U.S. MARINE CORPS

36th COMMANDANT'S PLANNING GUIDANCE

2015

INNOVATE ADAPT WIN

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Enduring Principles

- **Marines are focused on combat; every Marine is a rifleman.**
- **Marines are ready, relevant, and forward deployed.**
- **Marines are innovative, adaptable, and versatile; Marines win.**
- **Marines do what is right for the Nation.**
- **Marines keep their honor clean.**
- **Marines take care of their own.**
- **The Marine Corps is a naval expeditionary force.**
- **The Marine Corps is an integrated combined arms organization of complementary air, ground, and logistics components.**
- **The Marine Corps is a good steward of the Nation's resources.**

These principles define our identity as Marines and as a Marine Corps. They are provided here as a reminder of who we are and what we do. **Our shared responsibility is to remain true to these enduring principles as we innovate and adapt for the future.**

Intent

During my initial months as your Commandant, I have engaged Marines at all levels to assist me in assessing where we are as a Corps. Your feedback has reinforced my belief that our United States Marine Corps is fundamentally in good shape. We are recruiting and retaining high quality Marines; we are adequately equipped; we are well trained; our professional military education programs are developing the next generation of leaders; and the infrastructure at our bases and stations is better than it has been in decades. Most importantly, our forward-deployed Marine Air Ground Task Forces (MAGTFs) are responding to crises around the world and winning the Nation's battles. The demand for Marines is strong and your recent performance in every clime and place, to include Afghanistan, Iraq, Yemen, Libya, Liberia, South Sudan, and throughout the Pacific, speaks for itself.

While we can be proud of our performance, we must never rest on our past accomplishments. In order to maintain the readiness necessary to meet our day-to-day requirements, we have accepted risk in the readiness of our non-deployed units, our ground and logistics modernization efforts, and our infrastructure sustainment. We will need to address that risk in order to be ready for tomorrow's requirements.

As a Corps, we also remain committed to constantly improving the quality of our manning, training, and equipping efforts and our resultant warfighting capability. The challenges of an increasingly uncertain, complex, and decentralized operating environment will continue to place new demands on our leaders at all levels. Our recruiting standards, manning policies, training, and education must constantly evolve to produce Marines who can meet those challenges. Our experimentation, combat development, and acquisition processes must be properly integrated to deliver the right equipment to our Marines at the right time. **And, as General Gray, our 29th Commandant said, *"Like war itself, our approach to warfighting must evolve. If we cease to refine, expand, and improve our profession, we risk being outdated, stagnant, and defeated."*** We must win today's battles while evolving, innovating, and adapting to win tomorrow's fight.

My initial planning guidance is intended to outline how we will set the conditions to fight and win against future enemies. I expect all Marines to read and discuss this document. The information provided within will serve to guide senior leaders, but it is important that all Marines regardless of rank or assignment understand what is important to the institution, where the Corps is headed, and are prepared to provide feedback when appropriate. This guidance will be implemented in a manner consistent with our culture and warfighting doctrine. Senior leaders will provide the resources necessary to accomplish the mission and ensure that subordinates at all levels understand the intent, policies, and priorities. As a rule, subordinate leaders will receive mission orders and the responsibility for their execution. *Marine Corps Doctrinal Publication 1 Warfighting* clearly outlines our mutual responsibilities:

"Mission tactics serve as a contract between senior and subordinate. The senior agrees to provide subordinates with the support necessary to help accomplish their missions but without unnecessarily prescribing their actions. The senior is obligated to provide the guidance that allows subordinates to exercise proper judgment and initiative. The subordinate is obligated to act in conformity with the intent of the senior. The subordinate agrees to act responsibly and loyally and not exceed the proper limits of authority."

Operating in accordance with mission tactics is an imperative on the battlefield where we assume the enemy will seek to compromise or degrade our ability to communicate. It is also how we conduct ourselves in our daily routines so we are better prepared for the inherent chaos and uncertainty of combat. In executing

this guidance, and **in all that we do, we should seek to reduce the dissimilarity between how we conduct ourselves in combat and garrison.** This is particularly true in the approach we take to empowering subordinates.

