



Commentary on the Corps

Our Corps: Quo Vadis?

by Col Charles C. Krulak

These are disturbing times for the Marine Corps—the Beirut tragedy, questions regarding our performance in Grenada, the Moscow Embassy security incident, rumors of difficulties surrounding selection boards, careerism and “cronyism”—yet these difficult days need not result in a rending of the fabric of our Corps. In fact, we can come out of them stronger than ever if we have the courage and vision to look critically at where we are now, how we got here, and where we need to go.

The first two questions are important ones; however, I will only address the last one because it is here that I feel we need to direct our immediate attention and our greatest efforts. First, let me say that when I speak of where we need to go, I do not mean from a programmatic standpoint. There are ongoing studies and established organizations to address mid- and long-range planning for the Marine Corps. What I am talking about involves the “soul” of the Corps—those almost intangible qualities that cause a lump to form in our throats when we hear “The Marine Hymn.” My comments are not intended to be accusatory or divisive in nature. To the contrary, I would hope they would inspire soul-searching on the part of all Marines and a commitment to continue doing those things that are right for our Country and our Corps. The following paragraphs discuss some of the areas that seem particularly deserving of our attention:

• **Accountability.** One of the bedrocks of our Corps is the concept that each Marine is accountable for everything he or she does or fails to do. Likewise, all commanders are accountable for everything their commands do or fail to do. It is this willingness by individual Marines to be held accountable for their actions, coupled with the resolve of our leaders to hold their Marines accountable, and to be held accountable themselves, that adds to our uniqueness. Unfortunately, the complexities of our world today sometimes ob-

scure the question of responsibility and, eventually, accountability. We in the Corps must not allow ourselves to fall prey to these complexities or allow them to dilute our concept of accountability. The bottom line must always be—we are Marines, we know our business, and we are accountable for how we conduct our business. If external agencies or personnel want to support the Marine Corps or individual Marines by talking about the complexities we face, that is fine. All that should be heard from Marines though is that we are accountable for our performance. There can be no “excuses.”

• **Discipline.** This must go hand in hand with accountability. Marines must understand there are acceptable standards for personal and professional conduct, and when these standards are violated, punishment will be swift and sure. At the same time, these same Marines must believe in their hearts and see in our actions that any discipline administered will be administered fairly and impartially. It goes without saying that discipline is for all Marines. Rank has its privileges but not in the area of discipline. The Marine Corps needs to officially reemphasize the standards of conduct expected of its members and then hold us strictly accountable to meet these standards.

• **Moral Courage.** The Marine Corps has traditionally enjoyed its greatest success when its members concentrated on doing the right things instead of doing things right. There is a big difference between the two! Specifically, there is widespread concern that some of us are more interested in looking good than being good, that some of us never stick our necks out for fear they’ll be chopped off, that being a “steeple-shaker” is not the road to advancement in today’s Corps. Whether these perceptions are true is moot—the perceptions are definitely there. We need to reinforce the value of moral courage within our ranks. The Marine who is concerned about how he appears to his seniors and how he can get a step ahead of his peers needs to be poleaxed! The Marine who has the moral courage to allow his subordinates to “test their wings,” even if it means not looking good all the time, needs to be elevated. As Sun Tzu said so very eloquently:

And therefore the general who in advancing does not seek personal fame, and in withdrawing is not concerned with avoiding punishment, but whose only purpose is to protect the people and promote the interests of his sovereign, he is the precious jewel of the state.

Because such a general regards his



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Because such a general regards his men as infants they will march with him into the deepest valleys. He treats them as his own beloved sons and they will die with him.

Our Marines need and deserve to be led by seniors who possess moral courage. They want to be part of a unit that does the right things because that is what is going to get them through the first battle of the next war.

