

The Commandant's Perspective

Preparing the Marine Corps for War

by Gen Charles C. Krulak

The 31st Commandant reviews the Corps' progress during the last 2 years, and points the way ahead.

In 1993 we took a major step forward in ensuring that our Corps would always be "The most ready when the Nation is least ready." In that year we published *Marine Corps Order (MCO) P3900.15*, which defines the Marine Corps Combat Development Process (CDP), now called the Marine Corps Combat Development System (CDS). In that order we codified an integrated process by which we identify, obtain, and support necessary combat capabilities for the Marine Corps. The CDS is not about the procurement of things. It is about the procurement of capabilities. Things don't win battles. Marines win battles . . . Marines who can outthink, outmaneuver, and who have the capabilities to overwhelm their foes.

As part of the CDS, the Commandant of the Marine Corps is responsible for publishing a document called the Commandant's Planning Guidance (CPG). The CPG is intended to be the foundation of Marine Corps planning, the cornerstone of our efforts to maintain a combat ready Marine Corps. Two years ago, we published the CPG—a comprehensive document that serves as the schematic for how we make Marines and win battles for the Nation. Now, at the halfway mark of this Commandancy, it is time to revisit the CPG and remind ourselves that our priority must always be maintaining our focus on *preparing the Marine Corps for war*.

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Unique Contributions

We have made significant contributions to the Nation's defense in several new and very unique ways. Identifying a gap in our Nation's ability to rapidly respond to chemical and biological attacks, a Chemical and Biological Incident Response Force (CBIRF) was created. This unit is ready for use in the fight against those who would attack our Nation asymmetrically. It has been deployed to several real-world contingencies, making our population and leadership safer—at the Olympic Games in Atlanta, at the President's inauguration in Washington, and at the economic summit in Denver. It is ready for worldwide deployment and is improving on ways in which it can be used to "train the trainers" in organizations and agencies preparing for similar contingencies.

A Standing Joint Task Force Headquarters (SJTFHQ) has also been creat-

ed. Recognizing the ad hoc nature in which Joint Task Force (JTF) headquarters are usually created and the inefficiencies incurred in such activations, the SJTFHQ was developed to address those inefficiencies. Resourced by the Marine Corps, it is ready for use by any theater commander. The SJTFHQ has participated in numerous joint exercises and most recently honed its skills in the European Command's Exercise AGILE LION.

The special operations capable Marine expeditionary unit, or MEU(SOC), deployments offer our Nation the quintessential crisis response force. Our country's reliance on their capabilities over the last several years has dramatically increased. But, rare are the occasions when any Service or Service Department conducts operations solely with its own resources. Because of this, and because the MEU(SOC)s are often the first on scene, we have increased their command and control capabilities so that they might be better prepared to serve as JTF enablers.

The enhanced MEU(SOC) capability to serve as a JTF enabler, the chemical and biological crisis management capability, and the SJTFHQ all provide unique capabilities to our national defense. By anticipating and filling the Nation's warfighting requirements we are *preparing the Marine Corps for war*.

Traditional Capabilities

While adding and enhancing some capabilities, our stock-in-trade remains being able to field well-trained and capable Marine air-ground task forces (MAGTFs). Whether a small, special purpose MAGTF (SP-MAGTF) organized for a contained response, or a Marine expeditionary force (MEF) employed in a major theater war, the Marines we send to battle must be well trained, properly organized, and ably led. Necessary combat power will be provided to the MAGTF, particularly at the MEF level, through global sourcing from the Total Force: one force consisting of Marines, both Active and Reserve.

The Marine Corps Maritime Prepositioning Force (MPF) remains one of the cornerstones of our ability to quickly insert a sustainable and capable force in time of significant crisis or challenge to our national interests. While offloading operations may take advantage of benign port facilities, it is our ability to offload unassisted by such infrastructure that makes MPF such a versatile means of force introduction. Congress has provided the funding, and we have contracted for an additional ship in each of our three MPF squadrons. This enhanced MPF capability will mean an added expeditionary airfield,

field hospital, and additional sustainment for our committed forces.

But forcible entry from the sea remains the Marines' forte. We continue to work with our Navy shipmates to ensure we reach our resource-constrained, programmatic goal of enough amphibious shipping to lift the equivalent of 2.5 Marine expeditionary brigades. The requirement—the capability which we strive to provide to our Nation—remains at 3.0 brigade equivalents. The goal of the Naval Services is to ensure a credible amphibious capability is ready when the Nation says, “land the Marines.”

