



MARINES LEARN THE "JOINT"

By Col R. E. Cushman, Jr.

USED TO BE THAT THE LIFE OF A Marine was simple and uncomplicated; a career of duty within the Marine Corps, lots of landings with the Navy, and only an occasional venture in which an acquaintance with the Army developed. When we recall that joint operations are those involving two or more Services, we can see that Marines have had many joint experiences with the Navy but that it pretty well ended there. Well, is this any cause for pushing the panic button? The answer is that with the passage of the Security Act of 1947 there was established another Service, and with the development of the cold war with the Communists there was ushered in an era of unified commands around the globe. Marines must be able to contribute commanders and staff officers of the highest caliber to joint operations.

The problem is: where can they learn the basic principles of the trade? The answer: the Armed Forces Staff College.

First, let us take a look at the mission of the Armed Forces Staff College: it is to educate selected officers of the Armed Forces in joint operations, including the planning thereof, and to provide background for an appreciation of combined operations. In plain words, the object of the school is to train officers so that they can become staff officers in a joint command immediately, and can become commanders of joint forces eventually, in addition to giving them an appreciation of international commands composed of forces of several nations, such as NATO.

This mission actually expresses a need of the Armed Forces which was

recognized as early as the first year of WW II. It was evident that joint and combined operations were becoming increasingly important in the waging of the war and that there was a dearth of staff officers who understood the basic principles involved or who were aware of the capabilities and limitations of the various Services. Consequently the Joint Chiefs of Staff authorized the establishment of the Army and Navy Staff College, and the first class assembled in Washington, DC on 5 June 1943. After the end of the War, the Joint Chiefs of Staff decided to put the institution on a permanent basis and the Armed Forces Staff College was officially established in Norfolk, Virginia in August 1946. The Joint Chiefs of Staff supervise the technical direction of the College, which is numbered among the

"Joint Chiefs of Staff" joint schools along with the National War College and the Industrial College of the Armed Forces. The Department of the Navy was designated the Executive Agent and therefore is looked to by the College for operation and maintenance.

Next, a brief description of the instructional procedure used and of the course itself will be helpful in understanding how the College carries out its assigned mission. The College has two classes a year of about 21 weeks duration. Each class has about 200 students with equal numbers from each Department of the Armed Forces. Among the Navy component we find 10 Marine officer students each class; all lieutenant colonels with about 14 to 16 years service. At the present time 6 of these officers are ground and 4 are aviators. On the faculty we have 3 Marine officers: one colonel in Plans and Operations, who currently is Director of the Division, but will be relieved by an Army officer as this job is rotated among the Services, one lieutenant colonel, ground, in the Intelligence Division and one lieutenant colonel, aviator, in the Logistics Division. These Marine instructors are assigned regular teaching duties with the rest of the faculty, act as advisers to the Marine students, are consulted on matters relating to amphibious operations and are the protagonists of the Marine Corps point of view in discussions which require it.

The class is divided into 14 groups with about 14 officers in each group. The 10 Marines are assigned one to a group. These groups are called committees and are the basis for most of the instruction. The normal pattern followed is that lectures are given in the morning to the class as a whole and the afternoons are devoted to discussions and problem solving by the committees. The atmosphere is that of an institution of higher learning; there are no marks assigned, no musters or roll calls to

attend. Academic freedom prevails and free expression of individual opinions is expected. The result is that an officer benefits from the course exactly in proportion to what he puts into it in terms of his own efforts, study and self-discipline. The real "marks" which come out of the course are the opinions of one's ability by his fellow students—and their estimates can be critical indeed as some of the sharpest officers from all of the Services attend here and they are quick to recognize ability, or lack of it, in others. Difference in rank or ability to bluster will not change their judgment one iota. This is a very healthy experience for the Marines, since leadership in the committees can be exercised only by exhibiting a high order of professional knowledge and competence. This leadership is required because the students all get their turn at being the commander, the director of a staff division, or a conference leader in the hypothetical commands and staffs, or in the discussion groups which are set up to probe and solve the various problems. The instructors here do very little teaching. Rather they set forth a situation and the known facts bearing on it in such form that the students can come to grips with it. The students must then research and solve the problem, which often involves the preparation of plans and estimates, or the oral delivery of briefings similar to those given to higher commanders by their key staff officers. Instructors monitor, advise and conduct critiques. It is apparent that the student must take a mature approach to the course; very little is done for him and he must exercise his brain and his initiative, and be able to speak and think on his feet in order to stand out at the College.

