
Chapter 3

Preparing for War

*“The essential thing is action. Action has three stages: the decision born of thought, the order or preparation for execution, and the execution itself. All three stages are governed by the will. The will is rooted in character, and for the man of action character is of more critical importance than intellect. Intellect without will is worthless, will without intellect is dangerous.”*¹

—Hans von Seeckt

*“It is not enough that the troops be skilled infantry men or artillery men of high morale: they must be skilled water men and jungle men who know it can be done—Marines with Marine training.”*²

—Earl H. Ellis

During times of peace, the most important task of any military is to prepare for war. Through its preparedness, a military provides deterrence against potential aggressors. As the nation's expeditionary force-in-readiness, the Marine Corps must maintain itself for immediate employment in "any clime and place" and in any type of conflict. All peacetime activities should focus on achieving combat readiness. This implies a high level of training, flexibility in organization and equipment, professional leadership, and a cohesive doctrine.

FORCE PLANNING

Force planning is planning that is associated with the creation and maintenance of military capabilities.³ Planning plays as important a role in the preparation for war as it does in the conduct of war. The key to any plan is a clearly defined objective, in this case a required level of readiness.

The Marine Corps' force planning is concept-based. That is, all force planning derives from a common set of concepts which describe how Marine Corps forces will operate and perform certain key functions. These concepts describe the types of missions Marine forces are likely to be required to perform and how they might accomplish those missions. These concepts

provide the basis for identifying required capabilities and implementing coordinated programs to develop those capabilities.

Based on this common set of concepts, force planning integrates all the efforts of the peacetime Marine Corps, including training, education, doctrine, organization, personnel management, and equipment acquisition. Unity of effort is as important during the preparation for war as it is during the conduct of war. This systematic process of identifying the objective and planning a course to obtain it applies to all areas and levels of preparations.

ORGANIZATION

The operating forces must be organized to provide forward deployed or rapidly deployable forces capable of conducting expeditionary operations in any environment. This means that in addition to maintaining their unique amphibious capability, the operating forces must maintain the capability to deploy by whatever means is appropriate to the situation.

The active operating forces must be capable of responding immediately to most types of crisis and conflict. Many sustained missions will require augmentation from the Reserve establishment.

For operations and training, Marine forces will be formed into Marine air-ground task forces (MAGTFs). MAGTFs are task organizations consisting of ground, aviation, combat service support, and command elements. They have no standard structure, but rather are constituted as appropriate for the specific situation. The MAGTF provides a single commander a combined arms force that can be tailored to the situation faced. As the situation changes, it may of course be necessary to restructure the MAGTF.

Operating forces should be organized for warfighting and then adapted for peacetime rather than vice versa. Tables of organization should reflect the two central requirements of *deployability* and the *ability to task-organize according to specific situations*. Units should be organized according to type only to the extent dictated by training, administrative, and logistic requirements.

Commanders should establish habitual relationships between supported and supporting units to develop operational familiarity among those units. This does not preclude nonstandard relationships when required by the situation.

DOCTRINE

Doctrine is a teaching of the fundamental beliefs of the Marine Corps on the subject of war, from its nature and theory to its

preparation and conduct.⁴ Doctrine establishes a particular way of thinking about war and a way of fighting. It also provides a philosophy for leading Marines in combat, a mandate for professionalism, and a common language. In short, it establishes the way we practice our profession. In this manner, doctrine provides the basis for harmonious actions and mutual understanding.

Marine Corps doctrine is made official by the Commandant and is established in this publication. Our doctrine does not consist of procedures to be applied in specific situations so much as it sets forth general guidance that requires judgment in application. Therefore, while authoritative, doctrine is not prescriptive.

PROFESSIONALISM

Marine Corps doctrine demands professional competence among its leaders. *As military professionals charged with the defense of the Nation, Marine leaders must be true experts in the conduct of war.* They must be individuals both of action and of intellect, skilled at “getting things done” while at the same time conversant in the military art. Resolute and self-reliant in their decisions, they must also be energetic and insistent in execution.⁵

The military profession is a thinking profession. Every Marine is expected to be a student of the art and science of war. Officers especially are expected to have a solid foundation in military theory and a knowledge of military history and the timeless lessons to be gained from it.

Leaders must have a strong sense of the great responsibility of their office; the resources they will expend in war are human lives.

The Marine Corps' style of warfare requires intelligent leaders with a penchant for boldness and initiative down to the lowest levels. Boldness is an essential moral trait in a leader for it generates combat power beyond the physical means at hand. Initiative, the willingness to act on one's own judgment, is a prerequisite for boldness. These traits carried to excess can lead to rashness, but we must realize that errors by junior leaders stemming from overboldness are a necessary part of learning.⁶ We should deal with such errors leniently; there must be no "zero defects" mentality. Abolishing "zero defects" means that we do not stifle boldness or initiative through the threat of punishment. It does not mean that commanders do not counsel subordinates on mistakes; constructive criticism is an important element in learning. Nor does it give subordinates free license to act stupidly or recklessly.