Once landed, our ability to maneuver effectively is directly tied to our tactical mobility. The V-22, the advance assault amphibian vehicle (AAAV), and the procurement of the lightweight 155mm howitzer are all part of an overarching architecture designed to make sure we have the mobility to support our doctrine of maneuver warfare. But, we must explore advanced technologies, not just for ship-to-shore movement or for enhanced air and ground mobility, but also for technologies that support the individual Marine's mobility. Their clothing and equipment have a direct and immediate impact on survivability, lethality, and mission accomplishment.

Marine Corps operational forces will continue to be organized as MAGTFs, with the MEF as the principal warfighting organization. We will maintain the amphibious forcible entry option for the National Command Authorities. We're enhancing our ability to move significant warfighting capabilities to a point of crisis, and we are aggressively working at increasing our tactical mobility. We are focused on *preparing the Marine Corps for war*.

Doctrine

We are forging ahead with our doctrine efforts, ensuring that concepts and doctrine are synchronized, covering the gaps, and coordinating materials at every level. New doctrinal publications are coming off the presses. And most importantly, the doctrine is sound.

To ensure that Marine Corps capabilities are understood and properly employed, we are fully participating in the joint doctrine development process. Having our capabilities fully inculcated in the Nation's quiver of warfighting techniques is vital to her defense. Ensuring that our Marines and our fellow joint warriors have a fundamental understanding of warfighting principles is of inestimable importance. We are focused on *preparing the Marine Corps for war*.

Harnessing Our Assets

No organization can be truly efficient until it harnesses all of its resources, especially its people. This is particularly true if your business is warfighting. The Corps recognizes that every Marine has something to contribute. We are a diverse institution comprised of men and women representing the cultural and ethnic diversity of our Nation. These Marines are our warfighters and race, creed, and gender make no difference. It is paramount that we, as an institution, foster an environment of dignity and respect for all Marines, an environment where all Marines feel proud to be part of something bigger than themselves. Those who cannot act with dignity and respect toward their fellow Marines in garrison certainly have not properly prepared their character for the stresses of war.

Often large organizations fail to take full advantage of their people because there is no mechanism by which good ideas can be surfaced to the top. Recognizing that good ideas come from individuals of all experience levels and from throughout our rank structure, we created Marine Mail. When we started, we asked for answers to three questions: What aren't we doing that we should be doing? What are we doing that we should be doing differently? What are we doing that we shouldn't be doing? Since then we have also come to appreciate just how many good ideas are out there with respect to new concepts, tactics, and equipment that might improve our warfighting capability. The response from Marines across our Corps has been tremendous. We are a stronger warfighting organization for the contributions received through Marine Mail.

Just as we have empowered the ranks of our Corps, we must ensure that we are making maximum use of the talents resident in our most seasoned leaders. An Executive Steering Committee has been created to make better use of the knowledge and experience of our senior leadership at the lieutenant general level. This more formalized process of coalescing ideas and tracking progress has been very helpful in the decisionmaking process that guides our Corps.

Capitalizing on our diversity, emplacing a mechanism to encourage the free flow of new ideas, and maximizing the talents of our senior leaders are all measures designed to *prepare the Marine Corps for war*.

Innovation

Innovation is our key to ensuring that we provide the Nation with a Marine Corps that is organized and equipped to fill our role as

the Nation's expeditionary force-in-readiness . . . ready not just for the battles of today but of tomorrow and the day after tomorrow. The Quadrennial Defense Review just finished, and the National Defense Panel underway, seek to define our place in the national defense. It is up to us to develop the operational concepts through which we will effect that role.

Operational Maneuver From The Sea (OMFTS) is our operational concept. Using the quantum leap in capabilities of the V-22, the air cushioned landing craft, and the AAV, we will be able to take maneuver warfare to a new level. We will not be constrained by traditional beach landing sites. We will avoid enemy defenses where he is strong and attack through his weaknesses to destroy his ability and desire to resist. Through an unprecedented ability to generate tempo, we will overwhelm our enemies and protect our force.

We are conducting a series of advanced warfighting experiments to determine, among many things, the best configuration of the force that will execute OMFTS. The Marine Corps Warfighting Laboratory will gather the data from these experiments. Based partly on this data, we will then conduct a comprehensive Force Structure Planning Group to evaluate the structure of our Corps. It is through experimentation that we will find the recipe for success on tomorrow's battlefield.

