



**DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY**  
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MARINE CORPS ORDER 5401.1

From: Commandant of the Marine Corps  
To: Distribution List  
  
Subj: CONCEPT GENERATION AND DEVELOPMENT  
  
Ref: See enclosure (1)  
  
Encl: (1) References

1. Situation. Marine Corps concepts propose new and innovative approaches for addressing current or future gaps, shortfalls, or challenges for which existing methods or capabilities are ineffective, insufficient, or nonexistent. They may also describe new opportunities based on changes in technology that present adversaries with new dilemmas. These threat-informed concepts, aligned with national security guidance and Marine Corps objectives, provide the basis for analytically supported recommendations to inform subsequent force design and development activities. This is a new Order and shall be read in its entirety. This Order is in accordance with references (a) through (j).

2. Mission. To establish the responsibilities, standards, and authorities associated with concept generation and development in order to support how to best organize, train, educate, and equip the Marine Corps for the future.

3. Execution

a. Commander's Intent and Concept of Operations

(1) Commander's Intent. Develop and execute a Marine Corps concept generation and development process that provides a sound basis for force development and force design through a family of future-focused, official Marine Corps concepts.

(2) Concept of Operations. Official Marine Corps concepts will be centrally managed by the Deputy Commandant for Combat Development and Integration (DC CD&I). Concept topic identification, content generation, and the critical examination of ideas is a collaborative activity that involves participation from other Deputy Commandants (DCs), the Fleet Marine Forces, and the supporting establishment, as appropriate to the subject matter.

(a) Concept Definition. This Order, and the corresponding Navy instruction, reference (b), provide a shared naval definition of a concept: "An expression of how something might be done; a visualization of future operations that describes how warfighters, using military art and science, might employ capabilities to meet future challenges and exploit future opportunities."

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(b) Types of Concepts. The following key terms describe the various types of Marine Corps concepts.

1. Unofficial Concept. Unofficial concepts may come in the form of magazine articles, white papers, or "think pieces" designed to espouse ideas and generate discussion. An unofficial concept may be nominated or directed for generation as an official concept.

2. Official Concept. Official concepts are those formally published by the Service to inform force design and capability development actions.

a. Strategic Concept. A strategic concept articulates the role of a Service in implementing national strategy. As the Nation's security needs evolve over time, the Commandant of the Marine Corps (CMC) may determine an updated strategic concept is needed to articulate how the Marine Corps will fulfill the responsibilities established by law in Title 10, as well as those assigned in Department of Defense and Department of the Navy (DON) policy, in a manner pertinent to a new strategic era. The strategic concept describes, in broad terms, the basic ideas to provide the framework for generating the operating and functional concepts that will drive innovation to meet the demands of the new era. The purpose of the strategic concept is twofold: 1) Explain to external audiences why a portion of national resources should be allocated to the Marine Corps; and 2) Focus internal audiences on the proper application of those resources. The CMC is the approval authority for the strategic concept. Given the nature of a strategic concept, validation is inherent in that approval.

b. Operating Concept. Operating concepts provide detailed descriptions of how Marine Corps forces will accomplish a given mission or range of missions within a particular situation or set of situations. The CMC is the approval and validation authority for operating concepts and may delegate that responsibility to the DC CD&I.

c. Functional Concept. Functional concepts provide detailed descriptions of how certain activities will be performed to drive capabilities planning and, ultimately, capability solutions that involve changes to doctrine, organization, training, materiel, leadership and education, personnel, facilities, and policy (DOTMLPF-P). The DC CD&I is the approval authority for functional concepts. The DC CD&I is the validation authority for determining if and when functional concepts complete force development processes to become authoritative source documents that inform subsequent capability development actions.

d. Concept of Operations (CONOPS). A concept of operations (CONOPS), when used in the context of force design and development, applies operating concepts against specific scenarios to provide the basis for wargaming, modeling, experimentation, and assessment activities used to refine that operating concept, inform capabilities-based assessment analysis, and ultimately support DOTMLPF-P decisions. The DC CD&I is the approval authority for CONOPS associated with capabilities planning and Marine Corps' input into the CONOPS associated with Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD), Joint Staff (JS), and DON force planning and analysis. A CONOPS does not require validation.

e. Concept of Employment (CONEMP). A concept of employment (CONEMP) describes how a capability (e.g., an organization, platform, weapon, piece of equipment, or training facility) is intended to be used. The DC CD&I is the approval authority for CONEMPs associated with capabilities planning and Marine Corps' input into the CONOPS associated with OSD, JS, and DON force planning and analysis. A CONEMP does not require validation.

f. Tentative Manual. A tentative manual is an iterative mechanism to facilitate further development of an approved concept. It provides more detailed and refined "how to" information supporting development and implementation of a concept. Very few concepts become the subject of a tentative manual. The main factor in determining whether an approved concept becomes a tentative manual is its projected size and scope of impact to Marine Corps force development and force design. The DC CD&I is the approval authority for tentative manuals.

