
Tactics Cliff Notes

A Synopsis of MCDP 1-3 *Tactics*

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Forward.

This book is about winning in combat. Winning in combat depends on leaders who can think creatively and act decisively. This book is designed for all tactical leaders from MAGTF commander to fire team leader in all types Marine units. This book establishes the Marine Corps philosophy for winning battles.

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Chapter 1: Understanding Tactics

An Art and A Science. Tactics is “the art and science of winning engagements and battles. It includes the use of firepower and maneuver, the integration of different arms and the exploitation of success to defeat the enemy.” The techniques for accomplishing a mission are the *technical* aspects of tactics.

Tactics range from the methods we use to defeat the enemy on the battlefield to the methods we use to control crowds or provide humanitarian aid.

The art of tactics is the creation, positioning and maneuver of combat power. The science of tactics lies in the technical application of combat power — techniques such as marksmanship and navigation. Without mastery of warfighting skills, one cannot bring tactics to the level of art.

Strategy and campaigning bring our forces to a particular place at a particular time. Tactical competence wins battles. Leaders at the strategic and operational levels use tactical victories to bring success in campaigns and wars.

In combat, our objective is victory. Sometimes we have to physically destroy the enemy’s forces. Other times we destroy only their will to fight.

The Environment. The tactical environment is dynamic, chaotic and unpredictable. The assault on Tarawa in November 1943 involved high casualties, bad communications and unit disruption. Only through leadership, initiative and teamwork were Marines able to prevail.

Battle is the collision of opposing forces. These military forces are complex system of individuals and equipment, interacting in chaotic ways. The actions of individual Marines can have a great impact in combat.

Battle is influenced by a variety of factors. Orders, missions, and training are internal factors. External factors are the enemy, terrain and weather, and civilians. The outcome of combat can only be anticipated in probabilities.

Technology also influences battle. It can help decrease uncertainty, but it also makes battle more fluid. Modern weapons technology has forced units to increase dispersion, making command and control more difficult.

Future battlefields are likely to become more chaotic. Our likely opponents will attempt to hide from our superior firepower within the local populace.

Chaos also bring opportunity. We must recognize and exploit opportunities when chance presents them. Look for recurring patterns to exploit.

How We View Combat and How We Fight. Our perception of combat affects how we fight. Some believe that combat is predictable. This leads to centralized control and the expectation of precision. Forces based along these lines are unable to adapt, and are overwhelmed by chaos.

Marine Corps tactics are based on the view that combat is unpredictable. We rely on decentralized control and mission orders, allowing local commanders the freedom to handle situations and they see fit. This view requires trust in competent subordinates and flexibility.

Victory cannot be achieved with checklists or formulas. We must study tactics and history to develop a creative talent for successfully handling difficult situations.

Marine Corps Tactics. Marine Corps tactics hinges on the thoughtful application of basic concepts. The concepts must be creatively employed during planning and execution. The concepts blend to meet the situation. The art and science of tactics lies in knowing what combination will lead to success.

The concepts presented should not limit your tactical decision making. They provide a framework from which you can expand your abilities. They are all of equal importance and apply equally to corporals and generals.

Conclusion. Tactical excellence is the hallmark of the Marine Corps leader. Success lies in the innovative use of maneuver warfare concepts. It is our duty as Marine Corps leaders to develop our own tactical proficiency as well as that of our subordinates.

Chapter 2: Achieving a Decision

Anzio: A Model of Tactical Indecisiveness. In 1943, the Allies were searching for a way to end the stalemate in Italy. An amphibious landing was planned to outmaneuver the Germans and capture Rome. Major General Lucas of the U.S. Army was to lead the operation.

When the Allied forces landed 35 miles south of Rome on January 22, 1944, they had achieved complete surprise. By midmorning, the beachhead was three miles inland. The Germans would not be able to commit forces in the area until the next day.

Yet General Lucas delayed. He sought to build his logistics base on shore. Lucas did not feel strong enough to press on until 29 January. By then the Germans had strongly reinforced the Anzio area and seized the dominating terrain. The Germans stalled the attack and seized the initiative. The fall of Rome did not take place for several months.

