



UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS

1st MARINE DIVISION (REIN), FMF
BOX 555380
CAMP PENDLETON, CALIFORNIA 92055-5380

IN REPLY REFER TO
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CG
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From: Commanding General
To: Distribution List

Subj: **COMMANDING GENERAL'S STAFF GUIDANCE**

Encl: (1) Commanding General's Staff Guidance

1. My talking points outlined in the enclosure are provided because several of you requested them. I used these to provide my commander's guidance to our Division Staff. There are several limitations to them when distributed in this format: primary drawback is that most examples I use to further define and amplify my thoughts are missing. But as we continue to sharpen this fine team in its warfighting focus, there is an advantage to our commanders' awareness of the tone and some of the specific expectations I have for the Division Staff. For the Staff, this guidance is actionable. This philosophy will guide our collective efforts as we prepare the Division to close with and shatter our enemies' will.

2. First Marine Division - no better friend, no worse enemy.

J. N. Mattis
J. N. MATTIS

Distribution:
Regimental Commanders
Battalion Commanders
Division Principal Staff
Division Special Staff

COMMANDING GENERAL'S STAFF GUIDANCE

- Sun Zinni - Know your enemy - win 100 battles; Know your self - win 1,000 battles; Know your boss - win 1,000,000 battles.
- Today - Commence modest effort to close gap between us.
I am easily satisfied with your best efforts: Self disciplined and unregimented.

Opening Remarks/Assumptions

- All of us are MAGTF leaders:
Unconcerned with MOS.
 - Respect rank, but due to nature of our profession, even the most junior sailor or Marine may be the one at the critical decision point in battle.
- The information shared today is actionable:
 - It should cause you to reflect, question and change what you have been doing - requires your engagement.
- In USMC, attitude is a weapon:
 - How you do your job will affect our combat efficiency - think about it everyday.
 - Our job is to gain necessary results - To do so, win the affection of subordinates: Commanders, Staffs, our own subordinates.
 - When they cross the line of departure, we want them to fight with a happy heart.
- Everyone fills sandbags in this outfit.
- Endstate is unity, a common harmony.

Dangers we face in putting our team together so it can whip anyone:

1. Belief in a linear battlefield.
2. Processing terrain vice focusing on enemy. Terrain is relative, don't overplay it.
3. Valuing deliberate tactics over hasty.
4. Process orientation - fleeting battlefield opportunities appear and disappear too rapidly for our processes. Procedural skills vs. decision making. Don't allow us to think that process or procedures will ever replace the need for all hands situational awareness and, more importantly, understanding.

5. Overwhelming flow of information.

- Critical info submerged in a sea of nonsense.

Human Dimensions

- Which commander has a better grasp of battlefield = the winner.
- A. A. Vandegrift - Positions are seldom lost because they are destroyed, but almost invariably because the leader has decided in his own mind that the position cannot be held.
- Stress, fear, etc. = loss of combat effectiveness.
- Command and Control (or Command and feedback) is a simple yet complex subject.
- You will use all your authority - intellectual and moral compassion, and force of personality:
 - If a unit is screwing up, hug 'em a little, love 'em a little more.
 - Negatives are generally for me to convey.
 - Don't permit your passion for excellence and our Corps to destroy your compassion for subordinates.
 - Everyone needs a mentor or to be a mentor - no one needs a tyrant.
- So the Division Staff must gain the trust, confidence and affection of all subordinates. Example: 202 MI Bn, Kandahar.
 - We must remember that we win only one battle:
 - * For the hearts and minds of our subordinates.
 - * They will win all the rest - at the risk and cost of their lives.
 - Leadership is all about confidence.
 - Remember, emotions are highly contagious.
 - We must be confident.
 - Do our homework / detailed planning.
 - Produce sound, succinct mission type orders.
 - This staff serves our subordinates as we carry out HHQ Commanders' intent and anticipate, anticipate, anticipate...
 - Think, what will be tomorrow's headlines? Then do what we must to turn those headlines to read: "Enemy defeated by Marines."

- CG = Head Coach.
 - Each of you is a coach - Log, Pers, Fires, Current Ops, Warning.
 - Harder on my staff than subordinate commanders. Harder on officers than enlisted. Hardest on the enemy.

Analysis and Assessment

- Analysis is important - breaking problems down into their parts:
 - But synthesis, putting it all back together is critical.
 - And with analysis, must avoid paralysis.
- Assessment is often the forcing function.
 - Intellectual, synthesis, G-2 driven, holistic.
- Read history - lots of old solutions to new problems.
 - Evaluate - what does it mean, how will we operate.
- Remember: You are here to lead, to shore up my weaknesses and to reinforce my strengths. You need to know my intent so you can make it happen. Reflect my personality in your own way, humanizing ops, winning trust and affection.