(c) Official Concept Process

1. Concept Generation. Concept generation involves all activities associated with creating and publishing an official concept. These activities may include research, seminars, war games, writers' workshops to create and edit drafts, illustration and layout design, coordination and document refinement, submission to appropriate authorities for approval, and publication.

2. Concept Approval. Once a concept is signed and published, it is considered approved for further examination and evaluation for force development and force design.

3. Concept Development. Concept development involves all activities associated with critically examining an approved concept to assess its validity. These activities include (but are not limited to) the following: more detailed wargaming; modeling and simulation; science and technology research and integration; live, virtual, and constructive experiments; crafting and publishing formal lessons learned; and providing recommendations to the appropriate authority regarding concept validation. These recommendations may lead to concept refinement to inform further critical examination, or a recommendation that the concept in whole, or portions of the concept, be accepted or disregarded as a basis for subsequent capability development actions.

4. Concept Validation. When an approved concept has completed sufficient analysis and is deemed to have sufficient merit, it is considered validated for entry into formal force development and force design processes. While it is preferable to have a detailed process and measurable criteria to determine when a concept is validated, the complex and variable nature of testing the hypotheses in a concept prevents listing specifics in this Order. No single process or list of metrics can anticipate every question or project every operating condition to prove or disprove every potential solution.

5. Concept Implementation. Concept implementation begins when a concept is declared valid by the appropriate authority as the basis for transitioning into appropriate Marine Corps doctrine and/or for capabilities planning and, ultimately, capability solution investment

decisions (i.e., DOTMLPF-P analysis). These activities are guided by other orders and directives.

b. Subordinate Element Tasks

(1) Deputy Commandant for Combat Development and Integration (DC CD&I)

(a) When directed by the CMC, generate the Marine Corps strategic concept.

(b) Generate and maintain the family of official Marine Corps operating and functional concepts.

(c) Lead Marine Corps participation in the generation of naval, joint, and coalition concepts.

(d) Conduct concept development activities and monitor other organizations' activities to test, refine, and recommend validation or invalidation of official operating concepts. Develop detailed CONOPS and/or CONEMPs, as necessary, to support such analysis as well as capabilities planning and materiel solution implementation.

(e) Prepare validated concepts for capabilities planning and solution implementation across the DOTMLPF-P.

(f) Ensure scenario alignment to the Defense Planning Guidance, and naval and joint concepts. As part of a joint working group, provide Marine Corps' inputs to the maritime design of joint CONOPS.

(g) Ensure analytic models used for joint analysis, which form the basis for jointly approved products, adequately represent official Marine Corps concepts.

(h) Provide concepts-related input for strategic communication products and congressional testimony.

(i) Articulate Marine Corps concepts and capabilities in professional journals and venues, to include war games, experiments, seminars, and both government and private research organizations.

(j) In coordination with the Commanding General for Training and Education Command (CG TECOM), make recommendations to the CMC regarding transition of a validated concept, in whole or in part, into one or more Marine Corps doctrine and training publications, or into a stand-alone publication.

(2) Commanding General for Training and Education Command (CG TECOM)

(a) Promote understanding of official concepts among students enrolled in professional military education.

(b) Encourage the generation of unofficial concepts by students enrolled in professional military education.

(c) When requested by the DC CD&I, support official concept generation, timely staffing, testing, and refinement.

(d) When desired, nominate topics for official concept generation per the procedures articulated in reference (d).

(e) In coordination with the DC CD&I, make recommendations to the CMC regarding transition of a validated concept, in whole or in part, into one or more Marine Corps doctrine and training publications, or into a stand-alone publication.

(f) Transition validated concepts, or portions thereof, into doctrine. These transitions can take various forms, ranging from a direct transition into a single doctrine or training publication on the same topic, to incorporating select ideas into numerous doctrine and training publications on related topics.

