



13 Jul 18

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1. **Background.** This battalion's ultimate reason for existence is twofold. On one end of the spectrum is the selective killing of people; on the other end of the spectrum is to preserve life. Successful accomplishment of actions, at either end of this spectrum, rests squarely on the shoulders of small unit leaders in this battalion. To that end, the focus of training will be centered on building cohesive, proficient sections, squads, teams, and crews. I strongly believe that if we have strong NCOs who take ownership of the Marines and equipment placed in their charge, this battalion will be unstoppable!

2. **Purpose.** This is how we must think about warfighting:

**Maneuver Warfare (MW).** It works, but only if we all understand what it means and the implications of thinking this way. It works not only at the larger operational and strategic levels, but most importantly to us, at the tactical level. It works at all echelons of command, from the gun crew to the MEF. MW must permeate everything we do as a unit, how we train, how we administrate, and most importantly, how we think and how we fight. A philosophy for operating in Hawaii cannot be different than the philosophy for how we intend to fight in every clime and place.

To put it in simple words for us to understand, MW means to be *thinking about how we can always achieve a position of advantage and then exploit that advantage* with the purpose of causing the rapid defeat of our opponent. *What* is a position of advantage and *how* can that be achieved? The *what* is called tactics, the *how* is called techniques and procedures.

**A position of advantage is that element of superiority over an opponent** that, when exploited, leads to his defeat. A position of advantage could be one of information, terrain, weapons, firepower, location, disposition; it could even be a psychological advantage--although to exploit a psychological advantage will be more difficult. In combat, (this is easily supported by history) when a unit or person is attacked from the flank or rear while he is dealing with either a perceived or actual threat to his front, his mental (psychological) *will* to remain and fight rapidly deteriorates. While not preferred, sections or platoons may be attacking an opponent frontally. However, attacking frontally will not be done in isolation. Efforts must be made to find and attack the enemy on the flank, in the rear or exploit some other weakness or gap of the opponent. *Achieving* a position of advantage requires superior execution of techniques and procedures to that of the opponent. Training is therefore, focused on techniques and procedures. Remember, however, that achieving a position of advantage can only be decisive when it is exploited. After all, the whole purpose of fighting from a position of advantage is to use it to defeat a foe!

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**Tactics** consist of decisions, choices the commander makes, that set the conditions for action in combat--ambush, defend, counterattack, penetrate, infiltrate, surprise, deceive, attack, wait, hide, etc...Tactics used in a fight must be connected however, to the aims of the next higher commander, hence the decisions that the tactical commander makes are never divorced from the higher commander's mission, purpose and intent. From this perspective, decisions that commanders make are the most basic element in tactics. It boils down to a mental contest between us and the 'enemy' commander. If, in using any tactic, making the best decision and applying the best techniques and procedures, we can cause the opponent to quit, (perhaps without even fighting) then we win. Remember, the basics are the tactics. The techniques and procedures must fit the tactics. Tactics come first then the techniques and procedures.

**Decision-making** is a basic fundamental of tactics and is improved upon with experience. However, since decision making is a mental process, the reading and study of combat history can make up for the lack of actual experience. Your personal ability to make better decisions is directly proportional to your level of reading and study about combat--education. Decisions are also improved upon by making many decisions and having these decisions critiqued.

Elements that contribute to execution of maneuver warfare:

**Command vs control.** I am in command not control of this battalion. My understanding of leadership in combat is that leaders who focus efforts to 'control' events and subordinates quickly lose control and are often forced to revert to firepower or micro-management to fix the situation, and extricate themselves or the unit from a bad situation to win. It is also my understanding that leaders who command using a variety of elements--personality, clear communication of orders, familiarity (in the sense of knowing subordinates and seniors) can achieve an unmatched ability to influence the battle and maintain better control. The right events will occur because subordinates are allowed to fight the situation they face.

In a decentralized command philosophy the commander communicates the central plan and allows decentralized execution; permitting subordinates to deviate (selectively disobey) from the central plan if the enemy situation demands it. The commander has an obligation to communicate his intent and the subordinate has the obligation to fulfill the intent. Inherent in this obligation is a communication flow, to the commander from the subordinate. In this method of command, the **commander's intent takes on increased significance**. Also, initiative of the subordinate is mandated. He must have a bias for action. In this battalion, we must be reprimanded for failure to make a decision or take action. When we make a decision and it results in failure, mistakes or less than expected performance, it will not be viewed from the same perspective as in lack of a decision or action. Remember that we only get better if we make decisions--this means mistakes and failure will occur. This is called learning and getting better.

