

United States Marine Corps Post-Cold War Evolutionary  
Efforts: Implications for a Post-Operation Enduring  
Freedom/Operation Iraqi Freedom Force

A Monograph

by

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## Abstract

United States Marine Corps Post-Cold War Evolutionary Efforts: Implications for a Post-Operation Enduring Freedom/Operation Iraqi Freedom Force, by LtCol Eric J. Adams, 53 pages.

This monograph asks the question, what lessons can the contemporary Marine Corps learn from its transition from the post-Cold War and Operation Desert Shield and Operation Desert Storm period, during the 1990s, that are applicable during the current period of transition following the conclusion of Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom?

The thesis describes how, during the 1990s, in a time of budgetary constraints and personnel drawdowns, the Marine Corps benefited from the efforts of forward thinking strategic leaders, namely Commandants of the Marine Corps Alfred Gray and Charles Krulak. These leaders developed groundbreaking doctrinal concepts, published updates to foundational guidance, and capitalized on future thinking experimentation, which enabled initial full spectrum military successes in Afghanistan and Iraq without compromising its ability to conduct a wider range of military operations if required.

This monograph draws conclusions from this period of transition and transformation and provides recommendations for how the Marine Corps should be thinking and acting during this contemporary period of transition in the wake of Global War on Terrorism operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. This monograph looks at the Marine Corps' current operational role as it supports, or detracts from, the Corps' long-term relevancy or if current strategic leaders need to focus on innovative capabilities and concepts to support future warfighters and its ability to wage war.

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## Acronyms

|         |  |
|---------|--|
| CMC     | Commandant of the US Marine Corps        |
| FMFM    | Fleet Marine Forces Manual               |
| JP      | Joint Publication                        |
| MCCDC   | Marine Corps Combat Development Command  |
| MCDP    | Marine Corps Doctrinal Publication       |
| MCWL    | Marine Corps Warfighting Laboratory      |
| MCWP    | Marine Corps Warfighting Publication     |
| OEF     | Operation Enduring Freedom               |
| OIF     | Operation Iraqi Freedom                  |
| USSOCOM | United States Special Operations Command |

## Illustrations

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## Introduction

In concluding I feel the desire to express to you that the results obtained by the corps during this year, in spite of decreased personnel and limited funds, have been highly satisfactory, and have been due in most part to the unfailing ability of marines to maintain a high spirit, even when the means of producing the most effective accomplishments are constantly being diminished.

—John A. Lejeune, *Annual Report of the Major General Commandant of the United States Marine Corps for the Fiscal Year 1926*

## Problem Statement

In the *2016 Marine Corps Operating Concept: How an Expeditionary Force Operates in the 21st Century*, Commandant of the US Marine Corps (CMC), General Robert B. Neller, stated the Marine Corps' central problem in restoring advantage and ensuring the relevancy of the Marine Corps in a post-Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) and Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) world. "The Marine Corps is currently not organized, trained, and equipped to meet the demands of a future operating environment characterized by complex terrain, technology proliferation, information warfare, the need to shield and exploit signatures, and an increasingly non-permissive maritime domain."<sup>1</sup> General Lejeune's statement of the conditions, ninety years earlier, with declining personnel numbers and inadequate budget allocations remains relevant today and the expectation that Marines will continue to perform without fail is an expectation carried into the new millennium. General Neller seeks these same results, in a similar environment as a means to keep his service relevant. This monograph details how during the 1990s, in a time of budgetary constraints and personnel drawdowns, the Marine Corps benefited from the efforts of forward thinking strategic leaders, namely Commandants Alfred Gray and Charles Krulak. The office of

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<sup>1</sup> Department of the Navy, Headquarters US Marine Corps, *2016 Marine Corps Operating Concept: How an Expeditionary Force Operates in the 21st Century* (Washington, DC: Headquarters US Marine Corps, September 2016), 8.



the CMC has a unique status, which enables him to act broadly and enact monumental change in support of the organization that he leads, given the right circumstances and personal vision.

## Research Question

What lessons can the contemporary Marine Corps learn from its transition from the post-Cold War and Operation Desert Shield and Operation Desert Storm period during the 1990s that are applicable during the current period of transition following the conclusion of operations during OIF and OEF?

## Background

In the fall of 1957, CMC General Randolph Pate, sent a short memo to Director, Marine Corps Educational Center, Lieutenant General Victor “Brute” Krulak, asking a very basic question, “Why does the U.S. need a Marine Corps?”<sup>2</sup> The answer to this question is at the center of 241 years of debate, what is the Marine Corps for, where does it fit in the grand scheme of national defense, and how should it be resourced? The Marine Corps has filled numerous niches since its Continental Congress establishment in 1775: naval infantry, counter-insurgency, Truman’s naval police force, amphibious operations, and an expeditionary force in readiness. Each role was a contemporary attempt to answer Pate’s question often in a resource scarce environment, as described by General Lejeune in 1926.

Krulak’s now famous response was that the United States did not need a Marine Corps, the United States wanted a Marine Corps. The Marine Corps has never truly cornered the market on any one skill. The US Army and US Air Force provide a greater capacity on the ground and in the air than the Marine Corps ever has or will. Krulak followed up his retort with three, albeit emotionally based, ideas. First, Krulak asserted, the Marine Corps is most ready when others are

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<sup>2</sup> Victor H. Krulak, *First to Fight* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1984), xiii.

not. Second, when called upon the Marine Corps will be wildly successful. Third, the Marine Corps is the premiere organization for turning disorganized youths into productive and useful “citizen resources” for our nation.<sup>3</sup> For these reasons, along with a well-oiled propaganda machine, the Marine Corps remains identified as a strategic necessity when all logic and reason may declare it a fiscal non-necessity and military redundancy. In this private correspondence, Krulak warned that if these three beliefs were ever seriously in doubt, the Army would quickly subsume the Marine Corps and it would fail to exist. Krulak believed the American people and their representatives held these beliefs closely, and their truth would ensure a Marine Corps for perpetuity. This idea has permeated Marine Corps history and legacy and has been foundational to the Marine Corps in the way it recruits, trains, and retains its personnel. The Army could adopt the unique missions of the Marine Corps. The larger force could subsume its personnel and equipment. Transferring the core values and culture from one service to the next, wholesale, would be less likely.

Transition periods between conflict movements can be fraught with uncertainty with renewed talks of eliminating unnecessary redundancies. The period following the end of the Cold War and Desert Storm is the most recent example. The Marine Corps successfully navigated this period and its actions provide valuable lessons and strategies for the contemporary, post-OIF and OEF period the nation finds itself in now. The Cold War ended with the collapse of the Soviet Union in late 1991 and with Desert Shield and Desert Storm combat operations ending earlier that same year. These two events signaled potential defense spending savings and resource scarcity for many military leaders and planners and their civilian masters.

The US Marine Corps entered 1990 with 196,956 active duty Marines and closed the decade with 171,154 active duty Marines. This reduction is a net loss of 25,802 individual

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<sup>3</sup> Krulak, *First to Fight*, xv.

Marines on active duty. Post-Cold War budgets sought to capitalize on the peace dividend and the services braced for austerity. With fewer resources, in the form of personnel and money, the Marine Corps needed to ask itself if it could continue to conduct business as usual. At the conclusion of Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm, small-scale operations, generally based around the Marine Expeditionary Unit, became the mission du jour for Marine forces.

The Marine Corps successfully conducted its piece of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Initial combat operations in Afghanistan were essentially Operational Maneuvers from the Sea executed well past the littoral regions, where Marines performed counter insurgency operations against a non-conventional enemy.<sup>4</sup> In Iraq, Marines quickly deployed for major combat operations followed even more quickly by the execution of stability and counter insurgency operations.<sup>5</sup> Facilitating both the deployment and combat operations was the expeditionary nature of the Marine Corps and the concepts that were created and honed during the 1990s. Combat operations in Iraq and Afghanistan concluded in 2011 and 2014, respectively with Marine Corps end strength climbing to 202,000. If the 1990s were the most recent historical period of transition for the US military, the current period characterized by the conclusion of major combat operations in Iraq and Afghanistan is ongoing.

The 2010 Force Structure Review directed a multi-year force reduction to 186,800 active duty Marines at the conclusion of combat operations, but a subsequent internal 2013 working group lowered that number to 174,000 active duty Marines due to increasingly severe budget

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<sup>4</sup> Stephen Tanner, *Afghanistan: A Military History from Alexander the Great to the War Against the Taliban* (Philadelphia: Da Capo Press, 2002), 306.

<sup>5</sup> Nicholas E. Reynolds, *Basrah, Baghdad, and Beyond: The U.S. Marine Corps in the Second Iraq War* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2005), 100.

predictions and sequestration.<sup>6</sup> The most recent directed end strength is 182,000 Marines by the end of fiscal year 2017 with expectations that number will increase by the conclusion of that same year.<sup>7</sup> With expectations of increased budgetary constraints, the Marine Corps added geographically focused Marine Air Ground Task Force deployments in addition to Marine Expeditionary Unit operations to support a strategy of persistent forward presence.

## Rationale

During the 1990s, in a time of budgetary constraints and personnel drawdowns, the Marine Corps benefited from the efforts of forward thinking strategic leaders, namely Commandants Alfred Gray and Charles Krulak. These leaders developed groundbreaking doctrinal concepts, published updates to foundational guidance, and capitalized on future thinking experimentation, which enabled initial full spectrum military successes in Afghanistan and Iraq without compromising the Marine Corps' ability to conduct a wider range of military operations if required.

