

Engineering Management  
Field Project

**CONTINGENCY PLANNING AND EXECUTION**  
Planning For the Modern Battlefield

By

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The United States Marine Corps is the world's premier fighting force and has been in action against our Nation's foes for over 200 years. As successful as the Marines have been on the battlefield, the current planning process is in dire need of an overhaul if they are to maintain their combat superiority.

The planning process is outdated and does not have the faith of the commanders and ground troops. Faced with the myriad of changes on the modern battlefield, today's military member is forced to rely solely on commander's intent for guidance. This is largely due to the inability of senior leadership to change the planning process, allowing it to adapt and keep up with the evolution of warfare. There is a considerable void left when planning is not accurate or missing critical elements and scenarios faced by our forces in contingency operations.

This project will examine the current planning process and how it is implemented in the Marine Corps today. Solutions will be developed and instituted into all levels of command, pending senior leadership approval. The goal is to have significant changes made to the planning process in time for the upcoming deployment of Marine forces to Afghanistan. Long term solutions will also be developed for approval and full implementation in all future contingency exercises and operations.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary	2
Acknowledgements	3
Introduction	5
Literature Review	11
Research Procedure	13
Results	18
Conclusions	30
Suggested Further Research	37
References	38

# INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this project is to revitalize the Marine Corps planning process, which has been stagnant for over thirty years. While changes have swept across the battlefield in the areas of weapons, technology, communication and armor, the system of military planning has remained the same. The current planning process was developed to support a particular style of engagement, namely force-on-force. However, the evolution of war has grown past those boundaries and removed the typical battlefield, replacing it with small towns, streets and homes filled with civilians. The enemy has constantly made changes to their approach to warfare and tactics in order to survive against a superior force. Planning must now evolve to provide our ground troops with the best chance for success in any mission.

The current planning process carries with it a fundamental paradox and the crux of this project. Planners are still preparing for exercises, contingencies and operations with the mindset of force-on-force engagements. Requirements are being assembled and sourced in the same manner that they were for WWII. There is training in current situations and updates to battle plans based on previous engagements, but the planning process has remained unchanged. There have been facelifts to the planning, but the structure beneath is the same. This forces Marines on the ground to adapt to each mission and overcome a lack of planning. While “Adapt and Overcome” is our secondary motto, there are fundamental changes that need to be made in order to maintain our combat superiority throughout the foreseeable future.

## **A Brief History of the United States Marine Corps**

### **The Early Days and Colonial Origins (1775 – 1798)**

The United States Marine Corps was originally organized as the Continental Marines and formed by the Continental Congress on 10 November, 1775. At that time, the plan was to draw the new military personnel from among Washington’s army in Boston and send them to capture supplies from Halifax, Nova Scotia. However, Washington was unenthusiastic about the plan and suggested the Marines be recruited in New York or Philadelphia instead.

On 28 November, 1775, Capt Samuel Nichols was commissioned as the Continental Marines’ first officer. He is also known as the first commandant of the Marine Corps. The official birthplace of the Marine Corps is Tun Tavern in Philadelphia, PA. Young men that wandered into the local tavern were recruited for their first tour of duty. Robert Mullen, the bartender, is listed as the first

official recruiter and later became a commissioned officer, serving in several operations over the next few years.

The Continental Marines served with distinction through the end of the Revolutionary War in 1783. At that time, there were 131 Colonial Marine officers and approximately 2,000 enlisted Colonial Marines. The end of the Revolution was also the end of the Continental Marines and Navy, as both were disbanded.

### **Founding the Modern Day Marine Corps (1798 – 1899)**

In preparation for a war with France, Congress created the United States Navy and Marine Corps. President John Adams signed the act for establishing and organizing a Marine Corps on July 11, 1798. This new Corps was to consist of a battalion of 500 privates, lead by a major and a compliment of officers and Non-Commissioned Officers (NCOs). The intent behind establishing the Marines was to conduct ship-to-ship fighting, provide shipboard security and assist in landing forces.

Several significant events took place during this time period:

- The first official Commandant in the U.S. Marine Corps was Lieutenant Colonel Ward Burrows. He was promoted to this office in June of 1800, when the capital moved to Washington D.C.
- LtCol Burrows was given a stock of uniforms that were blue in color and had red trim. This was the basis for the modern day “dress blues”.
- LtCol Burrows also selected the land for the Marine Barracks between 8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>, G and I streets. These buildings are still service today and known as the 8<sup>th</sup> and I Marine Barracks.
- The Marine band was founded and debuted at the President’s house on January 1, 1801. It has garnered national acclaim and played for every presidential inauguration since.
- Several significant engagements and actions took place, which laid the ground work to justify the Marine Corps’ existence. They included: establishment of an advanced forward base, continued actions on ship, early amphibious landings and joint operations with the Navy and Army.
- In 1834, the Marine Corps was in the fight for its life, pitting the President Andrew Jackson against the Commandant of the Marine Corps. General Archibald Henderson had breathed new life into the Corps and took on many expeditionary duties. President Jackson wanted to combine the Marine Corps with the Army. However, Congress instead passed the Act

for the Better Organization of the Marine Corps, which stipulated that the Marine Corps was part of the Department of the Navy as a sister service.

- The Civil War was not a highlight in our nation's history or the Marine Corps'. Half the strength of the Corps resigned to join the Confederacy. It was during this war that the Marines had their only failed amphibious landing at Fort Sumter in Charlestown harbor.
- During this time period, the Marines fought in battles and engagements in Panama, Asia, East India, Mexico, Chile, Columbia, Philippines, Cuba and the Caribbean. For the most part, their performance was exemplary.
- Under the Commandant Jacob Zeilin, Marine customs and courtesies began to take shape. The Marine Corps adopted its emblem on 19 November, 1868. They also adopted new uniforms and the Marines Hymn. In 1883, the motto Semper Fidelis, which translates to "always faithful", became was first heard and has been with the Marine Corps ever since.

## **Early 1900s**

During the early 1900s, the Marine Corps began to establish itself as a force in readiness, as demonstrated by landings at Guantanamo. It was also becoming clear that the Marine Corps had significant advantages over the slow mobilization of the U.S. Army. Between the years 1900 and 1916, the Marines continued worldwide operations and gained significant experiences in amphibious landings, counter insurgency and guerrilla tactics during the Banana Wars.

World War I saw the Marines in a central role for the first time in a land battle. There were many battle tested veterans from previous engagements and they proved vital to the U.S. entry into the war. The Marine Corps leadership did not rest on previous accolades, but instead kept abreast of the changing world situation and began preparing for future wars. This new thought process marked a significant departure and ushered in a new age in military planning. Many officers foresaw a war with Japan and began preparations for such a conflict. During the prelude to WWII, the Marine Corps pushed urgently for joint amphibious exercises and acquired equipment which would prove of great use in the upcoming conflict.

World War II again saw the Marines in a key role. The Marine Corps had been expanded from two brigades to two corps with six divisions and five air wings with 132 squadrons. The battles and heroics during this engagement added to their already significant popular reputation. By war's end, the Corps had grown to a force of more than 485,000. This war was also very costly, as the Marines lost 19,733 and 68,027 wounded.

Although the war had ended, the fight to remain a single force was just beginning. The Army began pushing for a strengthened and reorganized defense establishment and wanted to fold the Marine mission into the Navy and Army. Early Congressional support for this move did not look good for the Marines, but the leadership at the time rebuffed the dismantling and sought out new legislation. The National Security Act of 1947 was adopted and instead of disbanding the Marine Corps, it gave statutory protection and further defined its mission.

The National Security Act of 1947 was amended in 1952 and gave the Marine Corps an equal voice with the Joint Chiefs of Staff by appointing a Marine General. It also established the current structure of three divisions and air wings, with the 3d Division being permanently based in the Far East (Okinawa). The Act also defined the mission of the Marine Corps into seven key elements, further solidifying the Marine Corps as its own service.

The Korean War again put the Marines in far off places fighting the enemy under austere conditions. The Army found itself in a compromising position and had been overrun once before at the Pusan perimeter. General McArthur called on the Marines to perform an amphibious landing at Inchon and provide a flanking maneuver. The successful landing resulted in the collapse of the North Korean forces, but also saw the entrance of China into the war. Chinese troops surrounded the American forces and the situation was grim. Instead of surrendering or fleeing in disarray (as the Army had done previously), the 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division regrouped and fought its way back to the coast, inflicting heavy casualties along the way. The Battle of the Chosin Reservoir again showcased the resolve and toughness of the Marine Corps.