Planning - Constant, never ends and is driven by intel.

- Nothing more than anticipatory decision-making.
- Gamble vs. Risk - never know any enemy until you fight them!
 - Know the difference, calculate the dividing line.
- Deliberate planning is always done under OPT using MCPP.
 - Dynamic/hasty planning is still integrated!
- Orders - tell what need to know - lean.
 - Use all hands brief when applicable.
- Good execution will overcome bad planning.
 - But, poor execution will not win even with good planning.
 - Good planning simply cannot overcome bad execution, so get out a good plan quickly, stay alert for audibles, and focus on 6th troop leading step.

- Constant and Participatory - messier, stronger - incorporate tasked units early.
 - Accused of making subordinate commanders my equal - that's good - I stand guilty! I don't need to call all the plays so long as the plays will gain my endstate / intent.
 - I don't want subordinates on a string like puppets, but I expect them to energetically carry out my intent.
 - Trust them - but I must understand the "how."
 - I ask a lot of questions.
 - Centralized planning = unity of effort and vision with decentralized execution.
 - No subordinate hesitation - reduce approvals required for routine actions so commanders are free to act aggressively.
- Don't screw with higher commander's intent, mission, tasks.
 - As the Nike ad says, "Just Do It!" when MEF assigns us a mission.
- Subset under C2, planning is where we intellectually meet, and beat, the enemy.
 - Assume we will operate under conditions of uncertainty.
 - Reduce reports and we increase feedback.
- Warning orders - they are issued only when I have made the decision to commit.
 - My absence, ADC, COS or SOPA.
 - Judgment! Don't yank around subordinate units.
- Culminating point - identify, watch, push it off if possible. We must understand its implications - logistics, weather, exhaustion - All lead to culminating points. Anticipate!
- Boundaries and fire support coordination measures, imposed by HHQ, generally favor the enemy. Not our intent, but it is their effect.
 - Reduce to bare minimum.
- Remember: Uncertainty, not the plan, will drive us! Uncertainty can lead to indecision. We must ruthlessly seek critical information, make decisions, then keep right on planning OODA looping.

Tactics - What I value: not a recipe.

- Speed, simplicity, surprise, security.
 - Smaller staffs/units = more agility and less enemy foreknowledge.
 - Speed, surprise.
 - Don't rearrange/reinforce units - speed simplicity.
 - Adhockery = brittleness, kills Marines.
 - Maintain habitual relationships.
 - Breeds trust, implicit comms, speed of execution.
 - Ambush mentality - surprise.
 - All hands - CP Security, weak center/wedge, ACE.
 - Decentralize decision making - speed.
 - Time lost, never regained - fleeting opportunities.
 - Create dilemmas/move along unexpected lines - security, surprise.
 - Penetrations - narrow front into enemy rear - surprise, speed.
 - Create a sense of despair = Get into enemy's rear.
 - Deception effort - nested, make enemy commander do something - surprise.
 - Is the deception effort worth it? - can enemy pick it up?
 - Harmony - coordinated, not synchronized ops - speed.
 - Synchronized maneuver = slow maneuver. Coordinate, don't synchronize.
 - Phasing - only when enemy or our forces are in a certain situation in which phasing can speed transition - otherwise flow on - speed.
 - Decision - move on.
 - Multiple avenues of approach for GCE - speed, simplicity, security, surprise.
 - Some unexpected, because expected line of advance is wrong.
 - Branch (aw shit) and sequel (great, now what?) - speed.
 - Always a COA against unexpected enemy COA - speed, security.
 - Jazzman's ability to improvise - speed simplicity.

- Built upon friendly unity - harmony.
- Reserves - sometimes large, sometimes none (least engaged)-surprise, security, speed.
- Use everyone (stagnation's effect on uncommitted units).
- Tactical Training train to get through first five days of combat in NBC environment w/ max use of combined arms.
 - Brilliance in the basics: move, shoot, comm.
 - AAR and Retrain - before and during combat ops.
 - All four S's! Surprise, Speed, Simplicity, and Security.
 - Speed of employing combined arms effects on target = measure of effectiveness.
 - Whoever wins the reconnaissance battle wins the fight:
 - We must see and we must blind the enemy.
 - Center of gravity identify/choose one and indirectly (if possible) attack it.
 - EX: Sprt bases and their LOC's.
- Perfect War = 0 "reports" or "boundaries" - just fight and dodge consistent with commander's intent.
- Comms - Must go both ways to build shared situational awareness.
- Command and Feedback (vs. command and control) - From All Hands.
 - MSN type orders require higher form of discipline from subordinates.
 - No need for "control" - feedback is better.
- Meet subordinate/senior unit's timeline - critical.
 - Answer senior/subordinates' questions on their timeline.
 - Key to winning trust.
 - Role of COS/CG if you cannot respond to subordinate Cdr/HHQ on their timeline.
- Redundant means for sending frag orders (include graphics).
 - G-6 focus but everyone has a stake in this.
- Staff visits - critical to building trust: visit subordinates daily; Wing, FSSG, and MEF weekly.