Our Inheritance

□ . . . During my 20 years in the Corps, I became aware of the fine record my predecessors left me to live up to. It was my contention then, and it is now, that if modern day Marines do as well as the ones who wrote the record up until the time of Commandant Holcomb (1936-1943) we'd be doing damn well. I think my generation of Marines in World War II and Korea lived up to that tradition. But during the time when I helped to make history for today's Marines, from the reading of books and other publications, and from the instructions of my teachers of history and traditions, never did I find anything remotely close to the events occurring in today's Marine Corps. Some of the indicators that concern me include:

- A Marine commander of a unit in hostile country (Beirut), contrary to TBS training, common sense, and tactical competency, does not disperse his troops but gathers them into a small enclave where they are vulnerable to their potential enemies.

- A small island with the smell of nutmeg is seized from (and here it depends on who wrote the articles in the newspapers for the numbers) 600 to 1,600 Cubans that were classed as "construction workers." It took at least 7,000 troops from all of the Services to do the job. (I could never determine just how many planes, helicopters, ships, etc., were used in the operation for this is apparently the first engagement in our history that no one wishes to write about.)

- Field grade officers are embroiled in questionable political doings. If only one-

• *Professionalism.* Careerism is a cancer that is eating away at the guts of our Corps. We should face it, conquer it, and guard against its return. If one doubts that careerism is prevalent, I would only request that he or she talk to some of the monitors at Headquarters (Codes MMEA or MMOA) about the concerns their "populations" have regarding assignment to "career-enhancing" billets. If you can't reach the monitors, talk to the career planners and hear what concerns they listen to on a daily basis. Altogether too much emphasis is placed upon whether or not a Marine is selected for school, whether or not he or she hits the Fleet Marine Force at the right time for command, whether the job is "high-visibility," whether the Marine has "credibility within his occupational specialty," etc. We need Marines who

third of what one hears or reads about the fracas is true, the lack of judgment and knowledge displayed by said field grade officers represents a sharp departure from those who preceded them.

- Marine NCOs are charged not only with breaking regulations forbidding consort with nationals of the country they are serving in, but also with aiding and abetting the intelligence gathering activities of a foreign power on an installation they are charged to guard.

There are numerous lesser events that have occurred in the time period of the incidents listed above, but these are enough to show the creeping malignancy of false discipline and pride in an institution that once had the real thing. The symptoms are all around, but everyone from the Commandant to the lowest private seems to be tasked with the job of constantly saying the same exact words—"In today's Corps we have the most educated and the best men and women in the Corps' history, and they are ready for any assignment, anywhere, anytime." To me, in my latest embarrassment, anger, and dismay over the embassy fiasco, the statement is an insult to all the fine men I served with, many who died, and to all of our predecessors who we tried to emulate as faithfully as possible under some damn trying moments.

One final word on that "most educated," and here I borrow a question from a retired officer with good credentials who asked, "Educated in what?" Surely not educated in the ability to take instructions and apply them; surely not educated in discipline, love of country, or moral courage.

I have seen signs for recruiting that



are willing to "bloom where they are planted," and we need a Marine Corps that will reward those who demonstrate that attitude.

In addition, we need to guard against the "cronyism" concept within the Corps. It is not healthy for either the subordinate or the senior to have a relationship that finds the former following the latter around from duty station to duty station. It is not healthy for the Marine Corps to have a subtle sponsorship program that results in certain members receiving preferential treatment because of who they know. What is healthy is a Marine Corps whose members believe that

claim, "We train them like we used to." That statement seems completely false to me. Methods that proved successful in the past (squad bays, liberty cards, inspections in civilian attire before liberty, strict punishment for infractions) have been abandoned or diluted so that they are worthless. The training in boot camp seems to lack the ironclad discipline and pride in country and Corps that can last beyond the last eagle-eye glare of the drill instructor. A long, hard look should be given to methods that replaced time-tested practices that made the young Marine tough enough, disciplined enough, and instilled with that vital moral courage so necessary to his life in the Corps. A Marine used to leave boot camp indoctrinated with the ethics, moral underpinnings, and esprit de corps that in some cases lasted a life time. His graduation day attitudes should last him through his time in service, whether it be embassy duty, Fleet Marine Force, or whatever . . .