The Vietnam War was the next battle fought by the Marines and pitted them in a land war with a tenacious enemy. During this war, the Marines were conducting several different tactics that included constant guerrilla warfare, conventional war against NVA regulars and unconventional techniques for counterinsurgency warfare. The end of the war and the years that followed were some of the lowest points in Marine history. There were a high number of courts martial, non-judicial punishments, unauthorized absences and outright desertions. This prompted what is now known as the remaking of the Marine Corps.

In the 1970s many policies were changed and leadership styles shifted based on the dismal outlook for a peacetime force that did not know what to do with itself. This led to a cleansing of the worst Marines and an injection of better quality recruits. The current leadership realized that having skilled officers was not enough, but that the NCO ranks were vital to a well disciplined and behaved force. The transformation of the NCO Corps was an absolute vital element in the functioning of the Marine Corps and still is today.



It was during this era that the planning process was at its peak point. All engagements were planned and executed using combined arms and battalion level maneuvers. Planning was viewed as essential to success during large scale operations, even as planners conceived missions without knowledge of terrain or the benefit of extended weather forecast. Towards the end of this period, it was apparent there was a shift in how planning was viewed as Marines on the ground began to lose faith in the ability of planners to accurately conceive a mission.

### **New Face of the Enemy (1980 – Present)**

Up to this point, the world had seen many atrocities in large scale war and destruction. America was no stranger to sending military to fight around the globe, even if the battle had not been on our own soil since the Civil War. However, a new enemy was beginning to surface that would change the way wars were fought forever.

Terrorism was on the rise and random acts of violence were occurring around the world. These terrorist groups knew they could not attack a military force head on in conventional tactics, but realized the power of terror, the media and political influence. Operation Desert Storm was a prime example. The feared Iraqi Army was known to the world as capable and relentless in their approach to warfare. It only took a mere 43 days for the American forces to roll through the entire country and the world was shown just how inferior other Armies are. This was a reality check for many of the forming terrorist organizations who realized they could not stand and fight.

Guerrilla warfare and counterinsurgency has become more popular throughout recent history, but force on force is still the main thrust to a war. As terrorist attacks increased throughout the 80s and 90s, a fundamental shift in the forces to be engaged occurred. Countries were no longer the enemy, but organizations inside the country that wanted to inflict terror for purposes of ideological or political gain. This further complicated the issue.

The last fifteen years has seen several engagements, most notably Iraq. The lines between civilians and insurgent forces has been blurred and in most cases overrun. The battlefield is no longer a field, but instead it is streets and houses. The enemy no longer wears a uniform and carries a gun, but instead fights with roadside bombs, cell phones and suicide bomber vests. They do not hold to any rules or conventions and this allows a great deal of freedom when waging war against a superior foe.

The Marine Corps has entered unfamiliar territory with the events of the last 20 years. It has been tasked with sustained operations that do not suit its expeditionary training and experience. Typically, the Army has taken on the role

of sustainment and is well suited for that mission. The Marine Corps is not designed, trained, equipped or suited to handle long term operations. They are a light, mobile, expeditionary and amphibious force capable of projecting power from the sea and devastating attacks on land. The events and current state of warfare has found the Marine Corps out of its element in many ways and struggling to adapt. While the performance of the Marines indicates it can handle the mission, getting back to the amphibious roots is the first priority of the current leadership.

During this period, the Marine Corps still utilized planning to a great extent and even made several efforts to resurrect the faith in the ability to plan with ground commanders. However, a large disconnect had developed between the planners and the operators. Some of this issue can be attributed to the decentralization of decision making and the ability of the ground commanders to improvise when necessary, keeping their commanders intent as the driving guidance. Beyond that was the realization that planning was no longer leading exercises and contingency operations. Instead, it had been reduced to sourcing logistical requirements and was now seen as out of touch with the evolution of warfare that had taken place.

## Literature Review

**MCWP5-1:** The Marine Corps War Fighting Publication 5-1 is the document that outlines the planning process and is used by commanders to support decision making. This is the “bible” of planning and is billed as flexible and interchangeable at all command levels. This publication was consulted for an overview of the current planning process and used for reference when dealing with planning procedures.

**Command & Staff College, Non-Resident:** The Command & Staff non-resident course is designed for Lieutenant Colonels as their resident Primary Military Education (PME) requirement for promotion. It is also considered middle level schools for field grade officers. The course can be taken as a resident status in a one year school or as non-resident either through correspondence or through lectures at command locations. Course materials cover the planning aspects of the operational level of war, as well as the tactical level. For the purposes of this project, the program course materials were used as reference to ensure accurate descriptions and procedures of the current planning process were depicted.

**SharePoint NIPR and SIPR:** SharePoint is the newest revolution in web-based connectivity for all commands. Each command has their own website where all aspects of daily routine and mission planning are stored and can be accessed by registered users. There are two versions of the website, a commercial side (NIPR) and a secret, secure version (SIPR). Both the NIPR and SIPR are only accessible through government computers with a CAC card (ID card with a computer chip) reader.

SharePoint is utilized by planners to bridge the distance and time gaps, as well as communication for all mission requirements. For the purposes of this project, SharePoint was a source of information for past operations and as a learning guide for how planning was conducted previously.

**Planning Conferences:** Conferences are being included in the literature review because they were relevant communications for this project and upcoming exercises/operations. Planning conferences are utilized by planners when exercises/operations will be conducted with joint services, multi-national forces and/or in remote locations. Several conferences were attended in preparation for upcoming exercises and operations:

- Cobra Gold 08 (Thailand): Initial Planning Conference (IPC) Nov 07, Middle Planning Conference (MPC) Jan 08, Final Planning Conference (FPC) Mar 08.

- Talon Vision 09 (Philippines): IPC June 08, FPC Aug 08.
- Balikatan 09 (Philippines): IPC Oct 08
- Talisman Saber 09 (Australia): IPC July 08, MPC Nov 08, FPC Mar 09.
- Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF Afghanistan): IPC/FPC Oct 08.

During these conferences, lead planners from all aspects of the operation are present and work together in preparation for the mission. This was a considerable source of information and education.

## Research Procedure

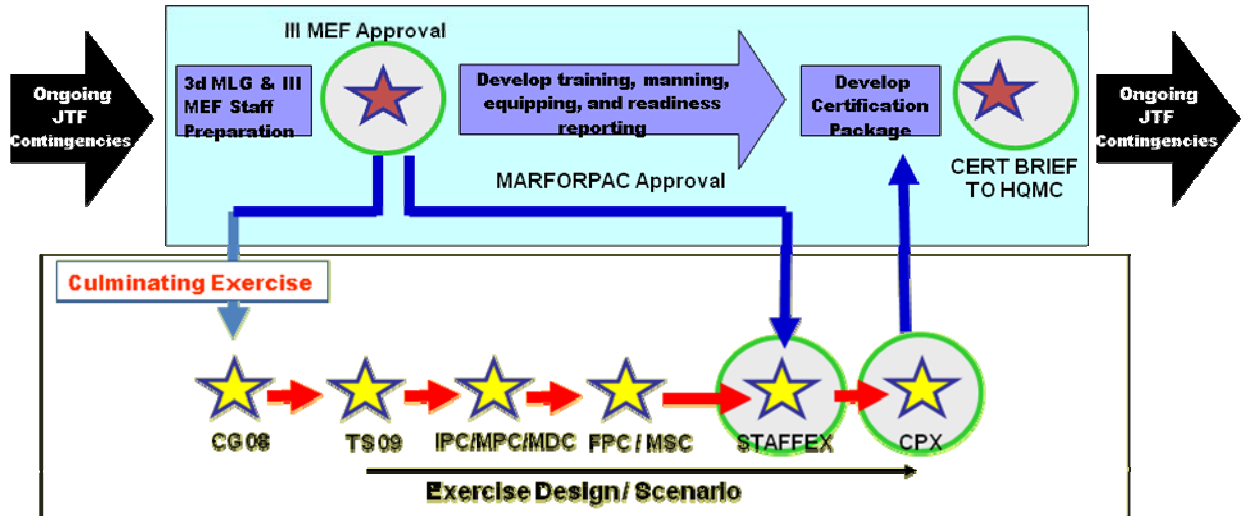
Much like the humble beginnings of the Marine Corps, this project was first conceived in a bar. During the Cobra Gold 08 final planning conference, a conversation was started with a senior leader that was in attendance for the purpose of evaluating the conference. Several liaison officers had questions about the process and how it applied to operations. They were new to the planning construct, but each had extensive operational experience. Throughout the remainder of the evening, the glaring reality that planning was not in line with current operations became the focal point of the growing audience. One week later, the liaison officers found themselves in the middle of an unorthodox project. It was unorthodox because senior leadership wanted Marines from outside the planning process to evaluate, recommend and implement changes.

