

Understanding the Few Good Men: An Analysis of Marine Corps Service Culture

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The man who will go where his colors go, without asking, who will fight a phantom foe in the jungle and the mountain range, without counting, and who will suffer and die in the midst of incredible hardship, without complaint, is still what he has always been, from imperial Rome to sceptered Britain to democratic America. He is the stuff of which legions are made.... His pride in his colors and his regiment, his training hard and thorough and coldly realistic, to fit him for what his must face.... He has been called United States Marine.

--T. R. Fehrenbach, This Kind of War¹

This passage, written by retired U.S. Army officer and Korean War historian, illustrates how U.S. Marines view themselves and their service to the nation. The Marines are America's legions and their mindset and outlook reflect a warrior culture. This article explores the nature of that culture. Because their culture and their history are inseparable to Marines, it will do so in a historical context.

A recent *Joint Forces Quarterly* article correctly defines military culture as “socially transmitted behavior patterns, beliefs, and institutions that shape a community or population” and “influence the way a people fight, affecting not only goals and strategies but also methods, technologies, weapons, force structures, and even tactics.”² Since its founding by Act of the Second Continental Congress on November 10th, 1775, two predominant factors have driven the evolution of Marine culture. The first of these factors is a blending of the traditional national, naval, and military cultures due to its unique role as a naval expeditionary power projection force. The second factor is a productive, institutional paranoia for remaining relevant. These factors have produced a culture that, once understood, helps explain the way Marines view war and the way they fight, to include all aspects of the Service's functional responsibilities.

National, Naval, and Military Cultures

National Heritage. As with the other Services, the Marine Corps' culture is grounded in the larger national culture. In this regard, Marines are zealous advocates of democratic government and its ideals, to include the principle of civilian control of the military. Consistent with the national tradition that evolved while taming the country from east coast to west coast, Marines also value individual independence, initiative, and audacity. Although the Marine Corps notably avoids relying on technology to the extent of the other Services, it has historically benefited from the nation's industrial might and its ability to gain a material and technological advantage over its adversaries. It thus seeks to embrace and leverage technology without relying on it. The Marine Corps shares the nation's value for human life and its aversion to mass casualties, and subordinates these factors in its planning only to mission accomplishment.

Naval Heritage. Beyond its democratic national heritage, the Marine Corps' culture is also firmly rooted in its naval heritage. As with its predecessors, the Dutch, Spanish, and British Marines, the fledgling United States created its own Marines to protect contracted naval vessels, provide them with boarding parties, and to protect the ships' captains and officers from potentially mutinous sailors. This last mission created a tension between Marines and sailors

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from the Corps' inception. Nonetheless, since its founding, the Marine Corps has developed a number of shared cultural values with the Navy. Both Marines and sailors, for example, place significant value on decentralized execution and independence of command. This inclination developed in part because of the lack of communication with ships at sea in years past. Once the ship sailed, the captain had almost absolute power to execute the nation's will within the law. Similarly, the Marine Corps affords its commanders great latitude, and senior commanders are usually reluctant to intervene in a subordinate commander's affairs unless they are clearly violating direction or intent.

The Navy and the Marine Corps share a common language, referring to walls as "bulkheads," floors as "decks," and ceilings as "overheads," to cite but a few examples. They also both view the sea as maneuver space and, therefore, recognize the importance of sea control. More significantly, Marines and sailors share an expeditionary mindset, where they are prepared to move or change mission at a moment's notice (not after prolonged planning), and they take with them only what is mission essential (as the rest may not fit aboard ship). Posts and stations are necessary, but secondary priorities to the ships and equipment needed to project naval power. Indeed, naval power projection is the *raison d'être* for the Navy-Marine Corps team as Marines provide the Navy with the means to influence events and achieve national objectives ashore, where missiles and aircraft will not suffice. The principle weapon system aboard an amphibious ship is not the main battery or the aviation squadron – it is the Marine.

