

Comparative Relevance of Maneuver

Points of Maneuver Warfare with Universal Relevance

- Orient on the enemy
- Terrain is only as important as its importance in defeating the enemy
- Exploit enemy weaknesses and vulnerabilities

It should be noted that the points of universal relevance are the basic tenets of enemy-oriented operations.

Figure 2.

ver warfare doctrine is really one of a number of options to be selected if the enemy's mistakes or vulnerabilities warrant it. However, other elements of

Points of Maneuver Warfare with Limited Relevance

- O-O-D-A cycle
- Recon pull tactics
- Surfaces and gaps in operations
- Loss of enemy cohesion as a key to victory

what we now call maneuver warfare are universally applicable along the entire spectrum of conflict. Figure 2 lists the areas where maneuver war-

fare as defined in *OH 6-1* is universally relevant as well as those that are relevant in conventional conflict.

An enemy-oriented mindset as represented by the completion of the R-E/R-C cycles is a universal construct. The O-O-D-A cycle and maneuver warfare are a subset of the greater whole. We need to realize when the precepts of the O-O-D-A cycle are relevant and when they are not. Adopting maneuver warfare as a doctrine isn't a bad idea; it is merely an incomplete one.

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Combined Arms Warfare

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Modern warfare is combined arms warfare. Many Marines pay lip service to this truth, but few actually understand what the term "combined arms" means. Fewer still are the field exercises in which Marines actually practice combined arms operations.

What does the term "combined arms" mean? It is not merely a matter of using more than one combat arm—say, tanks and artillery. Rather, it is a specific way of using them together. Combined arms means using two or more different combat arms in such a way that the actions the enemy must take to avoid one combat arm make him more vulnerable to another. In other words, combined arms puts the enemy on the horns of a dilemma. From the enemy's standpoint, there is no "good answer"; whatever he does, he gets hurt. This means he faces not only physical but also psychological pressure. Combined arms helps destroy the enemy mentally as well as physically.

History offers some good illustrations of combined arms. Many have read about Wellington's squares of British infantry standing off the French cavalry at Waterloo. Fewer people are aware of how some Dutch/Belgian squares at Waterloo were chopped to pieces by the French using a standard 18th century combined arms tech-

nique. In that technique, cavalry charged the infantry, forcing it to form squares. The cavalry drew off a short distance and horse artillery was brought up to fire into the squares. As Dutch/Belgian forces soon learned, the squares were largely impervious to cavalry, but they were wonderful targets for artillery.

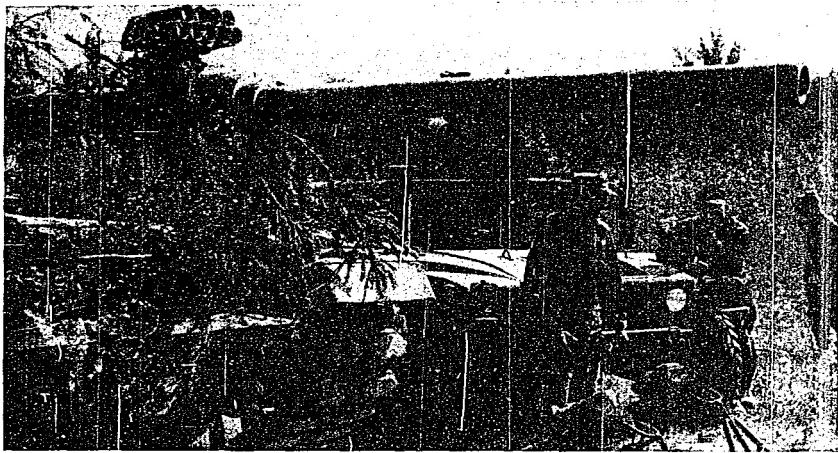


The infantry were presented with a dilemma: if they maintained the squares, they were decimated by the artillery; if they broke their squares, the cavalry overran them. That is combined arms warfare.

World War I offers another good example. While the Allies, especially the French, relied on artillery to destroy German infantry positions, the Germans used artillery more for suppression. They found that if their infantry arrived at the enemy trenches just as the artillery lifted, the Allied infantry would often still be in their bunkers, from which they could not fight effectively. To avoid the artillery, they had sought refuge in the bunkers, but to fight the German infantry, they had to come out of them. To take best advantage of this effect of combined arms, the Germans were willing to accept some casualties from their own artillery, bringing their infantry in while the last of the artillery was still falling.

