sup>10</sup> While AI has not played a prominent role in the war in Ukraine, it has already played on the periphery. One usage of AI to support Russia's 2022 invasion was releasing of an AI-based, deepfake video of Ukrainian President, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, telling troops to surrender.<sup>11</sup> Despite Russia's many challenges in Ukraine, their national drive for AI is still a concern. As these adversaries make strides in AI and integrate these tools, the Marine Corps cannot be left behind.

### Initiative: Letting the Roombas® Rumble

One of the main functions of leadership is to allow people to act in coordinated ways under a set of unified guidance. This amplifies the effects that any one individual can have at a time. Every fire team leader gives his team orders that they need those orders to have the ability to execute independently. They will do so to the best level that they understand those orders and can execute given personal and environmental limitations. Squad leaders do this for their fire teams, and this goes on up the chain of command. This chain of trust in the ability of subordinates to accomplish the tasks you have assigned to them is a powerful thing and requisite for the success of any organization. This trust is developed through human interaction, observing and working together through training to understand the nuances of the leader's intent and the limits of the ability of subordinates to accurately make that intent reality. What happens when your subordinate is no longer human?

Systems are still decades from gaining human-like initiative.<sup>12</sup> Still, cars are already driving with minimal human interaction and everyday people



**A Marine with III MEF experiments with a micro unmanned ground vehicle's capabilities.**  
(Photo by LCpl Stephen D. Himes.)

allow their Roombas® to make simple decisions as they clean their homes.<sup>13</sup> As AI-enabled systems become more capable and ubiquitous on the battlefield, tactical and operational leaders must learn how and when to allow these machines to exercise initiative. Just as you develop confidence in your subordinates through training and evaluation, leaders must also build trust and understanding of their AI systems.<sup>14</sup> Through rigorous training, leaders will gain an

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**... everyday people allow their Roombas® to make simple decisions ...**

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understanding of the capabilities and limitations of platforms. This will help them discern the situations these assets can handle and those that require a more nuanced human approach.<sup>15</sup> Nevertheless, the battlefield is moving toward automation, forcing leaders to decide when to let AI exhibit various degrees of autonomy.

A poignant example comes from the Second Nagorno-Karabakh War in the Fall of 2020. Azerbaijan, having lost

the conflict with Armenia in 1994, invested in unmanned aerial systems (UAS) and loitering munitions in the lead-up to the war.<sup>16</sup> These systems used an AI feature called computer vision to identify enemy positions, vehicles, and personnel. The computer vision algorithm then made targeting recommendations to their human controllers, who could then decide whether attack or wave off. The Azeris used these unmanned aerial systems and loitering munitions to compensate for the lack of traditional airpower and achieved impressive combined-arms effects against well-entrenched personnel, armor, and logistical support of the Armenians, largely due to the rapid tempo they were able to generate.<sup>17</sup>

They intentionally avoided limiting the computer vision's autonomy by establishing a "human-on-the-loop" relationship with the weapons vice a "human-in-the-loop" structure. This relationship provided a level of control and relieved personnel from monitoring the weapons full-time until the systems identified a target.<sup>18</sup> Human-on-the-loop constructs place the controller on the edge of the decision-making (DM) process, allowing the AI to take initiative when targets are identified. Decision points are reached much faster than possible with the human-in-the-

loop model, where the person still has complete control over starting or stopping an action.”<sup>19</sup> Can the culture of the Marine Corps adapt to the “human on the loop” model?

Leaders across the Marines must aggressively pursue early opportunities to integrate these technologies into their training environments. This not only allows the systems to be improved by increased data inputs, but it also allows the leaders to develop the trust that is critical for determining when a subordinate (AI or human) can and should take initiative, and when to let their “Roombas®” take the fight themselves.

### **Decisiveness: Speeding Up the OODA-Loop**

The ability of leaders to quickly synthesize data and make informed decisions is a critical element of their role, and technology has been an enabler throughout the history of warfare. AI promises to be yet another leap in the DM evolution. AI-based DM comes in various forms that generally take three basic stages. The first is by providing support when making decisions. Humans pair their contextual knowledge and common sense with AI, which provides descriptive, diagnostic, or predictive data. With more advanced AI, it may be allowed to augment decisions. Using data, the AI suggests a decision or options to a human counterpart. The most advanced level is automated DM, in which an AI-enabled system uses predictive or prescriptive analysis to make decisions without human intervention. This offers inhuman speed, scalability, and consistency but lacks the mitigating role of human experience.<sup>20</sup>

A 2021 panel examining how emerging technologies like AI would impact the U.S. intelligence community specifically highlighted AI for its potential to speed up the DM of leaders. AI is incredibly good at taking vast amounts of data (at a scale that would be meaningless for humans) and quickly finding patterns and relations.<sup>21</sup> They found that AI had the potential to speed DM by assisting in the automated processing of data, triage and notification, adaptive tasking, and pattern recognition.<sup>22</sup> While specifically focused on

intelligence organizations, some of these benefits translate to the battlefield and will inevitably impact a leader’s ability to be decisive.

