

## *Developing Leaders at Every Echelon*

The multitude and diversity of Information Age technologies with combat applications will challenge, and may exceed, the span of control of any leader. All leaders – from junior NCOs to senior officers – will need critical thinking skills to continually assess and navigate complex engagements characterized by blurred boundaries between military and civilian concerns, differing objectives between allies and partners, and the frustrating effects of adaptive adversaries. To overcome these challenges, we must:

- Emphasize mission-type orders and commander’s intent.
- Develop unit structures that rely on skilled enlisted operators to offload some of the decisional burden so that leaders can focus on employing their force to defeat an adaptive enemy.
- Fully leverage ISR and lethality advancements in the MAGTF ACE that enhance the small-unit leader’s ability to employ kinetic and non-kinetic effects.
- Train and educate Marines in decision-making skills to help them avoid information overload in a rich situational awareness environment or compensate for the lack of information when C2 and ISR systems are degraded or denied.
- Ensure technology does not undermine a Marine’s “brilliance in the basics” of orienting, navigating, communicating, fighting, and commanding, by emphasizing fieldcraft such as map reading, operating to commander’s intent, and voice calls for fire.
- Recognize that seizing and maintaining the initiative in the face of uncertainty and risk will sometimes lead to imperfect results, and accept mistakes as a cost of exercising initiative and a bias towards action, just as is described in our most basic document, MCDP 1, *Warfighting*.<sup>1</sup>
- Renew our focus on the idea that just as every Marine is a rifleman, every Marine officer must be mentally prepared and professionally fit to command a provisional rifle platoon should the need arise. These common threads in our force are essential to performance and competence of the individual Marine to respond effectively under chaotic, uncertain and adverse conditions.
- Ensure commanders establish a garrison environment that assigns levels of authority, accountability, priorities, processes, and access to resources similar to those that subordinates are expected to encounter in combat.
- Adjust how we identify and instill leadership skills and capabilities at the small-unit level.
- Improve our professional development (training, education, standards, and assignment patterns) to account for technological advances.

---

<sup>1</sup> MCDP 1: “...errors by junior leaders stemming from over-boldness are a necessary part of learning. We should deal with such errors leniently; there must be no ‘zero defects’ mentality. Abolishing ‘zero defects’ means that we do not stifle boldness or initiative through the threat of punishment.”

[Type here]