UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS
Marine Corps University
Corporals Noncommissioned Officers program

CPL 0305
Jan 99

STUDENT HANDOUT

MCDP 1 Human Dimension

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

a. TERMINAL LEARNING OBJECTIVE: With the aid of and per the reference, explain the elements found in the combat environment. (CPL 8.1)

b. ENABLING LEARNING OBJECTIVES (CE): Without the aid of but per the reference, identify the following:

(1) The purpose of training. (CPL 8.1f)
(2) The definition of maneuver warfare. (CPL 8.1g)
(3) Conduct of maneuver warfare. (CPL 8.1h)
(4) Orienting of the enemy. (CPL 8.1i)
(5) Philosophy of command. (CPL 8.1j)
(6) Shaping the action. (CPL 8.1k)
(7) Decision-Making. (CPL 8.1l)
(8) Mission Tactics. (CPL 8.1m)
(9) Commander's Intent. (CPL 8.1n)
(10) Main effort. (CPL 8.1o)
(11) Surfaces. (CPL 8.1p)
(12) Combined arms. (CPL 8.1q)
(13) Violence and Danger. (CPL 8.1r)
(14) Physical, Moral, and Mental Forces. (CPL 8.1s)
(15) Initiative and Response. (CPL 8.1t)

OUTLINE

1. TRAINING: There are two basic military functions: waging war and preparing for war. Any military activities that do not contribute to the conduct of a present war are justifiable only if they contribute to preparedness for a possible future one. Clearly, we cannot afford to separate conduct and preparation. They must be intimately related because failure in preparation leads to disaster on the battlefield.

a. Purpose of Training: The purpose of all training is to develop forces that can win in combat. Training is the key to combat effectiveness and therefore is the main effort of a

peacetime military. However, training should not stop with the commencement of war; training must continue during war to adapt to the lessons of combat. All officers and enlisted Marines undergo similar entry-level training which is, in effect, a socialization process. This training provides all Marines a common experience, a proud heritage, a set of values, and a common bond of comradeship. It is the essential first step in the making of a Marine.

   b.   Individual Skills: Basic individual skills are an essential foundation for combat effectiveness and must receive heavy emphasis. All Marines, regardless of occupational specialty, will be trained in basic combat skills. At the same time, unit skills are extremely important. They are not simply an accumulation of individual skills; adequacy in individual skills does not automatically mean unit skills are satisfactory. In order to develop initiative among junior leaders, the conduct of training — like combat — should be decentralized. Senior commanders influence training by establishing goals and standards, communicating the intent of training, and establishing a main effort for training. As a rule, they should refrain from dictating how the training will be accomplished.

   c.   Collective Training: Training programs should reflect practical, challenging, and progressive goals beginning with individual and small-unit skills and culminating in a fully combined arms MAGTF. In general, the organization for combat should also be the organization for training. That is, units, including MAGTFs, should train with the full complement of assigned, reinforcing, and supporting forces they require in combat. Collective training consists of drills and exercises. Drills are a form of small-unit training which stress proficiency by progressive repetition of tasks. Drills are an effective method for developing standardized techniques and procedures that must be performed repeatedly without variation to ensure speed and coordination. Examples are gun drills, preflight preparations, or immediate actions. In contrast, exercises are designed to train units and individuals in tactics under simulated combat conditions. Exercises should approximate the conditions of war as much as possible; that is, they should introduce friction in the form of uncertainty, stress, disorder, and opposing wills. This last characteristic is most important; only in opposed, free-play exercises can we practice the art of war. Dictated or "canned" scenarios eliminate the element of independent, opposing wills that is the essence of war.

   d.   Critiques: Critiques are an important part of training because critical self-analysis, even after success, is essential to improvement. Their purpose is to draw out the lessons of training. As a result, we should conduct critiques immediately after completing training, before memory of the events has faded. Critiques should be held in an atmosphere of open and frank dialogue in which all hands are encouraged to contribute. We learn as much from mistakes as from things done well, so we must be willing to admit mistakes and discuss them. Of course, a subordinate's willingness to admit mistakes depends on the commander's willingness to tolerate them. Because we recognize that no two situations in war are the same, our critiques should focus not so much on the actions we took as on why we took those actions and why they brought the results they did.