After assembling the team, the project timeline was established. The goal was to have an operational product implemented in time for the upcoming Afghanistan deployment in December of 2008. The flow of the project was setup to fully integrate into current operational contingencies. The main idea was to evaluate the Marine Corps planning machine while it was in motion. The team would be spread out across current operations and planning exercises. The above was agreed upon, with changes requiring approval from the III Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF) commander and is shown below in figure 1.

The research procedures used during this project were based on several key factors:

- Understanding the current planning process and how it is implemented
- Identifying contributing elements of the planning process
- Identifying problem areas within the main construct of operational planning
- Development of solutions to the problems identified
- Implementation of the solutions

**Focus of Project is  
Preparing JTFs for Real  
World Operations**



\* = JTF: Joint Task Force

Figure1: Phased implementation of project schedule

The project timeline and milestones were also developed and approved through senior leadership. They are shown in detail in Figure 2 below. From the start, this project was an ambitious undertaking. In the beginning, there was significant discussion on the feasibility of obtaining realistic results under such a time compressed schedule. After all, the Marine Corps planning process has been in place for a significant amount of time and battle tested through many of the largest battles and wars this world has seen. Was it conceivable to think that significant impact could be made and implemented in less than a year?

The answer was a resounding yes. The team and leadership believed the work could be accomplished with proper planning and due diligence on the part of the team members. The real question was would senior leadership accept the recommendations and fully implement change throughout the Marine Corps. Prior to work beginning on the project a senior leadership conference was held and it was agreed that if the team could produce viable COAs and a realistic implementation schedule then they had the backing of every senior officer up to the Commandant of the Marine Corps.

## Project Schedule and Milestones

Action	Event	Milestone Achieved	Approved/Date Briefed
Research	CG 08	Yes	Apr 08
Develop COAs	TS 09 IPC	Yes	July 08
Revise COAs	TV 09 FPC	Yes	Aug 08
Implement Short term COAs	Balikitan IPC/TV 09	Yes	Oct 08
Deploy Short Term COAs	OEF Afghanistan	On Schedule	Nov 08
Develop Long Term COAs	Talisman Saber 09	On Schedule	Apr 09
Implement Long Term COAs	Talisman Saber 09	On Schedule	June 09

Figure 2: Project Schedule and Milestones

The first phase of the project was research. It was imperative that the personnel developing the changes to the planning process fully understand the system they were affecting. The main focus of this phase was to review Marine Corps doctrine and how the planning process supported successful missions. This was accomplished by reviewing MCWP 5-1 and planning documents from past exercises and contingency operations from the past eight years.

It was also important to understand how elements of the planning process were executed and their role in the larger picture of the battlefield. To facilitate this understanding, team members played active roles in all planning conferences and Operational Planning Team (OPT) sessions. During these conferences and meeting, senior commanders of the groups were made available for interviews and discussions on potential changes and impacts of those changes. Research is an ongoing aspect of this project and is still taking place today.

Identifying the problems with the current planning process was the next phase of the project. Determining the focal point of the problems became a complicated issue due to the nature of the commands involved and their operational missions. The process of identifying problems was broken down into two functional areas, observation and analysis. They are explained further below:

### **Observation:**

The observation phase was further broken down into three sections: operational planning at the unit level, OPTs and planning conferences. Due to time constraints and operational necessity, this phase was trimmed down from six months to four. This was initially a concern. After reviewing the timeline, the team recommended cutting the time on the observation phase to be able to increase the amount of time available on the solutions and implementation

phases. This was approved by the senior leadership at III MEF and Marine Forces Pacific (MARFORPAC).

During the observation phase, the following actions were completed:

- Operational planning at the unit level: All operational meetings, briefs, situation updates, battle update assessments and commanders in calls were attended. This included the four levels of command, MARFORPAC, III MEF, 3d Marine Logistics Group (3d MLG) and Combat Logistics Regiment 37 (CLR-37). Particular attention was paid to content, processes, command relationships and progress. Commanders were also interviewed for their thoughts, perceptions and experiences throughout the planning process.
- OPTs: Several OPTs were attended during the observation phase. During this time period, there were OPTs convened only at the high three levels of command and not at CLR-37. This is typical because the CLR is a subordinate element of the MLG. The focus of observation was on specific representation and input provided.
- Planning Conferences: All conferences were attended by a member of the observation team. These included: ISS/IPC, MPC and FSS/FPC for Foal Eagle 08, Key Resolve 08, Cobra Gold 08, Talon Vision 09 and Balikitan 09. The observation team acted as working members and tracked attendance, participation, input provided (based on a 1 – 5 scale) and conducted interviews with the officer in charge of the conference.

All information compiled during the observation phase was consolidated and prepared for the next step, analysis.

### **Analysis:**

The first step in the analysis phase was to separate all the information into the three functional areas being studied: operational planning at the unit level, OPTs and planning conferences. Once that was accomplished, the information was cleansed or purified to ensure that random occurrences or perceptions were not leading the analyst to form conclusions that were baseless.

The act of cleansing the information is basically a roundtable meeting with the commanders of the units and the observation team. All the members present for this meeting bring a wide variety of experience. Due to the high volume of movement in the military, many of the members had served at other operational commands and were able to confirm the observations as presenting a true picture of what was taking place during the planning process.



The next stage was to validate the information. This was accomplished by coordinating with the main operational commands in the Marine Corps (I MEF, II MEF, Pacific Command (PACOM) and HQMC. All commands were provided the same information that was presented during the cleansing process and asked to review it for accuracy as compared to procedures and routines in their respective commands. The hope was that the validation stage would return at least 75% compliance from all involved. Surprisingly, 90% of all information sent out came back as validated and substantiated across the Marine Corps. This was very encouraging on several fronts. It meant that the planning process was similar at the major commands and that the results of an overhaul to the process would most likely be more accepted and long lasting. This is due to the fact that major commands would not have to make massive changes because they were already operating with the 70% solution just like every other command.

Once the research and analysis was complete, the next phase was to develop Courses of Action (COA). These COAs were split into two categories, short term and long term. The short term COAs were identified as changes that could be made quickly at the lower command levels and would have a measurable impact. The long term COAs were broad sweeping changes that required time and HQMC assistance in order to implement. The COAs then fell into a continuous cycle of development, review and submission to higher authority. As the COAs were reviewed, they were accepted, rejected or sent back with follow on guidance. This process has been ongoing throughout the project.

Throughout each phase of the project, interviews were conducted, meetings and conferences attended, extensive email correspondence utilized and operational experience was relied upon as a basis for comparison to current procedures.

# RESULTS

There was little doubt that the Marine Corps planning process still held a vital role in today's military operations. There was also no disagreement in the fact that current planning procedures and outputs are not providing the ground commanders with the best COAs. It was imperative to this project that there was a thorough understanding of the planning process before attempting to recommend solutions that would change the course of military history.

## The Current Planning Process

The Marine Corps War Fighting Publication (MCWP) 5-1 defines the planning process. It is the bible, if you will, and describes a planning process that supports decision making by the commander. The purpose of the planning process is to provide a vehicle that conveys a commander's decisions to his subordinates. It is also applicable to all echelons of commands and across all ranges of military operations.