In the April issue of the *Gazette*, Maj Ronald B. Helle touched on a lot of the same points, and many other *Gazette* authors have written outstanding articles about what a Marine should be, so I will not cover old ground. But I will suggest that it is time to quit saying we are the best in the history of the Corps and just try to be as good as those who preceded us. After all, it has served our country and Corps well for over 211 years by just being as good "Soldiers of the Sea" as those who went before us. And until we return to the ideals and methods of our predecessors, the malignancy will continue to spread and grow.

GySgt I.R. Stone, USMC(Ret)



their assignments and promotions are tied directly to job performance and potential for future service.

• **Integrity.** This remains the single most important trait of all Marine leaders, be they privates or generals. Our word must be our bond, and that dictum must take many forms. Bouncing checks, midnight requisitions, inflated fitness reports, fitness report tampering, inaccurate unit readiness reports, careerism, moral laxity, doctoring of range results, and everything comparable are all important integrity issues. Nothing is exempt. When we as a Corps start relaxing standards in any area, major problems will surely follow. This fact was noted as early as August of 1981 when one of the most respected leaders of our Corps, MajGen Richard C. Schulze, wrote the following words in the *Gazette* describing what happens when acts of dishonesty occur within an organization:

More importantly, members begin to fear that the system has been defiled, and the issue of vulnerability becomes central. If evidence of corrupt

behavior continues, honest people believe they are being taken advantage of, and the weaker ones abandon the serenity of integrity and begin to participate in the morass of looking out for themselves dishonestly. Organizational erosion occurs as more and more people join the ranks of marginal cheaters. The self-oriented, careerist model subtly becomes more prevalent and acceptable. The strengths of a once honest organization languish, and those members whose integrity remains intact leave. The organization begins to impose safeguards and eventually assumes the characteristics and shrunken capabilities of its antithesis.

The question we must ask ourselves is, "Are we on the road Gen Schulze mapped out six years ago?" If the answer is yes, and I believe there are disturbing indicators pointing in that direction, then we need to attack this problem immediately. The cornerstone of the solution should be that there is no room in the Marine Corps for the individual who demonstrates a lack of integrity—in any form. With absolute integrity as our line of departure, we need to move forward on a wide variety of fronts and ensure that our actions in every area meet the highest standards.

We are members of the profession

of arms. Ours is as much a profession as the medical or legal professions with one major difference—we do not have malpractice insurance. When we fail to properly serve our clients, there is no outside agency to pay for our errors. Our payment comes directly from the reservoir of faith that our countrymen have in our Corps, a reservoir filled by the sacrifices of Marines who have gone before us. We must move now to reinforce the concepts of integrity, professionalism, moral courage, discipline, and accountability or we will soon be drawing deeply from our reservoir. The first step is a simple one. Each of us needs to make a personal decision that he or she will not join the ranks of the "marginal cheaters—the self-oriented careerists" that Gen Schulze wrote about. After making this solemn commitment, we need to emblazon on our souls the concept of doing the right things and then go forth and spread the word.

To the visionary, the answer to quo vadis is simple—to the top of the mountain!

In that light, this article is intended only as a beginning. I encourage all Marines to assist in focusing on these issues by sharing their innovative thoughts and comments among each other.

USMC

Chinks in the Armor

by Col A. William Larson, USMCR(Ret)

Follow my car, glance at the bumper, and you'll see a strip reading, "The Few—The Proud—MARINES." I'm glad to advertise the Corps in which I have served as a Reserve, Regular, and again Reserve, from enlistment in a Platoon Leaders Class in 1939 to retired listing in 1968 to retired pay status since 1980. And despite misgivings about subsequent wars involving the United States, I am also glad to have taken part as a Marine in combat overseas for 37 months in World War II.