Military Heritage. The nature of operations once Marines are ashore also causes them to share certain cultural aspects with the Army. Moreover, although the Marine Corps' roles and missions revolve primarily around operations from the sea, circumstances have frequently required it to serve alongside the Army in sustained land operations. The nation does not view a force capable of short-term naval power projection exclusively as a worthwhile security investment. Similarly, it does not see the value in creating a second land army. Accordingly, the Marine Corps seeks to optimize itself to serve as a general purpose force, with value in both roles. In short, the Marine Corps happily "does windows" and in so doing, Marines have routinely performed actions across what is now known as the range of military operations throughout its history.

The Marine Corps has reinforced the Army in land operations since the Revolutionary War, and Marines have fought alongside soldiers in every war since. This has often led to a brotherly rivalry between the two Services, and a healthy competition for national recognition. Marines first gained significant notoriety in this capacity in World War I, during actions such as those at Belleau Wood and Blanc Mont. Because of the time spent fighting alongside the Army, the Marine Corps has adopted several aspects of Army organization and doctrine and tailored them to fit its naval expeditionary role. Like the Army, the Marine Corps organized administratively around a regimental construct. Marines, like soldiers, value and study European military theorists such as Clausewitz and Jomini. As a small force, Marines also tend to value Asian theorists like Sun Tzu to an even greater extent than the Army, because these theorists seek to compensate for a lack of mass by seeking an indirect approach to achieving military objectives.

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These theorists influence Marine Corps doctrine, and similar to soldiers (and somewhat unlike sailors), Marines value doctrine. Where possible, Marines willingly leverage the Army's robust system for producing doctrine, but routinely modify it for application in naval expeditionary operations. In some instances, where it views Army doctrine as lacking, Marines develop their own. This was the case with both the small wars doctrine and the amphibious warfare doctrine that Marines developed during the interwar years. The Small Wars Manual emerged from the Marines unique experience in the Banana Wars – a national economy of force effort where it conducted sustained land operations separate from the Army. Marine commanders know their doctrine and frequently apply it, but true to their naval heritage, they retain the prerogative to deviate from it. Marine authored doctrine also tends to be broader and less prescriptive than that authored by the Army. Nevertheless, the Corps has adopted much of the Army's doctrine, organization, and training for sustained land campaigning and for technical applications such as those associated with armor and artillery.

The sometimes tumultuous relationships with both the Army and the Navy, while commonly fighting side-by-side with both of them, have produced a unique Marine Corps culture. The Marines have learned much from their sister Services and have adopted bits and pieces of both naval and military cultures along the way. Marines fight like soldiers, talk like sailors, and think like both. They are "soldiers from the sea" who recognize no artificial lines in the battlespace between sea, land, and air. Because of this, Marines considered themselves joint long before "jointness" came into vogue.

Productive ... and Justified, Institutional Paranoia

Along with this unique blending of national, naval, and military cultural aspects, a second factor that has significantly shaped Marine Corps culture is a paranoia regarding its institutional survival. A review of the nation's history demonstrates that this paranoia is both justified and productive. At several points in its 232 year existence, the Army, the Navy, and even a few Presidents have launched serious campaigns to eliminate or dramatically reduce the Corps. In each case, the challenge was not personal – just business. Specifically, Service competition for scarce national defense resources and the Executive Branch's desire to free budgetary resources for other national priorities have sometimes caused them to view the Marine Corps as an expendable, lesser priority.

In each case, the American people and their Congressional representatives have preserved, protected, and often grown the Marine Corps. As a result of this dynamic, Marines have developed an intense institutional paranoia. This paranoia has been a healthy force driving the Marines to constantly evaluate their competence and direction against the challenges and opportunities associated with emerging and future operational environments. Accordingly, Marines plan for the next war even while fighting a current one, and they are willing to innovate and often accept great institutional risk to preserve their national value.