Combined arms is the reason minefields must be covered by fire to be effective. The actions the enemy must take to avoid the mines—moving slowly in the open—make him more vulnerable to the fire. The actions he must take to avoid fire—moving covertly and rapidly—make him more likely to hit a mine. That is combined arms; the enemy faces not just a problem, but a dilemma.

Why are combined arms important? Because they get far more effect per unit of firepower—both physical and psychological effect. In that sense, combined arms is a major "force multiplier." For example, if you combine artillery and air simply by having both bombard the enemy's positions, you may get some attrition from using both that one alone would not have given you. But that attrition is not likely to be decisive. On the other hand, if



Combined arms action means more than attacking with several weapons.

you use your artillery to support an assault while the air concentrates on attacking the enemy's reserves as they move up to counter your attack, you get a combined arms effect that may be decisive. If the enemy seeks to avoid your air by keeping his reserves stationary or at least off the roads, you may make a breakthrough because those reserves were not where they were needed. If the reserves are moved forward, especially on roads, they may be destroyed from the air. Again, the enemy faces a dilemma.

Where does the understanding and practice of combined arms warfare currently stand in the Marine Corps? As noted at the outset, not many Marines understand what the term means. It is used loosely, to mean anything where more than one combat arm is employed. Because of this imprecision in language, Marines usually miss what the term really means, and therefore also miss the powerful effect of combined arms.

Combined arms practice is a question of training. The Marine Air-Ground Combat Center at Twenty-nine Palms is the principal location for combined arms training. Here, Marines participate in what are called Combined Arms Exercises (CAXs). Unfortunately, until recently, the CAX did not reflect real combined arms warfare. It was too canned, too reflective of arcane techniques. It stifled initiative and forward thinking.

However, major and very positive changes in the CAX are now underway. A five-phase program of revision has already begun. The exercise has moved beyond the narrow limits of the Delta corridor. After the first day, the situation is different in each CAX,

making it unpredictable for the unit going through. In order to accommodate innovative maneuvers by the unit, the exercise will go non-live fire if and when necessary, for brief periods. Units may now bypass strongpoints if they think it tactically advisable. All orders after the first day are frag orders.

Other improvements are also involved. Safety requirements are being changed, permitting firing and clearing by grid square so as to diminish the linear nature of safety rules and thus tactics. Commencing with CAX 2-89, the live fire segment of the CAX has been followed by a non-live-fire, aggressed, free-play segment emphasizing MILES (multiple integrated laser engagement systems). This permits real maneuver, similar to that practiced by Army units at the National Training Center. (See "The Enhanced Combined Arms Exercise," by LtCol Charles M. Lohman, *MCG*, Mar89.)

All of these changes are moves in the right direction. They deserve and need strong support. The Marine Corps must provide sufficient resources to support the new plan, especially an adequate aggressor force (the current plan is for an operational force of only a mechanized infantry company and a tank platoon, which is insufficient). The control group must be manned by people who understand maneuver warfare and can critique it with a view to maneuver and combined arms. The principle of combined arms must be correctly explained and its application rigorously critiqued. With this support, there is no question that the CAX can become a major force in moving the Marine Corps toward true combined arms warfare.

Three other actions are needed to make combined arms a reality in the Marine Corps. First, the term must be understood and used precisely in our schools and in our doctrinal publications.

Second, we need to rethink our current approach to fire support coordination. Many doctrinal techniques of fire support coordination are essentially valid. Valid techniques are those that are not overly complex or difficult to employ and that work in a fast-paced, fluid environment. Unfortunately, our overall fire control procedures have become so slow that they make true combined arms warfare difficult or impossible.

The fact that the Marine Corps does not yet have a useful automated fire support coordination process in the field is a major hindrance to combined arms. It is not a difficult challenge. Perhaps some day we will learn that hanging every bell and whistle we can think of on a good idea usually dooms that idea to failure. What we need is a simple, robust system that displays real-time fire support coordination information where and when it is needed.

Finally, we need to look at the size of the CAX. The battalion CAX creates a false impression of the role of the infantry battalion commander on the combined arms battlefield. By dedicating a full plate of fire support assets to a battalion commander, we provide him a combat capability far in excess of what he is likely to have in the "real thing." This is not just a matter of teaching him more than he needs to know. It fails to teach him how to conduct combined arms warfare with the assets he is likely to have. Battalion CAXs should be scaled back—perhaps battalion special operations exercises would be more productive—and replaced with brigade CAXs.

Today, Marines are generally ineffective at combined arms warfare. But they can surely learn.

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