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**Mission orders.** Mission orders are a means of command and control. To as great an extent as possible we will operate, both tactically and administratively using mission orders. To me, this means that the commander assigns action (mission and intent) and the subordinate executes using available means and assets making every effort to accomplish the mission within the intent. The commander is not necessarily concerned with the how of the execution but must ensure that the subordinate is provided with assets needed to execute. I want effective execution and performance--not efficiency. Efficiency will be achieved as execution improves. When the commander has concerns, and wants to add the weight of both his presence and guidance he places himself with the unit that he has assigned the main effort. Operating this way carries with it a huge delegation of responsibility and obligatory action on the part of the subordinate. As mentioned above, communication up and across the chain is mandated. Initiative is a requirement. Supervision becomes crucial. Combat orders will be issued orally when possible. Orders will be written to preserve history.

**Surfaces and Gaps.** This idea is another basic in the execution of MW. Our tactics are based on the location of surfaces (strengths), avoiding them, and attacking the gap (weakness) we think is key for the enemy's success. Focus on finding the weaknesses and you will be surprised at the variety of options that will expose themselves to you in a fight. When you attack frontally leading with your nose (firepower) your options are limited. Strengths and weaknesses are located by recon-pull. NCOs must be allowed to exploit weaknesses they find. Commanders must then be in a position to communicate and exploit so that higher can follow through with non organic support. It becomes an art for Marines to know the differences between surfaces and gaps. Gaps may need to be created by use of infiltration or penetration attacks. Penetration is conducted by suppression, assault and exploitation. Infiltration will take more time and will depend on use of surprise, deception, excellent field skills and use of the night.

**Focus on the Enemy.** Since we know that the mind of the enemy commander is the target of our tactics, our energies and effort must be directed at becoming familiar with how the enemy commander thinks, his tactics, techniques and procedures. We must be faster than he is in our actions. Turn the map around. Think about what you would do in his shoes with his assets and capabilities (not yours).

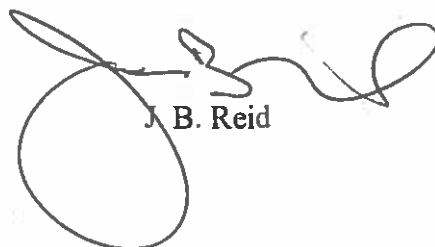
**Focus of Effort (main effort).** Directing the energy of a unit against an enemy unit (hopefully a weakness or gap) is called a focus of effort. It does not just mean main attack. When a unit is assigned as the main effort, all other units support that unit in the accomplishment of the commander's mission and intent. **The unit assigned the main effort is weighted.** In all that we do, only one main effort will be assigned. Can we operate administratively in this manner?

**Combined Arms.** In the application of tactics, techniques and procedures against an opponent there must be the goal to put him in a dilemma--that is, with every action he takes we have provided a counter that places him in an inextricable dilemma--at every turn he is faced

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with another problem. **Can one Marine with a rifle and grenade conduct combined arms?** Combined arms is not automatically achieved in the organization of a unit. It requires thought and superior execution of techniques and procedures IOT employ fires and effects of fires with movement so that a dilemma is created.

**Application of MW to other areas.** In everything we do (fight, support, administrate, etc.) in this battalion, we will always strive to do so from a position of advantage. Our focus of training and support will be at achieving tactical advantage in combat. However, in training, in providing support, in maintenance, in administrating, in relations with our sister units, adjacent units, attachments, civilian support agencies and higher headquarters, we will also always make the effort to attack from the position of advantage with a view toward exploitation that benefits us. This approach requires that our sh-- must be collectively focused, complete and in one bag. You will see that to accomplish this effort requires adherence to standards and regulations, excellent procedures and coordination, leaders cross-talking, information flow up, down and across--just as it will require in a fight with an opponent on a hostile shore. While the units and agencies we work with are not the enemy, I think this approach still works. Use of judgment, personality, common sense, timing, even politeness and protocol at times will be required to succeed. It may require that instead of forcing an issue, the best decision may be to wait, cooperate or re-attack from another direction. Try the indirect approach or use combined arms to get the person you are dealing with on your side. For example, it usually will not be the best decision to *ambush* or surprise higher headquarters with an issue. Bottom line, the application of this philosophy of fighting to how we interact with fellow Marines, how we train, and how we administrate requires us to 'think' about the people involved.



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