The Army challenged the Marine Corps' value from the very beginning, viewing the creation of two Marine battalions as a burden on scarce national resources needed for it to successfully prosecute the war for independence. Until the late twentieth century, the Marine Corps remained subordinate to the Navy, who similarly viewed Marines as a diversion of

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funding needed for capital ships. Although the Corps grew and gained great notoriety for its performance during both World Wars, Korea, and Vietnam, the larger Services continued to challenge the rationale for its existence during post-conflict draw downs.

While concurrently fighting the Banana Wars as the “State Department’s Army” during the interwar period, the Marine Corps remained true to its naval power projection role and accepted significant institutional risk to invest in the development of amphibious warfare doctrine, organization, and techniques.³ The Corps’ visionaries recognized the need for forces to seize advanced naval bases across the Pacific so that the nation could effectively meet the rising challenge demonstrated by Imperial Japan. These visionaries guided an institutional effort that produced an effective, combined arms approach to naval power projection that the Marines perfected during America’s drive across the Pacific in World War II. As the famous flag went up over Iwo Jima in the closing phases of the War, Secretary of the Navy James Forrestal turned to the commander of the amphibious forces, Marine Lieutenant General Holland M. “Howlin’ Mad” Smith, and said, “Holland, the raising of that flag on Suribachi means a Marine Corps for the next 500 years.”⁴

Less than two years later, however, the Marines again found themselves on the brink of extinction. The world had entered the nuclear age and as the United States reorganized its defense structure, many political and military leaders called for dramatically reducing conventional land forces, to include eliminating the Corps.⁵ Unable to find support within the Executive Branch, the Marine Corps took its case to the American public and its representatives. Marine Commandant General Alexander A. Vandergrift delivered his famous Congressional testimony arguing that the Corps was the most efficient and cost effective force in the American military. He concluded stating, “The Marine Corps thus believes that it has earned this right to have its future decided by the legislative body which created it – nothing more. The bended knee is not a tradition of our Corps. If the Marine Corps fighting man has not made a case for himself after 170 years, he must go.”⁶

The Commandant’s defiance angered President Truman, the War Department, and the military leaders of the other Services, but it solidified the Marine Corps’ bond with the Congress and the public. The hard fought efforts on Capitol Hill contributed to the National Security Act of 1947 codifying into law both the Corps’ role in national defense and its combined arms approach. The Act declared, “The Marine Corps shall be organized, trained, and equipped to provide fleet marine forces of combined arms, together with its supporting air components, for service with the fleet in the seizure or the defense of advanced naval bases and for the conduct of such land operations as may be essential to the prosecution of a naval campaign.”⁷

Despite this significant step, the National Security Act of 1947 stopped short of setting a minimum structure for the Corps or designating the Commandant of the Marine Corps as an equal member of the new Joint Chiefs of Staff. The Corps survived, but its resources remained scarce and its voice in defense issues small. As it had done during the inter world war period, the Marines focused on how to remain valuable to the nation. It again accepted great institutional risk by investing in untested, leap ahead technologies (most notably a single helicopter) and operational experiments while perfecting its combined arms approach.

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As the Korean War erupted on a largely unprepared American military in the summer of 1950, the Marine Corps again made its case on the battlefield. The victories that held the Pusan Perimeter and the decisive blow at Inchon proved the effectiveness of the combined arms team and secured further the American public's support for the Corps as the nation's expeditionary force in readiness. Subsequently, the Douglas-Mansfield Act again adjusted the Corps' roles and missions, calling for the Marines to continue to be "most ready when the nation was least ready" for war and fixing the Corps' minimum structure as "not less than three combat divisions and three aircraft wings, and other organic land combat forces, aviation, and services"⁸

The relationship between the culture of Marines and their roles and missions is an interesting one. The Service's paranoia and focus on remaining relevant has driven it to create new roles and missions for itself. Conversely, these unique and evolving roles and missions have further separated Marine culture from that of the other Services. Critics, pointing out that the Army has a corps that specializes in airborne operations, sometimes claim that the Army should simply absorb the Marines as simply another branch. While this seems to be an attractive and utilitarian argument, the Marine Corps approach provides a synergy to our nation's defense that the larger Services have not and cannot replicate at the lowest tactical level. Larger, naturally more bureaucratic organizations cannot duplicate the Marines' unique institutional warrior culture, born in all mediums of warfare – maritime, land, and air.