You have my commitment that we will operate in a decentralized manner that capitalizes on the leadership, initiative, intellect, aggressiveness, and innovativeness of Marines at all levels and across the Total Force – both active and reserve Marines, Sailors who serve with Marines, as well as civilians. Fully leveraging the talent and ability of every Marine is a critical component of our warfighting culture.

I realize that this method will sometimes lead to imperfect results, but leaders at all levels must be willing to accept mistakes as a part of the learning process.

"…errors by junior leaders stemming from overboldness 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. It does not mean that commanders do not counsel subordinates on mistakes; constructive criticism is an important element in learning. Nor does it give subordinates free license to act stupidly or recklessly."

MCDP-1 Warfighting

In return, I need the commitment of all Marines to engage in a constant dialogue with their leadership that will allow us to develop and maintain a common understanding and approach to our challenges and opportunities. I also need the full commitment of all Marines to our high standards of professionalism, discipline, and core values. Meeting our mutual responsibilities will ensure that when the Nation calls, we are ready – and when we fight, we win.

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This initial planning guidance establishes our foundational priorities and focus for the coming years. It will inform the development of policies and the allocation of resources. **The guidance does not address every important issue confronting the Corps.** Many efforts to tackle these matters are currently underway and I will provide specific guidance on these issues separately.

This document reflects my personal assessment, based on your input, of the most immediate opportunities to improve the quality of our Corps and our warfighting capabilities. My guidance reflects what the Nation expects from its Corps of Marines, our approach to leadership, and our warfighting philosophy. My intent is to direct actions at the institutional level with a particular emphasis on leadership, warfighting, and balanced readiness across the force. To ensure a common understanding of the end state of our efforts, the planning guidance begins with a brief summary of what we do for the Nation, who we are as Marines, and the future operating environment.

The Corps, Marines, and the Future

"The nation's shock troops must be the most ready when the nation is least ready … to provide a balanced force in readiness for a naval campaign and, at the same time, a ground and air striking force ready to suppress or contain international disturbances short of large-scale war."

82nd Congress deliberating the role of the U.S. Marine Corps

The Marine Corps is the Nation's expeditionary force in readiness. That fact reflects the intent of the 82nd Congress and shapes our culture, organization, training, equipment, and priorities. On a day-to-day basis, we are forward deployed, forward engaged, and prepared for crisis response. We are also ready to respond in the event of a major contingency. The American people have come to expect us to do what must be done "in any clime and place" and under any conditions. They expect us to respond quickly and to win.

To meet the expectations of the American people, everything we do must contribute to our combat readiness and combat effectiveness. While we emphasize the resourcing of our forward-deployed forces to meet the combatant commanders' requirements, it is equally important that our non-deployed forces are ready to respond quickly and successfully to the unexpected. The Marines and facilities of our supporting establishment have a critical role in training and sustaining our expeditionary forces; they are vital to building our warfighting capability.

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In partnership with the Navy, the Marine Corps provides unique capabilities to the Joint Force. **The inherent versatility, flexibility, scalability, and combined arms capability of MAGTFs joined with the mobility and sustainability provided by amphibious ships gives us an asymmetric advantage over adversaries.** Naval expeditionary forces can exploit the sea as maneuver space and conduct forcible entry operations. We also serve as the lead element for follow-on joint and combined forces.

Our expeditionary nature provides combatant commanders other options that are increasingly in demand. While Marines are naval in character and uniquely capable of coming from the sea, our expeditionary nature allows us to operate effectively in underdeveloped conditions ashore. Expeditionary is a state of mind as well as a capability. We expect to operate forward and sustain ourselves without a large logistics footprint. Every element of the MAGTF is designed and tailored to function in an austere environment. Whether coming from the sea or ashore, the complementary nature of the air, ground, and logistics elements is the essence of the MAGTF.

Marines are the foundation of the Marine Corps and the MAGTF. **The term Marine is synonymous with young men and women who are disciplined, smart, physically and mentally tough, and who remain**

The term Marine is synonymous with young men and women who are disciplined, smart, physically and mentally tough, and who remain always faithful to each other and to our Corps.

always faithful to each other and to our Corps. Our initial training instills in the individual Marine a selfless commitment to fellow Marines, a bias for action, and an unwavering commitment to mission accomplishment.