   e.   Professional Military Education: Professional military education is designed to develop creative, thinking leaders. From the initial stages of leadership training, a leader's career should

be viewed as a continuous, progressive process of development. At each stage, a Marine should be preparing for the subsequent stage. The early stages of a leader's career are, in effect, an apprenticeship. While receiving a foundation in theory and concepts that will serve them throughout their careers, leaders focus on understanding the requirements and learning and applying the procedures and techniques associated with a particular field. This is when they learn their trades as aviators, infantrymen, artillerymen, or logisticians. As they progress, leaders should strive to master their respective fields and to understand the interrelationship of the techniques and procedures within the field. A Marine's goal at this stage is to become an expert in the tactical level of war. Finally, every Marine has an individual responsibility to study the profession of arms.   A leader without either interest in or knowledge of the history and theory of warfare — the intellectual content of the military profession — is a leader in appearance only. Self-directed study in the art and science of war is at least equal in importance to maintaining physical condition and should receive at least equal time.

2. <u>MANEUVER WARFARE</u>: The Marine Corps concept for winning is a warfighting doctrine based on rapid, flexible, and opportunistic maneuver. In order to fully appreciate what we mean by *maneuver*, we need to clarify the term. The traditional understanding of maneuver is a spatial one; that is, we maneuver in space to gain a positional advantage. However, in order to maximize the usefulness of maneuver, we must consider maneuver in other dimensions as well. The essence of maneuver is taking action to generate and exploit some kind of advantage over the enemy as a means of accomplishing our objectives as effectively as possible. That advantage may be psychological, technological, or temporal as well as spatial. Especially important is maneuver *in time* — we generate a faster operating tempo than the enemy to gain a temporal advantage. It is through maneuver in all dimensions that an inferior force can achieve decisive superiority at the necessary time and place. *Maneuver warfare is defined as a warfighting philosophy that seeks to shatter the enemy's cohesion through a variety of rapid, focused, and unexpected actions which create a turbulent and rapidly deteriorating situation with which the enemy cannot cope.*

   a.   <u>Bypass the Enemy's Defenses</u>: Rather than wearing down an enemy's defenses, maneuver warfare attempts to bypass these defenses in order to *penetrate* the enemy system and tear it apart. The aim is to render the enemy incapable of resisting effectively by shattering his moral, mental, and physical cohesion — his ability to fight as an effective, coordinated whole — rather than to destroy him physically through the incremental attrition of each of his components, which is generally more costly and time-consuming. Ideally, the components of his physical strength that remain are irrelevant because we have disrupted his ability to use them effectively. Even if an outmaneuvered enemy continues to fight as individuals or small units, we can destroy the remnants with relative ease because we have eliminated his ability to fight effectively as a force.

   b.   <u>Relationship of Firepower to Maneuver Warfare</u>: This is not to imply that firepower is unimportant. On the contrary, firepower is central to maneuver warfare. Nor do we mean to imply that we will pass up the opportunity to physically destroy the enemy. We will concentrate fires and forces at decisive points to destroy enemy elements when the opportunity presents itself and when it fits our larger purposes. Engaged in combat, we can rarely go wrong if we aggressively pursue the destruction of enemy forces. In fact, maneuver warfare often involves extremely high attrition of selected enemy forces where we have focused combat power against

critical enemy weakness. Nonetheless, the aim of such attrition is not merely to reduce incrementally the enemy's physical strength. Rather, it is to contribute to the enemy's systemic disruption. The greatest effect of firepower is generally not physical destruction — the cumulative effects of which are felt only slowly — but the disruption it causes.

    c.   Objective of Maneuver Warfare: If the aim of maneuver warfare is to shatter the cohesion of the enemy system, the immediate object toward that end is to create a situation in which the enemy cannot function. By our actions, we seek to pose menacing dilemmas in which events happen unexpectedly and more quickly than the enemy can keep up with them. The enemy must be made to see the situation not only as deteriorating, but deteriorating at an ever-increasing rate. The ultimate goal is panic and paralysis, an enemy who has lost the ability to resist.

    d. Need for Speed and Focus: Inherent in maneuver warfare is the need for *speed* to seize the initiative, dictate the terms of action, and keep the enemy off balance, thereby increasing his friction. We seek to establish a pace that the enemy cannot maintain so that with each action his reactions are increasingly late — until eventually he is overcome by events. Also inherent is the need to *focus* our efforts in order to maximize effect. In combat this includes violence and shock effect, again not so much as a source of physical attrition, but as a source of disruption. We concentrate strength against critical enemy vulnerabilities, striking quickly and boldly where, when, and in ways in which it will cause the greatest damage to our enemy's ability to fight. Once gained or found, any advantage must be pressed relentlessly and unhesitatingly. We must be ruthlessly opportunistic, actively seeking out signs of weakness against which we will direct all available combat power. When the *decisive* opportunity arrives, we must exploit it fully and aggressively, committing every ounce of combat power we can muster and pushing ourselves to the limits of exhaustion.

