

Artificial Intelligence as a Force Multiplier for Marines

Transformative potential

by LtCol Jack Sile (Ret)

In battle, split-second decisions often define success or failure. Marines have long relied on their training and leadership to navigate the complexities of warfare. However, as today's battlefield becomes increasingly data-driven, it requires tools that can match its complexity. Enter artificial intelligence (AI): a force multiplier that enhances, not replaces, the human element.

Despite its transformative potential, the military has yet to fully integrate AI at the pace necessary to keep up with evolving threats. As GEN Mark Milley and Eric Schmidt recently pointed out, "The military has not yet embraced artificial intelligence ... its efforts are moving too slowly."¹ This underscores the need and opportunity for the Marine Corps to take the lead in AI integration. However, unlocking AI's full potential requires specialized solutions that go beyond off-the-shelf technologies. Artificial intelligence and large language model (LLM) systems, developed with a deep understanding of military needs, offer the precision and adaptability necessary to elevate decision-making and operational capabilities.

Integrating AI is not just about adopting new technology—it is about mastering it. Tailored training programs built around mission-specific AI/LLM capabilities will be crucial in preparing Marines to harness these systems effectively. Working with trusted partners who can deliver advanced

>LtCol Sile is a retired Intelligence Officer. He currently works at Joint Computer Technologies & Training Management, leveraging his extensive expertise in intelligence operations and technologies.

training in these systems will ensure that Marines remain ready to lead on the modern battlefield.

AI in Command and Control (C2)

Command and control is the nerve center of any military operation. The ability to process vast amounts of information quickly and accurately can mean the difference between success and failure. That is where AI steps in by helping commanders sort through data from land, sea, air, space, and cyber domains. By turning raw data into clear, actionable insights, AI gives commanders the edge they need to make fast, informed decisions in increasingly complex environments.

But the key to success is not just having AI systems in place—it is about knowing how to use them effectively. AI systems designed specifically for military decision making can filter out unnecessary noise, focusing on the data that matters most. These systems help commanders stay on top of fast-moving situations, but Marines must understand how to trust the insights these

systems provide—without losing sight of the human judgment that has always been at the core of leadership.²

The most effective way to ensure balance is through tailored training programs that not only focus on the technology but also help Marines master the art of using it in conjunction with their own judgment. By training with AI systems designed for their specific needs, Marines can ensure that AI becomes an invaluable tool in the decision-making process, not a replacement for it.

AI in Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR)

On today's battlefield, it is no longer enough to gather intelligence—you need to process it fast, make sense of it, and act on it. The problem is that there is more data out there than ever before.³ That is where AI makes a real difference. It can sift through massive amounts of information—from satellite images to intercepted communications—and highlight what matters most, in realtime.

But let's be honest: AI is only as good as the people using it. Artificial intelligence platforms built for ISR can take this capability to the next level by integrating multiple data streams into one coherent picture. However, to make the most of these systems, Marines need training that is specifically tailored to how these platforms work in the real world. That means teaching them not just how to operate AI but how to

interpret what it is telling them so they can react quickly and with confidence.

Ultimately, AI should be seen as a tool that enhances the instincts and experience of Marines in the field—not something that replaces them. The right function-specific training can make sure that AI works in harmony with the skills and insights that Marines already bring to the table.

Fires in the Age of AI

Precision, timing, and coordination are critical to effective fires. As warfare becomes more complex, AI enhances the fires warfighting function by improving targeting accuracy and speed. Artificial intelligence-driven systems can identify high-value targets and adjust fire missions in realtime based on changing battlefield conditions.

Large language models assist fires by streamlining communication and coordination, ensuring fire missions comply with legal standards, and facilitating joint operations across domains.⁴ However, integrating AI into fires presents ethical challenges. The Marine Corps must rigorously test and validate AI systems to ensure they distinguish between combatants and non-combatants, upholding the principles of proportionality and distinction. Human oversight remains critical, as commanders must retain the ability to intervene and disable AI systems if they behave unexpectedly.

