

DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY
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FOREWORD

This publication is about winning in combat. Winning requires many things: excellence in techniques, an appreciation of the enemy, exemplary leadership, battlefield judgment, and focused combat power. Yet these factors by themselves do not ensure success in battle. Many armies, both winners and losers, have possessed many or all of these attributes. When we examine closely the differences between victor and vanquished, we draw one conclusion. Success went to the armies whose leaders, senior and junior, could best focus their efforts—their skills and their resources—toward a decisive end. Their success arose not merely from excellence in techniques, procedures, and material but from their leaders' abilities to uniquely and effectively combine them. Winning in combat depends upon tactical leaders who can think creatively and act decisively.

This book pertains equally to all Marine leaders, whether their duties entail combat service support, combat support, or combat arms. It applies to the Marine air-ground task force commander as well as the squadron commander and the fire team leader. All Marines face tactical decisions in battle

regardless of their roles. Tactical leaders must develop and hone their warfighting skills through study and practice. This publication serves as a guide for that professional development. It addresses the theory of tactics and its application in a chaotic and uncertain environment.

The concepts and ideas within this publication are battle-tested. Throughout our history, one of the most important reasons for the success of the United States Marine Corps has been the military skill of our leaders at every level of command. Through their tactical skill and battlefield judgment, our commanders achieved tactical and operational advantage at the decisive time and place.

This publication is a revision of Fleet Marine Force Manual 1-3, *Tactics*, of 1991 and supersedes it. Marine Corps Doctrinal Publication (MCDP) 1-3 fully retains the spirit, scope, and basic concepts of its predecessor. MCDP 1-3 further develops and refines some of those concepts; in particular, a new chapter has been added on exploiting success and finishing, and some of the original material has been reorganized and expanded.

Tactics is in consonance with MCDP 1, *Warfighting*, and the other Marine warfighting publications. Presuming an understanding of maneuver warfare, MCDP 1-3 applies it specifically to the tactical level of war. Like MCDP 1, it is not prescriptive but descriptive, providing guidance in the form of

concepts and ideas. This publication establishes the Marine Corps' philosophy for waging and winning battles.

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Commandant of the Marine Corps

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