The latest revisions to the planning process were completed and published in 2001. Prior to that, major revisions had not been accomplished since May of 1979. This is not due to neglect or oversight, but more out of operational tempo and leadership indecision on where the processes needed to point. Since 2001, events have changed how the Marine Corps views each operation. The latest changes to the planning process were designed to provide different commands with the ability to adapt the processes to their individual needs. It also provides tools to assist in planning, such as matrices, worksheets and formats. While the processes described are designed for higher echelon implementation, there is also the ability to adapt the planning to be easily scalable for lower level use at the battalion or group levels.

Planning defined is "the act of envisioning and determining effective ways of achieving a desired endstate." The Marine Corps takes that definition a step further and it becomes, "Planning involves projecting our thoughts forward in time and space to influence events before they occur rather than merely responding to events as they occur. This means contemplating and evaluating potential decisions in advance." Planning is an essential and significant part of command and control and the commander is recognized as the central decision maker.

The Marine Corps focuses its planning on the mission and the threat. It capitalizes on the principle of unity of effort and supports the establishment and maintenance of tempo. Above all else, the considerations of time and uncertainty dictate the approach to planning and are the defining features. Time is the scarcest of resources and it is vitally important that commanders and staff optimize their processes to best utilize this dwindling asset. When time is critical,

planners use intuition, experience and judgment to guide them. All planners must also be aware that no amount of planning will remove uncertainty. Time and uncertainty are intertwined and have a great affect on one another. Planning is future oriented and the future is full of uncertainty. All planning is based on imperfect knowledge and assumptions. Even in the midst of extreme uncertainty, proper planning allows the commanders to decide and act effectively. The key functions of planning are to:

- Direct and coordinate actions
- Develop a shared situational awareness
- Generate expectations about how actions will evolve and how they will affect the desired outcome.
- Support the exercise of initiative.
- Shape the thinking of planners.

These key functions are then used as a basis for the tenets of the planning process. The tenets are derived from the doctrine of maneuver warfare and they guide the commander's use of his staff to plan and execute military operations. The three tenets are top down planning, single battle concept and integrated planning. All three are outlined in detail below.

**Top down planning:** The commander is the key to this process and must drive the concept with his intent and guidance. Because planning is one of the fundamental responsibilities of command, the commander must do more than merely participate. Planning is used to provide the commander with knowledge of a situation to support his decision making process, as well as to provide subordinates with a concept of operations that will be used in accomplishing the mission. It is imperative that the commander not only provide input during this process, but also keep his staff engaged to ensure the planning meets his intent and has the best chance at mission accomplishment.

**Single battle concept:** The commander must be able to effectively visualize and focus all the elements of a force to accomplish the mission. During an operation, one part of the battlefield may have profound and often unintended effects on others areas and events. This means the commander must view the battlespace as an indivisible entity. The staff planners may and often do conceptually divide the battle into sections such as deep, close and rear to assist and decentralize execution. When viewing and fighting a single battle, the commander's intent is more likely to be accomplished and ensure a unity of effort.

**Integrated planning:** Integrated planning is based on the war fighting functions of command and control, maneuver, fires, intelligence, logistics and force protection. These are the building blocks of a successful operation and planners use them to integrate the planning effort and supervise the execution of the plan. The commander uses integrated planning as a disciplined approach that is systematic, coordinated and thorough. The key element to this approach is the assignment of appropriate personnel to represent each specific war fighting function.

The tenets described above provide the basis for the commander and his staff to begin the planning process. The first step is to follow procedures that are established and designed to analyze a mission, develop COAs and translate the operational order to subordinates for execution. These procedures are broken down into six manageable and logical steps. Each step provides the planners at all levels with a means to organize activities, transmit plans to subordinate levels and subordinates and to share a common understanding of the mission and the commander's intent. The planning steps encourage interaction which allows a coordinated effort that maintains flexibility, effectively uses time and ensures information sharing. Figure 3 below is a graphical representation of the six steps in the planning process.

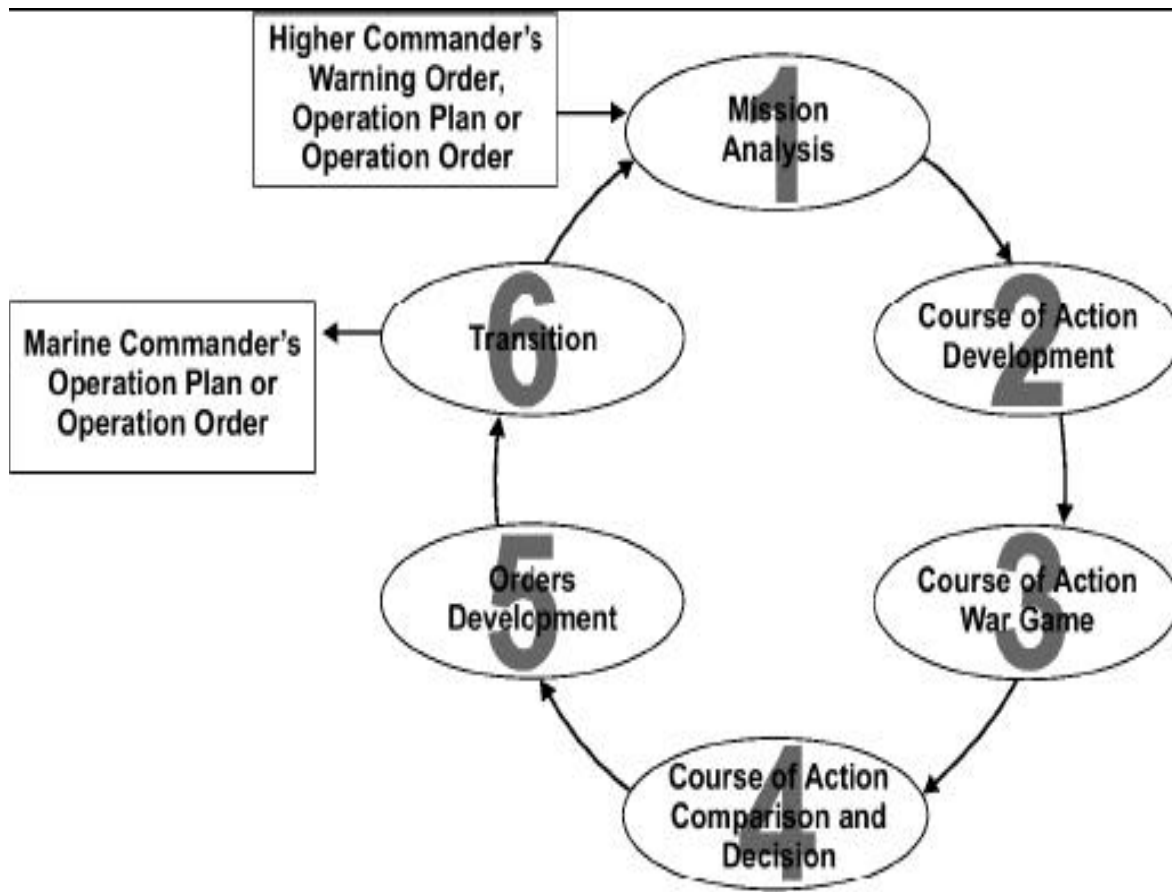


Figure 3: Six Steps of the Marine Corps Planning Process

**Mission Analysis:** The first step in the planning process. The purpose is to review and analyze orders from higher headquarters and to produce a mission statement.

**Course of Action Development:** Planners use the mission statement to develop COAs that are suitable, acceptable and complete in accordance with the commander's intent and facilitate mission accomplishment.

**Course of Action War Game:** This step involves detailed assessment of each COA as it pertains to the enemy and the battle space. Each friendly COA is war gamed against an enemy COA to determine strengths, weaknesses, associated risks and associated shortfalls. War gaming provides the most reliable basis for understanding and improving each COA.

**Course of Action Comparison and Decision:** The commander selects the COA that will best accomplish the mission by evaluating each COA against established procedures.

**Orders Development:** The staff uses the commander's COA decision and intent to develop orders that direct unit actions.

**Transition:** The passing of the orders to those directed to execute the task. It is an orderly process that provides that tasked with situational awareness and rational for key decisions necessary to ensure there is a clear and coherent shift from planning to execution.

Once the transition has occurred, there is a distinctive break between planners and commanders that are executing the mission. The operational planners are typically assigned to a new project, extension of the mission or another mission altogether. The operational commanders execute the plan at their discretion, as long as they are following the commander's intent. Often times in contingency operations it is found that while the planning was invaluable in creating situational awareness and conveying the commander's intent, the actual plan is not worth the paper it is printed on. Several contributing factors are the cause of this and will be discussed in detail later.