The actual instruction falls into 3 main divisions. Part One comprises the orientation and background instruction required to acquaint all students with the capabilities and limitations of all the Ser-

vices. The principal means of accomplishing this is to have the students orally describe their Service to the other members of their committee, and answer their questions. Part One also includes some fine demonstrations: of aerial fire power at Eglin Air Force Base in Florida, of infantry division fire power at Fort Benning, Georgia and of naval, including amphibious, power and capabilities in the Norfolk area. Part Two of the course is devoted to joint and combined planning and operations: it is the heart of the course and half of the allotted hours are assigned to it. The principal topics are made the subject of lectures and problems and include: organization and establishment of command relationships within a theater area of responsibility; staff functioning and procedures within a unified command; initial planning within a theater of operations; the joint planning process to include the required estimates, the commander's decision, campaign planning and operational tactical and logistical planning. Conventional land, sea and air operations are considered and, in addition, amphibious and airborne warfare. Finally the existing unified and combined command structure around the world is described and analyzed. Part Three of the course is called the trends of war and is an exercise in imagination. Full reign is given to a discussion of warfare of the future and to the many divergent opinions as to the character of a possible World War III. And to put the frosting on the cake, the course finishes with a comprehensive group discussion of our National Strategy. Instead of grumbling about how "they" are doing it in Washington, the student is required to come up with *his* solution to the problems facing the country today. Since Allied observers are also in attendance at the College, one of our Marines may find himself describing how we would solve the North African crisis to a committee which includes a French officer ready, willing and able to tear his solution to shreds. This tends to stimulate research for facts and logical thinking for conclusions, as the reader can well imagine!

In conclusion, let us evaluate this Armed Forces Staff College from

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the Marine point of view. Is it of value to the Marine Corps and to the individual Marine officers who attend? First, let us see what the Staff College is *not*—it is *not* in any way a substitute for the Marine Corps Schools, nor is it competitive. All students who come to the Staff College should be thoroughly grounded in their own Service and should have attended their own Service schools, if possible, through the Senior School level at Quantico—or comparable level in the other Services. They should already know the fundamentals of command and staff functioning and procedures as practiced within their own Service. The Armed Forces Staff College requires this foundation as a base upon which to build knowledge of joint procedures and functioning.

Now to outline the benefits. First, there accrues a great intangible benefit, learning to know officers from all the Services, and, even more important, how they think. Every Service position on any controversial subject is described and discussed. The Marine knows all of these conflicting Service positions when he graduates. This is invaluable in the rough and tumble of the Pentagon conference, or in the achievement of smooth joint staff work within a unified command in the field.

Second, the Marine officer is prepared to do a good job on a joint staff, one which will reflect credit on the Marine Corps. The officer is better prepared to be an accomplished advocate of the Marine Corps position when that is necessary. And I would like to emphasize a fact which many Marine officers, particularly junior ones, do not know—there are many, many jobs for Marine officers on joint staffs, and on some staffs of other Services. They range from Tokyo to Frankfurt, from Oslo to Naples, and are found in Washington in profusion. In addition to these billets, it is getting more difficult now to find any responsible billet for a senior officer which does not require many contacts with the other Services, either to co-ordinate planning and programs or simply to attend the ubiquitous conference. It used to be that whenever two officers met they had a drink together; nowadays they hold a conference! The Staff College prepares the Marine well for these all-pervading joint aspects of modern military life.

Third and last, there is the benefit to the individual Marine himself. It is very valuable every once in a while to get a job where you have to exercise command by persuasion. You can't cover up poor thinking

and preparation by simply barking out the order to execute. You have to be able to convince by logical reasoning processes and by professional competence that your way is the best way. That is the situation which confronts the Marine student here. Also, the Marine learns that there are many problems today which are neither black nor white, but gray, and require compromise of many conflicting factors for their solution. This state of affairs is not immediately apparent to the officer in a tactical unit, where most of the answers are clearly written out in the Landing Force Manuals. It is clearly demonstrated here at the Armed Forces Staff College during the discussions at which a solution must be hammered out from the divergent views of the participating committee members.

To sum up: the Armed Forces Staff College is an outstanding school which compliments the Marine Corps schools in rounding out in excellent fashion the education of the Marine lieutenant colonel. It is highly recommended that the Marine Corps continue to fill its quota at the College, and that individuals selected to attend realize that they have been *specially* selected for a most rewarding and high-level course of instruction. US ⚔ MC



Facing Facts

⚔ A QUICK appreciation of a situation has often saved a Marine. I know of no better illustration than the following incident which occurred recently.

An inspecting officer from Headquarters was questioning vehicle operators as to their knowledge of the capabilities and limitations of their vehicles, fording depths, loads, grades that could be climbed and the like. The answers were not heartening. On his return to his quarters, he questioned the jeep driver and found that he didn't know either. When asked, the driver readily agreed that such information was important and useful. Finally, in desperation, the officer asked, "When do you think this information would be important?"

"Right now, sir!" was the laconic reply.

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RHIP

⚔ WHEN I WAS NCO-in-charge of the commissary of the Marine Detachment, American Legation, Peking, China in the 30s, I ordered some asparagus tips for sale through our small sales commissary. Through error the San Francisco depot shipped a larger quantity than the order called for, and to avoid spoilage I issued some to the general mess. The day the asparagus tips were served in the general mess the sergeant's mess had asparagus (the regular issue kind) on the menu. As the Chinese mess boy pushed the laden food cart for the sergeant's mess through the mess hall a raw-boned, red-headed corporal from Texas sitting at one of the tables eating asparagus tips drawled, "That's the way it is. The sergeants get all of the asparagus and we get only the tips."

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(The GAZETTE will pay \$10.00 for each anecdote published. Submissions should be short and pointed.)