### **Knowledge: If you Don’t Know, Now You (Should) Know**

Understanding the capabilities and limitations of the equipment your element employs, and at least the basic concepts of what your personnel specialize in, is critical for leaders to execute any mission properly. This holds true for AI, where Marine leaders need to start getting familiar with the types of AI, the way that this technology interfaces with their equipment, and its capabilities and limitations. This does not mean that every squad leader needs to become a programmer; however, in the same way that ground element leaders do not need to know how to fly a

neers, (NMOS 2652).<sup>25</sup> Similarly, the Naval Post Graduate School now offers distance learning programs in AI, which opens this education to a swath of the officer community.<sup>26</sup> While these are important steps, there are greater opportunities to engage staff non-commissioned officers and even more junior non-commissioned officers. Courses could be tailored to address the relevant systems and interactions that they would face at their level while providing a better depth of knowledge for future system integration.

Leaders need to take the initiative to bridge the knowledge gap informally while the Marine Corps develops its own curriculum. Training resources are available online that provide an understanding of fundamental principles and foundational knowledge for leaders to build from.<sup>27</sup> These can be tailored

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## ***AI is coming to warfighting in a way that may disrupt key elements of how the Marine Corps fought over the last decades.***

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fighter jet, they still need to understand the basic capabilities and limitations of those platforms so they can effectively utilize them to deliver outcomes.

In 2020, DOD’s Joint Artificial Intelligence Center published the DOD AI Education Strategy, which provides a framework for how to educate personnel and leaders on the basics of AI as it enters the force.<sup>23</sup> Importantly, it differentiates the types of knowledge required at different levels of interaction. Most Marine leaders will fall into an “employment” role, defined as interpreting the output of AI systems to help their DM, understanding basic concepts with an eye toward future applications, and proficiency in engaging with and interpreting AI applications on the battlefield.<sup>24</sup>

The Marine Corps has also taken steps toward creating a more AI-literate workforce. In 2019, the Marine Corps partnered with Northern Virginia Community College to provide AI training for intelligence data engi-

into hip-pocket lessons that can provide Marines with a head start. It is critical as a leader to learn and be conversant with the technology you are employing. There is an urgent responsibility for Marine leaders to know and understand AI-enabled systems.

### **Conclusion: Meeting the Challenge of AI Integration**

AI is coming to warfighting in a way that may disrupt key elements of how the Marine Corps fought over the last decades. Technological revolutions can provide tools that make a force dominant, but militaries that build the best doctrine for adopting those tools often come out on top. How well is the technology understood, tested, and applied? The demands for AI are no different. Leaders throughout the Marine Corps need to be prepared for the impact on the speed of their decisiveness, the questions over allowing autonomous systems to exercise initiative, and to develop the foundational knowledge

that will provide the foundation for the successful integration of AI.

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# Getting Past the “Woke” Noise

Why diversity, equity, and inclusion are leadership imperatives

by LtCol Susan E. Upward

**Woke: aware of and actively attentive to important societal facts and issues (especially issues of racial and social justice).<sup>1</sup>**

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**W**oke. No doubt you have heard the word before. Turn on mainstream media or click on any social media platform and it will be there. Added to the dictionary in 2017, woke was one of the top ten searched terms for 2021, rivaling other much-politicized terms such as vaccine or insurrection.<sup>2</sup> Just by reading this word you may have had a visceral reaction to it, as it is often used to evoke such a response. The term is bastardized to be used as a noun, adjective, verb, or adverb, but regardless of form, it is pejoratively misused to describe any discussion of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives to paint them all with a broad negative brush. Pundits and politicians continue to decry DEI programs as creating “a woke, emasculated military” and accuse the military’s generals of being “woke corporate bozos” who are “pushing questionable policies on our troops just to satisfy the ideological agenda of a minority of Americans.”<sup>3</sup> As a result, a recent survey found that “half

of Americans believe woke practices are undermining military effectiveness.”<sup>4</sup>

But strip away the rhetoric and the white noise, or as I call it, the woke noise. Separate the term from the tweets and the sound bites and the raw emotion the word is intended to elicit, and what we are left with is the hard truth that being woke, by the true definition of the word, is a vital part of being a military leader. The concept behind wokeness is essential—if not required—by our doctrine, leadership principles, and the critical thinking necessary for effective warfighting.

As quoted above, woke is simply defined. Yet, since its inclusion into the mainstream vernacular, it is the par-enthetical of that definition that has subsumed the word’s entire meaning.

At face value, the definition of woke should garner positive attention as achieving more inclusive and equitable ends for *all* through DEI. Instead, “wokeness” pigeonholes DEI into a merely dismissible equal opportunity phenomenon encompassing policies whose sole focus is on race, gender, sexual orientation, or one of the other protected classes. But DEI is a much broader topic that incorporates considerably more individual qualities that have far-reaching implications. DEI is necessary to truly

get after the real challenges we are facing as an organization, both internally in our ranks and externally in effectively projecting military power. DEI actually encompasses:

- Diversity: *All the different characteristics and attributes* of individuals that complement our core values, contribute to our warfighting capabilities, and ensure our connectedness to the American public.
- Equity: The fair and equal treatment, access, advancement, and opportunity for *all* Marines, sailors, and civilian Marines based on individual skills, abilities, aptitudes, performance, and merit.
- Inclusion: The integration of *each individual’s* differences into the way an organization functions and makes decisions.<sup>5</sup>

Looking through that lens, it is clear that DEI initiatives are about more than just a particular demographic, political ideology, or word of the day. Instead, they are a tool to make Marines more aware and actively attentive not only to cultural differences but cognitive diversity as well.

