



Are You Ready to Go to War, Marine?

As your Commandant, my number one concern is, "Are you ready to go to war?" Have you prepared yourself for that most horrific event should you be called upon? You are a United States Marine. You have been entrusted with a sacred duty. The American people have placed in your hands the preservation of their very freedom and their well being—both as a people and as a nation. You have pledged your allegiance to them through your oath to uphold the Constitution of the United States. You have accepted a great responsibility. Now, are you ready to deliver? When America commits her Marines to combat, she does so with an unwavering confidence that her Marines—that *you*—will bring her victory—victory every time—victory without fail. What will be your part? Are you ready to do it? Are you ready for war?

There are many ways to prepare for combat. The most common images probably involve LINE training, marksmanship, physical training, and training in your MOS. These are, to be sure, some of the principal methods in which you prepare for war. But there are others. You must make yourself versatile. You must make yourself tough. You must hone your skills and hone your mind. A true warrior must be a complete package, able to win in a bayonet fight and able to make the right call when the chips are down. Body...mind...spirit. Each takes development, each takes maintenance. Each can let a warrior down in the crucible of battle if the warrior has not adequately prepared. The Marine Corps can provide opportunities for you to develop and maintain your body, mind and spirit, but only you can actually do it.

Just as the Marine Corps cannot do for you that which you must do yourself, there are things that you cannot do to prepare for war, things you have no control over. You cannot directly control the kind of equipment you will be issued and the choice of weapons that will be procured for your use and your support. You cannot control the assignment process that either refines or detracts from our efforts to build cohesive units. The list goes on. These are the responsibilities of the senior Marine Corps leadership and are handled ultimately by Headquarters Marine Corps with the assistance of the Marine Corps Combat Development Command, the Marine Corps Systems Command and others.

Notice I said you cannot *control* such preparations; you *can* influence them. You should always feel free to pass good ideas up the chain of command. The chain of command is, among other things, a two-way conduit for information. Another way to get an idea to the forefront is Marine Mail. If you are uncertain how to access Marine Mail, ask your chain of command. Your idea could make a big difference. I need to know from you four things: What are we doing that we shouldn't be doing? What aren't we doing that we should be doing? What are we



doing that we should do differently? What new concept, idea, tactic or piece of equipment should the Marine Corps investigate to improve its warfighting capability?

Utilizing your energies and the brain power of our entire Corps, we can continue to be what we have always been: innovators and improvisers. As the nature of warfare changes, as technology gives us new options and as new operational concepts come to light, we must ensure that the Marine Corps remains relevant. We must be an adaptable force. You must help us adapt institutionally, and you must adapt individually.

There are many exciting initiatives underway in our Corps today designed to ensure that, as an institution, we remain ready and first to fight. Some are focused on immediately improving our capabilities. Some are long range, focused on experimentation and evaluation, and some are simply designed to support your individual efforts at becoming a better warrior. All are about warfighting.

Immediate Improvement of Capabilities

To be at your fighting best, you need good equipment. To that end, we have recently bought, or are in the process of procuring and fielding, bivvy sacks, modular sleeping bags, new boots, better body armor, modular packs, new tents and other items of personal equipment. This long overdue modernization effort is designed to relieve the stress on you the warrior, to conserve your strength, to keep you healthier, to make you tougher. We're getting the right gear to be better prepared for war.

The four-step Transformation Process, which includes the Crucible during Recruit Training, is designed to improve the way we make Marines—Marines as ultimate warriors. It's designed to ensure that Marines—you, or the Marine on your flank—have the advantage in spirit. It is designed to ensure that our core values of honor, courage and commitment are there for you to draw upon as sources of strength during warfare's darkest and most demanding hours. The transformation is about preparing for war.

Part of the Transformation Process is directly aimed at fortifying one of the Corps' greatest strengths, its cohesion. Recently, we have begun to assign Marines from their entry-level training to their FMF units in teams. We will keep these Marines together in the same unit for as long as we can, with a goal of seeing them serve together through their entire initial enlistment. Through this long-term association, living together, working together, training together and deploying together, Marines will come to know the strengths and weaknesses of their fellow Marines inside and out. Knowing one another as you know your own brother or sister, knowing that you can count on one another, is cohesion. The esprit that flows from

cohesion has been part of our formula for victory for over two centuries. We are now strengthening that esprit. Building cohesion is about preparing for war.

Long-Range Readiness and Capabilities

The Marine Corps Warfighting Laboratory (MCWL) and its engine for experimentation, Sea Dragon, are making sure that the Marine Corps is ready for the wars of tomorrow and the wars of the day after tomorrow. The Advanced Warfighting Experiments (AWE) provide the data which directly influence our decisions as to which weapons we will buy, what our organization for combat will look like and what operational concepts and tactics we will write into our doctrine. The Marine Corps Warfighting Laboratory and Sea Dragon are about preparing for war.