Cannae: A Clear Tactical Decision Achieved. On August 2, 216 B.C., the Carthaginian general Hannibal fought the Roman army under Varro near the city of Cannae. Hannibal, with 50,000 soldiers, placed a strong unit of heavy infantry on his left, a thin line of light infantry across his center, and another unit of heavy infantry on his right. Both flanks were protected by cavalry. Varro, with 80,000 men, observed the vulnerable center of the Carthaginians and decided to crush his enemy with sheer weight of numbers. As the Romans attacked, Hannibal moved his left cavalry unit around and behind the Romans, where they attacked into the rear of the densely packed Roman infantry. At the same time, Hannibal wheeled both his left and right heavy infantry forces into the flanks of the Roman army. The Romans were boxed in, unable to maneuver or use their weapons effectively. The entire Roman army was destroyed. Hannibal's victory was decisive.

Understanding Decisiveness. Achieving a decision is important. An indecisive battle is a waste of lives. Chaos, friction, and the enemy make a decisive victory hard to achieve. History has many examples of commanders who could not achieve decisive results. *For a battle to be decisive, it must lead directly to a larger success in the war as a whole.* We do not seek decisiveness for its own sake. We stack the deck in our favor so the battle will go our way. When we seek battle, we seek victory. Tactical victories should help meet operational and strategic goals.

Military Judgment. Military judgment is learned skill that is gained through acquired wisdom and experience. Combined with situational awareness, military judgment allows us to see patterns, identify vulnerabilities and concentrate combat power.

Understanding the Situation. We must have a clear picture of what is happening now and how it will develop. We must see the situation as the enemy does. In every situation, the commander must think of what actions will prove decisive.

For every situation, the commander must decide what pieces of information are reliable and important. *Pattern recognition* is an important skill. Decisions must be made in dynamic

situations of friction, uncertainty and danger. Sometimes there is time for analytical decision making. We compare several courses of action and choose the best one. When engaged, the commander will have little time for analysis. Intuitive decision making is necessary to gain speed and momentum. Intuition is a developed skill based on experience, education and practice.

Leaders with situational awareness and broad experience can act intuitively.

Acting Decisively. When an opportunity arrives, we must exploit it fully and aggressively, committing every ounce of combat power and pushing ourselves to the limit.

- *Critical Vulnerabilities.* We must focus our combat power on the enemy's critical vulnerabilities in order to destroy some capacity that the enemy needs. We pit our strength against enemy weakness at a time when he is not prepared, committing the greatest damage with the least cost to ourselves. Just because a target is vulnerable does not mean that it is worth attacking. We must strike a vulnerabilities which will produce the greatest effect upon the enemy. Critical vulnerabilities may be hard to recognize and are different in each situation.
- *Shaping the Operating Area.* Shaping includes planning fires, deception, objectives and routes of advance. Shaping activities can make the enemy vulnerable to attack, blunt his actions, or facilitate our own actions. Shaping forces the enemy to take courses of action which will lead him into a trap.
- *Main Effort.* The main effort is where we center our combat power. The unit designated as the main effort has priority for whatever support is available. Other units must support that effort so that the whole force can succeed. The use of a main effort implies *economy of force*. Forces not in a position to directly support the main effort can be used in feints or distractions, or for security of rear areas. While there should always be a main effort, the situation may demand that it be shifted. As battle is unpredictable, another unit may make a breakthrough while the main effort is stalled. The successful unit should then be designated the main effort and receive whatever boost in combat power the original main effort had.
- *Boldness and Ruthlessness.* Boldness refers to daring and aggressive behavior. We must desire and dare to "win big". Ruthlessness refers to pursuing goals mercilessly. Once we have gained advantage, we must exploit it and increase the pressure on the enemy.

Conclusion. A leader is responsible for results. The most important result is decisive victory. Learn how to translate your thoughts into a main effort, a commander's intent, and missions for your subordinates. Learn how to clearly communicate the results your want to your subordinates.