    e.   Surprise: An important weapon in our arsenal is *surprise*, the combat value of which we have already recognized. By studying our enemy, we will attempt to appreciate his perceptions. Through deception we will try to shape the enemy's expectations. Then we will exploit those expectations by striking at an unexpected time and place. In order to appear unpredictable, we must avoid set rules and patterns, which inhibit imagination and initiative. In order to appear ambiguous and threatening, we should operate on axes that offer numerous courses of action, keeping the enemy unclear as to which we will choose.

    f.   Human Skills and Traits: Besides traits such as endurance and courage that all warfare demands, maneuver warfare puts a premium on certain particular human skills and traits. It requires the temperament to cope with uncertainty. It requires flexibility of mind to deal with fluid and disorderly situations. It requires a certain independence of mind, a willingness to act with initiative and boldness, an exploitive mindset that takes full advantage of every opportunity, and the moral courage to accept responsibility for this type of behavior. It is important that this last set of traits be guided by self-discipline and loyalty to the objectives of seniors. Finally, maneuver warfare requires the ability to think above our own level and to act at our level in a way that is in consonance with the requirements of the larger situation.

3. CONDUCT OF MANEUVER WARFARE:

a. <u>Orienting on the Enemy</u>: Orienting on the enemy is fundamental to maneuver warfare. Maneuver warfare attacks the enemy "system." The enemy system is whatever constitutes the entity confronting us within our particular sphere. For a pilot, it might be the combination of air defense radar, surface-to-air missiles, and enemy aircraft that must be penetrated to reach the target. For a rifle company commander, it might be the mutually supporting defensive positions, protected by obstacles and supported by crew-served weapons, on the next terrain feature. For an electronic warfare specialist, it might be the enemy's command and control networks. For a Marine expeditionary force commander, it might be all the major combat formations within an area of operations as well as their supporting command and control, logistics, and intelligence organizations.

(1) <u>Focusing Outward</u>: We should try to understand the unique characteristics that make the enemy system function so that we can penetrate the system, tear it apart, and, if necessary, destroy the isolated components. We should seek to identify and attack critical vulnerabilities and those centers of gravity without which the enemy cannot function effectively. This means focusing outward on the particular characteristics of the enemy rather than inward on the mechanical execution of predetermined procedures. If the enemy system, for example, is a fortified defensive works, penetrating the system may mean an infiltration or a violent attack on a narrow frontage at a weak spot to physically rupture the defense, after which we can envelop the enemy positions or roll them up laterally from within. In this way we defeat the logic of the system rather than frontally overwhelming each position.

(2) <u>Enemy's Thought Processes</u>: We should try to "get inside" the enemy's thought processes and see the enemy as he sees himself so that we can set him up for defeat. It is essential that we understand the enemy on his own terms. We should not assume that every enemy thinks as we do, fights as we do, or has the same values or objectives.

b. <u>Philosophy of Command</u>: It is essential that our philosophy of command support the way we fight. First and foremost, *in order to generate the tempo of operations we desire and to best cope with the uncertainty, disorder, and fluidity of combat, command and control must be decentralized*. That is, subordinate commanders must make decisions on their own initiative, based on their understanding of their senior's intent, rather than passing information up the chain of command and waiting for the decision to be passed down. Further, a competent subordinate commander who is at the point of decision will naturally better appreciate the true situation than a senior commander some distance removed. Individual initiative and responsibility are of paramount importance. The principal means by which we implement decentralized command and control is through the use of mission tactics, which we will discuss in detail later.

(1) <u>War as a Human Enterprise</u>: Second, since we have concluded that war is a human enterprise and no amount of technology can reduce the human dimension, our philosophy of command must be based on human characteristics rather than on equipment or procedures. Communications equipment and command and staff procedures can enhance our ability to command, but they must not be used to lessen the human element of command. Our philosophy

must not only accommodate but must exploit human traits such as boldness, initiative, personality, strength of will, and imagination.