## **How the Planning Process is Implemented**

Now that we have discussed what the planning process looks like, it is important to understand how it is implemented across the Marine Corps. The intent of the planning system is to have the same consistency at all commands. A commander, in theory, should be able to move to any command and be able to engage his planning staff without any questions or changes to procedures and

team composition. For the most part, this has been accomplished. While the size of the planning staff will change based on each unique mission, the procedures, processes and outputs of the planning process remain unchanged at various commands throughout the Marine Corps.

The burden of operational planning is placed squarely on the shoulders of the G3 section of each command. For clarification, the “G” sections are as follows, G1 – Admin, G2 – Intel, G3 – Operations, G4 – Logistics, G6 – Communications, G8 – Finance. The staffing of the G3 is made up of several senior enlisted and officers that represent Military Occupational Specialties (MOS) critical to the planning process. Each MOS representative is considered to be a Subject Matter Expert (SME) in his/her field and represents that specialty in all aspects of operational planning.

Several key MOSs that are generic to every planning staff. They are the Air officer (AirO), Logistics officer (LogO), Communications officer (CommO), Intel officer and the Chief of Staff (CoS). The CoS is responsible for the planning staff as well as the principal and special staff to the commander. During the planning process, elements of the principal or special staff will meet with the planning staff to provide input into the process as needed.

There are three main actors or elements responsible for the development of an operational plan. They are the operational planner, Operational Planning Team (OPT) and the planning conference. The planning conferences are known as Initial Planning Conference (IPC), Middle Planning Conference (MPC) and the Final Planning Conference (FPC). There are also multiple spin off conferences dedicated to logistics, manpower, deployment and redeployment which are used to plan for a specific function, but will not be discussed.

### **Operational Planner:**

The operational planner is assigned to the G3 operations section as needed, requested or directed. This billet is a collateral duty and is not considered to be time spent in the respective MOS. Operational planning at the command level carries with it a certain negative stigma, while planning at the joint level comes with an air of prestige. The problems associated with this will be discussed in the next section.

Operational planning is a grueling assignment that brings little reward. The planner never sees an operation through to completion because they are moved to another assignment as soon as the execution phase begins. During the execution phase, the planners are the source of everything that can and will go wrong. However, a good planner is sought after and rarely allowed out of the sight of the commander.

## Operational Planning Team (OPT)

Once a requirement is identified, an OPT is built from internal and, as required, external units. A task organized team with supporting units is built around analysts, SMEs and any other military specialties required by the mission. These teams are led by the commander and his staff.

The OPT is a critical asset to the commander when a task or mission is received from higher headquarters. The OPT is convened for exercises, missions and contingency operations when there is time to do so. The OPT is an integration tool that provides the commander with COAs. It is at the heart of all units within a command and gathers, consolidates and optimizes their input before creating operational orders for the commander.

The composition of the OPT is shown graphically below in Figure 4: (The operational planners are part of the G3 section and make up the bulk of the planning team)

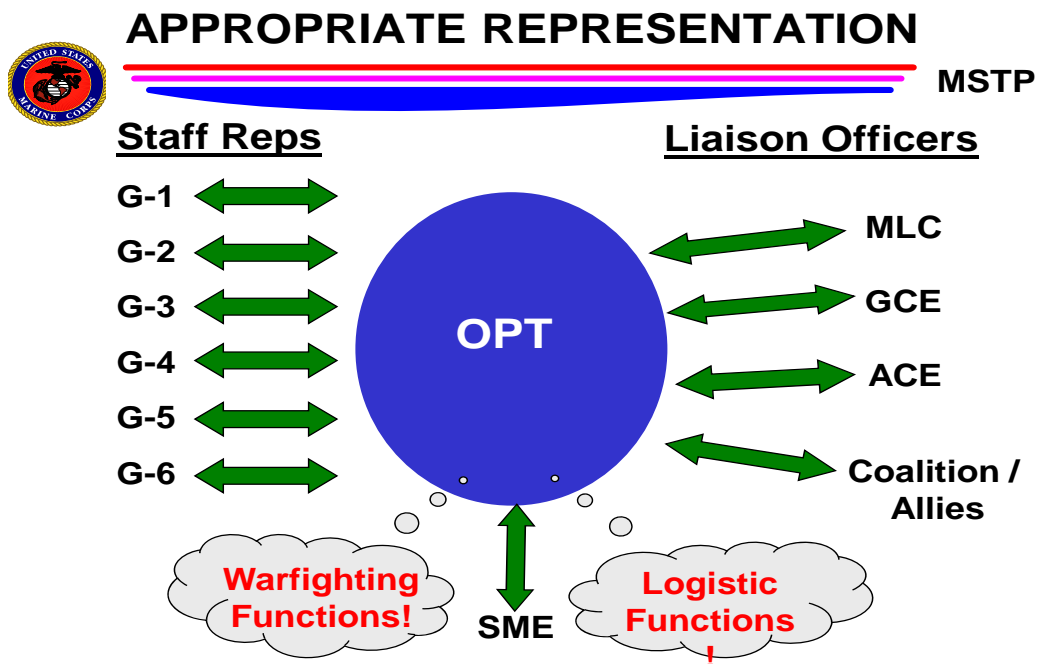
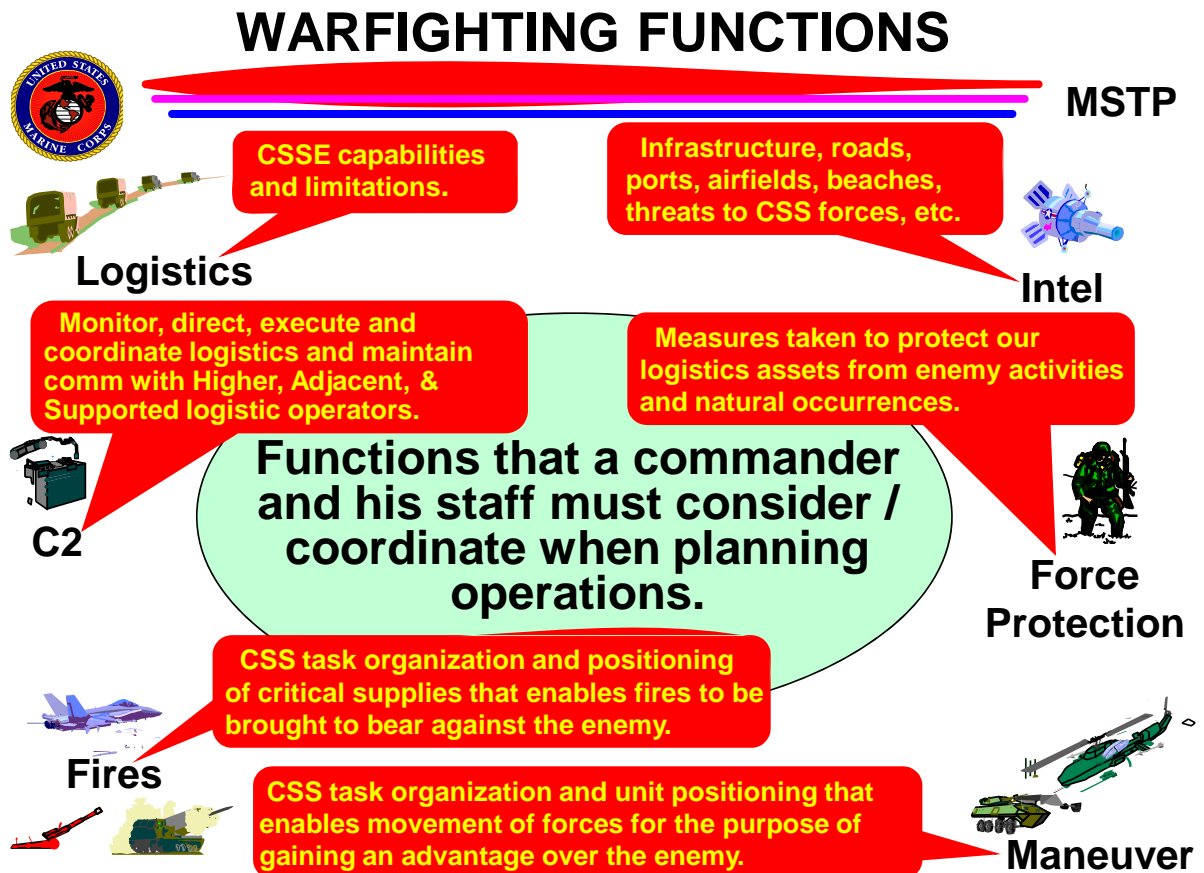


Figure 4: OPT Composition

Liaison officers are used to represent each command or Marine Air Ground Task Force (MAGTF) component that will be utilized during the execution of the operational plan. Typically, they originate from the Major Logistics Command (MLC), the Ground Combat Element (GCE), the Air Combat Element (ACE) and any coalition allies for joint and multinational operations.