Regardless of what it is called, exploring societal and cultural facts and issues is not something new to the Marine Corps. In fact, we have been

acutely aware of and actively attentive to culture and the human dimension of warfare for some time. Our cornerstone foundational document, *MCDP 1, Warfighting*, recognizes that “war is shaped by human nature and is subject to the complexities, inconsistencies, and peculiarities which characterize human behavior.”<sup>6</sup> This is echoed in *MCDP 7, Learning*, that states because “conflict is a human phenomena,” it is necessary for Marines to educate themselves and “prepare for the complexities of each conflict by studying social, economic, political, cultural, environmental, interpersonal, and intrapersonal factors.”<sup>7</sup> It is within this framework that the Regional, Culture, and Language Familiarization Program was introduced in 2012 as a career-long curriculum “to provide the foundation for a cross-culturally competent general purpose force with diverse regional and cultural understanding” in order to increase effectiveness while “operating in culturally complex environments.”<sup>8</sup>

It would be shortsighted to believe that the premise behind *Warfighting* was only referencing human behavior as it applies externally in the operating environment and not internally within our own in our ranks. Indeed, *MCDP 7* reflects that internal focus, demanding that “the Marine Corps must also foster a culture of learning, understand their own Service culture, those of other Services and allies, the human dimension of the operational environment, and the cultures of those we operate among.”<sup>9</sup> In this context, DEI training and policies are a complimentary corollary to Regional, Culture, and Language Familiarization—an opportunity to reflect on our own social and cultural factors to effectively leverage the mosaic of individuals that make up our organization.

This view is in line with our bedrock leadership principles. *MCRP 6-11B, Marine Corps Values: A User’s Guide for Discussion Leaders*, believes that knowing your Marines and looking out for their welfare is “one of the most important of the leadership principles.”<sup>10</sup> But the mandate to “get to know and *understand* the Marines under your command” takes more cog-

nitive awareness and mental fitness than simply recalling a Marine’s name, rank, and hometown.<sup>11</sup> To truly “determine what your unit’s mental attitude is,” a leader must “develop a genuine interest in people” to understand an individual’s background, experiences, and how their unique history and culture have shaped their particular point of view.<sup>12</sup>

For instance, it is informative to note that the majority of age groups that make up our ranks expect, if not demand, to be part of a diverse organization that is both genuinely concerned for their welfare and appreciative of individual uniqueness. A 2021 study into what people want from their employers found that being part of an organization that truly cares about employees’ well-being was the number one issue for younger Millennials and Gen Z (born 1989–2001) as well as older Millennials (1980–1988), and was the second most important issue for Gen X (1965–1979).<sup>13</sup> Additionally, another top priority for younger Millennials and Gen Z respondents was for an organization to be “diverse and inclusive of all people” because they consider DEI “not a ‘nice to have’ ... [but] an imperative that is core to their personal identities.”<sup>14</sup> Of course, we cannot simply shape our policy based solely on popular opinion, but we nevertheless need to pay attention to these salient points.

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**... DEI training and policies are ... an opportunity to reflect on our own social and cultural factors to effectively leverage the mosaic of individuals that make up our organization.**

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Armed with a comprehensive knowledge of the authentic diversity of our Marines, a leader can effectuate another leadership principle: employ your command in accordance with its capabilities. It is only by having a diverse pool to draw from, and then truly knowing the Marines that comprise that group, that a leader is best equipped to bring their unique talents to bear on the task

at hand. Nowhere is that premise more evident than in the balance between the art and science of warfare described in *Warfighting*:

Various aspects of war fall principally in the realm of science, which is the methodical application of the empirical laws of nature ... [but that] does not describe the whole phenomenon. An even greater part of the conduct of war falls under the realm of art, which is the employment of creative or intuitive skills.<sup>15</sup>

Certainly, there are aspects of our profession in which uniformity is critical to ensure that we are all using the same terminology and methodology to proverbially “row the boat” in the same direction—that is the science. But there is one area that we cannot afford to ignore the tangible benefits of our differences, and that is in the realm of diversity of thought. The ever-changing face of the future fight dictates “the same way of framing a problem, the same opinion, or the same perspective just won’t do.”<sup>16</sup>

The art of warfare requires creativity that thrives in diverse groups, where individuals from different backgrounds—whether it is race, gender, national origin, MOS, Service, or any other defining characteristic—are both included and actively participate in “open, dynamic, and respectful collaboration to understand, frame, and solve problems.”<sup>17</sup> This is not just a sugges-

tion, but a duty prescribed by *MCDP 1* to have honest and frank discussions “regardless of disparity” in rank and “provide honest, professional opinions” even when they differ from the senior’s opinion.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, it is a practice born from hard lessons. Since the early 1960s and the Bay of Pigs debacle, the military has been committed to avoiding the groupthink that dominated that



flawed approach.<sup>19</sup> Historically our focus has primarily been on how our biases may skew our thinking toward our adversaries. It seems only logical that similar awareness and scrutiny need to be exercised internally, using DEI training to discuss the possibility of bias, intentional or unintentional.