Not only must we not stifle boldness or initiative, but we must continue to encourage both traits *in spite of mistakes*. On the other hand, we should deal severely with errors of inaction

or timidity. We will not accept lack of orders as justification for inaction; it is each Marine's *duty* to take initiative as the situation demands. We must not tolerate the avoidance of responsibility or necessary risk.

Consequently, trust is an essential trait among leaders—trust by seniors in the abilities of their subordinates and by juniors in the competence and support of their seniors. Trust must be earned, and actions which undermine trust must meet with strict censure. Trust is a product of confidence and familiarity. Confidence among comrades results from demonstrated professional skill. Familiarity results from shared experience and a common professional philosophy.

Relations among all leaders—from corporal to general—should be based on honesty and frankness regardless of disparity between grades. Until a commander has reached and stated a decision, subordinates should consider it their duty to provide honest, professional opinions even though these may be in disagreement with the senior's opinions. However, once the decision has been reached, juniors then must support it as if it were their own. Seniors must encourage candor among subordinates and must not hide behind their grade insignia. Ready compliance for the purpose of personal advancement—the behavior of “yes-men”—will not be tolerated.

TRAINING

The purpose of all training is to develop forces that can win in combat. Training is the key to combat effectiveness and therefore is the main effort of a peacetime military. However, training should not stop with the commencement of war; training must continue during war to adapt to the lessons of combat.

All officers and enlisted Marines undergo similar entry-level training which is, in effect, a socialization process. This training provides all Marines a common experience, a proud heritage, a set of values, and a common bond of comradeship. It is the essential first step in the making of a Marine.

Basic individual skills are an essential foundation for combat effectiveness and must receive heavy emphasis. All Marines, regardless of occupational specialty, will be trained in basic combat skills. At the same time, unit skills are extremely important. They are not simply an accumulation of individual skills; adequacy in individual skills does not automatically mean unit skills are satisfactory.

Commanders at each echelon must allot subordinates sufficient time and freedom to conduct the training necessary to achieve proficiency at their levels. They must ensure that

higher-level demands do not deny subordinates adequate opportunities for autonomous unit training.

In order to develop initiative among junior leaders, the conduct of training—like combat—should be decentralized. Senior commanders influence training by establishing goals and standards, communicating the intent of training, and establishing a main effort for training. As a rule, they should refrain from dictating how the training will be accomplished.

Training programs should reflect practical, challenging, and progressive goals beginning with individual and small-unit skills and culminating in a fully combined arms MAGTF. In general, the organization for combat should also be the organization for training. That is, units, including MAGTFs, should train with the full complement of assigned, reinforcing, and supporting forces they require in combat.

Collective training consists of drills and exercises. Drills are a form of small-unit training which stress proficiency by progressive repetition of tasks. Drills are an effective method for developing standardized techniques and procedures that must be performed repeatedly without variation to ensure speed and coordination. Examples are gun drills, preflight preparations, or immediate actions. In contrast, exercises are designed to train units and individuals in tactics under simulated combat conditions. Exercises should approximate the conditions of war as much as possible; that is, they should introduce friction in the form of uncertainty, stress, disorder, and opposing wills.

This last characteristic is most important; only in opposed, free-play exercises can we practice the art of war. Dictated or “canned” scenarios eliminate the element of independent, opposing wills that is the essence of war.

Critiques are an important part of training because critical self-analysis, even after success, is essential to improvement. Their purpose is to draw out the lessons of training. As a result, we should conduct critiques immediately after completing training, before memory of the events has faded. Critiques should be held in an atmosphere of open and frank dialogue in which all hands are encouraged to contribute. We learn as much from mistakes as from things done well, so we must be willing to admit mistakes and discuss them. Of course, a subordinate’s willingness to admit mistakes depends on the commander’s willingness to tolerate them. Because we recognize that no two situations in war are the same, our critiques should focus not so much on the actions we took as on why we took those actions and why they brought the results they did.

PROFESSIONAL MILITARY EDUCATION

Professional military education is designed to develop creative, thinking leaders. From the initial stages of leadership training, a leader’s career should be viewed as a continuous, progressive

process of development. At each stage, a Marine should be preparing for the subsequent stage.

The early stages of a leader's career are, in effect, an apprenticeship. While receiving a foundation in theory and concepts that will serve them throughout their careers, leaders focus on understanding the requirements and learning and applying the procedures and techniques associated with a particular field. This is when they learn their trades as aviators, infantrymen, artillerymen, or logisticians. As they progress, leaders should strive to master their respective fields and to understand the interrelationship of the techniques and procedures within the field. A Marine's goal at this stage is to become an expert in the tactical level of war.

As an officer continues to develop, mastery should encompass a broader range of subjects and should extend to the operational level of war. At this stage, an officer should not only be an expert in tactics and techniques but should also understand combined arms, amphibious warfare, and expeditionary operations. At the senior levels, an officer should be fully capable of articulating, applying, and integrating MAGTF warfighting capabilities in a joint and multinational environment and should be an expert in the art of war at all levels.

