



The 31st Commandant's Intent

by Gen Charles C. Krulak

Changes of command are exciting times for any unit or organization. It is a time to remember the contributions of the outgoing commander and to anticipate the guidance from the incoming commander. It is no less so for our Corps. These are especially exciting times because of the tremendous opportunities that await us. The next 4 years will, in many ways, shape our Corps for the next 50 years. The last 4 years, given the vision and exceptional leadership of the 30th Commandant, have given us a superb springboard from which to leap into the next century.

That leap, however, will be a long one, and I will need the help and support of every Marine, Active and Reserve, retired and former, and all of our friends and family, to complete it. I will provide more detail in the weeks and months ahead, both here and through other means. For now, I want to share with you my "Commandant's Intent." It's built around five pillars and represents my most strongly held beliefs.

Warfighting

We have no more important responsibility to the American people than to win the Nation's battles. We exist today because the American people expect their Marines to provide a lean, ready, and professional fighting force—a force that guarantees success when committed. They have such a force now and are proud of it. As good as we are today, we will be better tomorrow. Innovation, ingenuity, and a willingness to continually adapt to changes across the spectrum of conflict will take us there. We will reach out and take advantage of technology. The Marine Corps remains the Nation's naval, combined arms, expeditionary force-in-readiness. While we stand ready to perform "such other duties as the President may direct," our reason for being is what it has always been—warfighting. With capabilities inextricably linked to structure, it is vital that our organizations be designed with one goal in mind: success on the battlefield. The Marine Corps' operational forces will continue to be organized as Marine air-ground task

forces, with the Marine expeditionary force (MEF) as the principal warfighting organization. Necessary combat power will be provided to the committed MEF through global sourcing by the total force: one force—the Marine Forces—both Active and Reserve. Nevertheless, we must not be wed to current organizations and operational concepts—we must be willing to take both into the future. Above all, we must be ready. No matter what the crisis or threat, the Nation must have one thought: “Send in the Marines!”

People

The most important thing we do in the Marine Corps is to make Marines. The Marine is the Corps. This will not change. Our ability to win battles boils down today—as it always has—to the individual Marine. This will not change. People are our most precious asset, and we protect them by the fair, scrupulous, and unbiased treatment of all Marines as individuals who are members of a team—caring for them, teaching them, and leading them. I see this as my obligation. It is also the obligation of each member of the chain of command from top to bottom. We must ensure that this sense of fairness is a constant and genuine thing. I expect commanders to take prompt and vigorous action where and when deviations from this obligation are discovered. Our manpower processes—recruiting, classification, assignment, promotion, reenlistment, separation, and retirement—will support this sense of fairness. Our Marines must be confident that these processes work for them and for the Marine Corps in which they serve so selflessly.

Core Values

We will continue to be a force rich in history and traditions, imbued with the highest values of honor, courage, and commitment. I do not intend for these to be just words; I expect for them to frame the way we live and act as Marines. There is no room in our Marine Corps for either situational ethics or situational morality. Those found wanting will be held accountable. I expect Marines to epitomize

that which is good about our Nation and about the ideals upon which it was founded. Having said that, I want to be absolutely clear that, outside the areas of morality and ethics, there remains the “freedom to fail.” In areas not involving “character,” we must continue to work to remove the last vestiges of any remaining “zero defects” mentality. We must be allowed to err in peacetime to ensure we do not err in combat. We will not be able to survive if we do otherwise.

Education and Training

In times of fiscal constraint, the Marine Corps has always turned to its education and training systems to keep its warfighting edge. We must do that today. Each dollar spent must bring a solid return. The use of simulation, virtual reality, models, and various warfighting games can make subsequent field training more effective and, ultimately, less expensive. We will aggressively pursue this technology. Our professional military education programs and the focus of Marine self-education should be oriented toward the development of judgment, decisionmaking, and an understanding of the human factors in war, such as the effects of fear, deprivation, or fatigue. In addition, Marines must be broadly educated in unified and combined operations, must be able to function within the context of our doctrine, and must possess the intellectual agility to meet the full spectrum of challenges in the new security environment. At every level, from the individual Marine to the MEF, we will train the way we will fight. In combat, the preponderance of the leadership and fighting rests with the Marine staff noncommissioned officer (SNCO) and NCO. Therefore, while individual and unit training may be centrally planned, execution will be decentralized to the maximum extent and placed far more in the hands of our SNCOs and NCOs. Officers will continue to play a critical role, focused more in monitoring and evaluating than in conducting training. Training must be progressive and practical in nature. We must make the most of every learning opportunity in garrison be-

fore we go to the field. Training must include appropriate background reading, tactical decision games, modeling and simulation, and exercises and critiques. Education and training must lead to a better, more effective, more adaptable Marine. To be most effective, education and training must also be challenging and fun. Above all, education and training must be—and will be—focused on winning in combat.

Naval Character

The Navy and the Marine Corps are inextricably linked, and I believe this is good. Together, the Sea Services provide a tremendously versatile and unique warfighting capability to the Nation. It is important that the doctrine, tactics, techniques, and procedures that have been developed over the years continue to be updated and refined to meet the challenges of tomorrow. The Navy and the Marine Corps will provide the Nation with naval expeditionary forces shaped for joint operations operating forward from the sea. Our unique maritime character is as important to defining our Marine Corps ethos as is the individual Marine, our recruit and officer training, and our basic tenet of “every Marine a rifleman.” Separately and collectively, they are what sets us apart from other fighting forces. I intend to work closely with the Chief of Naval Operations to strengthen the bond between the Navy and Marine Corps and to seek innovative ways to increase the value of naval expeditionary forces to the national military strategy.

I am deeply honored to be the 31st Commandant of the Marine Corps. Enormous challenges are ahead, but more importantly so are great opportunities. The tasks that lie ahead require that the Corps let me know what we are doing right, what we are doing wrong, what we are doing that we should not be doing, and finally what we are failing to do that badly needs doing. Join me at the helm as we chart our way towards the 21st century. Semper fidelis.

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