To be glad is one thing, a feeling of pride is another. I've always had my doubts about the latter. Webster's dictionary may help to explain this with some of its definitions: "pride—inordi-

nate self-esteem . . . disdainful behavior or treatment . . . ostentatious display," and "proud—having or displaying excessive self-esteem." So, too, some synonyms: arrogant, haughty, lordly, insolent, overbearing, supercilious, and disdainful, all of which have a "shared meaning element" of "showing or feeling superiority toward others."

These definitions point up the flip side of being proud or prideful; namely, the danger of being blinded by one's self-esteem, personal and/or institutional as the case may be. To some degree, of course, it makes eminently good sense to feel good about oneself and one's associates. Among Marines, this translates into "esprit de

corps" without which they would comprise just another fighting force rather than, together with the Navy, "America's premier force-in-readiness, capable of fighting across the entire spectrum of conflict," as expressed by the Commandant, Gen Paul X. Kelley in his "Statement on Posture, Plans, and Programs for Fiscal Years 1988 through 1992" (MCG, Apr87). Fair enough, but one is well advised to bear in mind the inherent risk of having such "esprit" become the excessive or ostentatious pride that constitutes self-deluding vainglory, perhaps creating chinks in the armor of self-esteem.

In light of recent and current developments affecting the Corps, I read



eventually come, so to speak, out of the infantry's hide. My response is that I'd rather go up the hill with two pla-

toons of Marines strong enough to make it to the top than with three platoons who are too overloaded and exhausted to climb out of the trenches.

One last postscript while we're on the subject of "appalling ideas." Dispensing with "machinegun tripods, T&E mechanisms, and mortar bipods"

is the most appalling idea I've heard in some time. What earthly good are crew-served weapons if the gunners can't hit the target? And anyone who thinks a mortar gunner can hit squat by holding the tube between his legs has seen too many John Wayne movies (may he rest in peace). 

□ As the Marine Corps' developer of individual combat clothing and equipment for the past 18 months, I have come to the conclusion that current clothing and equipment technology has just about reached its limit to further lighten the infantry Marines' loads. That doesn't mean that we have stopped looking. During the next five years, Marines will receive new individual equipment every year. The U.S. Army and the Marine Corps are heavily engaged in improving what we give to our fighters now and looking at what they will need in the first decade of the next century.

But Maj Inghram's position, that commanders have the responsibility for their Marines' loads, is central to the whole problem. In most instances, Marines are overloaded because of a commander's exercise in "risk avoidance." Risk taking, making the best possible decision based on available intelligence, is a commander's primary job. There is only one way to lighten the load, leave some gear behind. The plan must include early and rapid resupply and be responsive enough to get the heavy packs up to the rifle companies when they need them.

It can be a tough decision, particularly when ships, helicopters, or cold weather is involved. Greater combat effectiveness is the reward.

Maj Jeffery W. Bearor

□ Maj Inghram hits the nail right on the head. Recently, while loading infantry Marines for a simulated helicopter assault exercise at Camp Pendleton, I was amazed at the burden heaped on their shoulders. As they staggered aboard our Sea Knight, I could not help but imagine the chaos they would encounter if they were discharged into an actual "hot" landing zone. S.L.A. Marshall's book, *The Soldier's Load and the Mobility of a Nation*, states that we overestimate the physical strength of men in combat. As Maj Inghram notes, rather than require the logistics system to function properly and provide the needed provisions at the prescribed time and place, we often force the infantryman to carry it with him. Marshall pointed this out also. He stated that we do lip service to the principle that the aim in logistics is not simply to support

and supply the men on the fire line, but to relieve them of all unnecessary strain and tension.

A system must be developed to require the logistics system to support the action. Where initial combat operations do not require long movements from initial insert to secure an objective, standardized combat packs could be netted and slung under inserting helicopters and jettisoned in the landing zone just prior to touchdown. Once the zone of action is secured, the combat Marines could quickly retrieve this gear for practical use. Where maneuver is necessary, logistical support based on weather, threat, and time constraints should be specially dedicated to support the scheme.