The responsibility for implementing professional military education in the Marine Corps is three-tiered: It resides not only with the education establishment, but also with the commander and the individual.

The education establishment consists of those schools—administered by the Marine Corps, subordinate commands, or outside agencies—established to provide formal education in the art and science of war. All professional schools, particularly officer schools, should focus on developing a talent for military judgment, not on imparting knowledge through rote learning. Study conducted by the education establishment can neither provide complete career preparation for an individual nor reach all individuals. Rather, it builds upon the base provided by commanders and by individual study.

All commanders should consider the professional development of their subordinates a principal responsibility of command. Commanders should foster a personal teacher-student relationship with their subordinates. Commanders are expected to conduct a continuing professional education program for their subordinates that includes developing military judgment and decisionmaking and teaches general professional subjects and specific technical subjects pertinent to occupational specialties. Useful tools for general professional development include supervised reading programs, map exercises, war games, battle studies, and terrain studies. *Commanders should see the development of their subordinates as a direct reflection on themselves.*

Finally, every Marine has an individual responsibility to study the profession of arms. A leader without either interest in or knowledge of the history and theory of warfare—the intel-

lectual content of the military profession—is a leader in appearance only. Self-directed study in the art and science of war is at least equal in importance to maintaining physical condition and should receive at least equal time. This is particularly true among officers; after all, the mind is an officer's principal weapon.

PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT

Since war is at base a human enterprise, effective personnel management is important to success. This is especially true for a doctrine of maneuver warfare, which places a premium on individual judgment and action. We should recognize that all Marines of a given grade and occupational specialty are not interchangeable and should assign people to billets based on specific ability and temperament. This includes recognizing those who are best suited to command assignments and those who are best suited to staff assignments—without penalizing one or the other by so recognizing.

The personnel management system should seek to achieve personnel stability within units and staffs as a means of fostering cohesion, teamwork, and implicit understanding. We recognize that casualties in war will take a toll on personnel stability, but the greater stability a unit has initially, the better it will absorb those casualties and incorporate replacements.

Finally, promotion and advancement policy should reward the willingness to accept responsibility and exercise initiative.

EQUIPPING

Equipment should be easy to operate and maintain, reliable, and interoperable with other equipment. It should require minimal specialized operator training. Further, equipment should be designed so that its use is consistent with established doctrine and tactics. A primary consideration is strategic and tactical lift—the Marine Corps’ reliance on shipping for strategic mobility and on landing craft, helicopters, and vertical/short take-off and landing aircraft for tactical mobility from ship to shore and during operations ashore. Another key consideration is employability and supportability in undeveloped theaters with limited supporting infrastructure—where Marine Corps units can frequently expect to operate.

In order to minimize research and development costs and fielding time, the Marine Corps will exploit existing capabilities—“off-the-shelf” technology—to the greatest extent possible.

Acquisition should be a complementary, two-way process based on established operating and functional concepts. Especially for the long term, the process must identify combat requirements and develop equipment to satisfy these require-

ments. Where possible, we should base these requirements on an analysis of likely enemy vulnerabilities and should develop equipment to exploit those vulnerabilities. At the same time, the process should not overlook existing equipment of obvious usefulness.

Equipment is useful only if it increases combat effectiveness. Any piece of equipment requires support: operator training, maintenance, power sources or fuel, and transport. The anticipated enhancement of capabilities must justify these support requirements and the employment of the equipment must take these requirements into account.

The acquisition effort should balance the need for specialization with the need for utility in a broad range of environments. Increasing the capabilities of equipment generally requires developing increasingly specialized equipment. Increasingly specialized equipment tends to be increasingly vulnerable to countermeasures. One solution to this problem is not to develop a single family of equipment, but to maintain variety in equipment types.

As much as possible, employment techniques and procedures should be developed concurrently with equipment to minimize delays between the fielding of the equipment and its usefulness to the operating forces. For the same reason, initial operator training should also precede equipment fielding.

There are two dangers with respect to equipment: the overreliance on technology and the failure to make the most of technological capabilities. Technology can enhance the ways and means of war by improving humanity's ability to wage it, but technology cannot and should not attempt to eliminate humanity from the process of waging war. Better equipment is not the cure for all ills; doctrinal and tactical solutions to combat deficiencies must also be sought. Any advantages gained by technological advancement are only temporary for someone will always find a countermeasure, tactical or itself technological, which will lessen the impact of the technology. Additionally, we must not become so dependent on equipment that we can no longer function effectively when the equipment becomes inoperable. Finally, we must exercise discipline in the use of technology. Advanced information technology especially can tempt us to try to maintain precise, positive control over subordinates, which is incompatible with the Marine Corps philosophy of command.

CONCLUSION

There are two basic military functions: waging war and preparing for war. Any military activities that do not contribute to the conduct of a present war are justifiable only if they contribute to preparedness for a possible future one. Clearly, we cannot afford to separate conduct and preparation. They must be inti-

mately related because failure in preparation leads to disaster on the battlefield.