Just as we have done in other interwar periods, we are using experimentation and innovation to ensure we are ready for war as it will be, not as it was. Innovation is one of the keys to *preparing the Marine Corps for war*.

Professional Military Education

Professional military education (PME) is crucial to our development as warriors. There are few dilemmas that will face our Marines on the field of battle that have not been faced before. Even as the nature of war evolves, the challenges associated with it contain a number of reoccurring themes. The Marine who has not availed himself of the opportunity to learn from the mistakes and successes of others is ill prepared for war. He or she stands a higher chance of needlessly becoming a casualty, endangering other Marines, and failing to accomplish the mission. But, Marines don't fail in battle. We prepare ourselves for it. We ensure we are technically and tactically proficient. We study our trade.

We have placed great emphasis on PME. We want all Marines to receive topgrade education at every level, education that will make them better warfighters. Having said

that, we have received considerable input that says some of our correspondence course PME may be too time consuming, that it is detracting from the accomplishment of our day-to-day mission. We are examining that. The goal is a continuous and incremental increase in the ability and education of every Marine as he or she progresses in rank.

Formal, residence courses are valuable experiences for those Marines who get an opportunity to attend them. We have not always done as good a job as we could have in filling school quotas. This is an area that requires constant monitoring. These courses are where we accrue the skills necessary to allow us to conduct decentralized operations—to fight and win.

The Commandant's Reading Program is designed to help steer our Marines toward books with good lessons. The MAGTF Staff Training Program provides professional education for our staffs. All of our correspondence and resident PME courses cultivate our Marines as warriors and prepare them for additional responsibilities. PME is an essential ingredient in *preparing the Marine Corps for war*.

Developing the Warrior

We have already spoken of the preparation of our warriors' minds through education, but there is more to being mentally prepared for combat than being well schooled in the art of war. Our Marines must be mentally tough as well. The Transformation Process helps make Marines with the depth of character to do the right thing, in the right way, for the right reasons. Marines full of conviction and with strong minds, Marines who have been made to look within for the answers they seek, will

the gateway for the development of the Marine spirit. The cohesion-building phase of the Transformation Process is designed to strengthen the bonds between us as warriors. Being a Marine has always been a mystical association of spirit with one's fellow Marines. Capitalizing on this esprit, we have become the band of warriors we are today, feared by our foes, and respected throughout the world.

We make Marines—body, mind, and spirit. Making Marines is all about *preparing the Marine Corps for war*.

You the Marine

The last paragraph of the CPG states:

In the final analysis, my guidance simply is to be prepared to fight, on the shortest notice, under any circumstances of weather or resistance, in conflicts large or small. Be prepared to integrate Marine combat power smoothly into the overall matrix of other U.S. Services or other nations. Be prepared, in conjunction with the U.S. Navy, to project power from the sea for as far and as long as necessary. Be ever mindful of technological opportunities to enhance combat proficiency and to promote logistic economy. Be also mindful of the deep meaning in Title 10 of the U.S. Code of the requirement that Marines shall be prepared to discharge 'such other duties as the President may direct,' whatever those duties may be. But, most of all, be prepared to fight and win.

We, as an institution, are preparing the Marine Corps to fight. This preparation is reflected in everything we do. From revamping the fitness report system so that we are sure to promote our most qualified warriors, to our aggressive efforts in seeking funding for the tools we need to enhance our warfighting capabilities, it's all about preparing the Marine Corps

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be a powerful force on any battlefield to which the Nation sends them. The Marine Corps Values Program is designed to reinforce and help sustain the hardening—the Transformation.

Of all the things we do as an institution, none is so crucial as preparing our Marines for the rigors of combat. Tough physical training hardens our warriors, makes them equal to the challenges ahead. The Physical Fitness Test has been made tougher. We will continue to emphasize fitness as a way of life for Marines.

But Marines are more than body and mind. To be a United States Marine, one must prepare the body, the mind, and the spirit. The experiences of the Crucible are

for war. But we can't achieve our goals as an institution without participation from all Marines—from you. Look for ways to contribute to the readiness of your Corps. Make training for your Marines tough and demanding. Reaffirm your commitment to principle and make a check of your personal character. Conduct or participate in the daily warfighting discussions mandated in the CPG. Send in a Marine Mail, write your ideas in an article for the *Gazette*, or share a lesson learned with a peer. Together, we shoulder the awesome responsibility of *preparing the Marine Corps for war*.

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