## Relevance

This thesis draws conclusions from the 1990s as period of transition and transformation and provides recommendations for how the Marine Corps should be thinking and acting during this contemporary period of transition in the wake of Global War on Terrorism operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. This monograph looks at the Marine Corps' current operational role as it supports, or detracts from, the Marine Corps' long-term relevancy or if current strategic leaders

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<sup>6</sup> J. R. Wilson, "Marine Corps Update: The Frugal Force Makes More Cuts," Defense Media Network, 17 April 2014, accessed 13 January 2017, <http://www.defensemedianetwork.com/stories/marine-corps-update-the-frugal-forces-faces-more-cuts/>.

<sup>7</sup> US Marine Corps Concepts and Programs, "End Strength," US Marine Corps, last modified 3 March 2015, accessed 30 January 2017, <https://marinecorpsconceptsandprograms.com/programs/manpower/end-strength>.

need to focus on innovative capabilities and concepts to support future warfighters and its ability to wage war. The monograph will outline the unique characteristics of the office of the CMC, which allow the commandant to act with greater freedom as the Marine Corps' primary strategist and change agent, as compared to his service chief peers.

## Literature Review

The literature review for this monograph provides an evaluation of sources for Marine Corps history, doctrine, and leadership as they relate to the post-Cold War period through military operations in the wake of the 9/11 attacks on the United States. While materials exist describing Marine Corps doctrine, American actions in the aftermath of the Cold War, the role of the CMC, Marine Corps' contributions to the Global War on Terrorism, there is not a clear line drawn between these topics. This monograph uses the general period of the 1990s and identifies key actions and steps taken by Marine Corps leadership in an attempt to make changes and preparations and divine future requirements using available primary and secondary sources. While major combat and counter insurgency operations in Iraq and Afghanistan were the eventual requirement, any number of other mission sets could have become preeminent and this monograph uses these same sources to determine if the Marine Corps would have or could have been ready for any combination of missions along the spectrum of conflict.

The *Marine Corps Gazette* is the definitive source of discussion and debate for Marine Corps doctrine, history, future concepts, and innovation. The Marine Corps Association has published the monthly periodical since 1916 with an intended audience of Marine officers and senior enlisted personnel. In 1976, it merged with the monthly periodical *Leatherneck*, intended and geared more towards enlisted readership. Both professional journals operate under the independent and privately held leadership of the Marine Corps Association with an approved Marine Corps trademark. The *Gazette* publishes interviews, guidance, and testimony from the

CMC as well as an annual index of topics in its December issue each year making the search for a specific author or topic simple and the *Gazette* a good source of unfiltered primary and secondary literature.

Robert Coram provides a study of modern Marine Corps doctrine, and its development, in his book, *Boyd: The Fighter Pilot Who Changed the Art of War*. He offers an excellent study of the history and development of US Air Force Colonel John Boyd's theories of warfare and military tactics that extends well beyond the scope of air power. The work provides two chapters on Boyd's relationship with the Marine Corps and his role during the maneuverist movement of the 1980s that led to the adoption of Maneuver Warfare as a fundamental of Marine Corps doctrine. The biography details Boyd's failure to reach a broader Air Force and Army audience. The Marine Corps, however, adopts and operationalizes his principles of surfaces and gaps, mission type orders, and thinking leaders. These concepts informed the establishment of the Marine Corps University and the drafting of Fleet Marine Force Manual (FMFM) 1 *Warfighting* through the championing of the maneuverist movement, which were directly influenced by Boyd's writings and teaching.

The Cold War is the subject of volumes of writings and discourse. Most of these works focus on how and why it started, where and when confrontation took place, and eventually how and why it ended and not necessarily the direct impact on the individual services. Michael J. Hogan's 1992, *The End of the Cold War: Its Meaning and Implications* is an early entry into the latter. This edited work contains twenty-two offerings from an international group of authors from political, historical, and policy analysis backgrounds. The work focuses on the implications of a world with one superpower and innumerable challenges and challengers. From this, the Marine Corps attempted to align their mission and organization to this new threat, which led to transformation and modernization within the Marine Corps.

One, albeit unexpected, source of information on Marine Corps operations and modernization in the 1990s as well as a detailed look at the Marine Corps' most senior leadership comes from the fiction author Tom Clancy in his 1996 non-fiction work, *Marine: A Guided Tour of a Marine Expeditionary Unit*. Clancy's celebrity allowed him unfettered access to the Marine Corps and its then Commandant, General Charles Krulak, to include a detailed interview, published in its entirety. As its title implies, the work details, the operational crown jewel of the 1990s Marine Corps, the Marine Expeditionary Unit. The book also looks at Krulak's goals, initiatives, and visions as well as providing a detailed account of the Marine Corps, its equipment, people, and culture. Clancy's work provides less of a critical look at individual Marine Corps leadership contributions, which is generally lacking with reporting on the CMC's role as the Marine Corps' senior strategist.

Another more detailed review of the roles, functions, and contributions of the CMC is in Edgar F. Purvyear Jr.'s 2009 *Marine Corps Generalship*. Purvyear provides a detailed analysis of contributions from contemporary CMCs as well as a historical look back at all CMCs beginning with John A. Lejeune. Profiles of two CMCs serving in the 1990s are in this monograph with a more critical eye on their legacies, which is lacking in Purvyear's work. An underestimation of these leaders' contributions is dangerous as their roles include that of chief strategist for their organization.

Non-fiction works on both OIF and OEF began filling library and bookstore shelves before troops were able to redeploy from theater. This genre includes first-person accounts of battle and historical reporting of the conduct of the war or its battles and campaigns. The genre also includes critical analysis of the political motivations for entering these conflicts and third-person interpretations of the heroism of individuals, small units, or large historically relevant organizations. Commentary generally follows that the tragedy of the 9/11 attacks caused politically motivated civilian leadership to exaggerate threats and thrust an ill-equipped and

poorly prepared military into ill-advised and poorly planned wars without a thought of strategic goals or a criteria for war termination. The title of the book by Thomas Ricks, *Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq, 2003 to 2005*, speaks to his low opinion of the political motivations and execution of the Iraq war. Another, slightly more positive narrative, reads that in typical American fashion the young people of the military, led by a few brilliant military leaders, triumphed in spite of, and not necessarily thanks to their civilian masters. *The March Up: Taking Baghdad with the United States Marines* by Ray Smith and Bing West takes this Marine centric view of the war effort without a larger political look or critically wading through these narratives. It fails to look at the Marine preparations for, and conduct of, war in a hostile environment occupied by new and indiscernible threats after the fall of the Soviet Union not just in operations in Iraq and Afghanistan but wherever the Marine Corps may have served in different circumstances.

The future application of American military power, the Marine Corps specifically, is not the subject of large volumes of non-military publications. Organizations within the Department of Defense are the source of numerous works ranging from articles in professional journals, academic research, and commissioned studies across the defense organization and industry. Even privately held think tank studies are difficult to recognize as objective due to the political nature of most of these organizations or the fact that many of their studies have sponsorship by organizations from within the Department of Defense. An effort to identify relevant actions during the post-Cold War and Operation Desert Shield and Desert Storm period, which either enabled or failed to do so, the Marine Corps' ability to execute a full range of military operations does not exist to cover this topic sufficiently.



## The Cold War and its End

Through the 1970s and 1980s post-Vietnam War US military thought was preoccupied by the Cold War, American intervention abroad in support of small war actions, and eventually a large-scale conventional confrontation with Iraq in the wake of its invasion into neighboring Kuwait during Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm. The end of the Cold War created a vacuum of power and left the United States as the sole remaining super power. The successful large-scale mobilization and deployment of US troops and unexpectedly quick defeat of Iraqi forces left little doubt as to the capability and might of US military power. Pundits may have assumed a peace dividend was to follow but there was a greater professional military and political understanding that no shortage of work for the American military would follow.

With this likely push for a peace dividend forthcoming, the Marine Corps needed to articulate what it was tasked to do in the past and what it potentially could be required to do in the future. It needed to account for any significant perceived difference between the two. For the Marine Corps, the President Ronald Reagan era of the 1980s was a boon for spending on personnel and equipment due to concern about a conventional confrontation in Central Europe. The Marine Corps' role in a full-scale land war in Europe entailed large formations of highly mobile forces sweeping through Scandinavia. Prepositioned stocks in Norway and adequate amphibious capacity to get Marines across the Atlantic meant that troop levels would remain high and adequate funding guaranteed to keep the expensive end items available for training and in storage ready for a confrontation or at least as a legitimate deterrent. Without this existential threat from the United Soviet Socialist Republic, Marines and their detractors questioned their ability and need to retain a strong amphibious capacity, and access to prepositioned stocks to ensure their expeditionary capability in support of their perceived role in national security.

Congressional legislation in 1947 and 1952 reaffirmed the Marine Corps' amphibious assault mission and added a requirement to maintain a rapidly deployable air-ground task force

for regional conflict response.<sup>8</sup> The Marines saw significant action during conventional operations in the Korean War and fought non-conventional warfare in the Vietnam War as offshoots of the greater Cold War. Troop levels during the Vietnam War would be the largest in Marine Corps history, since World War II, and proved the Marine Corps' capacity for contributing to long-term land based conflict. Smaller operations in Lebanon, Grenada, and Panama during the Cold War proved the Marine Corps was a flexible, capable, and economic force. Shortly after the conclusion of the Cold War, CMC General Carl Mundy highlighted that with only a 5 percent share of the Department of Defense budget, the Marine Corps provided 12 percent of active duty armed forces personnel, 20 percent of active divisions, 13 percent of all active tactical aviation assets, and 14 percent of reserve division equivalents.<sup>9</sup> Mundy was highlighting why the Marine Corps was important to the Cold War effort and how this force of economy would continue to remain relevant in the absence of a near-peer competitor.

