

# Quality over Quantity

Training command structure can impact the fleet

by LtCol Alexandra Gerbracht & LtCol Jason Johnston

The Training Command mission is to produce officer and enlisted entry-level MOS, career progression, and career enhancement skills to meet Fleet Marine Force (FMF) requirements and sustain the transformation. Although capable of making mission today, Training Command is not adequately manned, organized, or equipped for a 21st century learning approach that prepares Marines to defeat a qualitative and quantitative peer adversary. Necessary investments in training and education are essential to increasing readiness across the force. The *38th Commandant's Planning Guidance* (Washington, DC: HQMC, July 2019) and *MCDP 7, Learning* (Washington, DC: HQMC, February 2020), highlight the need to focus on how best to train and educate today's Marine. A wholesale reorganization of Training Command, including a tailored headquarters, would better enable formal learning centers (FLCs) to deliver a modern learning eco-system suited for today's learner and produce a higher quality Marine for the FMFs.

From 23 February to 13 March 2020, Training Command assembled a "bottom up" Design Operational Planning Team (OPT) from 17 major subordinate elements (MSEs) representing 87 total FLCs to analyze and provide recommendations on reforming the organization. Commanding General, Training Command, specifically tasked the OPT to provide recommendations on how to best orient and organize the command as dictated by the *38th Commandant's Planning Guidance*. The Commandant requires that our education and training system undergo substantial reforms to meet the challenges of the future operating environment. The OPT started with a question, "How do we make better Marines?" and evolved from there.

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In its entirety, the OPT sought to reduce inefficiencies and add capabilities, thereby enabling our schoolhouses to better train and educate Marines.

## Current Environment

Since 2008, Training Command has grown from 52 to 87 FLCs and increased the number of programs of instruction from 215 to 611 between 1996-2017, respectively. Despite the significant increase in mission across Training Command, the headquarters staff and FLC staffs have not grown to support this increase. Within Training Command, FLC understaffing has encumbered our instructors with collateral duties, thus setting the conditions of *instructors not instructing*. In recent years, Training Command attempted to introduce new teaching methodologies to enhance learning, increase efficiencies, and ensure curricula meet emergent operational requirements. Modernizing the learning environment has been stifled as a result of staff and budget shortfalls, competing priorities, and low manning prioritization for the Supporting Establishment. Continued inefficiency across Training Command derives from a confusing line and block chart organization. For example, Marine Detachment Fort Gordon, at the Army's Cyber Center of Excellence, has multiple command and control arrangements, such as being administratively aligned to Marine Aviation Training and Support Group 21, a colonel commander in charge of

production of entry-level pilots. Operationally, the Marine Cyber Detachment submits period of instruction approval for its satellite communication training through Marine Corps Communication Electronic School at Twentynine Palms to Training Command. This ineffective alignment forces the geographically-isolated detachment to coordinate requirements with multiple chains of command. Regional alignment with a mixed MAGTF construct attempted to reduce temporary additional duty travel costs and allow colonel-level sexual assault reporting authorities at the cost of a more efficient functional set up. The FLCs have fallen behind FMF requirements and need to reorganize in order to increase the quality of entry-level trained Marines.

The OPT conducted problem framing with input from across Training Command and their higher headquarters, Training and Education Command (TECOM). The group received informational briefs regarding shifts in manning, MOS production management, and outcomes-based learning. The problem statement developed; the *38th Commandant's Planning Guidance* and the publication of *MCDP 7, Learning*, signify an elevation in training and education prioritization to equal that of "man" and "equip." The Marine Corps must train and educate adaptable warfighters capable of fighting and winning in dispersed and contested environments. Continuous production of MOS proficient Marines and Sailors

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**2020 Theme** | The Future of Civil-Military Operations and Civil Affairs Marines.

**Question** | As our service implements a historic effort to modernize the Marine Corps for the era of great power competition, how should it plan and execute Civil-Military Operations across the competition and conflict continuum? What relevant lessons should the Corps sustain from almost two decades of “war among the people” to prepare commanders and posture our Civil Affairs Marines to inform, influence, shape and gain access to the cognitive civil environment in support of a naval campaign against a peer adversary?