The Marine Corps' naval character has also shaped the character of Marines. Combining the best virtues of both sailors and soldiers, our Marines have developed a sense of elitism forged in the crucible of our shared training experiences and reinforced by the *esprit de corps* and cohesiveness of our small units.

This idea of being an elite force was captured by General Krulak, our 31st Commandant, in *Leading Marines*: *"A sense of elitism has grown … from the fact that every Marine, whether enlisted or officer, goes through the same training experience. Both the training of recruits and the basic education of officers… have endowed the Corps with a sense of cohesiveness enjoyed by no other American service."*

The current operating environment is volatile and complex. It is marked by a growing demand for Marine capabilities ranging from Amphibious Ready Groups/Marine Expeditionary Units (ARG/MEUs) and Special Purpose MAGTFs to Marines at embassies. **There are no indications that the future will be any less challenging or that the demand for Marines will decrease.** Threats will continue to include the proliferation of modern conventional, asymmetric and cyber weapons, violent extremism, transnational crime, and piracy. Sources of conflict will include water, energy and food scarcity, weak governments resulting in ungoverned spaces, territorial and tribal disputes, and regional competition. Due to geography and demographics, the most likely locations for conflict will be in and around the littorals where our naval forces are uniquely capable of responding. The realities of reduced defense spending and increased competition for limited defense dollars will create additional challenges.

As the Nation meets current and future challenges, it will rely heavily on the Marine Corps to be ready, relevant, and capable. While there will be consistency in our missions, we must be willing to experiment, take risk, and implement change to overcome those challenges. We must also continue to be good stewards of the Nation's resources. **Although we remain proud of our heritage, we should expect no credit tomorrow for what we did yesterday.**

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Making Marines, Leading Marines, and Keeping Faith with Marines and their Families

Our success in maintaining an elite force begins with recruiting young men and women who possess the character, mental aptitude, physical and psychological fitness, and desire required to earn the title "Marine." While our recruiters have met or exceeded all of our expectations in recent years, there is always room for improvement in our screening processes. We will enhance the assessment process for potential recruits and those undergoing initial training with psychological screening to augment our testing of physical and mental aptitude. We will quickly assess the efficacy of available psychological screening tools currently used by special operations forces, law enforcement organizations, and industry. We will subsequently use the best available tools to better predict the resiliency of recruits and their probability of successfully completing an enlistment. **The end state is to enhance the quality and resilience of the force – thereby making us more combat ready.**

There is no doubt that completing Marine Corps boot camp changes a person forever; however, the transformation that takes place at our Recruit Depots must be sustained. Our ability to sustain and enhance the transformation and achieve a consistent standard of readiness and effectiveness across the Corps demands that we deliver decisive, engaged, and respected leadership to every Marine, every day. We must also enable unit leaders to develop the trust and implicit communications necessary to succeed in a fight.

Sustaining and enhancing the transformation and building cohesion starts with effective leadership at all levels. We have made great strides in our professional military training and education efforts and will continue to move forward on these initiatives. However, many of our units are experiencing significant gaps in the numbers of unit leaders with the right grade, experience, technical and leadership qualifications associated with their billets. The shortfalls are particularly prevalent in units that are not deployed or immediately preparing to deploy. **Specifically, our current inventory of Non-Commissioned Officers (NCOs) and Staff Non-Commissioned Officers (SNCOs) is not meeting our force structure requirements and this shortfall must be addressed.** This dynamic affects training, maintenance, and discipline. In the end, our readiness and combat effectiveness are degraded.

Significant to sustaining the transformation is selecting the best Marines to be NCOs, and continuing to train them to sustain the values and warfighting ethos of our Corps. Marine Corps NCOs are the primary leaders of our first term Marines and must emulate the high standards of what small unit effective leadership requires.

Beyond preparing a Marine Corps that will win in combat, what truly distinguishes our legacy to our nation are the citizens we produce — citizens transformed by their Marine Corps experience and enriched by their internalization of our ethos, ideals, and values.