To avoid the harm of groupthink and gain the advantage of DEI, there is another leadership principle at play, and it is perhaps the most difficult to apply: know yourself and seek self-improvement. Our human tendency is to believe that we are objective, when in fact “we see the world, not as it is, but as we are—or, as we are conditioned to see it.”<sup>20</sup> Accordingly, *MCDP 7* tells leaders to develop a level of introspection coupled with “self-awareness of the personal factors that can detract from learning, such as hubris (i.e., ego) and bias.”<sup>21</sup> This is echoed in the recently released *Training and Education 2030* strategy, where the Commandant reiterates the importance of out-thinking our adversaries by “forcing Marines to contend with their assumptions, perceptions, and concepts.”<sup>22</sup> Again, we have long endeavored to do hard critical thinking when it comes to our enemies, but we must also do the much harder task of turning those same critical thinking skills to assess ourselves, especially when it comes to how we deal with our own people. DEI allows us to apply the same concepts to what the Marine Corps has long considered to be our greatest asset—our Marines.

Both parts of Sun Tzu’s famous maxim apply here: as a military leader, you must know the enemy *and* know yourself. To be a more effective fighting force, we must accept the reality that our blind spots apply equally to our view of the world outside and inside our organization. Harnessing the power of diversity requires that we actively think about the way we think—to get different answers, we must include and listen to different perspectives in the room. “Woke” is merely a buzzword, used like a talisman to ward off any discussion of the inherent value of DEI. But to listen to those who use woke as an invective is missing the point, turning away from the fundamental tenets of

Marine Corps leadership and practices we have already been using for years. Being aware and actively attentive to societal facts and issues is not undermining military effectiveness—it is an essential component of it.

#### Notes

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15. *MCDP 1*.

16. *DEI Strategic Plan*.

17. Keith T. Holcomb, “How Marines Can Fight the Stifling of Independent Thought,” *National Interest*, October 3, 2022, <https://nationalinterest.org/feature/how-marines-can-fight-stifling-independent-thought-205154>.

18. *MCDP 1*.

19. Keith Vore, “Understanding Groupthink,” *Small Wars Journal*, April 8, 2013, [https://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/understanding-groupthink#\\_ftn4](https://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/understanding-groupthink#_ftn4). President John F. Kennedy famously said, “how could we have been so stupid?” after the ill-conceived invasion formulated by his advisors who “stumbled over the most common traps lurking in the group decision-making terrain. ... Inadvertently, they gave each other biased feedback that made the group as a whole feel certain that it was making the right choice. They discouraged each other from looking at the flaws in their assumptions. And they ignored dissenters who tried to speak up.”

20. Stephen R. Covey, *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2013).

21. *MCDP 7*.

22. Gen David H. Berger, *Training and Education 2030*, (Washington, DC: January 2023).

> *Author’s Note: The views presented are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the views of the DOD or the Marine Corps.*



# Cooperating

by Mr. Joseph Miranda & Dr. Christopher Cummins

**M**CDP 1-3 defines *Cooperating* as the “union of self-discipline and initiative in pursuit of a common goal.” Effectively, cooperating means a team effort. It also includes such elements as combined arms tactics and joint operations. This is especially critical when forces from multiple nations are operating towards common goals in a single theater of operations.

*MCDP 1-3* also states that, “Cooperation can be viewed as a component of control.” There are two types of control: centralized and decentralized. Centralized control uses a top down flow of orders, with higher headquarters determining courses of action for subordinates. Decentralized control relies on the initiative of lower level commanders. There is a fine balance here because attempts to impose control can undermine initiative, while a lack of control can lead to individual units pursuing divergent objectives.

Cooperating comes back to the human dimension: “People who gather information, make decisions, take action, communicate, and coordinate with one another in the accomplishment of a common goal.”

We can see examples of cooperating in the Marine Corps employment of combined arms teams. The Marine Corps makes use of the Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF) to include elements of ground forces (a Marine division), aviation (Marine Air Wing) and logistics (MLG), all under a single headquarters. The MEF has its antecedents going back a century, including the Marines developing air-ground tactical cooperation during the campaign in Nicaragua during the 1920s, amphibious warfare in the 1930s, and the organization of the Amphibious Corps in World War II including Marine Divisions and

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Marine Air Groups as well as Army and Navy formations.

On a larger scale, the various military campaigns in the Persian Gulf, 1990 through 2021, saw United States in alliance with Coalition partners fight various wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. In these campaigns, cooperation was vital in gaining overall objectives and in coordinating units for operations in the field. Coalition forces in Operation DESERT STORM in 1991 conducted joint operations to clear the Iraqi military from Kuwait. Theater operations coordinated ground forces with airpower, the latter under a joint air tasking system maximizing the employment of multi-national fixed wing and helicopter assets. Part of the campaign was the coordination of an Marine Corps amphibious deception operation to further disorient the Iraqi leadership.