It is important to note that in today's modern and mechanized world, there cannot be enough emphasis placed on logistical planning. Nothing stops an operation from moving forward faster than not having enough gas or a resupply of ammunition. While logistics plays a major role in any operation, there are many other factors to consider. They are shown graphically in figure 5 below:



CSSE = Combat Service Support Element  
 CSS = Combat Service Support  
 C2 = Command and Control

Figure 5: Planning Considerations for War Fighting Functions

### Planning Conferences

Planning conferences are another tool that the commander has at his discretion. They are most useful when planning operations and exercises with joint and multinational forces. Typically, the conferences are held on location for exercises or at higher headquarters for contingency operations.



There are key factors to consider when holding planning conferences:

- **Cost:** III Marine Expeditionary Force (III MEF) is one of the largest users of the planning conferences. They are responsible for yearly exercises in the Philippines, Thailand, Korea and Australia. A typical planning conference consists of anywhere from 25 – 100 planners, which includes host nation support and all unit representatives for the exercises. Cost is a critical factor when considering the number of participants, location and length of stay. Typically, there is an Initial Site Survey (ISS) and Final Site Survey (FSS) that are held in conjunction with the IPCs and FPCs. Each evolution lasts approximately a week. Normal costs for all exercise planning conferences can easily exceed \$750K.
- **Key personnel:** Having the right personnel on hand is imperative to any position, but even more so when engaged in the planning phase of a major operation. The intent is that each representative present at the conference is empowered with the ability to make decisions for their respective unit, MOS and commander for the purposes of that exercise. Specifically for exercises, the purposes of the conference is to work out show stopping details and critical requirements with the host nation face to face and solidify over arching constructs prior to the end of the conference.
- **Site Surveys:** Being able to see the ground that a unit will be operating on, talk with the vendors that will be providing support, check the local water and food sources for health issues, view the training areas, landing zones and ports are all invaluable pieces of information in the planning process. Obviously, in contingency operations, this will most likely not be available unless the military has operated in the region previously. However, for exercises, this greatly enhances every unit's ability to come prepared to accomplish their given mission.

Planning conferences have been considered what we call a boondoggle (vacation or time to party away from their main duty station). However, recently, the past two commandants have refocused our planning process and placed restrictions on the number of attendees, locations and length of stay. While the planning conferences have proven to be very beneficial, there is also the potential for them to be a large waste of time if not kept focused and under control.

Having conducted all the research and developed solutions, command approval is the next step in making changes to the planning process. Issues or proposed changes to procedures that affect the entire Marine Corps must be vetted through local commands before being submitted through senior leadership channels at HQMC. Figure 6 below outlines the command levels, dates briefed and approved.

### Command Approval Hierarchy

Command	First Presented	Date Briefed	Date Approved	Submitted to Higher
3d MLG	OEF OPT	15 July	18 July	18 July
III MEF	TS09 IPC	21 July	23 July	23 July
MARFORPAC	TV09 FPC	12 Aug	30 Sep	30 Sep*
MARFORLANT**	Balikitan IPC	15 Oct	17 Oct	17 Oct
HQMC	OEF OPT	23 Oct	25 Oct	--

\* = Sent to HQMC for cursory review, official decision pending MARFORLANT approval

\*\* = Via VTC (video television conference)

Figure 6: Command Approval Hierarchy

During the command approval process, several briefs were given to different levels of leadership. These briefs gave an overview of the current planning process, observations, analysis and solutions to the problems identified.

For the purposes of this project, the following areas were identified as problematic and in need of change.

- **Force on Force:** Long gone are the days of meeting on a battlefield at noon and charging across the open field. The development of gunpowder put an end to that type of battlefield planning. It should also be understood that there is not an Army in the world that could attack the U.S. military with force on force and have a chance. This is due to several factors that include: money spent on defense (the U.S. spends more than its next five closest competitors combined), equipment and training.

The fundamental flaw during contingency planning is the idea of planning for force-on-force. The Marine Corps has been a leader in developing small unit tactics and training in a scenario based environment, but plans are still being drawn up with battalion and regiment size operations. This type of fighting has served us well in many of our past engagements, but as the face of warfare changes forever, so must we adapt. The enemy has learned that guerrilla and counterinsurgency style tactics are the only way to be successful against a superior force.

The focus must be on platoon and small unit operations. The Marine Corps is the only military force in the world that can coordinate naval gunfire and close air support with one Marine on the ground that is engaged in the fight. The technology to continue and further this type of mission execution is the future of our military.

- **Key Personnel:** Critical! SMEs should be exactly that, a no kidding expert in their field that can speak to command issues during an evolution and assist the planners with a way around complications. Far too often the SMEs that attend OPTs or conferences are the guy from the shop that can't be trusted with anything. The justification is that the real SMEs are busy executing the daily mission, already deployed or preparing for the next deployment and that the planning process rarely produces a quality product. There is some truth and concern over the high operational tempo being faced by all military forces, but not putting our best effort forward during the planning phase only reinforces the fact that all we are going to get out of it is garbage. There are other factors that tie into why key personnel are not utilized during planning and they are listed below.
  
- **Perceptions of Operational Planners:** "Those that can, do, those that can't, plan." This is a quote from a unit commander of an infantry battalion in the Army. It embodies the mentality of many of the infantry personnel in the Army and the Marine Corps. The basis behind this is years of planning that are not up to the quality that is expected. This is due to several factors:
  - o Career paths: As previously discussed, operational planners are operating outside of their respective MOS. In order to stay in line for promotion and career advancement, there are generally accepted accomplishments or wickets that must be met.
    - MOS credibility: time spent in the MOS executing your primary mission
    - B-Billet: Independent duty outside the MOS such as a recruiter, drill instructor, etc...
    - Command time: Commanding officer or executive officer of a company, regiment, group or higher
    - Joint billet: Serving at a joint command or with a joint staff in a deployed environment.

Notice that no where listed above is the billet for operational planner. Becoming an operational planner is often times viewed as a kiss of death career wise and to be avoided if at all possible. It is also seen as a thankless staff job that is merely to be survived, enduring endless hours through nights and weekends developing plans that may or may not be utilized by the units that execute the mission.

- **Change in Force Structure:** In the mid 1990s, the Marine Corps began to realize that it needed a more focused effort in the planning arena. One solution was to open up an MOS that was specifically called operational planner. The intent was to have a trained force of personnel that planned for a living. This idea stopped short of creating an officer MOS, as it was

only opened up to the enlisted side. Prior to this move, all planners were sourced from internal units. A temporary reprieve was seen at the unit level as Marines laterally moved into the MOS, but this was short lived. The MOS topped out with senior enlisted quickly and lost the allure of faster than normal upward mobility. The elation over qualified operational planners lost ground quickly when many were discovered to be improperly screened and not qualified for the assignment. The end result was that once again units began sourcing quotas for planning billets and reverted to sending their least qualified personnel, because they couldn't justify parting with their top performers.

- **Planning is lacking key functional areas:** While planning is being conducted at a fast and furious level all around the Marine Corps, the end product is far too often not in line with the situations that are being faced by the units executing the mission. This is due, in part, to the fact that as warfare has moved from the open country side to city streets and urban areas, there have been no adjustments in planning.