Chapter 3: Gaining Advantage

Combined Arms. The integration of different arms is central to Marine Corps tactics. We seek to present the enemy with a *dilemma* — a no-win situation. We combine organic and supporting fires with maneuver in such a way that if the enemy moves to counter one threat, he makes himself vulnerable to another.

Combined arms at the squad level is using grenade launchers and SAWs to keep an enemy's head down while Marines with rifles and grenades assault the position. If the enemy attempts to jump from his position, the supporting fires will kill him. If he waits in his hole, the assault element will blast him at close range. This is a no-win situation. This is combined arms.

The different arms should complement each other. The strength of one arm should cover the weakness of another. The enemy is presented with a single unit rather than several different arms. The Marine Air-Ground Task Force (MAGTF) is an example of a balanced combined arms unit.

Maneuver. A war of attrition pits firepower against firepower and results in high casualties. We avoid this form of warfare.

Maneuver is not simply gaining a positional advantage. We may maneuver to threaten the enemy's lines of communication. In other dimensions we can maneuver to deceive the enemy of our intention. We must maneuver in both time and space. The goal is victory at the least possible cost to ourselves.

Exploiting the Environment. The environment, terrain, weather and night, can provide opportunities for success.

Terrain. We must understand how terrain limits movement, visibility or fires. We must recognize how terrain affects the enemy.

Weather. Adverse weather impedes military operations. Learning how to operate in difficult condition gives us great advantage.

Periods of Darkness or Reduced Visibility. Reduced visibility makes simple tasks difficult to carry out. Forces must be trained, equipped, able and willing to operate at night to add 12 hours to our operating time. There are also great psychological advantages to fighting at night.

Complementary Forces. The idea of complementary forces works hand-in-hand with the combined arms concept. We must trap the enemy between two or more separate actions. Sun Tzu spoke of using a direct, obvious action to fix the enemy while the Main Effort took an unexpected route towards victory. The different forces should be interchangeable in battle so that the Main Effort can be shifted to exploit new opportunities. The combinations of complementary forces are limited only to the imagination.

Surprise. Surprise often proves decisive. Between two evenly matched forces, the one who achieves greater surprise will be the victor. We achieve surprise through deception, ambiguity and stealth. We use *deception* to mislead our opponents as to our true intentions. We use *ambiguity* because we cannot hide all of our forces or intentions, but we can confuse the enemy as to the meaning of what he sees. We use *stealth* to hide our forces and movements.

Trapping the Enemy. We do not want a pushing match with the enemy. If we push the enemy off of a piece of terrain, he can withdraw, regroup, and return to fight the next day. Trapping the enemy leads to decisive victory.

Developing an Ambush Mentality. The *ambush mentality* is an attitude central to maneuver warfare. We want to turn every situation into an ambush.

- First, we *surprise the enemy* and do the unexpected. Surprise is the rule, not the exception, in the ambush mentality.
- Secondly, we draw the *enemy into a trap*. Through deception we make one course of action look inviting. When the enemy takes that course of action, we spring the trap.
- Third, we make the ambush *invisible*. The force of the ambush must not make itself known until it is too late for the enemy to react. This requires stealth and deception. *Do not let yourself be seen*.
- Fourth, we *shock the enemy*. We do not bring the enemy under fire gradually. We wait until he is in range of every weapons system and open up suddenly with everything. The sudden action will cause panic and paralysis.
- Finally, we *always focus on the enemy*. Destroy the enemy. Do not simply hold terrain.

Asymmetry. We gain advantage through imbalance, pitting our strengths against enemy weaknesses. We use dissimilar techniques and capabilities to maximize our strengths. Using asymmetry, we do not have to be numerically superior. We only need as many forces as is required to exploit the enemy's weak spots.

Conclusion. Combat is a test of wills where the object is to win. We must use maneuver and surprise whenever possible. It means trapping the enemy at night on poor terrain and in bad weather with complementary forces and combined arms. It means fighting asymmetrically to exploit the enemy's greatest weakness. It means ambushing him to paralyze his forces.

Chapter 4: Being Faster

Weapons are usually thought of as rifles, aircraft or missiles. Marines sometimes overlook one of their most powerful weapons—speed.