Much of this cooperation was the result of organizational and technological factors which had been in the making over the prior years. Notable examples include the passage of the 1986 Goldwater-Nichols Act which reorganized the U.S. armed forces to emphasize joint military operations, the implementation of the Army’s Air Land Battle doctrine, network-centric operations utilizing emerging information technologies and the global positioning system to enhance command control,

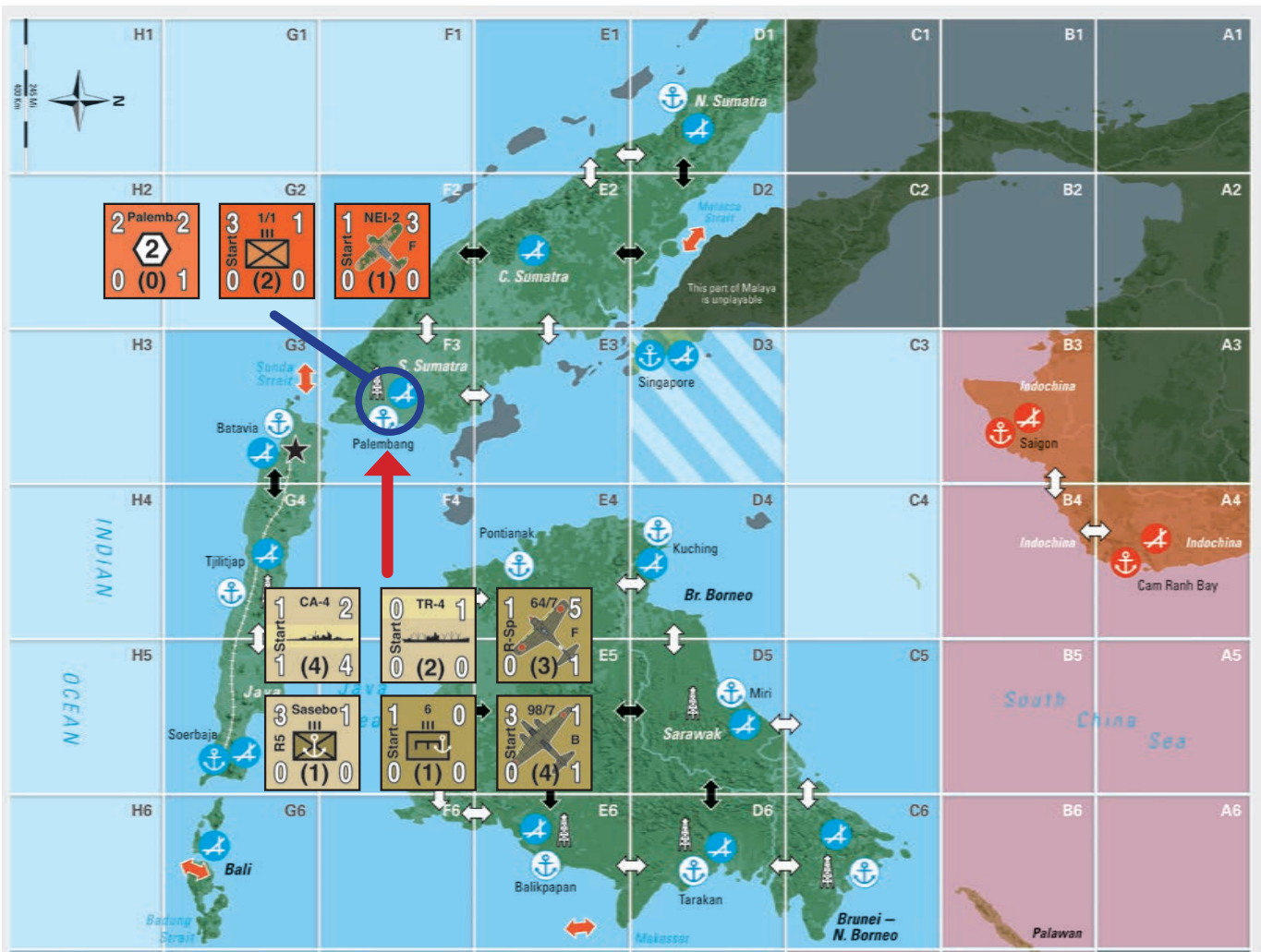
allowing for theater wide cooperation.

Wargaming shows how cooperation can be put into action.

## Cooperation in the Netherlands East Indies Campaign of 1941–42

In December 1941, Japanese forces invaded the Netherlands East Indies—the archipelago of islands stretching from Sumatra to western New Guinea that had been a Dutch colony for centuries. The Japanese objective was to seize vital resource areas, notably those containing petroleum extraction and production which had been developed by the Dutch. The Japanese offensive proved to be wildly successful, defeating Dutch, British, Australian and US forces, and conquering the East Indies in the span of three months. **Netherlands East Indies**, published in *World at War* #87, models this campaign at the operational level and provides several examples of the tenet of cooperation.

The game map is divided into grid squares which map land, sea or both types of geography. Game units include ground regiments and brigades, air groups and naval squadrons or divisions with individual aircraft carriers. The combat system is unique, providing all combat units with four combat factors (ground, air, surface naval and anti-submarine) allowing for a common combat resolution rule.



**A Japanese combined amphibious assault on Palembang. Imperial Japanese Navy forces include a special naval landing force regiment and an engineer unit, supported by fighter and bomber air groups, and gunfire support from a heavy cruiser (CA). Since all these units are part of the IJN, they can conduct a single combined Action. Allied ground forces defending the Palembang oilfields in South Sumatra include a logistical base, a Dutch infantry regiment, and Dutch fighter air group.**

The game system is based on *Actions*—discrete operations each requiring the expenditure of one or more Action Points (AP) to implement. Actions are categorized via the US staff system of G-1 (Administration), G-2 (Intelligence), G-3 (Operations) and G-4 (Logistics). One of the critical sub-categories is G-3 Combined Actions, involving more than one class of units (ground, air or naval). Combined Actions include air-ground combined attacks (close air support for ground attacks) and various types of Amphibious Assaults.