## Deadline

31 August 2020

## Prizes

1st Prize - \$3000  
2nd Prize - \$2000  
3rd Prize - \$1000

## 2500 to 3000 word limit

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**Marine Corps Combat Service Support School is an example of a FLC. (Photo by LCpl Laura Mercado.)**

requires Training Command to foster a learning culture that imbues our war-fighting ethos and modern battlefield success requires increased value on the quality of graduates. Currently, Training Command is not resourced or organized to manage the Information Age learning model. Training Command must optimize its structure, policy, and personnel to prepare resilient Marines and Sailors to succeed on tomorrow's dispersed and contested battlefields.

### Today's Learner

Currently, there are 88,000 Marines between the ages 18-24 within the Corps' ranks. These Marines likely experienced a different educational upbringing that is far from our current Industrial Age mass-production/reduced quality academic methodology. Modern high schools and colleges are more student-centered, hyper-connected to data, foster group collaboration, and use an over-the-shoulder instructional design to coach and mentor. Many of our schools are still front-facing classrooms based on lectures, memorizing and regurgitating facts, and with as few instructors as safely possible. Training Command needs to shift to a learning environment that takes advantage of millennial learning methods emphasizing teamwork, group problem solving, and the intuitive thinking that will

enable our Marines to out-think and out-pace the enemy. Even though technology is not a silver bullet solution, the Marine Corps is not taking advantage of the way Millennials have grown up learning. Our junior Marines' capabilities to data mine, seek and share information, and work in informal groups do not align with our current outdated learning environment, curriculum, and instructor development programs.

### Necessary Investments

Training Command's attachment to the Industrial Age educational model has resulted in the preponderance of our schools being inflexible and overly structured. This system allows for easy standardization and alignment with static training and readiness standards, but no longer works to prepare Marines for the constantly changing battlefield. Training Command reorganization must include instructor development and taking advantage of existing technologies.

The existing instructional model does not support the desired educational end state, focuses on quantity over quality, and does not prioritize manpower, instructor screening, resources, information sharing, and learning. The instructor-to-student ratio must be lowered to redesign the learning environment with over-the-shoulder mentoring that allows for advising,

guiding, and coaching students. "21st Century Learning" instructors use adult learning techniques in which problem-solving methodology challenges trainees to tackle challenges in groups while working in a collaborative class. FLCs need more instructors floating, advising, and coaching students inside this method. Instructors at FLCs need to be screened, trained, and developed to hone these facilitation skills and then bring those skills back out to the FMF. The OPT recommended moving Train the Trainer School capabilities up to the Training Command headquarters and combining with curriculum developers to coordinate both instructors and instruction evolving together and being equally disseminated to all the FLCs. Centralizing instructor development allows Training Command to have one organization focused on learning and teaching to connect outward with the FMFs.

Today's Marines are aggressive and agile in the information environment, and the Marine Corps is not taking advantage of digital native capabilities to seek answers, data mine, move data, and leverage their natural inquisitiveness. Modern, interactive learning aids that incorporate artificial intelligence, virtual reality, and simulation technology in the classroom will enhance learning. Instead of a one-time purchase in which the devices will shortly become obsolete and need replacement and software updates, we should allow students to bring their own devices to connect to schoolhouse networks. More "beeps and squeaks" are not the answer, but using existing technology (Moodle, MarineNet, MS teams, Adobe Connect, etc.) to connect students prior to classroom time will only increase knowledge retention through more "reps and sets."

Collaboration with academia and industry partners is also crucial to enhance instructor development, improve delivery methods, and perform assessments that offer a known point into which we can invest or divest methods and processes. Currently, there is no suitable feedback mechanism to measure the quality or failure of Training Command products and improve programs of instruction. Feedback and as-

assessment methods connecting the FMF and FLCs, that develop the curriculum, do not currently exist. To better develop the quality of Marines needed in a peer-to-peer fight, the Marine Corps needs to know its return on investment in Training Command.

### Organizational Change

The Training Command OPT tackled five specific questions: what should the Training Command headquarters staff look like; how should major subordinate units be categorized; what should the subordinate table of organization look like; should the subordinate units be regionally or functionally aligned; and what is the optimal naming convention? The group started by answering how the 87 FLCs should be organized and developed three courses of action: modified regional course of action, a MAGTF functional alignment, and a regional coordination authority course of action.

Firstly, the modified regional course of action slightly adjusts the current structure to better enable efficiency and modernization. The table of organization manning precedence for Weapons Training Battalion and the Training Command staff needs to increase. The current structure provides a good framework; however, Training Command requires an increase in manning precedence levels so the FLCs have the required personnel to instruct and support. Consolidating schools and shifting non-MOS producing schools to MAGTF Training Command are suggested adjustments. The most significant request is to increase Marine Detachment Fort Lee from a lieutenant colonel slated command to colonel for the school. These changes would provide the requisite capabilities at each FLC to accomplish their respective missions and alleviate the burden on Training Command headquarters where possible.