(2) Communicate Implicitly: Our philosophy of command must also exploit the human ability to communicate *implicitly*. We believe that *implicit communication* — to communicate through *mutual understanding*, using a minimum of key, well-understood phrases or even *anticipating* each other's thoughts — is a faster, more effective way to communicate than through the use of detailed, explicit instructions. We develop this ability through familiarity and trust, which are based on a shared philosophy and shared experience. This concept has several practical implications. First, we should establish long-term working relationships to develop the necessary familiarity and trust. Second, key people should talk directly to one another when possible, rather than through communicators or messengers. Third, we should communicate orally when possible, because we communicate also in *how* we talk — our inflections and tone of voice. Fourth, we should communicate in person when possible because we communicate also through our gestures and bearing.

(3) Command Presence: Commanders should command from where they can best influence the action, normally well forward. This allows them to see and sense firsthand the ebb and flow of combat, to gain an intuitive appreciation for the situation that they cannot obtain from reports. It allows them to exert personal influence at decisive points during the action. It also allows them to locate themselves closer to the events that will influence the situation so that they can observe them directly and circumvent the delays and inaccuracies that result from passing information up and down the chain of command. Finally, we recognize the importance of personal leadership. Only by their physical presence— by demonstrating the willingness to share danger and privation — can commanders fully gain the trust and confidence of subordinates. *We must remember that command from the front should not equate to over supervision of subordinates.* At the same time, it is important to balance the need for forward command with the need for keeping apprised of the overall situation, which is often best done from a central location such as a combat operation center. Commanders cannot become so focused on one aspect of the situation that they lose overall situational awareness.

(4) Thrive in an Environment of Chaos: As part of our philosophy of command, we must recognize that war is inherently disorderly, uncertain, dynamic, and dominated by friction. Moreover, maneuver warfare, with its emphasis on speed and initiative, is by nature a particularly disorderly style of war. The conditions ripe for exploitation are normally also very disorderly. For commanders to try to gain certainty as a basis for actions, maintain positive control of events at all times, or dictate events to fit their plans is to deny the nature of war. We must therefore be prepared to cope — even better, to *thrive* — in an environment of chaos, uncertainty, constant change, and friction. If we can come to terms with those conditions and thereby limit their debilitating effects, we can use them as a weapon against a foe who does not cope as well.

(5) Lack of Certainty: In practical terms, this means that we must not strive for certainty before we act, for in so doing we will surrender the initiative and pass up opportunities. We must not try to maintain excessive control over subordinates since this will necessarily slow our tempo and inhibit initiative. We must not attempt to impose precise order on the events of combat since

this leads to a formularistic approach to war. We must be prepared to adapt to changing circumstances and exploit opportunities as they arise, rather than adhering insistently to predetermined plans that have outlived their usefulness.

(6) Peacetime Application: There are several points worth remembering about our command philosophy. First, while it is based on our warfighting style, this does not mean it applies only during war. We must put it into practice during the preparation for war as well. We cannot rightly expect our subordinates to exercise boldness and initiative in the field when they are accustomed to being over-supervised in garrison. Whether the mission is training, procuring equipment, administration, or police call, this philosophy should apply.

(7) Competency in a Decentralized Environment: Next, our philosophy requires competent leadership at all levels. A centralized system theoretically needs only one competent person, the senior commander, who is the sole authority. A decentralized system requires leaders at all levels to demonstrate sound and timely judgment. Initiative becomes an essential condition of competence among commanders.

(8) Familiarity: Our philosophy also requires familiarity among comrades because only through a shared understanding can we develop the implicit communication necessary for unity of effort. Perhaps most important, our philosophy demands confidence among seniors and subordinates.

c. Shaping the Action: Since our goal is not merely the cumulative attrition of enemy strength, we must have some larger scheme for how we expect to achieve victory. That is, before anything else, we must conceive how we intend to win.

(1) Establish What We Want to Accomplish: The first requirement is to establish what we want to accomplish, why, and how. Without a clearly identified concept and intent, the necessary unity of effort is inconceivable. We must identify those *critical* enemy vulnerabilities that we believe will lead most directly to undermining the enemy's centers of gravity and the accomplishment of our mission. Having done this, we can then begin to act so as to shape the campaign, operation, battle, or engagement to our advantage in both time and space. Similarly, we must try to see ourselves through our enemy's eyes in order to identify our own vulnerabilities that he may attack and to anticipate what he will try to do so that we can counteract him. Ideally, when the moment of engagement arrives, the issue will have already been resolved: Through our influencing of the events leading up to the encounter, we have so shaped the conditions of war that the result is a matter of course. We have shaped the action decisively to our advantage.