The game includes a Joint Operations rule which brings in historical coopera-

tion factors. The Japanese have two contingents, Imperial Japanese Navy (IJN) and Imperial Japanese Army (IJA). For IJN and IJA units to participate in the same Action the player must expend additional AP, representing the historical friction between the respective naval and army high commands.

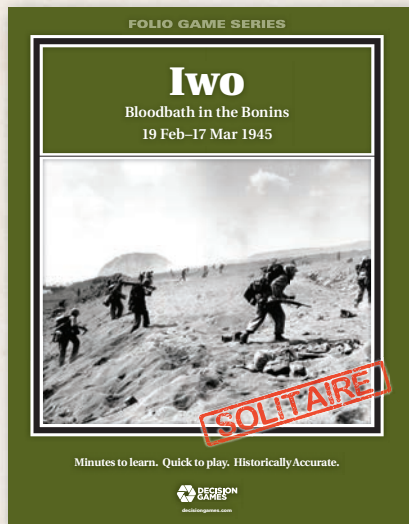
The Allies face a corresponding situation, having to expend additional AP to conduct operations involving forces of more than one nationality. This rule models differences in doctrine, tactics, and communications among the Allied militaries. While a player may appear to hold a preponderance of strength at various points in the campaign, utiliz-

ing the full range of forces can run up against that lack of cooperation between contingents. On the other hand, if a player makes the effort to cooperate by expending the additional AP, there can be a real payoff in gaining tactical and operational victories.

A critical differentiation on the game's tactical level is that the Japanese can conduct certain Actions which the Allies cannot. These include the Combined Amphibious Assault, allowing IJN naval units to provide direct support for IJA ground units making opposed landings. The Allies cannot conduct this action because of a lack of training and command/control at the early stage of the Pacific War.

Similarly, the Japanese can initiate combined air-naval attacks while the Allies cannot, adding naval aviation to support a surface attack. Again, this goes back to superior Japanese doctrine and training, especially in night opera-





**US UNITS AT SEA**

**RESERVES**

**ELIMINATED UNITS**

**AVAILABLE FOR LANDING**

**COMBAT RESULT MODIFICATIONS**

Regular Contact	Die 1 Japanese Die 2 US	Japanese Die 1 US Die 2
D6	D6 + AA	D4 + AA
D12	D12 + AA	D12 + D6 + AA
		D12 + D12

27/5  
4 2 6

2/3  
6 6 6

204  
1 2 2

310  
2 4 4 4

200  
0 2 0

149  
2 4 0

US UNITS AT SEA

RESERVES

ELIMINATED UNITS

AVAILABLE FOR LANDING

COMBAT RESULT MODIFICATIONS

Regular Contact	Die 1 Japanese Die 2 US	Japanese Die 1 US Die 2
D6	D6 + AA	D4 + AA
D12	D12 + AA	D12 + D6 + AA
		D12 + D12

**Iwo Bloodbath in the Bonins**

Iwo Jima was a critical point on the path of US bombers from their Saipan bases to their Japanese targets. The island could be a refuge for malfunctioning or damaged bombers. An obvious target for a US amphibious assault, the Japanese had reinforced the garrison and dug miles of tunnels the length and breadth of the island. Their goal was to inflict maximum casualties on the Americans to force them to reconsider the seemingly inevitable invasion of Japan. The resulting battle was brutal, even by the standards of the Pacific War.

- **Players:** 1–2
- **Level:** Battalion
- **System:** Fire & Movement

**NETHERLANDS EAST INDIES**  
1941–1942

1 3/23  
0 (3) 1

2 90/3  
0 (3) 1

3 1/1  
0 (2) 0

4 4/2  
0 (1) 0

5 1  
0 (0) 1

6 21  
0 (1) 0

7 2  
0 (1) 0

8 2  
1 (4) 5

**Netherlands East Indies: 1941 to 1942** is an operational wargame of the campaign in 1941–42 in which the Japanese seized control of the Dutch colonial empire in the South Pacific. **NEI** is a combined naval-air-land campaign, in which operational capabilities can be decisive. The game system shows the effects of various operations over the course of a scenario. Players conduct actions which encompass discrete combat, logistical, intelligence and other operations. A player can conduct one or more actions per turn. All units in the game use a similar combat system. The system shows the interaction of naval, air and land forces. At stake: the resources of the South Seas and the gateways to the Indian Ocean and Australia.



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# The Armor Room Concept?

by Capt Michael A. Hanson

**M**AGTF WARFIGHTING EXERCISE 3-22 at Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center in Twentynine Palms, CA, was a huge success for the infantryman and the infantry leader. This exercise revealed cracks in a rigid and uncompromising mindset that has been hard to shake, simply because it is what we have been doing for the last twenty years and most Marines today simply cannot imagine not doing it.