Making Marines, Winning Battles, and Innovating

In addition to evaluating itself in tangible terms of roles, missions, and capabilities, the Marine Corps carefully considers its standing as an American institution. In a 1957 letter, Lieutenant General Victor H. "Brute" Krulak captured the essence of the Corps' historical situation, when he wrote, "In terms of cold mechanical logic, the United States does not need a Marine Corps. However, for good reasons which completely transcend cold logic, the United States wants one."⁹ Years later in retirement, he expanded this basic theme in a book, *First to Fight*, which helped identify exactly why the nation wants a Marine Corps and what the Corps has to do to keep the nation's support. Krulak boiled it down to two specific, critical services that the Marine Corps provides the nation beyond its basic roles and missions: making Marines and winning battles. In the late 1990s, when Brute Krulak's son, General Charles C. Krulak, became the Corps' thirty-first Commandant, he further refined, invigorated, and formalized this concept, effectively tying it to all of the Service's functional responsibilities.

Making Marines. Lieutenant General Krulak recognized that Americans valued their Marine Corps not only because it produced reliable fighters during time of conflict, but also because it transformed the nation's youth into citizens of reliable character who often continued their public contributions long after they left uniformed service. He wrote, "They believe ... that our Corps is good for the manhood of the country; that the Marines are masters of a form of unfailing alchemy which converts unoriented youths into proud, self-reliant, stable citizens – citizens into whose hands the nation's affairs may be safely entrusted."¹⁰ Because approximately 70 percent of the active duty Marine Corps consists of Marines in their first enlistment, the Corps looks upon this responsibility as a sacred duty.

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The younger General Krulak and his predecessor, General Carl Mundy, recognized as well that the emerging operational environment also necessitated an emphasis on character as a foundation for making proper, decentralized, and instantaneous combat decisions with potentially strategic repercussions.¹¹ General Mundy identified three institutional core values: honor, courage, and commitment; and Krulak set about inculcating the development of these values throughout all aspects of the Service.¹² General Krulak further identified a multiple-stage Transformation Process for enhancing the historical production of Marines of high character. It is through this endeavor of *Making Marines* that the Corps imbues its culture on its newest members and they come to understand and internalize the credo of “Once a Marine, Always a Marine.”

Winning Battles. The Krulaks identified winning battles as the Corps’ second critical service to the nation. This does not challenge the Army’s role to win the nation’s wars. Rather, the American public depends upon the Marine Corps to literally be “the first to fight” as an expeditionary force in readiness. In this role, Marines regularly perform missions at the lower end of the range of military operations, while remaining prepared to facilitate the introduction of Army forces – and fight alongside them – during sustained combat ashore at the higher end of this range. In either case, America’s Marines are able to deploy immediately, without lengthy planning or the mobilization of reserves, by any transportation means available (sea or air).

Moreover, the public believes that Marines guarantee a win every time, and that Marines will die before accepting anything less. Accordingly, near fanatical training and preparation typify the Corps’ warrior culture. Regardless of how peaceful things seem, Marines train, educate, and prepare their bodies, minds, spirits, and equipment for the fight. They remain physically fit and regularly hone their close combat skills.¹³ Being soft or overweight is not merely against regulations; it demonstrates a departure from the warrior culture, and both the institution and fellow Marines are quick to correct Marines that violate this culture. Marine leaders also understand that Americans expect them to find a way to accomplish the assigned task, regardless of whether that task is consistent with the Service’s formal roles and missions or not. Again, the Corps “does windows” across the range of military operations, and guarantees the results. This is fundamental to Marine culture.