Operational Maneuver From the Sea (OMFTS) is the new operational concept for the Marine Corps. It is how we will fight and win in the 21st century. OMFTS pits our strengths against an enemy's weaknesses, creates a tempo and momentum that overloads an enemy's ability to cope and blurs the distinction between land and water when defining maneuver space. To execute OMFTS we must harness powerful new technologies. The MV-22 Osprey provides one of those critical capabilities. With this tilt-rotor aircraft, the Marine Corps will be able to range freely throughout the battlefield, attacking what, where and when we choose.

The Advanced Amphibious Assault Vehicle (AAAV) is another leap in technology that will enable us to execute this new and heightened form of maneuver. The AAAV is a unique combination of firepower, armor protection and high-speed mobility both in the water and on land. This vehicle will bring our Marines from ship to shore at previously unobtainable rates of speed, thus lessening the exposure of our infantry to enemy fire. Once ashore it will have the cross-country mobility necessary to integrate operations with our M-1A1 main battle tanks. Forcible entry from the sea—amphibious assault—will never be the same. There no longer will be a need for the bloody wading ashore through withering fire such as we had to endure in the battles of yesteryear: battles like Tarawa, Iwo Jima and Inchon. Today's assault will be one of flexibility and speed. Instead of slogging our way through an enemy's defenses we will penetrate his vulnerabilities and defeat him. Developing OMFTS, and procuring the technology to execute it, is preparing for war.

Supporting the Warrior's Efforts to be Prepared

The Commandant's Planning Guidance directs that every unit in the Marine Corps spend time each day in some form of discussion about warfighting. How was your discussion today? How was the one day before yesterday? Were you able to contribute? Remember great ideas come from within our Corps. If there was no formal discussion organized by your seniors today, did you gather your juniors and carry out the Commandant's intent at your level? Daily discussions about warfare will prepare us for war.

The Commandant's Reading Program is not about reading. The goal is not to have you read books, to be smarter or even to broaden your horizons. All these things will occur, but the purpose of this program is to help you learn your trade. Your trade is warfighting. In the histories of mankind, you will read about many warriors. Some have fought bravely, some have fought with great intelligence and cunning, and others have simply failed and died because of their own stupidity or inflexibility. There are lessons on how to, and on how not to, execute every conceivable facet of warfare. Study well. The Commandant's Reading Program can help you find good lessons in

good books. The Commandant's Reading Program is about preparing for war.

Professional Military Education (PME) is designed to give you the knowledge to outsmart your opponent, to make you a better leader and to improve your skills. We have improved the responsiveness to the 160,000 Marines enrolled in Marine Corps Institute (MCI) courses. Soon we will transition MCI to the Distance Learning Center for the Marine Corps. Many courses will be coming on line in electronic format. We have also emphasized PME courses for Marines throughout the ranks to ensure that we are all progressing and learning. PME is preparing for war.

The Key Volunteer Program and the Marine Corps Family Team Building Program are about making you a more capable warrior. All of us who have families worry about them when we are away. These family support programs help lessen that worry. Knowing that someone has shown a new spouse the ropes and that there is someone for them to turn to should they need assistance or an ear to listen can help. Knowing that there is a support structure available on the home front can help keep the warrior focused. While they will miss and be concerned about their families, they need not worry that they are alone and without help to turn to. Our family support programs are about warfighting!

Are You Ready?

You find yourself in the streets of one of the urban slums of the world. The enemy is hard to detect as they mingle with the local population. Suddenly you take fire, and a Marine in your squad goes down. You observe the source of fire for an instant, and then the perpetrator is masked by the crowd, and you are unsure, unsure as to who fired the weapon, unsure as to what to do. You are a squad leader in the 21st century Marine Corps. At your fingertips is an arsenal of options from nonlethal weapons to the full direct fire capabilities of your squad. You even have access to near instantaneous fire support weapons capable of flattening whole city blocks. What do you do, Marine? What do you do? No one prepared you for this! Or did they? Or did you? Are you prepared to make the right decision, a decision that will accomplish the mission, save your squad from additional casualties and one which both you and your nation will be proud of?

We are entering an age in which more and more responsibility will be given to Marines at lower and lower echelons of command. You will have better communications equipment, enhanced mobility and ever increasingly lethal forms of fire support. Preparing yourself to handle the responsibilities and pressures that may be placed upon you must be part of your personal preparation of war.

The 82nd Congress of the United States wrote of the Marine Corps, "The nation's shock troops must be the most ready when the nation generally is least ready." You are one of the nation's shock troops, Marine! Make sure you are ready when the call is sounded, "Send in the Marines."



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