(3) Deputy Commandants (DCs), Fleet Marine Force (FMF) Commanders, Marine Force Commanders, and Supporting Establishment Commanders

(a) When requested by the DC CD&I, support official concept generation, timely staffing, and development activities.

(b) Support concept development activities, such as war games, exercises, experiments, and DOTMLPF-P development analysis to assess the validity of approved concepts.

(c) Prepare validated concepts for capabilities planning and solution implementation across the DOTMLPF-P.

(d) When desired, nominate topics for official concept generation per the procedures articulated in reference (d).

4. Administration and Logistics

a. Records Management. Records created as a result of this Order shall be managed according to National Archives and Records Administration (NARA)-approved dispositions in reference (g), SECNAV M-5210.1, to ensure proper maintenance, use, accessibility, and preservation, regardless of format or medium. Records disposition schedules are located on the Department of the Navy/Assistant for Administration (DON/AA), Directives and Records Management Division (DRMD) portal page at: <https://portal.secnav.navy.mil/orgs/DUSNM/DONAA/DRM/Records-and-Information-Management/Approved%20Record%20Schedules/Forms/AllItems.aspx>. Refer to reference (h), MCO 5210.11F, for Marine Corps records management policy and procedures.

b. Privacy Act. Any misuse or unauthorized disclosure of Personally Identifiable Information (PII) may result in both civil and criminal penalties. The DON recognizes that the privacy of an individual is a personal and fundamental right that shall be respected and protected. The DON's need to collect, use, maintain, or disseminate PII about individuals for purposes of discharging its statutory responsibilities shall be balanced against the individuals' right to be protected against unwarranted invasion of privacy. All collection, use, maintenance, or dissemination of PII shall be in accordance with reference (i), the Privacy Act of 1974 (5 U.S.C. § 552a), as amended, and implemented in reference (j), SECNAVINST 5211.5F.

c. Forms. There are no forms used in this Order.

d. Updates. Updates made to this Order shall be done in accordance with the current iteration of MCO 5215.1, "Marine Corps Directives Management Program."

e. Recommendations. Recommendations concerning the contents of this Order are welcomed and may be forwarded to the DC CD&I via the appropriate chain of command.

5. Command and Signal

a. Command. This Order is applicable to the Marine Corps Total Force.

b. Signal. This Order is effective the date signed.



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References

- (a) CJCSI 3030.01A, "Implementing Joint Force Development and Design," October 3, 2022
- (b) OPNAVINST 5401.9A, "Navy Concept Generation and Concept Development Program," June 24, 2014
- (c) CJCSI 5123.01I, "Charter of the Joint Requirements Oversight Council and Implementation of the Joint Capabilities Integration and Development System," October 30, 2021
- (d) MCCDC/CD&I Instruction 5401.1, "Concept Development," February 8, 2016
- (e) "DOD Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms"
- (f) "Marine Corps Supplement to the DOD Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms"
- (g) SECNAV M-5210.1
- (h) MCO 5210.11F
- (i) 5 U.S.C. § 552a
- (j) SECNAVINST 5211.5F

APPENDIX A

Glossary of Acronyms and Abbreviations

CD&I	Combat Development and Integration
CG	Commanding General
CG TECOM	Commanding General of Training and Education Command
CJCSI	Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Instruction
CMC	Commandant of the Marine Corps
CONEMP	Concept of Employment
CONOPS	Concept of Operations
DC	Deputy Commandant
DC CD&I	Deputy Commandant for Combat Development and Integration
DoD	Department of Defense
DON	Department of the Navy
DON/AA	Department of the Navy/Assistant for Administration
DOTMLPF-P	Doctrine, Organization, Training, Materiel, Leadership and Education, Personnel, Facilities, Policy
DRMD	Directives and Records Management Division
FMF	Fleet Marine Force
JS	Joint Staff
MCCDC	Marine Corps Combat Development Command
MCO	Marine Corps Order
NARA	National Archives and Records Administration
OPNAVINST	Office of the Chief of Naval Operations Instruction
OSD	Office of the Secretary of Defense
PII	Personally Identifiable Information
SECNAV	Secretary of the Navy
SECNAVINST	Secretary of the Navy Instruction
TECOM	Training and Education Command
U.S.C.	United States Code