Maj Gregory J. Johnson

□ Reading Maj Inghram's article made me think of the winter uniform I wore while on occupation duty in Iceland 1941-1942.

Early in the fall it became apparent that the Marine winter service uniform was not ideal for cold weather conditions. We envied the British soldier when it came to his uniform. It was donned easily, was light and warm, and he moved around in it with agility. In contrast, ours was heavy and uncomfortable, and did not keep out the wet and cold. One item of the British uniform that some of our officers chose to wear was the short webbing gaiter (legging).

When we fell out for maneuvers, guard duty, or other military formations, this is what we wore:

- Winter Service "A" (Greens).
- Woolen (long-handled) underwear (dated 1916) and woolen socks.
- Woolen shirt w/field scarf (tie).
- Knitted sweater (sleeveless) (worn under

the coat).

- Shoes (high top), leggings, and galoshes (rubber and canvas overshoes).
- Mittens (leather w/woolen liner). (These were made in Canada and the right hand mitten had a slit with a flap for the trigger finger.)
- Gloves, leather, lined (worn on liberty and in formal military formations).
- Steel helmet (World War I) or fur trimmed hat with Marine Corps emblem affixed.
- Overcoat and scarf (woolen).
- 782 equipment (individual weapon, ammunition belt, bayonet, canteen, first aid pouch, haversack and knapsack, entrenching tool, gas mask).
- Added to the burden was additional equipment carried and pulled by those in either the heavy weapons or headquarters companies—mortars, machineguns, tripods, ammunition boxes, carts, radios, wire, etc.

Some of the troops had sheepskin coats that were authorized for wear only in camp. Dungarees (overalls) were worn on work details, and a heavy rubber raincoat with metal fastening clasps was available for wear on guard duty during inclement weather (which was all the time).

This was an awful lot of husk for one ear of corn. Needless to say, it was not easy to move around in such a cumbersome uniform. The old saying, "The Army has mules and the Navy has Marines," fit us to a "T." Man, we were loaded for bear!

When we left Iceland in late January and early February 1942, the quartermaster issued certain of us a bulky fur-lined parka. This smart move on his part kept him from packing and shipping this item of clothing to the States. I carried and wore that damned parka on leave all the way across the United States from New York to San Diego before I could turn it in.

LtCol R.J. Vroegindewey, USMC(Ret)



Check the *Gazette* indexes (December issues), then find out how others have handled the problem!

□ Some problems, such as the combat load, are intractable.

The enclosed pictures and text are from *Corporal Si Klegg and his Pard*, copyright 1887, author Wilbur S. Hinman, an account of everyday life of the soldier in the Civil War.



"Sh-Shorty," he gasped, as he reached the end of the second mile, "d-don't they give a feller any restin' spells? Dad used ter put us through when we was pitchin' hay 'n' hoein' corn, but he'd let us b-blow once 'n a while."

"Ye ain't playin' out a-ready, are ye, Si?"

He first tossed his hatchet over the fence. Then his clothes-brush and shoe-brush went; true they did not weigh much, but every ounce would help. His frying pan and coffee-pot he decided to be necessities. Opening his knapsack he held a melancholy inquest upon its contents. The hymn-book he speedily disposed of without carrying out his intention of bestowing it upon a wicked cavalryman . . .



Maj Bill Barnes, USMC(Ret)

□ Maj Inghram's article reaffirms the curious influence of S.L.A. Marshall's *The Soldier's Load and the Mobility of a Nation* on the American military profession. Probably no other book in history has been so widely praised by the members of a given profession, yet had so little influence on the behavior of those same individuals.