At MAGTF WARFIGHTING EXERCISE 3-22, all three battalions under 7th Mar dropped small arms protective inserts (SAPI) plates to execute a series of night foot movements that exceeded twenty kilometers for some units. 7th Mar did not have the organic lift to move three battalions, so the Ripper Regiment planned to close with the enemy the old-fashioned way. It was May and the temperatures in Twentynine Palms were approaching 100 degrees in the daytime. With the amount of chow and water the Marines would have to carry, something had to give. That something was the SAPI plates, which, per the Infantry T&R Manual are 28 lbs (just front and back plates, not including sides) with the plate carrier.<sup>1</sup> However, it took an order from the regimental commander to take this step because some Marines are just used to doing things the way they have always been done since the days of the Global War on Terror.

What Ripper 6 did was push this organization into taking a huge step forward. He nudged the infantry, and the greater Marine Corps, toward significant progress. The results speak for themselves: elements of 3/4 Mar, for example, moved from Engineer's Pass to Range 630 (over 20 kilometers in rugged terrain) with *no* heat cases. Now, there were definite logistical challenges, and these units performed herculean efforts to resupply their Marines with water so they could keep moving, but there were *no* heat cases. This is unheard of in Twentynine Palms, and everyone agrees it would not have been possible wearing SAPI plates. It would not have been possible because, for that 28 lbs of body armor, the Marines could not have carried enough water to go these distances, over this terrain. That is precisely the point here, there comes a trade-off with body armor, and the trade-off is in performance.

Some people will say, "If you drop SAPI plates you're going to take casualties on the objective." In response, I would like to point out that none of that matters if you cannot make

**>Capt Hanson is the last Weapons Company Commander at 3/4 Mar, as the battalion transitions to the IBX30 table of organization.**

it to the objective in the first place. If you are carrying so much weight in ammo, water, chow, and body armor that you cannot even make it to the objective, then it simply does not matter. Nothing else does. Furthermore, if you cannot hold the objective because you could not bring enough batteries, ammo, chow, or water that you cannot last long enough to be reinforced, then again, it does not matter.

**... there comes a trade-off with body armor, and the trade-off is in performance.**

Dropping SAPI plates is a valid tactic, technique, and procedure. If it was not, the subject-matter experts at the Marine Corps' Mountain and Jungle Warfare Training Centers would not teach it. It is absolutely true that there are some missions that will require Marines to move light, move fast, or devote every pound they carry to sustainment. When this inevitable mission arrives, we owe it to the Marines and their leaders to give them the best chance to accomplish this mission. Just as the Marine Corps is exploring the feasibility of an *arms room concept* to allow commanders to specifically tailor their weapons suite to the requirements of the mission, the Corps should extend commanders the same latitude to plan their personal protective equipment requirements to their mission. If the mission commander decides to drop SAPI plates, then it is his risk to assume. Who knows, the Marines may even accomplish their mission.

## Notes

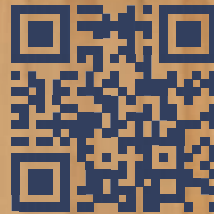
1. Headquarters Marine Corps. *NAVMC 3500.44D, Infantry Training and Readiness Manual*, (Washington DC: 2020).



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# DÜNKIRCHEN 1940

reviewed by LtCol Stuart R. Lockhart (Ret)

***Dünkirchen 1940 cuts through Churchillian rhetoric to account for the miracle of Dunkirk through German eyes. Hitler's generals thought Dunkirk an untidy battle with an unsatisfactory outcome, an awkward signpost on the road to Paris and beyond. As Robert Kershaw expertly reveals, it was this inherent German misunderstanding of the significance of the battle and the numerous German strategic and tactical miscalculations that turned the tide of the war.***<sup>1</sup>

It is an oft-cited cliché that “history is written by the victors.” While it is true that the history of wars may be written by the victors, the history of the campaigns within those wars often receives a different treatment. This includes the decisively won German campaign against France and the Low Countries in May 1940 (*Fall Gelb* or “Case Yellow”), among others. Our commonly held view of this event is still largely formed by the Allied and German propaganda of the era—of numerous German panzers well supported by wailing Stuka dive-bombers overrunning hapless Allied defenders. It is the “*Blitzkrieg*” of modern mythology—a term, both at the time and today, that has no common or precise meaning.<sup>2</sup> Our view of the “miracle of Dunkirk,” the evacuation of the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) from France back to England, is overwhelmingly British and one that is awash in the “Churchillian rhetoric” described above. This view has only been reinforced in (British) film depictions of

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*Mrs. Miniver* from 1942 and more recently from 2017 with *Darkest Hour* and *Dunkirk*. In short, the plucky escape of the British Army from the overwhelming power of the German Army had everything to do with Winston Churchill's steadfast leadership and the ability of Britain to muster overnight a fleet of shallow-draft civilian craft, with the support of the Royal Navy at sea and the Royal Air Force overhead, to miraculously pull its army off the beach to fight again another day.