Second, the MAGTF functional organization course of action reorganizes Training Command functionally based on the MAGTF model (ACE, GCE, LCE, and C4I [command, control, communication, computers, and intelligence]). The functional alignment allows MSEs to command and control the entirety of MOS pipelines that belong to an occupational field, as well as all of the students and permanent personnel. This enables MSEs to provide enhanced continuity of support to personnel and improve implementation of the transformation enhancement program. This organization better supports Training Command headquarters staff sections already aligned in MAGTF bins, resulting in clearer administrative control/operational control lines between MSEs and Training Command and its FLCs. Furthermore, FLCs can accelerate the *Commandant's Planning Guidance* directed modernization when they are better aligned to share community-

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**We have to adjust our teaching methods and move out of the Industrial Age teaching model.**  
(Photo by LCpl Mackenzie Binion.)

specific tactics, techniques, and procedures as well as drive implementation while Training Command can more efficiently resource instructor development and modernization enablers.

The third reorganization course of action was establishment of a regional coordinating authority. The regional coordination authority structure could expand FLC access to capabilities while minimizing growth at Training Command headquarters. This COA empowers subordinate units with relevant authorities and access to additional staff capacity. Structurally, the course of action refines existing regional alignments while leveraging targeted functional alignment for the aviation occupational fields. The most novel component is the designation of regional coordinating authorities (RCA). In each region, an existing colonel command, designated as the RCA, would be augmented with additional staff capacity and authorities. RCAs would be capable of performing specified support functions for all FLCs within their region and provide for continuity and the equitable application of delegated authorities.

The OPT also recommended minor changes and structure increases for the training command staff. A unit the size of Training Command with over 7,000 Marines and Sailors on the morning

report needs increased legal capacity. Training Command needs to increase personnel within the G-6 (Communications) to accommodate instruction modernization using software and hardware solutions. Instructor and curriculum development must combine and reside at the headquarters level and link to the FMF units to spread the adult learning methods Training Command is employing. Organic medical planners and providers—combined with inter-Service liaison for FLCs located aboard sister Service installations—will help to resource schools across the enterprise and ensure students have the appropriate medical support and screening for follow-on positions.

Organizationally, there is significant misunderstanding regarding Training Command units that look similar to regiments in shape and size but are named detachments. There are other FLCs called detachments that are squad sized. To assist in clarifying this issue, the OPT recommended a naming convention using the terms school, academy, and center to differentiate training and operational units and to clarify purpose. For example, Marine Detachment Fort Leonard Wood becomes the Marine Corps Maneuver Support Schools, and Infantry Training Battalion at the SOI turns into the Infantry

Training Academy. Clarifying the units which fall under Training Command would improve understanding across the TECOM enterprise and the greater institution as well as better link FLCs with the Fleet.

### Broad Recommendations

The rich discussions on training, education, and reorganization brought up a number of topics that did not easily fit into the five questions. Additional suggestions to improve the enterprise include changing TECOM to Learning Command. TECOM needs to better integrate learning tools with FMF units by employing Marines with a formal instructor MOS. The Marine Corps needs to rewrite the Formal School Management Order, *MCO 1553.2C* (Washington, DC: HQMC, 2016), and employ a faster system for program of instruction development that links with training and readiness standards, yet still allows for more flexibility based on emerging threats. The Marine Corps overall needs to refocus on quality at the advanced skill levels, while understanding the need to maintain entry-level student production. There is a lack of capability to address and teach resiliency at all levels but especially within our entry-level training continuum.

One of the most important investments the Marine Corps can make is in the training of its Marines. On the heels of the Commandant's prioritization in education and training, and the publishing of *MCDP 7, Learning*, now is the time to optimize production, enhance the transformation, drive innovation, and continue to improve the workforce all while maximizing established finite resources. The work performed by the Design Team OPT offers recommendations that will create a more efficient, productive, and capable Training Command by transitioning into an overdue Information Age educational approach, that is focused on producing better prepared Marines for future conflict. The need to evolve our learning system and translate innovative ideas into action is imperative to make quality Marines capable of success on the 21st century battlefield.