(2) Project Our Thoughts Forward in Time and Space: To influence the action to our advantage, we must project our thoughts forward in time and space. We frequently do this through planning. This does not mean that we establish a detailed timetable of events. We have already concluded that war is inherently disorderly, and we cannot expect to dictate its terms with any sort of precision. Rather, we attempt to shape the general conditions of war. This shaping consists of lethal and non-lethal actions that span the spectrum from direct attack to psychological operations, from electronic warfare to the stockpiling of critical supplies for future operations.

Shaping activities may render the enemy vulnerable to attack, facilitate maneuver of friendly forces, and dictate the time and place for decisive battle. Examples include canalizing enemy movement in a desired direction, blocking or delaying enemy reinforcements so that we can fight a fragmented enemy force, or shaping enemy expectations through deception so that we can exploit those expectations. We can attack a specific enemy capability to allow us to maximize a capability of our own such as launching an operation to destroy the enemy's air defenses so that we can maximize the use of our own aviation. Through shaping, commanders gain the initiative, preserve momentum, and control the tempo of operations. We should also try to shape events in a way that allows us several options so that by the time the moment for decisive operations arrives, we have not restricted ourselves to only one course of action. The further ahead we think, the less our actual influence can be. Therefore, the further ahead we consider, the less precision we should attempt to impose. Looking ahead thus becomes less a matter of direct influence and more a matter of laying the groundwork for possible future actions. As events approach and our ability to influence them grows, we have already developed an appreciation for the situation and how we want to shape it. The higher our echelon of command, the greater is our sphere of influence and the further ahead in time and space we must seek to shape the action. Senior commanders developing and pursuing military strategy look ahead weeks, months, or more, and their areas of influence and interest will encompass entire theaters. Junior commanders fighting the battles and engagements at hand are concerned with the coming hours, even minutes, and the immediate field of battle. Regardless of the sphere in which we operate, it is essential to have some vision of the result we want and how we intend to shape the action in time and space to achieve it.

   d. <u>Decision-Making</u>: Decision-making is essential to the conduct of war since all actions are the result of decisions or of non-decisions. If we fail to make a decision out of lack of will, we have willingly surrendered the initiative to our foe. If we consciously postpone taking action for some reason, that is a decision. Thus, as a basis for action, any decision is generally better than no decision. Since war is a conflict between opposing wills, we cannot make decisions in a vacuum. We must make our decisions in light of the enemy's anticipated reactions and counteractions, recognizing that while we are trying to impose our will on the enemy, he is trying to do the same to us.

      (1) <u>Time</u>: Time is a critical factor in effective decision-making — often the most important factor. A key part of effective decision-making is realizing how much decision time is available and making the most of that time. In general, whoever can make and implement decisions consistently faster gains a tremendous, often decisive advantage. Decision-making in execution thus becomes a time-competitive process, and timeliness of decisions becomes essential to generating tempo. Timely decisions demand rapid thinking with consideration limited to essential factors. In such situations, we should spare no effort to accelerate our decision-making ability. That said, we should also recognize those situations in which time is not a limiting factor — such as deliberate planning situations — and should not rush our decisions unnecessarily.

      (2) <u>Situational Awareness</u>: A military decision is not merely a mathematical computation. Decision-making requires both the situational awareness to recognize the essence

of a given problem and the creative ability to devise a practical solution. These abilities are the products of experience, education, and intelligence.

(3) <u>Intuitive Process</u>: Decision-making may be an intuitive process based on experience. This will likely be the case at lower levels and in fluid, uncertain situations. Alternatively, decision-making may be a more analytical process based on comparing several options. This will more likely be the case at higher levels or in deliberate planning situations. We should base our decisions on *awareness* rather than on mechanical *habit*. That is, we act on a keen appreciation for the essential factors that make each situation unique instead of from conditioned response. We must have the moral courage to make tough decisions in the face of uncertainty — and to accept full responsibility for those decisions — when the natural inclination would be to postpone the decision pending more complete information. To delay action in an emergency because of incomplete information shows a lack of moral courage. We do not want to make rash decisions, but we must not squander opportunities while trying to gain more information.