The end of the Cold War created anxiety and apprehension for the entire Department of Defense and the Marine Corps. Not since the conclusion of the Vietnam War had such a great opportunity for transition presented itself. For the Marine Corps, the end of the Cold War presented a great many unique challenges and difficulties. The likelihood of large state-on-state conflict seemed to be over and the need for a large standing land based combat force was unnecessary; discussions of the redundancy of the Marine Corps as a second land Army would surely follow. For the CMC, this transition provided great opportunities for modernization and capitalization as an economy of force service. The CMC would have the opportunity to chart the

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<sup>8</sup> James D. Hittle, "The Marine Corps and the National Security Act," *Marine Corps Gazette* 31, no. 10 (October 1947): 57-59.

<sup>9</sup> Carl E. Mundy, "The Role of the Marine Corps in the post-Cold War Era" (lecture on National Security and Defense, The Heritage Foundation, Washington DC, 1 November 1993).

Marine Corps' new direction and influence its role in national security due to his unique role as the services senior strategic leader, administrator, and de facto commander.

## The Commandant as Strategic Leader

Per Title 10 of US Code, the CMC is responsible for transmitting the plans and recommendations of the Marine Corps to the Secretary of the Navy. He is to advise the Secretary of the Navy with regard to such plans and recommendations and act as the agent of the Secretary of the Navy in carrying them into effect once approved.<sup>10</sup> This makes the CMC the primary and lead strategic planner and leader for the Marine Corps. As such, the CMC is the chief strategist of the Marine Corps. The CMC serves under the authority, direction, and control of the Secretary of the Navy. The CMC is responsible for planning and advising the Secretary of the Navy in the execution of these plans as they relate to the staffing, training, and equipping of the Marine Corps.

US Code establishing the roles and responsibilities of the CMC provides that this role fundamentally does not differ from that of the Chief of Staff of the Army, or the Chief of Staff of the Air Force, or the Chief of Naval Operations. However, there are nuanced differences from cultural and leadership standpoints that allow the CMC to operate differently than his sister service counterparts. The 31st CMC, General Charles Krulak, sums it up as follows: "The man who serves as Commandant through a four-year term wields enormous power and inspires almost mystic veneration. He is the leader of a warrior caste, the head of a multi-billion dollar

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<sup>10</sup> Office of the Law Revision Counsel, "10 USC 5043: Commandant of the Marine Corps," US Congress, House of Representatives, 2010 ed., accessed 30 January 2016, <http://uscode.house.gov/view.xhtml?req=granuleid:USC-prelim-title10-section5043&num=0&edition=prelimitted>.

organization, and a member of the supreme military council of the land, the Joint Chiefs of Staff.”<sup>11</sup>

The relative scale differential between the Marine Corps and its sister services is one reason for the differing ability of the CMC to lead his service. The Marine Corps end strength recorded in 2010, the highest since 1968 at over 202,000, was still over 100,000 less than the Air Force or the Navy and over 360,000 less than the Army.<sup>12</sup> The Marine Corps’ small relative size has made end strength changes seem insignificant by comparison, to its sister services, but the scale suggests otherwise. With such a small force to lead, the Commandant is in a position to provide a greater leverage for personal leadership to his organization.

The size of the general officer population also allows for greater control over his organization. The Marine Corps is authorized only two four-star officers, the CMC and his assistant. While more than two of these officers have served concurrently, all others have served in joint billets, outside the Marine Corps. This lack of high-level bureaucracy allows for greater decision-making freedom and less necessity for consensus when change is required. The CMC makes a decision, like a true commander, and it becomes regulation without the requirement to socialize the considerations with his peers, as there are none. Unity of command is exercised by the CMC to a greater degree than by his sister service peers.

This leads to another difference, the title itself. The title Commandant implies command.<sup>13</sup> The Secretary of the Navy codified this fact in General Order No. 5 of 1954

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<sup>11</sup> Edgar F. Purvyear, Jr., *Marine Corps Generalship* (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 2009), 7.

<sup>12</sup> Defense Manpower Data Center, “DoD Personnel, Workforce Reports & Publications,” Department of Defense, last modified 30 September 2010, accessed 31 January 2017, [https://www.dmdc.osd.mil/appj/dwp/dwp\\_reports.jspm](https://www.dmdc.osd.mil/appj/dwp/dwp_reports.jspm).

<sup>13</sup> Purvyear, 5.

directing that, “The Commandant of the Marine Corps is the senior officer of the Marine Corps. He commands the Marine Corps and is directly responsible to the Secretary of the Navy.”<sup>14</sup> This mandate, along with other sweeping changes enacted by the US Congress and the Department of the Navy following World War II, stood for nearly three decades and served as the foundation for the CMC’s eventual entrance as a full member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in 1978 and the signing of the Goldwater Nichols Act in 1986. While the word command no longer exists in US Code 10, the relationship remains relevant and understood within the Marine Corps, and is unique to this service.

While many of these nuanced differences are subject to debate outside of the Marine Corps, they are widely accepted as fact within the Marine Corps at all levels. The unique culture of the Marine Corps is a critical element of the organization and vital to its self-image and societal perception. The formal title for the Marine Corps staff is Commandant Marine Corps, making CMC both a person and a staff. The Army staff is the Department of the Army, the Navy staff is the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, and the Air Force staff is the Air Staff. This very personal representation of Marine Corps leadership is another example of the uniqueness of the Marine Corps that permeates through all ranks. It highlights the importance of the office of Commandant and his vital role in leading the Marine Corps and establishing doctrine and concepts for the future.

During the 1990s, four Marines served as CMC: Alfred Gray, Carl Mundy, Charles Krulak, and James Jones. Each man was a product of his education, training, and experiences over a long and successful career. Each man’s ability to foresee opportunities, develop doctrine and concepts, and procure innovative equipment would influence the Marine Corps well into the future and beyond their individual tenure. Of note, none of these men served previously as the

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<sup>14</sup> Krulak, *First to Fight*, 61.

Assistant CMC, but all served in various joint assignments as well as numerous tours as commanding generals and directors at Headquarters US Marine Corps. A detailed discussion of the Marine Corps' ability to conduct full spectrum operations and the important role of CMC as strategic leader will detail the significant contributions of two of these Marines.

### Alfred M. Gray, Jr.

General Alfred M. Gray was the 29th CMC, serving from 1 July 1987 to 30 June 1991. Gray was a prior enlisted Marine, serving in the Korean War before to his commissioning. He commanded troops during the Vietnam War, leading Marines during Operation Frequent Wind, the evacuation of Saigon in 1975. He is famous for having his official photo taken in his camouflage utility uniform, the first and only CMC to do so, seeking to increase the martial spirit within the Marine Corps. Under Gray's leadership the Marine Corps consolidated its doctrine and conceptual centers at Quantico, Virginia in the Marine Corps Combat Development Command (MCCDC), strengthened and modernized the Marine Expeditionary Unit, published FMFM 1, *Warfighting*, a doctrinal foundational that remains virtually unchanged to this day, and fought in Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm.

### Marine Corps Combat Development Command

Shortly after Gray assumed the office of CMC, he formally established the Marine Corps Combat Development Command in the fall of 1987. He used the organization of the Marine Corps Development and Education Command as its foundation. The Marine Corps Development and Education Command was responsible for formal Marine Corps schooling, but under Gray became the center for doctrinal formulation, concept development, strategic planning, and the training and equipping of Marines and units. Gray created the Marine Corps University to lead Marine Corps Professional Military Education efforts, merged the Training and Education Command, which was responsible for formal training, and created the Commandants Warfighting

Center, which would later become the Marine Corps Warfighting Laboratory (MCWL) under CMC General Charles Krulak, to focus on concept development and experimentation. This organization would inform and coordinate with one of the six US Army Training and Doctrine Command Battle Laboratories in Fort Monroe, Virginia developing and establishing early entry, lethality, and survivability efforts.<sup>15</sup>

Today, the Commanding General, MCCDC also serves as Deputy Commandant, Combat Development and Integration. MCCDC's mission is to "Oversee and support the development, implementation, and maintenance of training and education programs, and participate in and support the Marine Corps Force Development System," and Combat Development and Integration's mission is to "Develop future operational concepts and determine how to best organize, train, educate, and equip the Marine Corps of the future."<sup>16</sup> These commands are made up of more than eighteen thousand personnel and consists of the Small Wars Center and Irregular Warfare Integration Division, the Operations and Analysis Directorate, the Training and Education Command, the MCWL, the Marine Corps Task List Branch, the Capabilities Development Directorate, a Seabasing Integration Division, and the Marine Corps Expeditionary Energy Office.

This diverse collection of offices is responsible for a wide range of strategic projects to include the publication of the *2016 Marine Operating Concept*, processing all Urgency of Need Statements, modeling and simulation, developing Mission Essential Tasks and Task Lists, and concept development and experimentation. The command is responsible for doctrine,

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<sup>15</sup> John L. Romjue, *American Army Doctrine for the Post-Cold War* (Washington, DC: United States Army Training and Doctrine Command, 1996), 75.