Lightening the *fighting or mission* load is simply not a viable option. Weapons and sufficient ammunition are heavy. New weapons, such as the M16A2, M249 SAW, and the shoulder-launched multipurpose

assault weapon (SMAW) add additional weight to the load . . . Most combat-wise infantrymen would rather err on the side of too much firepower rather than too little. Night vision devices and communications gear are critical on today's battlefield and should not be discarded. Neither can such essential items as machinegun tripods and mortar bipods be left behind, as proposed by one company commander in Maj Inghram's article.

Similarly, the *existence* load, while seemingly an attractive target for reduction, cannot produce much in the way of savings. Much of our present equipment functions well enough and, although relatively heavy, is durable. Funding for the purchase of new, expensive, lighter weight gear should not be counted on during these times of fiscal belt tightening. Nor can a good commander simply plan to leave behind those heavier items, such as sleeping bags and field jackets. Sometimes the environment will simply not allow this. So the answer lies not so much with lightening the *existence* load, as in simply not forcing the individual Marine to carry it.

The commander who controls the employment of helicopters, assault amphibian vehicles, trucks, and other rolling stock, must use these assets to carry the *existence* load to the Marine in the field. Instead of using modern technology primarily to move units around the battlefield to support grandiose schemes of maneuver, the commander must view these machines as the only way to relieve the burden of the individual infantryman. The reason today's Marine carries more into battle on his back than did his grandfather at Belleau Wood is because today's battalion, regimental, and division commanders fail to use our greatly improved assets to relieve him of the burden.

Capt Joshua J. Bocchino

□ Maj Inghram says, in his analysis, that "senior commanders . . . do not require their logistics officers to relentlessly pursue a policy of taking the weight off the infantry." He also observes that "if the high level commanders demand that the logisticians make every effort to transport the foot soldier's load, the problem would be largely cured." While these statements recognize the contribution of the logistics officers, it strikes me that they are more a transfer of responsibility than an understanding of the basic problem.

In the planning phase of any operation, the key figure usually is the operations/training officer (G-3 or S-3). In the feverish rush to put a good operational plan together, the tendency is for the G-3 or S-3 to



say, "G-4 or S-4 will provide logistic support," and to go on with the tactical considerations. There is something amiss here.

When the directive comes from above to plan an operation, the G-4 or S-4 should be brought in immediately as an intimate partner in the whole process. Terrain analyses, especially those that deal with possible accessways to interior points, must be made available to the logistics team at the earliest possible moment. It is conceivable that after this group has studied the target area, it will determine that support by wheeled or air cushion vehicles faces formidable obstacles that will have a major effect on the operation plan.

When G-3 says, "G-4 will provide logistical support," it is one thing. When G-4 says, "I have studied all the terrain information available, and my vehicles can provide this much transportation over these accessways"—and then puts it on the line in terms of pounds to be carried, distances to be traversed, supply areas to be maintained, and unit resupply procedures to be established—new light is cast on the entire proposed operation.

Perhaps the solution to the problem lies in greater cross-fertilization of experience . . . A fairly obvious and easily effected solution is to require that logistics officers have a minimum of three years of experience in combat units (infantry and artillery battalions, or aviation squadrons) before being assigned to logistics/supply functions. By the same logic, officers who have served in combat units and then are assigned to staff duties as operations personnel would be rotated about every two years to duty as logistics/supply officers. Only when the record shows that officer X has performed as a member of the G-4 or S-4 sections and then served a tour in the G-3 or S-3 office would specialization be authorized. Similarly, officer Y would have to show a tour in the G-4 or S-4 section before he could be assigned to duty with the G-3 or S-3 staff and later specialization . . .

Lightening the infantryman's load is something that every officer, regardless of background, specialization, or interest, must consider. After all, the Marine Corps' most potent, most flexible, most lethal, and most valuable weapon is the rifle-carrying, tough-talking, gravel-crunching, aggressive infantryman. He deserves the best we can give him.

Col Lane C. Kendall, USMCR(Ret)