MCRP 6-11D Sustaining the Transformation

We will address the current gaps in NCO and SNCO leadership by revamping our current manpower management and readiness reporting models, systems, policies, and processes. Our objective is to address the gaps for NCOs and SNCOs by grade, MOS, and qualifications in the structure that we man across the Marine Corps. In order to address these challenges, we will fully implement programs like the Squad Leader Development Program and consider other innovative ways to enhance the quantity and maturity of leadership at the small unit level.

In combat, the Marine Corps succeeds with mission tactics founded on implicit communications forged in the crucible of demanding and realistic training. The cohesion necessary to operate effectively with mission tactics must exist in our deployed, next-to-deploy, and non-deployed units. Cohesion also enables leaders to truly know their Marines and provide personalized, decisive, and engaged leadership. Today, the Marine Corps does not have the proper level of stability or cohesion in our non-deployed units. The practice of moving Marines between units to meet manning goals for deployments creates personnel turbulence, inhibits cohesion, and is not visible in our current readiness assessment tools. This personnel turbulence affects our combat readiness and our ability to take care of Marines. Moving forward, we will improve cohesion and move away from metrics related to preparedness for the next deployment to an approach that emphasizes consistency of leadership, personnel stability, and sustained readiness in our units. The overhaul of our manpower management and readiness reporting models, systems, policies, and processes will allow us to minimize personnel turbulence, increase unit stability, and develop cohesion.

I fully appreciate that addressing our NCO gaps and how we achieve cohesion will require making tough choices. In some cases, we need to change how we have been operating. We will make the hard calls and embrace change to our long-standing manpower and force structure policies and processes. In this, and in all other areas, we will emphasize quality and capability; where necessary, accept risk in capacity. Accepting risk in capacity means that we will only man structure when we can provide proper leadership. **The end state is to provide the continuity and quality of leadership and the appropriate leader-to-led ratio needed to sustain the transformation and enhance our combat effectiveness through personnel stability.** In doing so, we will develop true cohesion, enhance *esprit de corps*, and better balance readiness between deployed, next-to-deploy and non-deployed units. In the end, our well-trained and cohesive teams will send a shock wave through the enemy when making initial contact.

"The personnel management system should seek to achieve personnel stability within units and staffs as a means of fostering cohesion, teamwork, and implicit understanding."

MCDP-1 Warfighting

As an institution, we understand that family readiness is a key element of overall readiness and combat effectiveness. We have significantly expanded and enhanced our family readiness programs over the last decade to meet the challenges of frequent deployments, but some of our past practices will have to change in an era of fiscal austerity. **In order to maintain the high standard of family support we have today, we will evaluate our programs and develop a plan with a bias toward decentralizing decision-making and resource allocation.** Headquarters Marine Corps will focus on policy, standards, and resource allocation while local commanders will use the resources available to develop the most effective programs for their particular installation or command. The end state is to maintain a high-level of family readiness and put our resources where they can achieve the best effect in a period of fiscal constraint.

Marines take care of their own and our approach to wounded warrior care is a reflection of that enduring principle. We will continue to lead in this area and look for opportunities to improve. **Our commitment to our wounded Marines and their families is unwavering.** We are developing a long-term organizational structure and resourcing plan to sustain the Wounded Warrior Regiment. The goal is the swift return of our wounded, ill, and injured Marines to duty or to support their transition to civilian employment.

Our installations are critical to our efforts to care for Marines and their families. Installation commanders will ensure the safety and security of Marines and their families at Marine installations throughout the world, develop Base Master Plans to support new weapons platforms and future force structure, improve aging infrastructure and conserve energy resources. The base commanders will also implement initiatives to reduce overall operating support costs, eliminate costly redundancies, standardize levels of support, and most importantly, ensure installation support is directly linked to supporting the requirements and capabilities of our operating forces.

Warfighting, Crisis Response, and Institutional Readiness

"The Marine Corps is the Nation's 9-1-1 force."

General Carl E. Mundy, Jr., 30th Commandant

"We have no more important duty to the American people than to win the Nation's battles."