<sup>16</sup> Commanding General Marine Corps Combat Development Command and Deputy Commandant Combat Development and Integration, "Scope of Work," US Marine Corps, accessed January 31, 2017, <http://www.mccdc.marines.mil/About/Scope-of-Work/>.

organization, training, materiel, leadership and education, personnel and facilities.<sup>17</sup> General Gray created MCCDC with a vision to integrate these lines of effort and one of his first orders of business within the confines of this command was to publish FMFM 1, *Warfighting*.

### Fleet Marine Force Manual 1, *Warfighting*

FMFM 1, *Warfighting* was the culmination of over a decade's worth of debate and disagreement over how the Marine Corps would fight and win on the modern battlefield. The debate centered on the Marine Corps' utilization of maneuver versus attrition style tactics. Proponents of the former identified themselves as the Chowder Society, and met regularly with retired Air Force Colonel John Boyd to discuss his revolutionary views on maneuver tactics.<sup>18</sup> They considered attrition style tactics outmoded and too dangerous for the modern battlefield. They preferred to meld Clausewitzian concepts with modern ideas championed by Boyd in his papers and lectures, to include "Destruction and Creation."<sup>19</sup> Supporters of attrition style tactics considered maneuver to be in the realm of a larger land Army and not suited for the Marine Corps' amphibious mission. They viewed attrition style tactics as historically relevant and proven during World War I and II operations as well as most appropriate to the Marine Corps' mission sets and style of warfare. More moderately, attritionists believed the complete dismissal of

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<sup>17</sup> Commanding General Marine Corps Combat Development Command and Deputy Commandant Combat Development and Integration, "Scope of Work."

<sup>18</sup> Robert Coram, *Boyd: The Fighter Pilot Who Changed the Art of War* (Boston: Little Brown, 2002), 382.

<sup>19</sup> John R. Boyd, "Destruction and Creation" (paper presented to the US Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, KS, 3 September 1976), accessed 26 January 2017, <http://dnipogo.org/john-r-boyd/>.



attrition as a valid form of warfare was arbitrary and narrow-minded as the argument concluded that effective maneuver is better than ineffective attrition.<sup>20</sup>

“Maneuver warfare is a warfighting philosophy that seeks to shatter the enemy's cohesion through a series of rapid, violent, and unexpected actions, which create a turbulent and rapidly deteriorating situation with which he cannot cope.”<sup>21</sup> Maneuver Warfare, as a concept, was a matter of public debate in the Marine Corps at the conclusion of the Vietnam War and through the 1970s and 1980s. General Gray sought to solidify the concept as a foundation of strategic doctrine within the Marine Corps with the publication of *Warfighting*. As an opponent of attrition warfare, he was a member of the maneuverist movement and used his position as CMC to champion the concept into doctrine. Gray signed *Warfighting* in 1989 and was a brainchild of the Doctrine Division of Gray's Commandants Warfighting Center.

In his introduction, Gray describes the text as his warfighting philosophy, the Marine Corps doctrine, and the authoritative basis for preparing for, and fighting.<sup>22</sup> Nineteenth century Prussian theorist, Carl von Clausewitz's *On War* heavily influenced much of *Warfighting*. Beyond the quotations pulled directly from the book, three of the four chapters cite Clausewitz directly. Interestingly, only chapter four, “The Conduct of the War,” does not directly reference Clausewitz, but the ideas presented are clearly Clausewitzian. Noted Clausewitz scholar Dr. Christopher Bassford goes as far as to say that *Warfighting* is essentially cliff notes for *On War*. “It (*Warfighting*) is essentially an easily readable distillation of Carl von Clausewitz's famous

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<sup>20</sup> Phillip E. Knobe, “Revise FMFM 1, Warfighting,” *Marine Corps Gazette* 77, no. 10 (October 1993): 31-33.

<sup>21</sup> Department of the Navy, Headquarters US Marine Corps, Fleet Marine Force Manual (FMFM) 1, *Warfighting* (Washington, DC: Headquarters US Marine Corps, 1989), 59.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, i.

philosophical treatise *On War*.”<sup>23</sup> Chapter one of *Warfighting*, “The Nature of War,” follows Clausewitz so closely as to nearly transcribe the definitions of war and friction and using the word uncertainty in place of the phrase fog of war, while giving Clausewitz the credit.<sup>24</sup>

Chapters one and two of *Warfighting* provide factual and conceptual understandings of the nature and theory of war. Chapters three and four prescribe and describe preparations for and the conduct of war. It is in this last chapter that Gray describes the warfighting concept based on rapid, flexible, and opportunistic maneuver, which will fundamentally change the way Marines conduct combat operations; Maneuver Warfare. If *Warfighting* is the Marine Corps’ contemporary version of Clausewitz, then Maneuver Warfare is John Boyd flavored with Sun Tzu for the Marine Corps. Maneuver is not simply movement but a two dimensional mechanism using space and time together to “achieve decisive superiority at the necessary time and place.”<sup>25</sup> The key to the philosophy of Maneuver Warfare is decentralized command. This philosophy is dependent upon the application of mission tactics, understood commander’s intent, an identified focus of effort, the appreciation of surfaces and gaps, and the execution of combined arms. *Warfighting* provided General Gray’s authoritative doctrine on how the Marine Corps would fight; formalizing a maneuver style and Saddam Hussein’s invasion into Kuwait would provide an opportunity to put maneuver warfare to the test.

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<sup>23</sup> Christopher Basford, “Doctrinal Complexity: Nonlinearity in Marine Corps Doctrine,” *Maneuver Warfare Science* (1998) 1-6; accessed 26 January 2017, <http://www.clausewitz.com/readings/Bassford/USMCdoctrine.htm>.

<sup>24</sup> Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. and trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), 87.

<sup>25</sup> FMFM-1, 58.

## Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm

In August 1990, Saddam Hussein's Iraqi military swept into neighboring Kuwait and by the end of the year, Marine forces began flowing into Saudi Arabia in anticipation of a showdown with the Iraqis. Thanks to Reagan-era investments in equipment and expeditionary concepts such as the Maritime Prepositioning Force, strengthened under General Gray, Marine forces were the only US military capability prepared for early deployment offering more than a symbolic presence on the ground. Marines were able to deploy initial forces into theater and marry them up with complete unit sets of equipment from the Maritime Prepositioned Squadron out of Diego Garcia, including vehicles, armor, and artillery capable of conducting a combined arms fight.<sup>26</sup> While the US Army's 82nd Airborne was the first to arrive in theater, they did so without any sustainment or sufficient combat equipment to provide forcible entry capability or mount any sort of defense against an Iraqi attack.<sup>27</sup> Maritime Prepositioning Force stores would support Army forces until their equipment and supplies arrived in theater.

Following the devastating air campaign, Marine forces provided two divisions of Marines driving into Kuwait while Army forces conducted the main effort attack into the Iraqi flank. Two additional brigades of Marines fixed seven Iraqi divisions in place waiting for an amphibious assault that was never to be. Marines executed their first combat operations using the new Maneuver Warfare philosophy championed by General Gray as written in FMFM 1, *Warfighting*. Marines fought through the fog and friction of potential chemical warfare, executed combined arms operations with integrated air, infantry, and mechanized forces utilizing speed and violence to keep their enemy off balance and eventually destroyed to the point of mass desertions and with

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<sup>26</sup> Tom Clancy, *Marine: A Guided Tour of a Marine Expeditionary Unit* (New York; Berkley Books, 1996), 14.

<sup>27</sup> Romjue, 23, 84.

a steady flow of enemy combatants racing north to the safety of Bagdad.<sup>28</sup> Future CMC Charles Krulak, a commanding general serving in Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm would credit Colonel John Boyd's theories, the basis for Gray's *Warfighting*, and Maneuver Warfare, with much of the Marine Corps' success in eulogy for Boyd:

Bludgeoned from the air nearly around the clock for six weeks, paralyzed by the speed and ferocity of the attack, the Iraq army collapsed morally and intellectually under the onslaught of American and Coalition forces. John Boyd was an architect of that victory as surely as if he'd commanded a fighter wing or a maneuver division in the desert. His thinking, his theories, his larger than life influence, was there with us in Desert Storm.<sup>29</sup>

The Marine Corps' initial foray into Maneuver Warfare, as described by Boyd, was a success.

While the US Marine contribution to Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm effort was largely a resounding success, General Gray was keen to capitalize on lessons learned. Even though Marines were able to deploy and employ a force of nearly ninety thousand Marines in under a month thanks to the success of the Maritime Prepositioning Force, he was determined to improve capabilities and the timeliness of prepositioned stocks and push for increased amphibious shipping from the US Navy. This would improve the Marine Corps' ability to surprise and disrupt enemy planners with the ability to employ a formidable force on a timeline unimaginable, catching the enemy unprepared. The ability to fight at night and in the face of complex and mined obstacles were other capabilities that Gray sought to improve before his term was to expire later that same year.

General Carl E. Mundy, Jr. followed General Gray as the 30th CMC from 1 July 1991 to 20 June 1995. Mundy served in the Vietnam War and was closely associated with his

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<sup>28</sup> James A. Warren, *American Spartans: The US Marines: A Combat History from Iwo Jima to Iraq* (New York: Free Press, 2005), 305-312.