All aspects of conducting combat operations are affected by the terrain, location, weather and more specifically, the proximity to civilian population. Civilian Military Operations (CMO) and the Civil Affairs Group (CAG) have quickly become an integral part of the force composition in recent years. Marine war fighters engaged in Iraq and Afghanistan are finding that more and more of their time is being consumed with civil affairs issues. In a populous world, fighting terrorist organizations with a puppet government in place, this situation will be played out over battlefields for years to come.

CMOs have been in place in the military throughout many of our nations past battles. However, Iraq has been the showcase for these types of operations and is considered to be the first concerted efforts made in this area. General Mattis was a true architect of these projects for the Marine Corps and made it a part of his "winning the hearts and minds of the people" motto in 2003 when Iraq was invaded. CMOs are controlled by civil affair units.

Civil affair units are designed to act as a liaison between the civilian inhabitants of a warzone or disaster area and the military presence, both informing the local commander of the status of the civilian populace as well as effecting assistance to locals. They are composed primarily of civilian experts (doctors, lawyers, engineers, fireman, policeman, etc...) that provide critical expertise to host government support and are able to assess the need for critical infrastructure projects.

Civil affairs and CMO planning is typically far outside the mission of the Marine Corps. However, in 2006, the Marine Corps realigned its force

structure to create a civilian affairs MOS. Prior to this move, all civil affairs were handled by the Army and Army Reserve. Marines in Iraq were placed in charge of CMOs and Civilian Military Operations Centers (CMOCs), without any requisite training. While they handled the missions successfully, it was painfully clear that if the Marine Corps were to continue missions of this nature, drastic changes needed to be made. The first was to create the new MOS; the next step will be to implement this new structure into training, exercises and contingency operations. To date, planning for CMOs is not present in any exercise planning.

Closely tied to civil affairs and equally as important are financial operations. Afghanistan and Iraq have been the first battlefields where cash was moved forward with the operating forces and used to make battle damage, solatia and even death payments. The structure behind what is required for cash operations is not well understood by senior leadership and the regulations are foreign to commanders on the ground. Units are not aware of what money is available, its designate purposes or how to access it. These types of operations are also not represented during the planning process.

- **Planning Conferences:** Planning conferences were looked at closely to determine their feasibility, composition and outputs. Once the project was defined and tasked, several previous conferences were reviewed to determine agendas and accomplishments. In conjunction with current conferences, this was used as a baseline and combined with commander's interviews to paint a better picture of what the conference provided to all levels of command and the particular exercise.

Conferences have increased due to the value of increasing diplomatic ties and planning at the location of an exercise. However, the cost of these conferences has ballooned due to little oversight on attendees and virtually no control over agenda or requirements. One of the main issues is that there is not one clear commander of the conferences with authority over the participants. There has been funding in recent years that could be applied for the conferences, but reality is that it won't be there in upcoming years. Planning conferences may have certain intrinsic benefits, but alternative avenues of accomplishing the same mission must be sought out and available for future operations.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

After identifying the main issues with the current planning process, work began on solutions and the procedures to implement them into the current structure. As mentioned previously, the intent for this project was to have it designed, approved and released to the operational forces in time for the upcoming Afghanistan deployment and full implementation for the Talisman Saber 09 exercise (June 09).

## Force on force planning

**Solution:** The Marine Corps doctrine is based on maneuver warfare conducted by a MAGTF, resulting in force projection in ship to shore operations. Recent operations, world events and changes in warfare have led to the conclusion that a fundamental shift in strategy may be required to keep a tactical advantage over our nation's foes.

Although not discussed in this paper, the Marine Corps theory of war is derived from the three levels of war: strategic, operational and tactical. The team that was comprised to study the planning process, make recommendations and implement changes for MARFORPAC was operating at the tactical and operational level. The recommendations for an update to strategic planning are:

- Continue funding for small unit level tactics in the operational forces.
- Increase funding for the instruction of small unit training during the accession pipeline (initial training before arriving at an operational unit).
- After discussing options with commanders and operational planners, a formal request was sent through HQMC to recommend that the top level schools of warfare and the Naval Post Graduate School (NPS) conduct more research into the possibility for a doctrinal change to the Marine Corps operational strategy. Findings were requested prior to the FY2011 budget execution year.

On October 30, 2008, HQMC approved the request for further research and will forward it on to the designated agencies. Given the timetable allocated, operational tempo and rotation schedules for all Marines, it is unlikely that there will be an answer to this question while any of the existing personnel are still at this location. While the team assigned to this project was looking forward to being on the cusp of a historical change for the Marine Corps, they all agreed that a change of this magnitude needed further confirmation and would better serve and defend the American people if it was implemented slowly.

## Key Personnel, Perceptions and Structure

**Solution:** This was considered to be one of the critical elements identified during this process. Planning is an essential part of mission success and the lives of our young Marines are hanging in the balance when worldwide contingencies flare up.

Extensive coordination was conducted with the manpower branch at HQMC and senior leadership to develop a plan to correct the errors of the past in this area. The following recommendations were presented:

- A new planning MOS will be launched in FY2010 for both officer and enlisted.
- Current operational planners will be offered the opportunity to lateral move into that MOS as early as May 2009, before the current rotations of movers take place. Lateral move packages must be approved by the local command and forwarded to HQMC with endorsements from all commanding officers involved. This will ensure that only the most qualified and competent planners are retained for these billets.
- Coordination with the two branches responsible for promotions at HQMC, MMOA and MMEA (officers and enlisted) was conducted to ensure that qualified personnel were screened properly and promoted on time with peers. There was also considerable discussion on the negative connotations that operational planning has carried with it. These discussions were held with senior leadership, but several members of this team were in attendance to present findings and reinforce the need for change.
- With the addition of the force structure and the current congressionally approved surge in the total Marine Corps from 177,000 to 202,000, the new operational planning MOS will be eligible for bonuses in accordance with Marine Corps regulations.
- In coordination with occupational field sponsors and monitors for personnel moves, duty station preference will be given to each operational planner at the end of any successful tour completed.
- One of the highlights of this particular item was the approval of the changes to the mission of operational planners. Previously, planners were not involved in the execution of an exercise. Beginning with the Afghanistan tour in December 2008, each operational planner that is on staff with a deploying unit or involved with exercise planning will be retained on with the operational unit and complete the exercise or

deployment. This will also assist greatly in career progression and alleviate fears that operational planners never become operational.

## **Financial Planning/CMO**

**Solution:** CMO. Given the recent events and changes to conventional warfare, there is considerable need for inclusion of CMO and financial planning during exercises and contingency operations. The Marine Corps has taken the first step in the right direction in 2006 when they realigned force structure to include a civil affairs unit. However, the majority of civil affairs Marines are reservists. The same scenario exists in the Army, where only 4 % are active duty soldiers, with the remaining 96% of civil affairs units are reservists. This creates a multitude of problems when discussing exercise planning, training and scenario based evolutions for active duty forces.

The Marine Corps is implementing a force structure change that will open the door for more active duty forces, but it will still not be enough to have civil affairs units that the three MEF commands. However, it will then be possible to attach them to operating units for exercises and include them in the planning process. During this project, representatives from the 3<sup>rd</sup> Civil Affairs Group were requested to attend the conferences and be involved in the exercises. While they played a small role in Cobra Gold 08 and Talon Vision 09, their involvement was seen as a huge success and paved the way for future operations.

Long term deployments present another obstacle in training, preparation and command relationships. As the availability of trained civil affairs Marines increases, units will be based at each forward command and this problem will correct itself. In the interim, civil affairs units train for their respective mission at their home base and meet their new command in theater.

**Financial:** With the amount of money that is currently involved in combat operations, trained personnel must be involved in all aspects of the mission. Contingency contracting plays a large role in any mission and is essential when dealing with the civilian populous in a war torn country. Department of Defense and Marine Corps regulations are very specific on how cash in a deployed zone will be handled. To date, the Marine Corps has been very fortunate to not have any incidents in moving large amounts of cash or the responsibility for it during operations.

Civil affairs and financially trained Marines will be joined with contracting and comptroller (accounting) personnel into a joint contracting cell. This cell will be responsible for all financial and CMO projects during a mission. An example of how this cell will fit into the command structure is shown below in Figure 7. Talisman Saber 09 will be the first exercise to fully integrate the financial or



comptroller cell into the planning process, as well as the execution. It will also mark the first multi-national and joint service comptroller cell.