Speed in Combat. Speed circumvents the enemy's ability to react quickly. Speed can break down an enemy's confidence and composure. Speed and violence of action lead to success.

What is speed? Speed is moving fast. Physical speed is a powerful weapon in itself. On your approach, speed shortens the enemy's reaction time. In combat, speed changes the situation faster than he can react. Once you are past him, speed makes his action irrelevant. In these three cases, speed causes fear, indecision, and helplessness.

Speed and Time. Speed is more than going fast. Speed is not acting recklessly. Speed must be linked with time. Many times during combat we will not be moving at all, but we still must be fast when we are sitting still. That means faster planning, organizing and resupply. A good tactician has a sense of urgency. Don't waste time. Always look to increase the pace.

Timing. Tempo is created using speed and time. Timing is knowing when to act. Timing is an appreciation for the rhythm of combat and exploiting it to our advantage. It is impossible to operate at peak tempo all of the time. We must rest and resupply. The key is to know when to go full speed and to rest when the enemy cannot hurt us. Timing means knowing when to act and when *not* to act. Sometimes waiting is a better option. We may need to develop an situation to create an opportunity. Decisive action is the goal. A decision not to act can also save forces for later engagements. A unit's energy is a valuable resource.

Relative Speed. Our speed is only meaningful if we are faster than the enemy. To be faster, we can either increase our pace or slow the enemy down.

Continuing Speed. In order to maintain the initiative, we must be continuously faster than the enemy. Using combined arms can maintain our speed. When one arm is forced to halt or slow down, another is able to continue pressuring the enemy. The speed of logistics is critical. Halts are often driven by the need for maintenance or resupply. Prior planning and quick deliveries and repairs can maintain the momentum.

Speed and Change. Speed is about more than moving fast. We need to *transition* from one action to another quickly as well. Transitions produce friction. Reducing the friction maintains tempo and increases speed.

Battle drills and immediate action drills are examples of how we train for quick transitions. We must also train to shift our task organization quickly while in combat. The time and place where a transition takes place can be called a friction point. This is because transitions not only change our physical disposition, but our mindset as well.

John Boyd, a former Air Force colonel, studied how small forces defeated numerically superior opponents. Often, the smaller force introduced quick, sudden changes which the larger force could not cope with. Boyd developed a theory which we now refer to as the OODA loop. It describes the cycle we use to make and implement decisions.

- First we *Observe*. This includes ourselves, the enemy, the environment, and anticipating the enemy's next move.
- Second, we *Orient* to the situation. We use our situational awareness as the foundation of a plan. The better our appreciation of the situation, the better the plan.
- Third, we *Decide* upon a course of action. The decision becomes our plan and is communicated through orders.
- Finally, we *Act*. The plan is executed. Since this action has changed the situation, the cycle begins anew.

This cycle helps us define the term maneuver. It means being consistently faster than our opponent. It does not mean be hasty. Make a thorough reconnaissance, plan thoughtfully and coordinate different arms.

Becoming Faster. The basis of speed is a sense of urgency.

First we must *keep things simple*. Simplicity should be central to planning, command and control, and our own actions.

Second, speed is increased through *decentralization*. This is important to maneuver warfare. The required control is maintained through mission orders and commander's intent.

- *Missions tactics* is the assignment of a mission without the specification of how it is to be carried out. The leader must be able to adjust his tactics to fit the situation without waiting for orders.
- *Commander's intent* provides the overall purpose behind a mission. This allows a subordinate to change tactics without losing tempo. His actions will still fit the commander's intent.

A third way to gain speed is through *experience*. If we are familiar with a situation and generally know what to expect, we can think, act, and move faster. Experience comes from combat, tactical decision games, exercises and training. Experience helps reduce the confusion of combat.

Another way to become faster is by using *implicit communications*. Implicit communication is achieving mutual understanding with little talking. The ability to communicate implicitly takes time. Commanders must know each other well. Eventually this will lead to commanders

exploiting opportunities created by other commanders. Commanders will know what to expect from each other.