<sup>29</sup> Jeffery L. Cowan, "From Air Force Fighter Pilot to Marine Corps Warfighting: Colonel John Boyd, His Theories on War, and their Unexpected Legacy" (master's thesis, US Marine Corps Command and Staff College, Quantico, VA, 2000), 8.

predecessor, Al Gray, having served under his command twice while not necessarily sharing his views on maneuver warfare. Mundy's often times controversial tenure as CMC is not the reason for his exclusion here, and is not indicative of his lack of contributions as CMC. It is simply a matter of the widely acknowledged transformational nature of his predecessors' and successors' roles as CMC. It is worth noting that his role was just as vital to the transformation of the Marine Corps as General Gray's as he was responsible for implementing and solidifying Gray's innovations into acceptance just as he would have been responsible for ensuring the success of his replacement, General Charles Krulak.

## Charles Krulak

General Charles C. Krulak was the 31st CMC serving from 1 July 1995 to 30 June 1999. Krulak commanded Marines during the Vietnam War and as Commanding General, 2d Force Service Support Group during Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm. Krulak identified and implemented strategy, directed doctrine, and established a culture that would ensure the Marine Corps was prepared to fight and succeed in a counter-insurgency environment.

During Krulak's tenure as CMC, the Cold War was over but small-scale military actions in Somalia, Haiti, and Yugoslavia identified a potential unconventional threat that would require a refocus on small wars vice conventional state-on-state action. He believed that the Marine Corps would be uniquely qualified to address this threat with renewed doctrine, strategic direction, and the proper cultural frame of reference. Krulak directed the review and rewrite of the Marine Corps' seminal publication Marine Corps Doctrinal Publication (MCDP) 1, *Warfighting*, championed the elements of Maneuver Warfare, and prepared a generation of Marines for the largest conventional and counter insurgency fight since the Vietnam War, all while ensuring the service's ability to fight across the full spectrum of operations. Just as his father, Marine Lieutenant General Brute Krulak understood cultural ramifications of the Marine

Corps to the American public, Krulak sought first to reaffirm Marine Corps' culture internally. He established the Crucible at Marine Corps boot camps and Officer Candidate School, emphasized Core Values, reinforced and personalized the tenants of Maneuver Warfare in his many presentations, and subsequently published the article "The Strategic Corporal: Leadership in the Three Block War."

### The Three Block War and the Strategic Corporal

FMFM 1, *Warfighting* had proven its utility during combat in Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm and in a number of smaller contingencies in the four years since with the exercise of the Maneuver Warfare principles. Krulak sought to strengthen the individual and small unit relationship within Maneuver Warfare, which culminated in his highly-regarded article published first in *Marines Magazine* and later in the *Marine Corps Gazette*, "The Strategic Corporal: Leadership in the Three Block War."<sup>30</sup> This work would come to epitomize Krulak's time as CMC and influence US and foreign military thought. This article summarized and formalized several years of Krulak's discussions and presentations on the Three Block War concept which eventually informed the notion of the Strategic Corporal. The Three Block War concept assumes Marines will likely experience the entire spectrum of combat operations in as little as three city or village blocks.<sup>31</sup> This idea is present in many post-Cold War military engagements, to include the intervention in Somalia resulting in the Battle of Mogadishu, where a

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<sup>30</sup> Charles C. Krulak, "The Strategic Corporal: Leadership in the Three Block War," *Marine Corps Gazette* 83, no. 1 (January 1999): 18-22.

<sup>31</sup> Robert Carlson, "The Three Block War: Tactics for a New Millennium," *Marine Corps Gazette* 81, no. 9 (September 1998): 26.

humanitarian aid and peace keeping mission turned into an armed confrontation between US forces and a militia group in sort order.<sup>32</sup>

Krulak's article provides background, presenting a fictitious peacekeeping and humanitarian aid mission in which small unit leaders are required to make decisions that potentially have strategic impacts on US military posture and foreign policy. The young Marines of the Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable) begin the day providing security to a food distribution center when crowd control becomes a necessity and eventually ending in a potential standoff with warring native factions. The Three Block War builds off the fundamentals of Maneuver Warfare with Marines in receipt of mission type orders, operating with well-communicated commander's intent, operating in a fluid environment, with multiple frictions, and being required to use expert judgement in making appropriate decisions. "Success in winning the three-block war requires junior leaders who are not only masters of techniques and procedures, but who are capable of making relevant and timely tactical decisions in concert with the commander's intent."<sup>33</sup> Krulak understood that these qualities were well founded in the history of the Marine Corps and sought to capitalize on the Marine Corps' legacy as a service depending on independently operating youthful leaders. To reinforce these qualities, Krulak turned to core values of the Marine Corps and the instillation of them at Marine Corps entry-level training.

### The Crucible and Core (Corps) Values

Krulak believed that the foundation for Marine Corps success was the individual Marine and an understanding of their place in Marine Corps' legacy. That required recruiting young men

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<sup>32</sup> George J. Church, "Somalia: Anatomy of a Disaster," *Time Magazine* (October 18, 1993), accessed January 31, 2017, <http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,979399,00.html>.

<sup>33</sup> Charles N. Black, "The Marine NCO: Winning the Three Block War," *Marine Corps Gazette* 82, no. 3 (March 1998): 47.

and women of character and inculcating the Marine Corps' ethos of honor courage, and commitment from the beginning of their service and sustaining that transformation over their enlistment and for a lifetime. Krulak issued each Marine entering Marine Corps Boot Camp at Marine Corps Recruit Depot, Parris Island, South Carolina; Marine Corps Recruit Depot, San Diego, California; or Officer Candidate School, Quantico, Virginia, a card as a contract between the Marine Corps and the individual Marine. The card reminded each Marine of the foundational principles of the Marine Corps' ethos and provided a guide for Marines to follow.

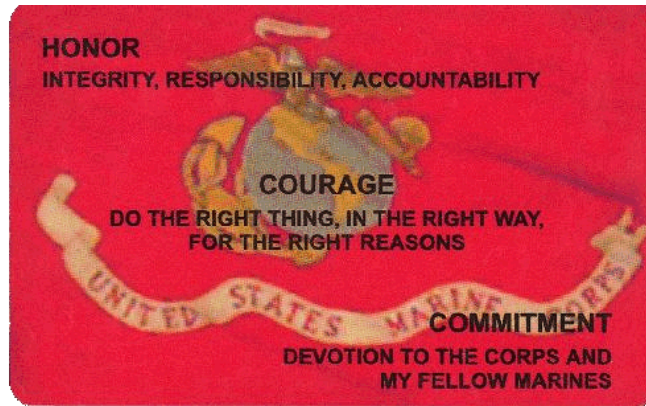


Figure 1. Marine Corps Value Card

*Source:* US Navy, NAVMC 11341, Marine Corps Value Card, January 1997.

The Marine Corps is an organization that claims a unique relationship with culture and the role it plays in mission success and organizational behavior. While the Marine Corps Value Card was an important tool in helping Marines to identify with the culture of their new organization, Krulak understood that individuals would need something more emotionally challenging to forge and solidify their identity in this new culture. In addition to twenty hours of supplementary values-



based training included in recruit training in 1996 during field and classroom sessions, he implemented the Crucible at all entry-level training facilities.

Krulak developed and implemented the Crucible to serve as a fifty-four field evolution as the finale of basic training that would test the individual's character, leadership, teamwork, and endurance that would culminate with the recruit formally earning the title Marine.<sup>34</sup> the Crucible was deemed so vital as to necessitate an additional week of recruit training due to its transformational nature and demanding schedule. the Crucible included early morning reveille, long foot movements, severely limited meals, tests of individual and team physical and mental agility, an awards ceremony, and a celebratory breakfast. "The crucible event will become the defining moment in the transformation from recruit to Marine. It will create better Marines and develop their ability to win the Nation's battles well into the 21st century."<sup>35</sup> Over the course of this fifty-four hour event recruits march over forty miles and complete thirty-two different evaluated tasks on the road to earning the title Marine. While it is difficult to measure the effectiveness of the Crucible, the event is part of a career long effort to transform and maintain a transformation of civilian to Marine with lifelong implications for society. With Krulak's foundation of the Marine Corps shored up, he needed to ensure that the men and women he transformed would have the best doctrine, concepts, equipment, and facilities with which to prepare for war. For this, he wanted an experimentation office testing innovative technologies and concepts focused on this warfighter. As CMC, he was able to transition this effort into his envisioned MCWL.

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<sup>34</sup> Ralph S. Bates, "The Crucible Begins," *Marine Corps Gazette* 81, no. 2 (February 1997): 39.

<sup>35</sup> James B. Woulfe, "The Crucible Event," *Marine Corps Gazette* 80, no. 10 (October 1997): 44.

## The Marine Corps Warfighting Lab

Krulak began the transformation of the Commandant's Warfighting Lab during his previous assignment as Commanding General, MCCDC in Quantico, Virginia. He established the new MCWL upon assuming his post as CMC. The new MCWL's mission was to identify future challenges and opportunities, develop warfighting concepts, and comprehensively explore options to inform the combat development process to meet the challenges of the future operating environment. The MCWL is a directorate led by a brigadier general who oversees five distinct divisions led by colonels: Futures Assessment, Concepts and Plans, Wargaming, Science and Technology, Experimentations, and the Marine Corps Center for Lessons Learned.