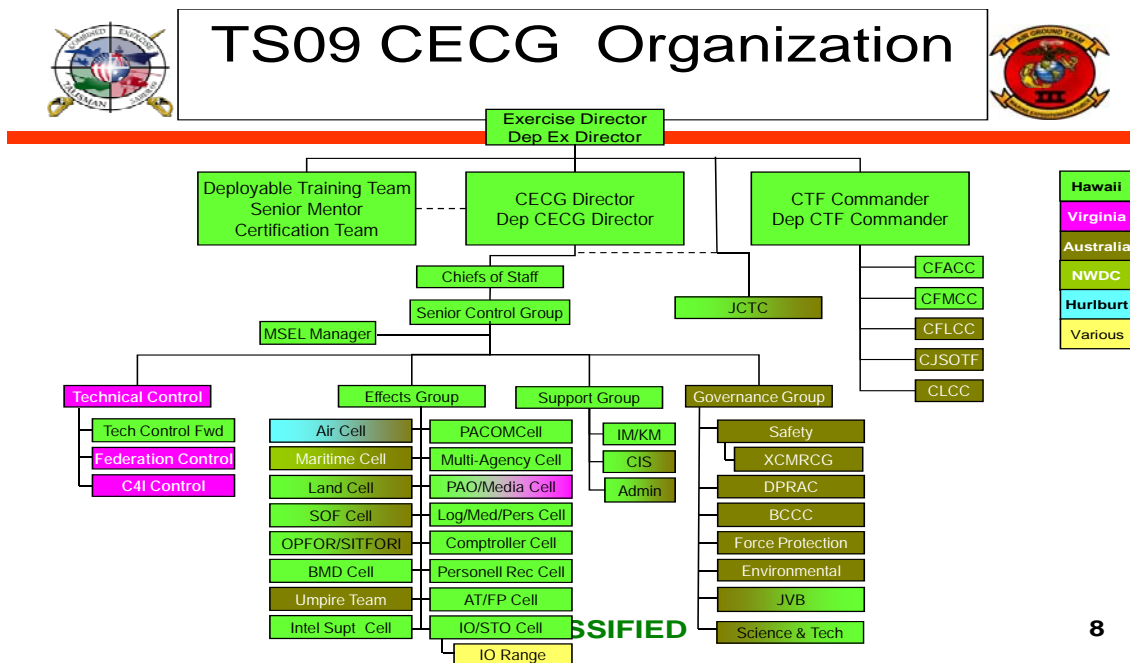


Figure 7: Command Structure for Talisman Saber 09, including Comptroller Cell

In addition, standard operating procedures will be established that will outline the duties of each member of the newly formed cell. Command relationships will be developed so that each member is clear on their reporting chain during the operation. Training will be conducted with all other Marines in preparation for any mission, with the addition of CMO and financial scenarios in the planning process and execution phases.

## Planning Conferences

**Solution:** The onus of planning conferences will fall to the command that is ultimately responsible for the exercise or contingency operation, known as the executive agency (EA). Although this is not a change from past operations, there will be significant changes in the procedures that take place before, during and after conferences.

Prior to the conferences, the EA will designate two personnel that are direct representatives of the commanders themselves. They will be appointed in writing and held accountable for their actions. With the appointment, in accordance with regulations, they will also be pecuniary liable for all funds obligated and expensed for the particular exercise they are responsible for (this will only apply to exercises, not contingency operations).

The Office in Charge (OIC) of the conference will be responsible for all attendees, coordination of the conference, agenda, force protection and output. They alone hold the power to invite or remove any member from the conference at any time. The assistant to the OIC will play a critical role in coordinating funding with the EA and cultivating relationships with the host government.

The comptroller (accounting) sections of the EA have also been directed to ensure strict adherence to regulations when planning conferences are involved and not to increase authorizations unless specifically directed by the commander. Also, budgets for planning conferences will be cut in half during FY09. Not only is this being done out of operational necessity, but the findings of the observation team indicated that the majority of the work being done at a planning conference either could have been done from the duty station or was being done from the duty station after the conference. Many of the representatives were being sent to the conferences with no power or no knowledge to make decisions and had to return to their command before finalizing operational plans.

## CONCLUSION

The current Marine Corps Planning Process is explained clearly, comes complete with examples, flows very well and basically looks great on paper. The main issue with the planning process is that the Marine Corps has fallen into a rut. While they have changed the face of the process and talked about systematic updates, the routine that plays out during planning looks eerily similar to what has been taking place over the last 40 years. The world has changed, upgraded its technology and spawned a new breed of enemy and war. The Marine Corps and the U.S. military must adapt to those changes or they will be out maneuvered and up against an enemy that uses their own tactics of strength vs. weakness against us.

The 34<sup>th</sup> Commandant of the Marine Corps, General Conway, echoed these words in this year's birthday message to all Marines.

"Extremists have attacked our Nation, at home and abroad, numerous times...Their aim has always been the same ---- to kill as many innocent Americans as possible. The attacks of 11 September 2001 changed our Nation forever, and our President has resolved that this Nation will not stand idle while murderous terrorists plan their next strike. The Marines will continue to take the fight to the enemy ---- hitting them on their own turf, crushing them when they show themselves, and finding them where they hide.

Only a few Americans choose the dangerous, but necessary, work of fighting our Nation's enemies. When our chapter of history is written, it will be a saga of a selfless generation of Marines who were willing to stand up and fight for our Nation; to defend those who could not defend themselves; to thrive on the hardship and sacrifice expected of an elite warrior class; and to ably shoulder the legacy of those Marines who have gone before." (Conway, Nov. 2008)

As discussed previously, the planning process is an effective way for commanders and staff to develop COAs and communicate the commander's intent to the forces and elements that will execute the mission. What has become the status quo is that while the planning is invaluable for the commander, the operational order is not in line with the current situation. Ground commanders are then forced to operate based on commander's intent alone. While the Marine Corps has been very adept at surviving and even thriving in this type of scenario, there are structural defects in our planning process that can be changed for the benefit of all involved. It would also provide the ground commander with a better product to aid him in decision making during operations.

The end result is that this project successfully evaluated the current planning process, developed solutions and is in the process of implementing them. The project will officially be closed at the completion of the Talisman Saber 09 exercise in July of 2009. At that time, all command levels will be operating with

the same guidance from HQMC concerning changes made to the planning process. They will also benefit from an improved planning process that utilizes qualified and trained personnel to produce a quality product for ground commanders and Marines. The ability to have planners participate in the missions they plan is critical in developing long term standards and up to date planning methods.

The translation of effective planning to the Marines on the ground engaged in battle against our Nation's foes is well worth the efforts expended during this project. If there is one thing that has been consistent on the battlefield over the past few decades, it is that there is constant change. Change has been evident in technology, communications, tactics, armor and weaponry... virtually all aspects of the military. Change has now made its way through the Marine Corps planning process and the Marine Corps will be much better for it. Throughout all the change surrounding the military and the modern face of warfare, there is one thing that has not changed...the expectations of the United States Marine Corps.

## SUGGESTED FURTHER RESEARCH

There are multiple areas available for further research. From the Marine Corps perspective, the planning process must adapt to changes on the modern battlefield deriving from technology, tactics and enemy operations. This will require constant vigilance and review of procedures and processes. Currently, the Marine Corps has agreed to a review board every two years beginning in FY2012, for this purpose. Other areas for further research include:

- MPS: Maritime Prepositioning Ships. This unique system is the impetus behind the military's ability to project power from the sea to any country in the world in less than 48 hours. These ships are loaded with all military gear required for a contingency operation and are prepositioned around the world in anticipation of potential hot spots for military deployments. While this process was cursorily reviewed during this project, the surface was barely scratched and the implications of a more efficient process would pay dividends to all branches of military service.
- Manpower and Structure: Given the current state of the world and the operational tempo of all military services, manpower is a grave concern. The impacts of the political administration could also be a factor in defense spending and the related trickle-down effect to the branches of service and its members.
- Marine Corps Engineers: Identified during this project, but not reported due to its classification, was the fact that the engineering MOS is over tasked and its technologies are not on par with current trends. This is an area that has hampered deployments to remote regions and created communications issues in the early stages of force maneuvers. Several side projects could be researched and potentially deemed unclassified.

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