

DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY
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Washington, D.C. 20380-1775

4 October 1996

FOREWORD

This doctrinal publication describes a theory and philosophy of command and control for the U.S. Marine Corps. Put very simply, the intent is to describe how we can reach effective military decisions and implement effective military actions faster than an adversary in any conflict setting on any scale. In so doing, this publication provides a framework for all Marines for the development and exercise of effective command and control in peace, in crisis, or in war. This publication represents a firm commitment by the Marine Corps to a bold, even fundamental shift in the way we will view and deal with the dynamic challenges of command and control in the information age.

The Marine Corps' view of command and control is based on our common understanding of the nature of war and on our warfighting philosophy, as described in Fleet Marine Force Manual 1, *Warfighting* (to be superseded by Marine Corps Doctrinal Publication 1, *Warfighting*). It takes into account both the timeless features of war as we understand them and the implications of the ongoing information explosion that is a consequence of modern technology. Since war is fundamentally

a clash between independent, hostile wills, our doctrine for command and control accounts for animate enemies actively interfering with our plans and actions to further their own aims. Since we recognize the turbulent nature of war, our doctrine provides for fast, flexible, and decisive action in a complex environment characterized by friction, uncertainty, fluidity, and rapid change. Since we recognize that equipment is but a means to an end and not the end itself, our doctrine is independent of any particular technology. Taking a broad view that accounts first for the human factors central in war, this doctrine provides a proper framework for designing, appraising, and deploying hardware as well as other components of command and control support.

This doctrinal publication applies across the full range of military actions from humanitarian assistance on one extreme to general war on the other. It applies equally to small-unit leaders and senior commanders. Moreover, since any activity not directly a part of warfighting is part of the preparation for war, this doctrinal publication is meant to apply also to the conduct of peacetime activities in garrison as well as in the field.

This publication provides the authority for the subsequent development of command and control doctrine, education, training, equipment, facilities, procedures, and organization. This doctrinal publication provides no specific techniques or procedures for command and control; rather, it provides broad guidance which requires judgment in application. Other

publications in the command and control series will provide specific tactics, techniques, and procedures for performing various tasks. MCDP 5, *Planning*, discusses the planning side of command and control more specifically.

“Operation VERBAL IMAGE,” the short story with which this publication begins, offers a word picture of command and control in action (done well and done poorly) and illustrates various key points that appear in the text. It can be read separately or in conjunction with the rest of the text. Chapter 1 works from the assumption that, in order to develop an effective philosophy of command and control, we must first come to a realistic appreciation for the nature of the process and its related problems and opportunities. Based on this understanding, chapter 2 discusses theories of command and control, looking at the subject from various aspects, such as leadership, information management, and decisionmaking. Building on the conclusions of the preceding chapters, chapter 3 describes the basic features of the Marine Corps’ approach to command and control.

A main point of this doctrinal publication is that command and control is not the exclusive province of senior commanders and staffs: effective command and control is the responsibility of all Marines. And so this publication is meant to guide Marines at all levels of command.

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Commandant of the Marine Corps

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