Speed is also increased through *lateral communications*. When adjacent leaders talk to each other, things happen faster.

Speed can be gained if commanders *position* themselves at friction points. Leading from the front means that a commander can instantly influence the battle as the situation develops. Friction points can occur anywhere on the battle field, so the commander must not always position himself with the main effort.

Speed must be maintained over time. This requires *mental and physical endurance*. We must be strong and agile physically. Mentally, we must be able to concentrate for long periods of time.

Conclusion. Our aim is to act faster than the enemy can react. Anything that works to make you faster is good.

Chapter 5: Adapting

Anticipation. The first way to adapt is to anticipate. This means developing techniques, tactics and equipment *for future use*. Based on past experience and trial and error, we must forecast the future. All echelons must adapt to situations in advance instead of trying to change when under fire.

Another import tool for adapting is immediate action drills, which cover quick transitions for common situations. We must be able to react to a variety of tactical situations in a *coordinated* manner.

Improvisation. The second way to adapt is to improvise, adjusting to the situation *at the spur of the moment without any preparation*. This requires creativity, intelligence, experience and the intuitive knowledge of what will work and what will not.

Improvisation is critical to increasing speed. Leaders must have situational awareness and a firm knowledge of their commander's intent. Often we will have to use resources not organic to our units to keep our momentum.

Flexible Plans. Flexibility aids us in adapting. We must establish courses of action which leave us several options. While planning, we develop branches for future operations. We become flexible by providing sequels to our current operations. They are courses to take depending on the overall outcome of our operation.

The value of branches and sequels is that they prepare us for several different courses of action. We should not plan for numerous branches, but for the most likely outcomes of our actions.

Flexible plans avoid details which can restrict a subordinate's latitude. Flexible plans are easily changed. Complex schemes are difficult to change. Failure in one part of a complex plan may doom the entire battle. Flexible plans are simple in order to deal with the fluid battlefield.

Decentralization. Leaders should have the latitude to deal with changing situations *on their own authority*, and in accordance with the commander's intent. When leaders do not have to wait for orders from higher, our speed is increased. Decentralization requires confidence in the abilities of subordinates.

Conclusion. History has many examples of success stemming adaptation and improvisation. Creativity must be fostered in training. Commanders must be ready to exploit the opportunities created by their subordinates.

Chapter 6: Cooperating

Control in Combat. Because war is characterized by chaos, uncertainty and rapid change, control quickly breaks down. Absolute precision is unattainable. Attempts at precision and strict control undermine the initiative on which our tactics depend. Marines cannot hesitate.

Cooperation. Cooperation is the union of self-discipline and initiative in pursuit of a common goal. It is a component of control.

Control can be divided into two types: centralized and decentralized. Centralized control works from the top down. Only one person thinks for the group and all others must conform.

Decentralized control works from the bottom up. Command is the exercise of authority and guidance, while control is the feedback about the effects of actions taken. Thinking is required at all levels. This feedback allows the commander to adapt to changing situations and decide upon subsequent actions. Subordinates coordinate laterally in order to fulfill the commander's intent. Cooperation demands that we help those around us meet the common goal.

Discipline. How do we cooperate when the going gets tough? Through discipline. Discipline enable individuals to pursue what is best for their comrades, their unit, and the Marine Corps. Discipline enable Marines to accomplish difficult tasks in combat. Discipline is the result of training. In combat, instant obedience to an order is crucial, even if the order is unpopular.

Discipline comes in two forms: imposed and self-discipline. Imposed discipline is external in nature, and ensures compliance with guidance from higher. It is a means to achieve efficiency in routine tasks and drill. In its extreme, it stifles initiative and makes it impossible for units to communicate laterally.

Self-discipline is an internal force that obligates all Marines to do what is right. Coupled with camaraderie and esprit de corps, it causes Marines to do everything for other Marines. Self-discipline means accepting responsibility.

Thus discipline is a *way of thinking and behaving*. It applies to life in garrison as well as combat.

Conclusion. Modern tactics depends on cooperation, not control. Cooperation depends on self-discipline. As a leader, you must allow self-discipline and initiative to flourish.