General Charles C. Krulak, 31st Commandant

The Marine Corps, as the Nation's force-in-readiness, is versatile and flexible in order to be relevant and capable across the range of military operations. We are optimized and resourced for crisis response and will continue to give priority to our forward deployed MAGTFs. However, we must rebalance in some areas to address the personnel, equipment, and training shortfalls in our non-deployed units to maintain our readiness to respond rapidly to contingencies. **My expectation is that all Marines and all Marine units are physically and mentally ready to deploy to every clime and place, at any time.**

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The combatant commanders' demand for high quality individual Marines and the unique capabilities of MAGTFs is increasing. The Marine Corps component headquarters is the critical link for engaging a geographic combatant command to determine the requirement for Marine forces and to set the conditions for their most effective employment and sustainment. **We will implement a plan to provide each geographic and functional combatant command with a properly tailored and effective Marine component.** This will include changes to General Officer assignments and organization/manning of the staffs. The resources realigned to our components will come from other headquarters elements. We will not resource component headquarters to serve as tactical command elements – MAGTF command elements and their major subordinate elements perform that role. **The desired end state is the effective employment and support of assigned, allocated, and apportioned Marine Corps forces.**

Our Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF) commanders play a critical role in balancing our requirements for MEF-level warfighting, Marine Expeditionary Brigade (MEB)-level crisis response, and providing forces for forward deployed MEUs and other requirements. To be clear, MEB is a term used to assist in planning and articulating our capabilities to a joint audience. **A MEB is in effect a MEF Forward due to the MEF Headquarters support required to deploy, operate, and sustain — a MEB is separable but not separate from a MEF.** To manage institutional risk and support our efforts to achieve balance, the command element priorities within each MEF are different.

I MEF will focus on sourcing requirements associated with the Global Force Management (GFM) force sourcing process as well as maintaining proficiency in major operations and campaigns. Within the context of limited time and resources, I MEF will continue developing proficiency at the MEB-level for crisis response.

II MEF will focus on sourcing requirements associated with the GFM force sourcing process as well as maintaining proficiency in MEB-level crisis response. Within the context of limited time and resources, II MEF will maintain proficiency for MEF-level warfighting.

I and II MEF will develop plans to mitigate the risk associated with the above construct.

III MEF will remain regionally oriented on the full range of military operations within its theater, to include designation as a standing joint task force headquarters for U.S. Pacific Command capable of combined operations.

While a MEF may prioritize the training and readiness of a particular command element, the MEF commander must retain the ability to respond should our assumptions prove wrong. **The end state is that the Marine Corps is capable of meeting its requirements across the range of military operations.**

A foundational element of our plan to rebalance must be a service-level Training Exercise and Employment Plan (TEEP) that reflects our objectives and priorities. **The TEEP will be a comprehensive planning document that informs the synchronization of our manning, training, equipping, and experimentation efforts across the Marine Corps.** It will result in achieving the proper balance in readiness across the Total Force. The processes that support TEEP implementation will result in our establishing and meeting the right service-level objectives for manning, readiness, resourcing, experimentation, deployment to dwell, personnel tempo, and Reserve force generation. It will drive our decisions regarding maintaining capabilities to include cultural training, language training, security cooperation capacity, etc. **The end state is to balance our readiness to meet requirements across the range of military operations while meeting our objectives for operational and personnel tempo.**

Exercising and Experimenting with a Focus on Naval Integration

In reflecting back on World War II, General Alexander A. Vandegrift, our 18th Commandant, captured the importance of exercises and innovation during the interwar period: *"Despite its outstanding record as a combat force in the past war, the Marine Corps' far greater contribution to victory was doctrinal: that is, the fact that the basic amphibious doctrines which carried Allied troops over every beachhead of WW II had been largely shaped-often in the face of uninterested and doubting military orthodoxy-by US Marines…."*

As it was prior to World War II, **the quality and focus of our exercise and experimentation programs is critical to our readiness, relevance, and success today and in the future.** We will balance our programs to inform how we will fight with today's capabilities while influencing the development of tomorrow's capabilities.