Innovating. In the course of winning battles with minimal resources, the Corps has developed a well-earned reputation for ingenuity, innovation, and improvisation. Indeed the Service’s institutional paranoia, along with its encouragement for frank and open discussion, a large degree of trust between commanders and Marines, and its focus on the human dimensions of warfare, have made innovation an inherent part of its institutional culture. As a result, the list of Marine innovations is long and notable, including close air support (CAS), small wars doctrine, amphibious warfare doctrine, nighttime CAS, and heliborne vertical envelopment, resupply, and casualty evacuation. The Corps also introduced Maritime Prepositioned Forces during the Cold War, and led the U.S. military’s doctrinal transformation toward maneuver warfare during 1980s.

Marine Corps innovation has continued in recent years with concepts such as Operational Maneuver from the Sea, Ship to Objective Maneuver, and sea basing, all of which seek to exploit the sea as a medium for maneuver. Recognizing the emerging technologies that could empower

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Marines to operate in accordance with these concepts, the Marine Corps accepted institutional risk by investing in leap-ahead technologies such as tilt-rotor aircraft and hydroplaning armor. In the 1990s, the Corps also recognized the changing dynamics associated with the information age, the empowerment of non-state actors, and the challenges of failed states and developed the “three block war” concept as a means to articulate the emerging operational environment. Recognizing as well that this type of conflict demands distributed, agile units with mature leaders of high character at the lowest tactical level, Marines introduced the “Strategic Corporal” concept. This collection of concepts is currently driving the evolution of Marine Corps doctrine and training, as well as its acquisition programs.

Service Functions

The Marine Corps’ warrior culture – formed from a unique blend of national, naval, and military heritages and driven by a justified and productive institutional paranoia – permeates all aspects of the Service’s functional responsibilities, as evidenced by an examination of each.

Doctrine. Marines produce and use doctrine based on their unique view of the fundamental nature war as “a violent struggle between two hostile, independent, and irreconcilable wills ... characterized by friction, uncertainty, fluidity, disorder, and danger.”¹⁴ Marines believe that this nature is unchanging and that it transcends technological advances. Marine doctrine is rooted in both classical warfare theorists and in over two hundred years of practical experience across the range of military operations. As mentioned, Marine commanders know their doctrine, value it as broad guidance, and frequently apply it. True their independent naval heritage, however, they resent prescriptive doctrine and retain their prerogative to deviate from it in order to best attain the objective at the least human and material cost. Accordingly, doctrine authored by Marines is normally somewhat broad to afford maximum applicability and freedom of action.¹⁵ Marine doctrine views war as a social phenomenon and recognizes that Marines must do the intimate killing necessary in attaining national objectives. The Corps’ warrior ethos reflects this view.

Organization. As mentioned, Marines inherently view the battlespace as a single, indivisible entity with no divisions between air, land, sea, and cyberspace. Accordingly, Marines fight as integrated air-ground-logistics teams known as Marine Air Ground Task Forces (MAGTFs), under a single commander. The MAGTF commander fights a single battle that unites and enhances the capabilities of his force, whose whole is exponentially greater than the sum of its parts.¹⁶ The MAGTF commander develops plans for achieving assigned objectives, and subordinate ground, air, and logistics combat element commanders develop their supporting concepts from that plan. This is fundamentally different than merely developing concepts of support for a plan created by a ground commander. Based on their experience operating as combined-arms, multi-dimensional MAGTFs throughout their careers, Marine leaders instinctively understand the logic and synergy behind joint and multinational operations whether they are first on the scene or part of, or leading a joint or multinational force.