On the other hand, German views of Dunkirk tend toward the overly simplistic: that the German Army, on



DÜNKIRCHEN 1940: The German View of Dunkirk. By Robert Kershaw. Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2022. ISBN: 978-1472854377 352 pp.

the cusp of administering the coup de grace to the doomed BEF, was held back from doing so because of the meddling of *Der Führer* and to the inept and unwise judgment of *Reichsmarschall* Hermann Göring, who gave the *Luftwaffe* the task of destroying the British Army marooned on the French beaches. Karl-Heinz Frieser's *The Blitzkrieg Legend: The 1940 Campaign in the West* has been one of the few books translated into English to offer an exceedingly detailed and insightful German view of the 1940 Western campaign. Although Frieser covers the planning and initial actions well—from the crossing of the Meuse River and the breakthrough at Sedan on 14 May—from the perspective of Army Group A, his explanations of German actions closing in on the BEF and Dunkirk fall short of a full description as to what happened and why. He focuses his narrative on the impact of the British/French armored counterattack at Arras on 21 May and how Hitler's “Halt Order” of 24 May stemmed from a “flank psychosis” at the top. This had been created by the overwhelming success of Panzer



Group Kleist to punch through to the English Channel while leaving its accompanying infantry and logistics train well behind. Frieser presents a worthwhile read, but one is left wanting to know more about this final and critical act of Case Yellow.

Robert Kershaw's *Dünkirchen 1940: The German View of Dunkirk* fills the void in existing English-language narratives. Kershaw, a former British Army officer and defense analyst who is fluent in German, has delivered once again a much more thorough and balanced view of what was going on inside of the German camp. His 1996 title, *It Never Snows in September*, provides a similar German perspective on the 1944 Battle of Arnhem. Although Dunkirk and Arnhem are two World War II battles that outwardly resist comparison, he poignantly describes their inherent similarity: "Both Dunkirk and Arnhem were catastrophes, celebrated in British military history and folklore as examples of outstanding human endeavor. For the Germans, they were militarily insignificant."<sup>3</sup>

This perspective on the part of the Germans and the challenges they faced during their campaign against the West has been missing in mainstream conversation on the miracle of Dunkirk. As Kershaw describes, as the BEF moved back to the English Channel along with remnants of Belgian and French armies caught in the encirclement north of the Somme, the Germans felt they were facing a defeated enemy based on the amount of equipment left behind in the retreat. After the last British soldier left Dunkirk on 4 June, the German high command calculated that 62 Allied divisions had been eliminated, with another 17 at reduced effectiveness at the completion of Case Yellow.<sup>4</sup> Observing these losses and the fact that the BEF constituted only ten divisions, Hitler felt, "The British had no relevance ... they had been the smallest opposing contingent in any case."<sup>5</sup>

Kershaw paints a detailed picture of the operational challenges that faced the German Army as its attack on the West unfolded. By the third

week in May, two Army Groups were converging on the channel ports from two different directions: Army Group A, the main effort with Panzer Group Kleist, advanced from the south after breaking through at Sedan racing to the coast while Army Group B had marched and fought through Holland, Belgium, and Northern France against the best and more mobile Allied divisions including the BEF. As the two armies came together, there was confusion in the German high command on how to proceed—it was a problem of command and control and battle-space management between converging forces. Then, in confronting the defeated Allied armies in Flanders, the Germans also had to reckon with the start of their next phase of their campaign, *Fall Röt* or "Case Red," the follow-on attack on southern France that included the capture of Paris and the defeat of the remaining 80 divisions on the French order of battle. Faced with the start of the next phase of their operation, senior German leaders were eager to withdraw the forces, especially the important armored units, from what appeared to be a "fait accompli" at Dunkirk to prepare for the next offensive to the south. Kershaw writes, "German soldiers found themselves in the invidious position of fighting and dying for objectives already proclaimed a victory back home in the *Reich*. They were as exhausted as their opponents."<sup>6</sup> Unsurprisingly, the defeat of the French Army, the Germans' historic and most powerful foe, remained their preoccupation throughout this campaign.

Add to this situation the effects of a shrinking Allied perimeter with stiffening resistance because of the resolve and tenacity of the BEF and defending French units, and facing terrain that was crossed with numerous canals and water obstacles restricting the movement of armored and motorized units, the German delay to finish the BEF comes better into focus. Kershaw uses accounts from senior officers to the average *Soldat* to convincingly show the challenging situation that faced German forces as they

moved against Dunkirk and why their momentum slowed in the face of the Clausewitzian "friction" impeding their ability to complete the capture of the BEF before its evacuation. As opposed to widely held views of British "luck" and Hitler's questionable judgment, there were very real problems facing the German armies as they converged on Dunkirk—problems that took time to resolve while preparing for subsequent operations. It was this pause in German operations brought on by the tactical situation, defensible terrain, and bad weather that precluded effective *Luftwaffe* operations, which the British used to their advantage to withdraw the BEF to safety.

In summary, Robert Kershaw's *Dünkirchen 1940* is truly an outstanding and insightful read that brings more than a few Ah-ha! moments. The book provided so much more nuance to the German view of this battle that for anyone with an interest in the 1940 French campaign, or as a follow-on to Frieser's *The Blitzkrieg Legend*, it is an absolute must-read! It is also a superb book for the current military professional in operational planning and a case study of how staffs must work through emergent battlefield problems encountered in offensive warfare.

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#### Notes

1. Robert Kershaw, *Dünkirchen 1940: The German View of Dunkirk* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2022), dustjacket summary.

2. "In sober military language, there is hardly any other word that is so strikingly full of significance and at the same time so misleading and subject to misinterpretation." See Karl-Heinz Frieser, *The Blitzkrieg Legend: The 1940 Campaign in the West* (Annapolis: USNI, 2005).

3. *Dünkirchen 1940*.

4. *Ibid.*

5. *Ibid.*

6. *Ibid.*



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