Our current ability to conduct amphibious operations is complicated by the proliferation of weapons capable of targeting our forces from increasingly greater ranges. **Our service-level exercise priorities for 2015 and 2016 will focus on how we will fight from the sea in this Anti-Access, Area Denial (A2AD) threat environment.** The baseline posture for our exercises will represent Marine Corps, Navy, and joint capabilities, capacities, and readiness levels as they are today. Command and control, compositing, and Naval Expeditionary Combat Command integration will be among the focus areas. The purpose will be to conduct an assessment of where we are, how we fight, and how to mitigate risk in the near term. With that appreciation, we will shift our focus in 2017 and 2018 toward how we will fight in an increasingly enabled A2AD environment in the 2025 timeframe. The purpose will be to gain an understanding of how our current service, Navy, and joint capability development plans will support winning in the context of future threat capabilities. **The end state of our service-level exercise plan is to ensure we are prepared to fight with what we have today, to inform the development of our organic future capabilities, and to improve our ability to advocate for the development of critical Navy and joint capabilities.** With top-down guidance and a mature process for harvesting and incorporating lessons learned, we can better shape and leverage ongoing exercises without generating additional tempo in the operating forces.

Our experimentation program will complement our exercise program but with a markedly different emphasis. While the objective of exercises will be doing what we do better, **our experimentation will be concentrated on developing and fielding highly advanced, indirect, or disruptive concepts and capabilities.** Our organizational construct for experimentation will be revised to ensure that it informs the combat development process but is not subsumed or constrained by a near-term focus on day-to-day requirements or non-responsive processes. **The end state of our experimentation will be to develop and nurture the intellectual energy, innovation, and creativity that will enable the Marine Corps to lead tactical and operational innovation.**

Our exercise and experimentation efforts should also work to improve the link between our Operating Forces and Special Operations Forces (SOF) on the future battlefield. Marines and SOF are highly complementary and have many similar characteristics; it is only natural that **our efforts should work to improve interoperability between the Marine Corps and United States Special Operations Command.** While our commitment to Marine Corps Special Operations Command is enduring, our partnership with the SOF community must extend to the entire Marine Corps. A closer alignment of special operations capability with expeditionary MAGTFs is a natural arrangement within the Joint Force and a daily reality in the Operating Forces. To

strengthen interoperability in the future we will experiment with new concepts and technologies to achieve integrated effects on tomorrow's battlefield through the complementary capabilities of the Marine Corps and SOF.

"As much as possible, employment techniques and procedures should be developed concurrently with equipment to minimize delays between the fielding of the equipment and its usefulness to the operating forces."

MCDP-1 Warfighting

There are a number of capabilities across the MAGTF that require immediate attention. In the coming months, the staff at Headquarters Marine Corps and I will focus on the following areas:

- **Building Partner Capacity** is a key capability of forward-deployed MAGTFs and we must clearly define our capabilities and determine our institutional capacity for what is an increasingly important component of the National Defense Strategy.

- **The F-35 Joint Strike Fighter** will reach Initial Operating Capability in 2015, and we will take full advantage of this transformational program by leveraging its kinetic and non-kinetic capabilities across the MAGTF.

- We will review our plan for live, virtual, and constructive training across the MAGTF. We will particularly focus on better leveraging modern immersive training and simulation technologies. We will prioritize the fielding of capabilities that support MAGTF integration and the development of resilient leaders and sound tactical and ethical decision making at the small unit level. We will continue to support the fielding of systems that enhance our proficiency and safety in operating weapons and equipment. **Our investment in training systems will reflect the priority we place on preparing for combat and be fully integrated with training and readiness standards.** I expect all elements of the MAGTF to make extensive use of simulators where appropriate. My intent is for Marines to encounter their initial tactical and ethical dilemmas in a simulated battlefield vice actual combat.

- Understanding and seizing opportunities in the cyber domain while meeting the associated challenges are increasingly critical to the MAGTF. Every day, determined adversaries attack and seek to compromise Marine Corps networks. The Marine Corps has supported the growth of the cyber component to address national-level concerns and direction. We are now at a point in the development of the cyber force where **MAGTFs need to be capable of planning, employing, and leveraging offensive and defensive cyber capabilities for warfighting and crisis response.** This requires a plan to integrate cyber-MOS qualified Marines to support our MAGTF warfighting capabilities; defend our key cyber terrain; provide an operational, secure, effective and efficient Marine Corps Enterprise Network to the MAGTF; and enhance command and control (C2) and digital interoperability across all elements. Our end state will be to increase the capacity and capability of the MAGTF to operate in and exploit the cyber domain.