Chapter 7: Exploiting Success and Finishing

Building on Advantage. Once we have gained an advantage, we must exploit it. We must create new opportunities. Even small advantages exploited ruthlessly and repeatedly can lead to decisive victory. You must think ahead, looking for new opportunities.

Consolidation, Exploitation, and Pursuit. Often, victories are the result of aggressively exploiting some relative advantage until it becomes decisive and the action turns to a rout. Historically, casualty rates remain stable until one side perceives a hopeless situation and flees. At that time, the fleeing force is cut to pieces.

One way to exploit success is through *consolidation*, to protect the objective we have taken from the enemy. We must be careful not to give up the initiative at this time. Yet we may lack the ability to carry on the advance. Our new position may force the enemy to meet our terms.

The second way to pursue advantage is through *exploitation*, an offensive technique designed to defeat the enemy in depth. The goal is to pour combat power through a breach in the enemy's defenses and destroy his entire system.

The third way to exploit advantage is through *pursuit*. Pursuit seeks to catch or cut-off an enemy force in retreat. The intent of a pursuit is to bring about the final destruction of the enemy forces. Its execution is marked by ruthless vigor.

Finishing the Enemy. We want to transform our advantages into a decisive victory. We must make our final attempt at victory at the right time. A Marine leader must be a good finisher with an aggressive mentality. He "goes for the throat" at the right time.

Use of the Reserve in Combat. The reserve is an important tool for exploiting success. Never reinforce failure. The reserve is a force held out of action in order to influence future action. The reserve is used to deal with both opportunities and crises. The commander should have a purpose for the reserve. Proper assignment of combat power to the reserve requires planning and task organization.

A strong reserve can be used to maintain the initiative. If an advance slows, the reserve can revitalize the attack. If a breach is created, the reserve can create a route. The reserve can attack in a different direction if the initial attack has failed. Sometimes the reserve is needed to stabilize a crisis, making it unavailable for commitment elsewhere. In such a case, another reserve should be created immediately.

Conclusion. We may have a number of ways to exploit tactical opportunity, but the objective is to pressure the enemy until we have the opportunity to boldly and ruthlessly finish him and achieve a decisive victory.

Chapter 8: Making It Happen

Doctrine. Doctrine establishes the fundamental beliefs of the Marine Corps on the subject of war and how we wage it. It defines our philosophies on warfighting, leadership, professionalism and creates a common language.

All Marine Corps doctrine stems from MCDP-1 *Warfighting* and is further explained in the Marine Corps Warfighting Publications series.

Education. While the best instruction is combat experience, Marine leaders cannot wait for war to begin their education. Lives depend on the competency of Marine leaders. Our education in tactics must develop three qualities: creative ability, military judgment, and moral courage. Training is required to develop these traits.

- *Creative ability* is finding unique solution to tactical problems. The line between boldness and foolhardiness is drawn by experience. Tactical study must look at cause and effect in depth.
- *Military judgment* includes situational awareness and decision making skills. The tactician must recognize the important factors in a situation and then make clear decisions. Education must emphasize the ability to understand the mission, issue a clear intent, and designate the main effort.
- *Moral courage* is the ability to make and carry out the decision regardless of personal cost. It is different from physical courage. Moral courage drives a leader to stick by a decision in the light of conflicting responsibilities.

An effective leader willingly takes on the risks that come with military responsibilities. It is a leader's duty to make decisions when the situation requires them. Whether the action is successful or not, the leader cannot fail to lead. Omission or inaction stemming from a lack of leadership is much worse than a failure in judgment.

Training. Good tactics depend upon sound technical skills. We achieve technical competence through training. Training develops skills and confidence.

One of the ultimate goals of training is speed. This speed must be coupled with accuracy. Speed without accuracy produces unnecessary damage and wastes energy.

Small-unit training should focus on immediate-action drills, battle drills and SOP's. Training in technical skills applies to all Military Occupational Specialties. Marine leaders must learn to discern valuable information, plan, coordinate and issue orders quickly.

Training should also prepare Marines for the harsh physical nature of combat. The goal is to train Marines to be effective when miserable or exhausted.