MAGTFs provide combatant commanders with scalable, tailored forces to meet specific mission requirements from forward presence and peacetime engagement to sustained operations ashore in a major theater war. They can rapidly reconfigure and leverage a variety of lift options

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to include amphibious assets, maritime prepositioned forces, and strategic airlift. Although MAGTFs at all levels may enjoy reserve augmentation, it is not necessary. Because of the Marine Corps' mandate to serve as the nation's force in readiness, Marines do not adhere to the "Abrams Doctrine."¹⁷ Rather, the Marine reserves provide trained units and qualified individuals for mobilization in time of national emergency and for providing personnel and operational tempo relief for active component forces.

Training. Because Marines do not recognize artificial battlespace divisions such as those associated with the deep, close, and rear fights, the Marine Corps seeks to train every Marine as a rifleman. In other words, regardless of a Marine's military occupational specialty (MOS), he or she is expected to be able to proficiently fight hand-to-hand and with infantry weapons systems up to and including heavy machine guns. Moreover, the Corps trains all of its officers to command a rifle platoon in combat. Consistent with its warrior culture, Marines do not think of themselves as pilots, logisticians, or infantrymen. They are Marines, and they can all fight. Moreover, being a Marine transcends any other form of identity, to include those associated with gender or race.¹⁸

Creating this single, shared identity – coupled with the need for all Marines in the operating forces to be immediately ready to deploy into harms way – is why Marines have the longest, and most arduous introductory training pipeline of any Service. All enlisted Marines attend twelve weeks of recruit training followed by four weeks of Marine Combat Training prior to their MOS producing school. Likewise, every Marine Officer attends six months at The Basic School prior to moving on to their MOS training. These common, extended, and often trying experiences prior to MOS training create a unique bond of trust and respect that serve as the foundation for a joint, multi-dimensional mindset throughout a Marine's career.

Materiel. Marines procure material with an eye toward empowering the decentralized, expeditionary warrior. While the more hardware oriented Services often seek to "man the equipment," Marines seek instead to "equip the man." What Marines buy must be able to fit on ship, be readily transportable ashore, and survive the elements at sea. It is not uncommon for the Marine Corps to modify Army equipment and munitions because of the requirement to withstand the harsh maritime environment and meet shipboard safety requirements. Because one cannot easily store heavy, self-propelled artillery on ship and readily transport it ashore, Marines rely instead on integrated tactical aircraft to provide the robust fires needed to facilitate maneuver. This is why Marines are adamant that the MAGTF commander, and not the Joint Force Air Component Commander, controls his aviation assets and why joint doctrine has codified that principle.

In overall terms, the Marine Corps historically receives very modest resources. For this reason, thriftiness is an inherent component of Marine culture. This tradition of frugality transcends everything the Marines do from the acquisitions process to the strict accountability of equipment. Although often not the best equipped force, Marines are religious about maintaining what they have well and knowing how to properly, and often creatively, employ it. The Marine Corps' entire budget constitutes approximately six percent of the Department of Defense's budget, and 52 percent of that covers personnel costs. Marines spend just 19 percent of their annual budget on procurement, research, and development.¹⁹ This forces the Service to assume

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substantial investment risks, such as investing in leap-ahead technologies like those mentioned earlier in order to bring emerging warfighting concepts to fruition. The Marine Corps prides itself on guarding the taxpayers' investment, and the Congress has come to rely upon this.

Leadership and Education. The Marine Corps views leadership and education as inseparable and has a robust professional military education (PME) system. As Marines progress through the professional development continuum over the course of a career, they spend less time in training to gain scientific skills and more time in formal education to gain artistic skills such as critical reasoning. The Marine Corps' manpower processes prioritize PME opportunities even during times of extended conflict. The Corps views PME as a human capital investment and wants Marines deeply acculturated in its warrior ethos and able to operate in positions of increased responsibility.