A number of priorities for capability development require close coordination and integration with the Navy. We must remember that our naval heritage is based upon more than tradition; it is mandated by law as our primary service responsibility. As such, **naval integration will form an important component of our exercise and experimentation programs.** We will also leverage the Naval Board as the venue to continue to address other issues of significance necessary for a robust maritime capability to include: Navy/Marine Corps staff integration, compatible C2 systems and situational awareness tools, clarification of the issues surrounding littoral operations in contested environments, and refining operational requirements for naval surface fires support.

Tactical ship-to-shore mobility is critical to our success across the range of military operations. **We will continue to prioritize the fielding of a self-deploying, high-speed amphibious combat vehicle that will meet our requirements for the future even as we implement the first phase of the current Amphibious Combat Vehicle Program.** This will be done in the context of an overall ground tactical vehicle strategy. In partnership with the Navy, we will also continue work to field high-speed, long-range, high-capacity system of connectors and craft that are critical for amphibious operations and Joint Forcible Entry Operations. The capabilities we field will support our concepts of Ship to Objective Maneuver and Operational Maneuver from the Sea and will be fully incorporated into our service exercise and experimentation program.

Amphibious ships provide the most capable and flexible means of deploying and employing Marines across the range of military operations. There are insufficient amphibious ships to meet the current combatant commander requirements across the range of military operations. I do not expect that situation to change for many years to come. We have taken steps to mitigate the shortfall in amphibious shipping such as the shore basing of Special Purpose Marine Air Ground Task Forces – Crisis Response (SPMAGTF-CR); however, shore basing does not substitute for MAGTFs coming from the sea. As Expeditionary Force 21 emphasizes, we need to modify traditional employment methods and augment amphibious warships by adapting other vessels for sea-based littoral operations. **We will aggressively develop concepts of employment for alternative platforms that are consistent with mission requirements and platform capabilities.** Our priority will be to develop immediately a concept of operations for SPMAGTF-CR-Africa and Marine Rotational Force-Darwin that employs alternative sea-based platforms to enhance flexibility and compensate for the shortfall of amphibious ships. We will begin to implement a plan in 2015, the results of which will inform subsequent operational deployments, capability development, and doctrine for alternative platform employment.

To better collaborate with joint, allied, coalition, interagency and non-governmental partners, **we will continue to develop and leverage enterprise and tactical digital interoperability solutions.** These initiatives will enable MAGTF C2 via computer and voice networks while maintaining the required cybersecurity and integrity of Marine Corps data and systems. To address this challenge we need to understand where we are today and where we will need to go in the future. In the next few months, we will conduct a senior leader assessment to determine current state of the MAGTF and develop future requirements. I will follow this assessment with amplifying guidance and set specific milestones for progress. Our end state will be to ensure we are organizing, training, and equipping our MAGTFs for the ongoing changes in C2 systems and situational awareness tools including those systems on naval and aviation platforms.

Way Ahead

The intent and initiatives outlined in this document are intended to address my priorities for improving the quality of the leadership we provide our Marines and Sailors, enhancing our warfighting capability, and achieving proper balance in our readiness, modernization, and infrastructure sustainment efforts. I will take other opportunities to provide guidance and direction on the many important issues not addressed in this document.

In the weeks ahead, I will meet with the senior officer and enlisted leadership responsible for implementing this guidance to develop specific plans of action and milestones. An appendix to this document will contain those plans in greater detail. Effective immediately, this planning guidance will inform the agenda for Executive Off-Sites and other senior officer and senior enlisted level meetings. It will focus the development of Program Objective Memorandum for Fiscal Year 2017 (POM-17) and future budgets. It will also drive when, where, and how I personally engage to advance the interests of the Corps. Most importantly, this document will initiate a dialogue that must take place across the Corps at all levels. Your continued feedback and ideas on this document and the full range of issues affecting our Corps are critical. I look forward to your input as a necessary element of shared understanding and trust. In the meantime, know that **I am proud to be your Commandant, proud of where we are as a Corps, and confident in your ability to innovate, adapt, and win.**

Joe Dunford
36th Commandant

Notes

INNOVATE *for the* FUTURE
ADAPT *to* OVERCOME
ALWAYS WIN!

U.S. MARINE CORPS
COMMANDANT'S PLANNING GUIDANCE
2015