For AI to truly transform the fires domain, AI solutions tailored for targeting and fire control offer a level of precision and adaptability that off-the-shelf systems cannot match. These solutions are designed to evolve with the complexities of modern warfare, offering an edge in contested environments. Training Marines to integrate these advanced tools requires expertise that matches the sophistication of the systems themselves. Partnerships with providers specializing in specialized AI systems will be crucial for ensuring that these tools enhance the precision and ethical standards of fire missions.

AI in Maneuver

Maneuver warfare, central to Marine Corps philosophy, focuses on agility,

seizing the initiative, and outmaneuvering the enemy mentally and physically, as outlined in *MCDP 1, Warfighting*.⁵ It is a fast-paced, ever-changing environment, and AI is tailor-made to help Marines navigate that complexity. Artificial intelligence can give commanders realtime insights into enemy movements, predict how the battlefield will evolve, and offer tactical options based on a wealth of data.

What's key here is that AI designed for military operations is not one-size-fits-all. Artificial intelligence systems, built with maneuver warfare in mind, can integrate critical battlefield information—from terrain and weather to

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enemy force composition—and provide realtime solutions that fit the specific scenario Marines are facing. The *DOD's 2023 AI Strategy* highlights the importance of such capabilities for maintaining an operational edge in complex battlespaces.⁶

However, even the best AI cannot operate in isolation. Marines need to understand how to blend AI insights with their tactical expertise. This is where custom training programs play a crucial role. These programs teach Marines not only how to operate AI systems but also how to trust them when it counts and, just as importantly, when to rely on their instincts. With the right training, AI becomes a powerful partner in maneuver warfare, helping Marines stay agile and ahead of the curve.

AI in Logistics

Logistics is critical to sustaining military operations. Artificial intelligence optimizes supply chain management by predicting supply needs, coordinating transportation, and tracking inventory in realtime, ensuring that supplies reach the frontlines efficiently.⁷

The future of logistics depends on AI platforms built to handle military-specific complexities—from contested environments to unpredictable supply routes. Artificial intelligence and LLM systems designed for military logistics offer more than just efficiency; they provide resilience and realtime adaptability, enabling Marines to maintain continuous supply chains under duress. For these systems to reach their full potential, Marines require specialized training in advanced AI logistics platforms that integrate seamlessly with operational realities. By doing so, they will be equipped to manage AI-driven logistics in both high- and low-intensity conflicts.

AI in Force Protection

Artificial intelligence enhances force protection by analyzing data streams to detect threats faster than human operators alone. Artificial intelligence-driven systems, such as autonomous drones, can monitor perimeters and identify unusual activity, reducing risks to personnel.

To maintain the security of key assets, the Marine Corps will benefit from AI-driven force protection platforms, which offer enhanced threat detection and rapid response capabilities. These systems, designed specifically for defense, can process vast amounts of surveillance data in realtime. However, fully utilizing these platforms requires Marines to receive training built around mission-tailored AI systems that enhance operational readiness and maintain ethical oversight.

AI in Information

In the Information Age, controlling the narrative is just as important as controlling the battlefield. Artificial intelligence plays a critical role in this, helping Marines manage vast amounts of information, identify misinformation, and keep critical data secure. Whether it's monitoring social media for disinformation or detecting cyber threats before they can compromise a mission, AI helps Marines stay in control of the information environment.⁸

The real value, though, comes from AI systems that are designed to handle

the unique demands of military information operations. Artificial intelligence solutions can monitor multiple channels at once, flagging disinformation campaigns in realtime and giving Marines the tools they need to counteract these threats.

Artificial intelligence's effectiveness depends on the people using it. To make the most of these systems, Marines need training built around how AI works in the information domain. Tailored training programs can show Marines how to leverage AI to manage information flow, protect sensitive data, and make sure their operations stay secure in the face of evolving threats. By combining the power of AI with expert training, the Marine Corps can maintain a strategic advantage in the information domain.