Krulak developed the MCWL with an eye on the past and a focus on the future. His studies of the development of amphibious doctrine focused on the Fleet Exercises. These were experiments beginning in 1922 and concluding with the start of World War II. While early Fleet Exercises were not necessarily successful, they gave the Marine Corps fifteen years of work in implementing change.<sup>36</sup> Krulak hoped to use this same idea for initial experimentation focusing on urban warfare techniques in the aftermath of the fighting in Somalia with an eye to potential future fights. Designed to concentrate on future capabilities, MCWL experimentation was to operate without distraction from current events and contemporary requirements.<sup>37</sup> Krulak established his concept of the *Sea Dragon* capitalizing on the opportunity for change and innovation. The idea of the Sea Dragon derived from Chinese mythology whereas the sea dragon would eat you if you ignored or attempted to control it, but to ride the sea dragon was to survive

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<sup>36</sup> Charles C. Krulak, "Innovation, the Warfighting Laboratory, Sea Dragon, and the Fleet Marine," *Marine Corps Gazette* 80, no. 12 (December 1996): 13.

<sup>37</sup> Roger J. Morin, "Reality Has Bitten Hard into the Corps' Dragon of Change," (research paper, US Marine Corps School of Advanced Warfighting, Quantico, VA, 2001), 1.

and prosper.<sup>38</sup> Sea Dragon consisted of several Advanced Warrior Experiments. Hunter Warrior and Urban Warrior were the first two Advanced Warrior Experiments with execution occurring from 1995 to 2001. Experimentation continued throughout the 2000s and remains active inside of the MCWL today.

Hunter Warrior was the first of these experiments and included a five-year plan to include five Limited Objective Experiments. The results of the Advanced Warrior Experiments, which focused on dispersed infiltration tactics, streamlined and flattened command and coordination, integrated command and control, and nonlethal employment, identified future technological requirements, inform battle formations, and develop tactics, techniques, and procedures.<sup>39</sup> The next experimentation under Krulak was Urban Warrior and was an extension of Hunter Warrior's focus on improving sea-based expeditionary power projection capabilities.<sup>40</sup> Hunter Warrior was conducted in a vast desert environment and Urban Warrior was deliberately conducted in the urban and suburban setting in an effort to test Three Block War theories and non-conceptual tactics, techniques, and procedures.<sup>41</sup> This Advanced Warrior Experiment included noncombatant role players, which necessitated the test and evaluation of non-lethal technologies. One particularly noteworthy Limited Objective Experiment focused on an Urban Penetration, a raid without an accompanying withdrawal, an Urban Thrust into an urban center, and an Urban

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<sup>38</sup> Kenneth Bergman, "A Ticket to Ride the Dragon," *Marine Corps Gazette* 80, no. 2 (February 1996): 12.

<sup>39</sup> Randolph Gangle, "Sea Dragon Update," *Marine Corps Gazette* 80, no. 2 (February 1996): 13.

<sup>40</sup> Gary Schenkel, "The Transition from Hunter Warrior to Urban Warrior," *Marine Corps Gazette* 81, no. 12 (December 1997): 27.

<sup>41</sup> Joshua T. Cohen, "MCWL Media Day Demonstrates Urban Warrior MOUT Training," *Marine Corps Gazette* 81, no. 12, (December 1997): 29.

Swarm focused on patrolling along urban routes.<sup>42</sup> The Marine Corps captured this experimentation in both formal doctrine and concept during these early years of the MCWL.

### Doctrinal Innovation

During his tenure as CMC, Krulak secured his legacy as the foremost expert on strategic thought in the Marine Corps through organizationally and individually published writings.<sup>43</sup> He directed a complete realignment and development of doctrinal publications, directed concept and informational publications and became the most prolific writing CMC of all time. Krulak directed MCCDC to realign and draft foundational doctrine early in his tenure. Commanding General, MCCDC, Lieutenant General Paul Van Riper, in turn directed his staff to develop three levels of doctrinal manuals.<sup>44</sup> The senior would be Marine Corps Doctrinal Publications, next Marine Corps Warfighting Publications (MCWP), and finally Marine Corps Reference Publications. MCDPs would provide broad concepts and guiding principles and the warfighting and reference publications would detail more specific tactics, techniques, and procedures. The MCDPs were higher order doctrine publications containing the fundamental and enduring beliefs of warfighting. Four of these, MCDP 1, *Warfighting*; MCDP 1-1, *Strategy*; MCDP 1-2, *Campaigning*; and MCDP 1-3, *Tactics* are capstone publications and provide guiding doctrine for the conduct of major warfighting activities. The remainder (MCDP 2, *Intelligence*; MCDP 3, *Expeditionary Operations*; MCDP 4, *Logistics*; MCDP 5, *Planning*; and MCDP 6, *Command and*

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<sup>42</sup> Chris Lawson, "Urban Warriors," *Marine Corps Gazette* 81, no. 2, (February 1998): 24.

<sup>43</sup> William Berris, "Why General Krulak is the Marine Corps' Greatest Strategic Leader," (master's thesis, US Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, PA, 2011), 2.

<sup>44</sup> Bassford, 1.

*Control*) are keystone publications with MCDP 1-0, *Marine Corps Operations*, translating the philosophical-based capstone and keystone publications into operational doctrine.<sup>45</sup>

Of the ten MCDPs in existence, only MCDP 1-0, *Marine Corps Operations* received an update since Krulak's tenure as CMC. The Marine Corps published this document in September 2011, following the initial execution of wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and the approval of Field Manual 3-24, *The US Army and Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Manual*. During Krulak's tenure the first and only rewrite of MCDP 1, *Warfighting* would be undertaken. While the changes are generally not considered substantive in nature, the publication of Joint Publication (JP) 1, *Doctrine for the Armed Forces of the United States, ... From the Sea*, and the successful conduct of Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm were considered catalysts for this necessary review, republish, and revalidation. ... *From the Sea*, and *Forward... From the Sea* defined the strategic concept intended to carry the US Navy and Marine Corps beyond the Cold War and into the twenty-first century with later updates expanding the strategic concept addressing specifically the unique contributions of naval expeditionary forces in peacetime operations, in responding to crises, and in regional conflicts respectively.<sup>46</sup> Krulak also directed and supervised the publication of Marine Corps Concept Paper-1, *Operational Maneuver from the Sea*, an update to amphibious doctrine, which sought to modernize Marine Corps' thinking on this primary mission.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Deputy Commandant Development and Integration, "Marine Corps Doctrinal Publications (MCDP)," US Marine Corps, accessed 31 January 2017, <https://www.doctrine.usmc.mil/MCDP.asp>.

<sup>46</sup> Department of the Navy, *Forward... From the Sea* (Washington, DC: US Navy, 1992), 1.

<sup>47</sup> Department of the Navy, Headquarters US Marine Corps, Marine Corps Concept Paper (MCCP) 1, *Operational Maneuver from the Sea* (Washington, DC: Headquarters, US Marine Corps, 1996), 1.

## Small Wars and Military Operations Other than War

While combat operations in Kuwait in 1991 concluded with the successful expulsion of Iraqi forces from Kuwait by U.S. and allied forces, and the end of the Cold War offered a hope of peace, the Marine Corps was not stagnant, operationally or doctrinally. Desert Storm's strategic and operational successes in deployment and employment, as well as the changing world stage, would offer opportunities for validation and development of doctrine.

Navy and Marine Corps (NAVMC) 2890, *The Small Wars Manual*, which was published in 1940, and republished as Fleet Marine Force Reference Publication 12-15, *Small Wars Manual*, was written in the wake of small war operations in the 1930s. It provided tactics and techniques for peacekeeping and counter-insurgency operations. In 1990, the popular phrase was Low Intensity Conflict and the term Military Operations Other Than War was codified in 1995 with the publication of JP 3-07, *Joint Military Operations Other Than War*. The Marine Corps would eventually publish MCWP 3-33, *Military Operations Other Than War* in January 1996, and then MCWP 3.33-5, *Insurgencies and Countering Insurgency* in 2014. MCDP 1-0, *Marine Corps Operations* is the current internal doctrine for all Marine Corps operations, to include counter-insurgency topics. Military Operations Other Than War doctrine identified sixteen distinct mission sets from Peace Operations, Humanitarian Assistance, Non-Combatant Evacuation Operations, Counter Terrorism, and Raids.<sup>48</sup> These types of missions kept the Marine Corps exceptionally busy from the conclusion of Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm until major combat operations were once again called for with OEF, and eventually OIF. During Krulak's tenure as CMC, the Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable) was the force of choice for the Geographical Commanders in Chiefs for these small wars operations.

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<sup>48</sup> Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Publication 3-07, *Military Operations Other Than War* (Washington, DC: Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1995), III-1.

General James L. Jones would follow Krulak as the 32nd CMC from 1 July 1999 to 12 January 2003. He commanded a platoon and company in the Vietnam War and served in Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm. Jones would have the distinction of being the last CMC in the modern era to serve as CMC where MOOTW missions held primacy, prior to the Global War on Terrorism, and the ensuing combat operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. As in the case of General Mundy, his contributions and legacy are significant in and of themselves, but his role in solidifying the transformations of the Krulak era, as well as his efforts in support of the Global War on Terror, would reign supreme as he prepared his forces for combat in Afghanistan and Iraq based on Krulak's efforts.

### Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom

Well after his tenure as CMC ended, General Gray provided the criteria for determining success or failure for the Marines during OEF and OIF. "These concepts of maneuver warfare are in reality a thought process built on the ideas of concentration, speed, surprise, boldness, friction, uncertainty, disorder, fluidity, philosophy of command, commander's intent, decision making, focus of effort, shaping the situation, and mission tactics."<sup>49</sup> As the Marine Corps warfighting philosophy of Maneuver Warfare is central to Marine Corps doctrine, training, and equipping, it is only fitting to use these characteristics as criteria for the evaluation of success in execution as well as an examination of Krulak's Three Block War concept as it applies to OEF and OIF.

Speed has become a hallmark of Marine Corps tactical operations operating under the fundamentals set forth in FMFM 1, *Warfighting*. This characteristic is evident throughout all stages of Marine operations from deployment, into employment, and redeployment. Prepositioned assets allowed Marines to deploy into Kuwait in preparation for combat operations during OIF.

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<sup>49</sup> Purvyear, xvi.

More than sixty thousand Marines deployed into theater and offloaded eleven ships of the Maritime Prepositioning Force in less than two months.<sup>50</sup> In preparation for the 1st Marine Division's drive north into Iraq, then Commanding General, Major General James Mattis planned combat operations around highly mobile, and task organized, Regimental Combat Teams. "Mattis's guiding principle was speed and he directed the bypass of cities and towns, where possible. At no point, would there be a pause. Make dust or eat it."<sup>51</sup> He ensured sufficient numbers of tactical vehicles and Light Armored Vehicles deployed in support of a rapid motorized advance on Baghdad from the generally foot-mobile infantry units.<sup>52</sup> Speed in combat lends itself to the principles of surprise, boldness, and uses tempo to shape the situation. It also allows the commander the ability to be fluid.

Fluidity was required as Marines entered OEF in Afghanistan. The Marine Corps' primary mission of amphibious operations assumes operating within the littoral regions of the world. Before leading the 1st Marine Division during OIF, Mattis led Marine forces in Afghanistan under Task Force -58 in 2001. In Marine Corps Concept Paper 1, *Operational Maneuver From the Sea*, the Marine Corps defined the littorals as "those areas characterized by great cities, well populated coasts, and the intersection of trade routes where land and sea meet."<sup>53</sup> Camp Rhino, four hundred miles north of the Arabian Sea, in the Registan Desert of Afghanistan, does not meet this definition of littoral. During OEF, the Marines of Task Force 58 used speed and Operational Maneuver from the Sea as Marines operated four hundred miles from

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<sup>50</sup> Reynolds, 53.

<sup>51</sup> Francis J. West and Ray L. Smith, *The March Up: Taking Baghdad with the 1st Marine Division* (New York: Bantam Books, 2003), 32.

<sup>52</sup> Reynolds, 46-47.

<sup>53</sup> MCCP 1, 3.



amphibious shipping, well beyond the littorals. This ability to maneuver well outside of the normal range of amphibious operations is an example of Mattis's ability to operate with fluidity. The Marines would demonstrate their ability to be fluid later in the same theater adapting to shifting command structure early in the operations with tactical control to the Combined Forces Land Component Commander and operational control to Combined Forces Maritime Component Commander.<sup>54</sup> Enabling speed was the smallest unit leader's ability to function under mission type orders with well-communicated commander's intent within a fluid operational environment.

General Krulak's vision of the Strategic Corporal operating in the Three Block War is evident throughout the execution of OEF and OIF. In Afghanistan, Marines played a small role in the initial stages of conventional battle with the Taliban and quickly turned to stabilization operations and concurrent counter insurgency operations. Early in OIF, Marines conducted a swift three-week assault towards Baghdad later to be ordered to pause and conduct stabilizing operations, only to be engaged in heavy combat with an armored force days later.<sup>55</sup> This ability to transition between two distinctly separate mission types was a hallmark of Krulak's Three Block War. Even more dramatically, small teams, led by first term Marines would conduct combat patrols through urban centers, on route to meetings with local government leaders attempting to begin the rebuilding process, while distributing humanitarian aid as part of a larger civil affairs effort. This was Krulak's Three Block War led by his Strategic Corporal. Maneuver Warfare principles and the Three Block War concept were keys to the Marine Corps' success in OEF and OIF. With these operations declared complete, the Marine Corps needs to carry these ideals founded by Generals Gray and Krulak of decentralized command, mission tactics, commander's

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<sup>54</sup> Reynolds, 10.

<sup>55</sup> Warren, 335.

intent, focus of effort, surfaces and gaps, and combined arms through the next transitional period towards an unknowable future.

## Implications for the Future Force

The 1990s were a transitional period in which the Marine Corps capitalized on innovation. The CMC championed this innovation focused on the principles of Maneuver Warfare with doctrinal development as the basis of all innovation. The Marine Corps innovated with its technology and its people, but it was based in its doctrine.

The role of the CMC as strategic leader is critical to the development and future of the Marine Corps, even more so than his peer service chiefs in the Air Force, Army, or Navy. His ability to direct, implement, and lead change is supreme. During the 1990s, General Alfred Gray and General Charles Krulak were instrumental in preparing the Marine Corps for its service in the Global War On Terrorism. Their ideas represented revolutions within the Marine Corps and a CMC who was able to implement their ideas followed their tenures. Not every CMC has the capacity, opportunity, or inclination to be an innovator. The task of implementing their predecessor's ideas may even prove to be a more difficult challenge. Through their actions, General Gray and General Krulak proved they understood people were the key to successful innovation.

The strength of the Marine Corps needs to remain in the ability and character of the US Marine and not the technology he wields. While the latter is important, it will never come close to the significance of the former. In his 1987 testimony to US Congress, CMC General P.X. Kelly stated, "I would like to emphasize that the successful application of technology is not limited to the acquisition of new weapons and equipment. It also means the continual evolution of tactics

and operations to accommodate the changes of technology.”<sup>56</sup> Innovation has been a buzzword in ever enlarging Marine Corps circles as the Marine Corps drew down from combat operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. Contemporary discussions of innovation center on advanced technology. Unmanned technology, cyber operations, and anti-access area-denial capabilities receive the lion’s share of attention, and unfortunately, there has not been an associated interest and renaissance within the greater Marine Corps in regards to knowledge supporting doctrinal or educational development.

Krulak and Gray understood the need for advancements in education. Gray built the Marine Corps University and established the Commandant’s Reading List while Krulak’s personal interest made him a common site at educational and training venues at Marine Corps Base Quantico, as well as his inclusion of the Crucible in entry-level training. Marines, especially Officers, need to be encouraged to think and write. Resident Professional Military Education provides an exceptional opportunity and environment for these endeavors. It should not be the exclusive realm of academic thought. Officers study and write, given the fact that one-year periods of study are rewarded to board selected officers but writing with the expectation to publish is not a given. Resident Professional Military Education is not a break, a career interruption, or an inconvenience. It is an opportunity to think deeply about the profession of arms, free of distraction from the high tempo of operational forces and jobs requiring a focus on individual Marine welfare and unit readiness. The expectation should be that academic writing on doctrine and future concepts to professional journals, like the *Marine Corps Gazette*, occurs at a dizzying rate, but it does not. Krulak provided an excellent example with a number of articles in print before, during, and after his tenure as CMC.

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<sup>56</sup> Paul X. Kelly, “Statement on Posture, Plans, and Programs for Fiscal Years 1988 through 1992.” *Marine Corps Gazette* 71, no. 4 (April 1987): 34.

If the *Marine Corps Gazette* serves as the formative authority on Marine Corps history, tradition, and doctrine, one should be able to look there for arguments on the validity of current doctrine or the need for doctrinal innovation and modernization. Unfortunately, the 2016 index of topics only reveals three articles on Marine Corps doctrine. The CMC's handpicked team of twelve full-time strategic thinkers, the Ellis Group, wrote two of those. The Marine Corps sub-contracted its academic thinking on doctrinal topics to a small group of specialized staffs and civilian think tanks. Active duty Marine intellectuals on this subject need to be encouraged in their quest to seek the next big Marine Corps strategic thing, as the Corps seems to be doing with technological innovation through programs seeking and rewarding technological innovation.

Technological innovation should presuppose an associated doctrinal innovation or modernization or provide an enhanced support to a contemporary doctrinal component. Without these requirements, innovation becomes innovation for innovation's sake and money wasted on an unnecessary expenditure. New doctrine causes the organization to seek out or create new technology to support the new concept. The Marine Corps needs to take a hard look at whether it really needs doctrinal and technological innovation or if modernization makes sense and ensure it is directly in support of advancing warfighting capabilities. The introduction of technological innovation will cause the new technology to be shoehorned in place without supporting a doctrinal requirement until one is written and implemented. Doctrine will generally require the adaption, modernization, or introduction of technology to maximize its worth. Maneuver Warfare and FMFM 1, *Warfighting*, both required advanced technologies and practices to become reality. Time and experience will also create the necessity for advancing doctrine and knowledge.