- Clarify and confirm - "How are we doing?"
- Do it with them them, not to them - meeting their timeline?
- Reducing reports dictates we get out more and see units on their turf.
- Scrutinize every report = needed? Verify or remove (coordinate with COS).
 - Reducing approvals for routine acts means we must stay in touch.
 - No micro management, but no neglect either. Probing questions are good and done properly, do not imply any lack of confidence.
- Who did you visit today and did you make them smile?
- What do i know? Who needs to know? Have I told them?
 - Constantly ask yourself these three questions - and act on them.
- "Hang it on the web" = ?? Must follow up on this method.
- Pirated info - excellent source.
 - All Marines have a bias for action.
 - Need all to be aggressive in their search for info - ruthless.
 - SNCOs and Field grade officers - need to be anticipatory.
 - Their units should never be caught flat footed.
- Liaison Officers
 - We send our best - It will hurt to lose these Officers/NCO's.
 - Brief before they go out - my reps, reflect my personality and intent.
 - They must have comms, give daily feedback to central LNO/COS.
 - Adjacent/supporting units' LNOs to us = Sponsor (in our CP) and SOP for their workspace/welcome aboard brief.
 - Go Native? Bring 'em back..
- Three types of info:
 - Housekeeping: Perstat, logstat, PGM count, etc.
 - Decision making: enemy sprt bases and LOCs, key terrain, change in enemy sit.

- Alarms: Movement significant enemy force, NBC employment, enemy appearing where none were previously, appearance of Arty, Counter-battery radar input, etc.

- COMMS: How we do this will create the atmosphere needed for victory.

Problems for Commander that you must help solve:

- Quality and quantity of info: Too much, mostly irrelevant.
 - Coming in and demanded by HHQ (Ques: Are we guilty?).
- Staying focused on what is relevant.
- Focus on terrain (vs. enemy) - Must stay focused on MSN and enemy.
- Influence of our greatest concerns - if logistics is our biggest concern, then we can be predictable.
- Slave, not master of processes.
 - Battle rhythm, targeting cycle: Must be able to modify processes.
 - Norwegian engineers at Kandahar - unable to sweep mines due to US Army "battle rhythm" of meetings.
- Inability to see and act upon opportunities/vulnerabilities
 - Worse now than when I took these notes in '96.
 - Reason it is worse? Procedures seem to be replacing understanding.
- Force the plan when conditions changed.
 - Always a potential problem. "Assessment" function is critical to controlling this problem.
- Indecision (usually in the face of uncertainty).
- Recognizing patterns - ours/theirs.
- The "overs" - over control, over organizing, over refining plans...
 - Don't get overelegant - stay as simple as possible.
- Knowing/Articulating what he wants to do - Commander's intent - I write this, with your help.
 - Intent may often ID principal unit.

Recognizing Realities: Tacon, Adcon Handcon

- Battles can be fought and won by supply officers before first shot is fired.
 - Anaconda - Lack of pre-staged fuel or coordinate Air Support Plan.
- Seldom are you too strong at the Point of Decision.
 - Deciding who not to fight can help.
- Fires without maneuver are most often indecisive.
 - But combined arms work. Move when you fire!
- Generally I will avoid an operation that enables our opponent to operate on interior lines and destroy our formations piece meal.
 - Fundamental decision - when to fight/decline to fight.
 - Remember - Focus on Center of Gravity: Cut its lines of comm./support.
- Single battle concept requires agility to make battlefield adjustments.
 - Disciplined, unregimented thinking.
- Routines = traps - Natural (Dark/Light, Chow, etc.)
 - Sustainment.
 - Tactical (ex. Blackhawk Down).
- Intangibles more important than tangibles..
 - Human will is more important than numbers.
 - Cohesion, morale, affection.
- So nest our efforts inside the larger issues: Hug 'em a little, liberating them to the max degree possible so they can move freely and with max support against the enemy to destroy his will. Last thing we will think about as lads get ready to cross LD - What's in their hearts?