Conclusion

Artificial intelligence is no longer a distant concept but a vital tool for the future of the Marine Corps. To remain effective in modern warfare, the Corps must fully embrace AI as part of its operational toolkit. However, it is not enough to just adopt these technologies—Marines need to master them. Artificial intelligence offers incredible advantages, from faster decision making to more precise targeting, but it is up to Marines to ensure that these tools are used properly and ethically.

The principles laid out in *Marine Corps Order 5231.4* ensure that AI is integrated responsibly and with clear oversight. Marines will always be in control, using AI to enhance their judgment rather than replace it. This human element is critical, especially when considering the ethical challenges that come with using AI in combat. The Corps will need to continue to test and validate AI systems to make sure they follow the rules of engagement and protect non-combatants.

Partnerships with private companies will play a big role in getting the most out of AI. The Corps cannot rely on off-the-shelf solutions. It needs tools that are built specifically for the challenges Marines face. By working with experts in AI and military technology, the Marine Corps can develop systems

that meet its unique needs. Continued investment in research will ensure that Marines have the best tools available when it matters most.

One area where AI will be especially important is in contested environments. In these situations, Marines might not have reliable access to communications or supplies, and AI can help navigate these challenges. Systems that can make realtime decisions based on limited data will be critical to maintaining operational continuity. Artificial intelligence will also play a major role in areas like human-machine teaming, mission planning, and assessing threats on the battlefield.

Artificial intelligence will not replace the human element in warfare ...

However, none of this will work without the right training. Marines at every level will need to learn how to use AI effectively. This training cannot be a one-time event—it must evolve along with the technology. By teaching Marines to understand, trust, and challenge AI when necessary, the Corps can ensure that AI becomes a reliable partner in the decision-making process, not a crutch.

As noted by GEN Milley and Eric Schmidt, the military has been slow to adopt AI.⁹ This presents an opportunity for the Marine Corps to lead the way. By taking decisive action now, the Corps can become a model for how AI can be used in military operations. It is not just about having the best technology—it is about staying ahead of the curve and being ready for whatever challenges the future brings.

In the end, AI is a tool that, when used correctly, can make Marines more effective and agile in the field. By investing in the right systems, training, and partnerships, the Marine Corps can ensure that it remains ready to face the challenges of tomorrow. Artificial

intelligence will not replace the human element in warfare—it will strengthen it, giving Marines the edge they need to lead and win in an increasingly complex world.

Notes

1. Mark Milley and Eric Schmidt, "America Isn't Ready for the Wars of the Future—And They're Already Here," *Foreign Affairs*, August 5, 2024, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/united-states/ai-america-ready-wars-future-ukraine-israel-mark-milley-eric-schmidt>.
2. James Mattis, *Call Sign Chaos: Learning to Lead* (New York: Random House, 2019).
3. According to the *DOD's Data Strategy*, the growth in ISR data volume has reached unprecedented levels, necessitating the use of advanced technologies like AI to manage and exploit this vast resource efficiently (Department of Defense, 2020). The National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency has also highlighted the increasing challenge of processing this data, with efforts underway to automate and enhance ISR capabilities to keep pace with the data influx (*National Defense Magazine*, 2021).
4. U.S. Department of Defense, "DOD Adopts Ethical Principles for Artificial Intelligence," *Defense.gov*, February 24, 2024, <https://www.defense.gov/News/Releases/Release/Article/2091996/dod-adopts-ethical-principles-for-artificial-intelligence>.
5. Headquarters Marine Corps, *MCDP 1, Warfighting* (Washington, DC: 1993).
6. Department of Defense, 2023 *Department of Defense Artificial Intelligence Strategy* (Washington, DC: 2023).
7. RAND Corporation, *The Impact of AI on Military Logistics* (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 2022).
8. Christopher Paul et al., *The Firehose of Falsehood: The Role of Information in 21st Century Warfare* (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 2016).
9. "America Isn't Ready for the Wars of the Future—And They're Already Here."