Training should enable us to take appropriate action in any environment. We must learn to overcome the inherent friction of operating in inclement weather or darkness. This will allow us to strike at a time of our choosing.

Training and Educational Methods. There is no single “best” way to reach tactical proficiency. However, the approach should be adaptable to all echelons and grades. The learning environment should be challenging, rewarding and conducive to creative thinking.

Professional Reading and Historical Study. Because of the lack of combat experience in most Marine leader’s careers, knowledge must be gathered from military history. Military history gives a mental picture of battle, and outlines how successful commanders thought and fought the situations they faced.

Histories also cover what resources are necessary for combat, as well as the horrors and heroism of combat. Information can be found in battle studies, biographies and autobiographies, unit histories, after action reports, and films and documentaries. Group discussions help individuals share ideas and polish their tactical abilities.

Professional education cannot wait until a leader attends a school. Initiative and self-discipline are required for Marine leaders to expand their abilities by studying on their own time.

Tactical Exercises. Tactical success evolves from the *creative application of technical skills based on sound judgment*. Exercises allow units and staffs to practice and perfect collective skills. They also test tactics and techniques.

An exercise should serve as a unit’s internal assessment of the quality of its training. The aim is to improve shortfalls, not penalize poor performance. There will always be room for improvement.

Exercises also test a unit’s ability to sustain tempo for extended periods of time. In combat, the fighting will not end at the scheduled time, but when the overall mission is accomplished.

Tactical exercises range from field exercises to command post exercises and tactical exercises without troops. Field exercises are conducted by units of all sizes, and are usually general in nature, but can be focused to study specific echelons or capabilities.

Command post exercises are largely limited to commanders and their staffs. The goal is for the staff to learn to work together and work out procedures.

Tactical exercises without troops provide leaders with the opportunity to train their judgment while their units train on their own. Two approaches govern them. The first approach is to evaluate a subordinate’s ability to handle a given scenario. A specific mission is given to test the subordinate’s technical proficiency. The second approach seeks to evaluate judgment. A subordinate is given a mission order. A course of action is decided upon and the reason for that action examined. The exercise is designed to develop ingenuity and initiative.

Wargaming. Wargames are a valuable tool for understanding the many factors that influence a leader's decisions. The setting can be a sand table exercise, commercial boardgame, or a high-tech simulator. Routine should be avoided. The less familiar the environment, the more creative the student will be.

Sand table exercises, tactical decision games and map exercises provide a general situation and a minimum of information about the enemy and friendly situation. Sand table exercises are very beneficial for novice tacticians as they represent the terrain in a three dimensional manner.

Terrain Walks. Terrain walks introduce the realities of terrain, vegetation and weather. They can be conducted in two ways. The first method provides the students with an area of operations, a general situation and a mission. The group decides upon a plan and walks the terrain their plan would take them over. The instructor then introduces enemy actions while at the same time, students must deal with obstacles not depicted on their maps. The second method involves firsthand study of historic battlefields. We gain an appreciation of the battle by walking on the ground over which it took place. Students look at the battlefield from the perspectives of both commanders.

Competition. Exercises should provide realism. The means for realism are free-play and force-on-force exercises. This allows leaders to apply their skills against an active threat. Free-play exercises are adaptable to all scenarios and echelons. Marines learn to fight as an organization against a challenging foe.

Critiques. Marine leaders must be able to reach decisions with *clear reasoning*. All exercises should culminate in a critique in order to examine the causes and effects of decisions and actions.

The standard approach for critiques should promote initiative. There should be no ideal tactic or solution. The critique should focus on the rationale behind a decision. What factors did the student consider? Were the orders communicated clearly? The idea is to expand the students creative ability to solve difficult problems.

Critiques should be open minded and understanding. Leaders should learn from their mistakes. Do not damage a subordinate in public, as it will squander his self-confidence.

Conclusion. Maneuver warfare demands a professional body of officers and men schooled in its science and art. Everything we do in peacetime should prepare us for combat. Marine leaders must be tactically proficient and seek to expand their base of knowledge and experience.