(4) <u>Made in the Face of Uncertainty</u>: Finally, since all decisions must be made in the face of uncertainty and since every situation is unique, there is no perfect solution to any battlefield problem. Therefore, we should not agonize over one. The essence of the problem is to select a promising course of action with an acceptable degree of risk and to do it more quickly than our foe. In this respect, "a good plan violently executed *now* is better than a perfect plan executed next week."

e. <u>Mission Tactics</u>: One key way we put maneuver warfare into practice is through the use of *mission tactics*. Mission tactics is defined as the tactic of assigning a subordinate mission without specifying how the mission must be accomplished. We leave the manner of accomplishing the mission to the subordinate, thereby allowing the freedom — and establishing the duty — for the subordinate to take whatever steps deemed necessary based on the situation. Mission tactics relies on a subordinate's exercise of initiative framed by proper guidance and understanding. Mission tactics benefits the senior commander by freeing time to focus on higher-level concerns rather than the details of subordinate execution. The senior prescribes the method of execution only to the degree that is essential for coordination. The senior intervenes in a subordinate's execution only by exception. It is this freedom for initiative that permits the high tempo of operations that we desire. Uninhibited by excessive restrictions from above, subordinates can adapt their actions to the changing situation. They inform the commander of what they have done, but they do not wait for permission. Mission tactics serves as a contract between senior and subordinate. The senior agrees to provide subordinates with the support necessary to help them 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 to exceed the proper limits of authority. Mission tactics requires subordinates to act with "topsight" — a grasp of how their actions fit into the larger situation. In other words, subordinates must always think above their own levels in order to contribute to the accomplishment of the higher mission. It is obvious that we cannot allow decentralized initiative without some means of providing unity, or focus, to the various efforts. To do so would be to dissipate our strength. We seek unity not principally

through imposed control, but through *harmonious* initiative and lateral coordination within the context provided by guidance from above.

    f. <u>Commander's Intent</u>: We achieve this harmonious initiative in large part through the use of the commander's *intent*, which is defined as a device designed to help subordinates understand the larger context of their actions. The purpose of providing intent is to allow subordinates to exercise judgment and initiative — to depart from the original plan when the unforeseen occurs — in a way that is consistent with higher commanders' aims. There are two parts to any *mission*: the task to be accomplished and the reason or intent behind it. The intent is thus a part of every mission. The task describes the action to be taken while the intent describes the *purpose* of the action. The task denotes *what* is to be done, and sometimes *when* and *where*; the intent explains *why*. Of the two, the intent is predominant. While a situation may change, making the task obsolete, the intent is more lasting and continues to guide our actions. Understanding the intent of our commander allows us to exercise initiative in harmony with the commander's desires.

    (1) <u>As a Part of a Mission Statement</u>: The intent for a unit is established by the commander assigning that unit's mission — usually the next higher commander, although not always. A commander normally provides intent as part of the mission statement assigned to a subordinate. A subordinate commander who is not given a clear purpose for the assigned mission should ask for one. Based on the mission, the commander then develops a concept of operations, which explains *how* the unit will accomplish the mission, and assigns missions to subordinates. Each subordinate mission statement includes an intent for that subordinate. The intent provided to each subordinate should contribute to the accomplishment of the intent a commander has received from above. This top-down flow of intent provides consistency and continuity to our actions and establishes the context that is essential for the proper bottom-up exercise of initiative. It is often possible to capture intent in a simple ". . . in order to . . ." phrase following the assigned task. To maintain our focus on the enemy, we can often express intent in terms of the enemy. For example: "Control the bridge in order to prevent the enemy from escaping across the river." Sometimes it may be necessary to provide amplifying guidance in addition to an ". . . in order to . . ." statement. In any event, a commander's statement of intent should be brief and compelling — the more concise, the better. A subordinate should be ever conscious of a senior's intent so that it guides every decision. An intent that is involved or complicated will fail to accomplish this purpose.

    (2) <u>Unity of Effort</u>: A clear expression and understanding of intent is essential to unity of effort. The burden of understanding falls on senior and subordinate alike. The seniors must make their purposes perfectly clear but in a way that does not inhibit initiative. Subordinates must have a clear understanding of what their commander expects. Further, they should understand the intent of the commander at least two levels up.