The publication of the Marine Corps foundational doctrine of FMFM 1, *Warfighting*, in response to and because of the adoption of Maneuver Warfare occurred in 1989. A review, rewrite, and validation did not occur until 1996. This was the only revision of the document and provided little, if any, substantial changes to the document beyond clarifying definitions and

improving mutual understanding. The revision was a result of lessons learned from the Marine Corps participation in Operation Desert Shield and Operation Desert Storm as well as the publication of JP 1, *Doctrine for the Armed Forces of the United States*, and the Navy's revolutionary doctrine ... *From the Sea*. In the preface of FMFM 1, *Warfighting*, Krulak explained his decision to revise the publication, "I believe Warfighting can and should be improved. Military doctrine cannot be allowed to stagnate, especially an adaptive doctrine like maneuver warfare. Doctrine must continue to evolve based on growing experience, advancements in theory, and the changing face of war itself. It is in this spirit that Warfighting has been revised."<sup>57</sup> The CMC should revise FMFM 1, *Warfighting* and provide all Marines with a modern and contemporary foundational publication that revalidates what is important to, and about, Marines. A newer update to JP 1 occurred in March 2013, and wars in Iraq and Afghanistan proved over a decade of lessons and experience to Marines. Operation Desert Shield, Operation Desert Storm, and a revised JP 1 were enough evidence for a 1996 rewrite. With the conclusion of wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as a 2013 rewrite of JP 1, *Warfighting* is more than ready for another look even if it is a revalidation of Maneuver Warfare principles. Doctrine should inform how the organization will fight based on how it has fought successfully. This review would determine if there is a necessity for doctrinal modernization or innovation, which potentially could drive an associated requirement for new or modernized technology, which is the MCWL's very purpose.

Designed to provide a "bias for conceptual thought" over a bias for action, the MCWL attention on the individual Marine in the future and not the immediate needs of the operating force needs to remain a focus.<sup>58</sup> This future focus has been a challenge to the laboratory since its

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<sup>57</sup> Department of the Navy, Headquarters US Marine Corps, Marine Corps Doctrinal Publication 1, *Warfighting* (Washington, DC: Headquarters US Marine Corps, 1997), i-ii.

<sup>58</sup> Morin, 11-12.

inception as fiscal realities and the immediacy of the need for supporting Marines on the battlefield. OIF and OEF created a gap in conceptual thinking about the future fights. Marines were preoccupied with the conflict at hand and ensuring the best possible support to Marines in the contemporary fight. With these conflicts concluded, the Marine Corps must not allow the high operational tempo of the operating forces to inhibit further thought on conceptual thought and future planning. The future of a more SOF-like, vice land Army, mentality in the Marine Corps with smaller task organized multifunctional units, working within the Distributed Operations concept, would provide many opportunities for experimentation.

The Marine Corps must fully embrace US Southern Command (USSOCCOM) as a strategic partner and Marine Corps Forces Special Operations Command as only one of its key contributions to national security. Marine Corps Forces Special Operations Command currently consists of 2,742 active duty Marines, which is less than 1.5 percent of total active duty Marine Corps end strength.<sup>59</sup> The Marine Corps' contribution to USSOCOM is just short of 4 percent of the Special Operations authorized end strength.<sup>60</sup> If the Marine Corps were to double its contribution to USSOCOM, it would still only realize a 3 percent commitment to the Special Operations community, be 8 percent of the USSOCOM force, and still the smallest component to this extraordinarily relevant command. This slight increase in personnel numbers is a reasonable price to pay for the huge capability gained from Marine forces to USSOCOM and the Marine Corps would be able to bear this commitment with relative ease. A larger Marine Corps pledge to USSOCOM benefits USSOCOM and the Marine Corps thorough a greater understanding and interoperability. The general Marine Corps must be more Special Operations Forces-like in its

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<sup>59</sup> US Marine Corps Concepts and Programs, "End Strength."

<sup>60</sup> US Special Operations Command, *2016 Fact Book* (Hurlburt Field, FL: US Special Operations Command, 2016), accessed 31 January 2017, <https://www.socom.mil/FactBook/2016%20Fact%20Book.pdf>.

procurement, deployment, and employment and embrace the idea that a relevant Marine Corps is more similar to a USSOCOM force as opposed to a conventional Army force. The Marine Corps' utility as just another land Army in the right circumstances is an unfortunate reality but its legacy and capacity as small wars experts will remain a core mission, setting it apart from its heavier and slower sister service. The Marine Corps should not become another USSOCOM, but with Special Operations Forces-like systems and thinking, it becomes better at its strength as a light and fast combat force. "The Marines' role in Afghanistan appears to be a part of a larger trend: a de-emphasis on amphibious operations per se and a movement towards using Marines both in special operations and in support of other special operations forces."<sup>61</sup> The Marine Corps must continue to evolve into a more Special Operations Forces-like, and a less Army-like, organization in order to provide the Combatant Commanders with an expeditionary culture that is quick to deploy, able to project power beyond the littorals, and able to sustain itself for a longer period.<sup>62</sup>

The Marine Corps is currently enjoying a period of relative peace whether it wants to admit it or not. The Corps needs to capitalize on this period of opportunity to ensure forces are reequipped and refit. It also would be wise to expend adequate intellectual rigor and energies in the innovation and modernization of its people, equipment, and doctrine. The Marine Corps needs to ensure that it is not expending an inordinate effort, in the pursuit of global busy work with the Special Purpose Marine Air Ground Task Force-Security Cooperation, in an attempt to ensure it does not lose a perceived relevancy or the fiscal payout it provides. The Marine Corps must assess if these types of pursuits are stopping it from seeking innovation and looking forward. Marine Expeditionary Units are keeping its forces busy, as they were in the 1990s, but without

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<sup>61</sup> Warren, 329.

<sup>62</sup> Bradley Graham, "Distancing Tradition, Marines Eye Role in Special Operations," *The Washington Post*, 17 November 2002, accessed 2 February 2017, <http://www.leatherneck.com/forums/showthread.php?2523-Distancing-Tradition-Marines-Eye-Role-in-Special-Operations>.

the addition of these Special Purpose Marine Air Ground Task Force-Security Cooperations which are units forward deployed and working instead of thinking and developing doctrine and best practices for full spectrum conflict. The Marine Corps cannot have it both ways.

## Conclusion

The Marine Corps owes its successes in OEF and OIF in large part to the significant contributions of former CMCs Alfred Gray and Charles Krulak. The 1990s served as a significant period of transition and change for the Marine Corps with the conclusion of the Cold War. The unique role of the CMC, as the Marine Corps' senior strategist with overarching authoritative direction over his service, provided a significant opportunity to act as a change agent. General Gray's and General Krulak's foresight in taking substantive action reinforcing Marine Corps culture and values, developing and instituting new doctrine, and adjusting organization in support of these new efforts directly influenced the execution of combat operations during Operations Desert Storm, OEF, and OIF.

The Cold War ended with the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, shortly after the conclusion of combat operations during Operation Desert Storm. General Gray's tenure as CMC ended during this same period, but his efforts directly influenced the Marine Corps' contribution to the latter. Gray stressed the warrior ethos within the Marine Corps through training and education. He championed the tenants of Maneuver Warfare and formalized them in FMFM 1, *Warfighting*, a prescriptive and foundational doctrine that was accessible to all Marines as an easy pocket reference. He reorganized a variety of Marine Corps training and education commands into an all-inclusive cohort of doctrinal focused professional development organization. He created the Marine Corps University and established the Commandant's Warfighting Center, which would inform General Krulak's more comprehensive MCWL.



As CMC, General Krulak capitalized on Gray's revolutionary efforts and implemented further changes that would prove to be critically beneficial to the Marine Corps warfighting effort in the future. Krulak would further the understanding and acceptance of the Maneuver Warfare concept through the review and republication of FMFM 1, *Warfighting* as MCDP 1, and with his Three Block War and Strategic Corporal ideas. Krulak would also conceive of and implement the Sea Dragon series of experiments through his recently evolved MCWL, testing and evaluating concepts, equipment, and theories with an eye to the future using Maneuver Warfare principles. General Krulak's Crucible event at all Marine Corps entry level training would seek to create a solid foundation, within the individual Marine, to enable the successful execution of these legacy concepts he and Gray would be remembered for, setting the stage for the execution of the full range of military capabilities by the Marine Corps in the twenty-first century.

Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm served as the initial test of the Marine Corps Maneuver Warfare doctrine in action. The execution of OEF and OIF occurred over a decade after the initial publication of FMFM 1, *Warfighting* and with the theory soundly in acceptance in the Marine Corps. These operations owe a great deal of their success to this doctrine and the two CMCs who are responsible for its creation, implementation, and evolution. The criteria set forth by General Gray and General Krulak for the execution of Maneuver Warfare are conceptual in nature. OEF and OIF provide examples with a qualitative and quantitative evaluation criteria for the success of these military efforts using the principles of Maneuver Warfare.

If the Marine Corps is to continue having success on future battlefields, it must capitalize on the current period of transition and relative peace as they did in the 1990s. This capitalization entails leadership focused on the individual Marine as its foundational key to success and ensures proper leadership, training, education, with the best possible technology and equipment available as it directly supports the warfighting mission. The Marine Corps must ensure that experimentation and innovation focuses on the future fight without concern for the immediacy of

current operations. The Marine Corps must retain its persona and prestige of being the nation's premier force in readiness and be able to back up this claim in action if it expects to be relevant into the future. To end where this monograph began, Lieutenant General Victor Krulak reminded the Corps that it must continually self-assess if it expects to exist and that it must rely on itself for its own survival:

In the most profound sense, I suppose, the future of the Corps lies within itself, because, however large or small its problems are, nobody else is going to find solutions for them. It has been that way for over 200 years and it is that way today. It is a challenge that will demand the very best of a Corps that has been sharpened on challenge for all of its colorful life.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Krulak, *First to Fight*, 226.

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