    g. <u>Main Effort</u>: Another important tool for providing unity is the *main effort*. Of all the actions going on within our command, we recognize one as the most critical to success at that moment. The *unit* assigned responsibility for accomplishing this key mission is designated as the main effort. Main effort is defined as the focal point upon which converges the combat power of the force. The main effort re-cedes priority for support of any kind. It becomes clear to all other

units in the command that they must support that unit in the accomplishment of its mission. Like the commander's intent, the main effort becomes a harmonizing force for subordinate initiative. Faced with a decision, we ask ourselves: *How can I best support the main effort?* We cannot take lightly the decision of which unit we designate as the main effort. In effect, we have decided: *This is how I will achieve a decision; everything else is secondary.* We carefully design the operation so that success by the main effort ensures the success of the entire mission. Since the main effort represents our primary bid for victory, we must direct it at that object which will have the most significant effect on the enemy and which holds the best opportunity of success. The main effort involves a physical and moral commitment, although not an irretrievable one. It forces us to concentrate decisive combat power just as it forces us to accept risk. Thus, we direct our main effort against a center of gravity through a critical enemy vulnerability, exercising strict economy elsewhere. Each commander should establish a main effort for each operation. As the situation changes, the commander may shift the main effort, redirecting the weight of combat power in support of the unit that is now most critical to success. In general, when shifting the main effort, we seek to exploit success rather than reinforce failure.

h. <u>Surfaces and Gaps</u>: Put simply, surface is defined as hard spots — enemy strengths — and gap is defined as soft spots — enemy weaknesses. We avoid enemy strength and focus our efforts against enemy weakness with the object of penetrating the enemy system since pitting strength against weakness reduces casualties and is more likely to yield decisive results. Whenever possible, we exploit existing gaps. Failing that, we create gaps.

(1) <u>Gaps</u>: Gaps may in fact be physical gaps in the enemy's dispositions, but they may also be any weakness in time, space, or capability: a moment in time when the enemy is overexposed and vulnerable, a seam in an air defense umbrella, an infantry unit caught unprepared in open terrain, or a boundary between two units.

(2) <u>Surfaces</u>: Similarly, a surface may be an actual strongpoint, or it may be any enemy strength: a moment when the enemy has just replenished and consolidated a position or a technological superiority of a particular weapons system or capability.

(3) <u>Situational</u>: An appreciation for surfaces and gaps requires a certain amount of judgment. What is a surface in one case may be a gap in another. For example, a forest which is a surface to an armored unit because it restricts vehicle movement can be a gap to an infantry unit which can infiltrate through it. Furthermore, we can expect the enemy to disguise his dispositions in order to lure us against a surface that appears to be a gap.

(4) <u>Fleeting Nature of Gaps</u>: Due to the fluid nature of war, gaps will rarely be permanent and will usually be fleeting. To exploit them demands flexibility and speed. We must actively seek out gaps by continuous and aggressive reconnaissance. Once we locate them, we must exploit them by funneling our forces through rapidly. For example, if our main effort has struck a surface but another unit has located a gap, we designate the second unit as the main effort and redirect our combat power in support of it. In this manner, we "pull" combat power through gaps from the front rather than "pushing" it through from the rear. Commanders must

rely on the initiative of subordinates to locate gaps and must have the flexibility to respond quickly to opportunities rather than blindly follow predetermined schemes.

   i.   <u>Combined Arms</u>: In order to maximize combat power, we must use all the available resources to best advantage. To do so, we must follow a doctrine of combined arms. Combined arms is the full integration of arms in such a way that to counteract one, the enemy must become more vulnerable to another. We pose the enemy not just with a problem, but with a dilemma — a no-win situation. We accomplish combined arms through the tactics and techniques we use at the lower levels and through task organization at higher levels. In so doing, we take advantage of the complementary characteristics of different types of units and enhance our mobility and firepower. We use each arm for missions that no other arm can perform as well; for example, we assign aviation a task that cannot be performed equally well by artillery. An example of the concept of combined arms at the very lowest level is the complementary use of the automatic weapon and grenade launcher within a fire team. We pin an enemy down with the high-volume, direct fire of the automatic weapon, making him a vulnerable target for the grenade launcher. If he moves to escape the impact of the grenades, we engage him with the automatic weapon.

4. <u>HUMAN DIMENSION</u>: Because war is a clash between opposing human wills, the human dimension is central in war. It is the human dimension which infuses war with its intangible moral factors. War is shaped by human nature and is subject to the complexities, inconsistencies, and peculiarities which characterize human behavior. Since war is an act of violence based on irreconcilable disagreement, it will invariably inflame and be shaped by human emotions. War is an extreme trial of moral and physical strength and stamina. Any view of the nature of war would hardly be accurate or complete without consideration of the effects of danger, fear, exhaustion, and privation on those who must do the fighting. However, these effects vary greatly from case to case. Individuals and peoples react differently to the stress of war; an act that may break the will of one enemy may only serve to stiffen the resolve of another. Human will, instilled through leadership, is the driving force of all action in war. No degree of technological development or scientific calculation will diminish the human dimension in war. Any doctrine which attempts to reduce warfare to ratios of forces, weapons, and equipment neglects the impact of the human will on the conduct of war and is therefore inherently flawed.

   a.   <u>Violence and Danger</u>:

      (1) <u>Violence</u>: War is among the greatest horrors known to humanity; it should never be romanticized. The means of war is force, applied in the form of organized violence. It is through the use of violence, or the credible threat of violence, that we compel our enemy to do our will. Violence is an essential element of war, and its immediate result is bloodshed, destruction, and suffering. While the magnitude of violence may vary with the object and means of war, the violent essence of war will never change. Any study of war that neglects this basic truth is misleading and incomplete.

      (2) <u>Danger</u>: Since war is a violent enterprise, danger is ever present. Since war is a human phenomenon, fear, the human reaction to danger, has a significant impact on the conduct of war. Everybody feels fear. Fear contributes to the corrosion of will. Leaders must foster the

courage to overcome fear, both individually and within the unit. Courage is not the absence of fear; rather, it is the strength to overcome fear. Leaders must study fear, understand it, and be prepared to cope with it. Courage and fear are often situational rather than uniform, meaning that people experience them differently at different times and in different situations. Like fear, courage takes many forms, from a stoic courage born of reasoned calculation to a fierce courage born of heightened emotion. Experience under fire generally increases confidence, as can realistic training by lessening the mystique of combat. Strong leadership which earns the respect and trust of subordinates can limit the effects of fear. Leaders should develop unit cohesion and esprit and the self-confidence of individuals within the unit. In this environment, a Marine's unwillingness to violate the respect and trust of peers can overcome personal fear.

    b.   <u>Physical, Moral, and Mental Forces</u>: War is characterized by the interaction of physical, moral, and mental forces. The physical characteristics of war are generally easily seen, understood, and measured: equipment capabilities, supplies, physical objectives seized, force ratios, losses of materiel or life, terrain lost or gained, prisoners or materiel captured. The moral characteristics are less tangible. (The term "moral" as used here is not restricted to ethics, although ethics are certainly included, but pertains to those forces of a psychological rather than tangible nature.) Moral forces are difficult to grasp and impossible to quantify. We cannot easily gauge forces like national and military resolve, national or individual conscience, emotion, fear, courage, morale, leadership, or esprit. War also involves a significant mental, or intellectual, component. Mental forces provide the ability to grasp complex battlefield situations; to make effective estimates, calculations, and decisions; to devise tactics and strategies; and to develop plans. Although material factors are more easily quantified, the moral and mental forces exert a greater influence on the nature and outcome of war. This is not to lessen the importance of physical forces, for the physical forces in war can have a significant impact on the others. For example, the greatest effect of fires is generally not the amount of physical destruction they cause, but the effect of that physical destruction on the enemy's moral strength. Because it is difficult to come to grips with moral and mental forces, it is tempting to exclude them from our study of war. However, any doctrine or theory of war that neglects these factors ignores the greater part of the nature of war.

    c.   <u>Initiative and Response</u>: All actions in war, regardless of the level, are based upon either taking the *initiative* or reacting in *response* to the opponent. By taking the initiative, we dictate the terms of the conflict and force the enemy to meet us on our terms. The initiative allows us to pursue some positive aim even if only to preempt an enemy initiative. It is through the initiative that we seek to impose our will on the enemy. The initiative is clearly the preferred form of action because only through the initiative can we ultimately impose our will on the enemy. At least one party to a conflict must take the initiative for without the desire to impose upon the other, there would be no conflict. The second party to a conflict must respond for without the desire to resist, there again would be no conflict. If we cannot take the initiative and the enemy does, we are compelled to respond in order to counteract the enemy's attempts. The response generally has a negative aim, that of negating, blocking or counterattacking the enemy's intentions. Like a counter-punch in boxing, the response often has as its object seizing the initiative from the opponent. The flux of war is a product of the continuous interaction between initiative and response. We can imagine a conflict in which both belligerents try to take the

initiative simultaneously — as in a meeting engagement, for example. After the initial clash, one of them will gain the upper hand, and the other will be compelled to respond at least until able to wrestle the initiative away from the other. Actions in war more or less reflect the constant imperative to seize and maintain the initiative.

REFERENCE: MCDP 1, Warfighting