The Corps views leadership, foremost, as the product of a shared value system that places the institution first and the individual last. This shared value system enables a culture of trust tactics based on commander's intent and mission-type orders. Trust is an exceptionally important part of Marine culture. Because military leadership is about influencing others to contribute to accomplishing a mission, the Corps relies heavily on its history, traditions, and culture as means to *inspire* Marines of all grades to meet organizational standards for selfless service and operational excellence established by Marines of earlier generations. As General Mundy wrote in the introduction to the Marine Corps' doctrinal leadership publication:

The most important responsibility in our Corps is leading Marines. If we expect Marines to lead and if we expect Marines to follow, we must provide the education of the heart and of the mind to win on the battlefield and in the barracks, in war and in peace. Traditionally, that education has taken many forms, often handed down from Marine to Marine, by word of mouth and by example. Our actions as Marines every day must embody the legacy of those who went before us. Their memorial to us – their teaching, compassion, courage, sacrifices, optimism, humor, humility, commitment, perseverance, love, guts, and glory – is the pattern for our daily lives. This manual attempts to capture those heritages of the Marine Corps' approach to leading. It is not prescriptive because there is no formula for leadership. It is not all-inclusive because to capture all that it is to be a Marine or to lead Marines defies pen and paper. Instead, it is intended to provide those charged with leading Marines a sense of the legacy they have inherited, and to help them come to terms with their own personal leadership style. The indispensable condition of Marine Corps leadership is action and attitude, not words.²⁰

Personnel. The Marine Corps is foremost a people organization. While Americans normally refer to members of the other Services as being *in* the Army, Navy, or Air Force, when referring to a member of the Marine Corps, they state that the person *is* a Marine. This is the result of the continuously refined Transformation Process – a five-stage process for Making Marines, one of the two fundamental services mentioned earlier that the Corps provides to the nation. The process begins with recruiting. Marines maintain high recruiting standards and would rather reduce in size than compromise or lower those standards. Marine recruiting

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advertisements offer nothing more but the opportunity to become a Marine – an intangible reward greater than college benefits and transferable job skills. The appeal is the challenge to endure the most demanding entry-level training and the strictest standards of character and military performance that comes with being a Marine. As a result, Marine recruits are generally different from those of the other Services from the very beginning.

As mentioned in the training section above, Marine recruits undergo a rigorous recruit training program over a period of twelve weeks. Following recruit training, all Marines attend the School of Infantry where, regardless of their MOS, they learn basic infantry skills. This reinforces the mindset that there are no rear areas and every Marine is a rifleman. Unit commanders are responsible for sustaining the Transformation throughout a Marine's enlistment through arduous training, continued character development, and cultivation of the warrior culture. Finally, even after the Corps returns Marines to civilian life, it remains in contact through the Marine For Life Program, helping former Marines to stay in contact with one another, find employment opportunities, assist in recruiting efforts, and serve as stewards in their communities. In short, Marines *are* the Corps. Similar to Rudyard Kipling's wolf analogy in *The Jungle Book*, Marines believe that the strength of the Corps is the Marine and the strength of the Marine is the Corps.

Facilities. Perhaps nowhere is the cultural characteristic of frugality more apparent than in Marine facilities. Consistent with their warrior culture, Marines prioritize readiness and training facilities above all others, and in all instances, they maintain an expeditionary mindset. For example, a Marine regiment with three battalions will have only two battalion command posts and barracks, because Marines know that at least one battalion will always be deployed. Rather than expend resources to maintain empty facilities, they choose to apply them elsewhere. Although Marines maintain their garrison facilities, they are free of frills. A person walking through Marine facilities will usually note that they are Spartan in appearance and that virtually everything is in or near a green "mount out" box with embarkation data stamped on it.

Conclusion

Indeed, every aspect of the Services' functional responsibilities demonstrates its expeditionary warrior culture. Driven by a historically justified and productive institutional paranoia, this culture evolved from a unique blending of the American national, naval, and military cultures. Recognizing that the Marine Corps exists only because the American public wants one, Marines are constantly seeking innovative means to remain relevant in emerging operational environments while preserving scarce national resources and guaranteeing a win when committed to battle. The Marine Corps is the original joint force – soldiers from the sea who view the battlespace as indivisible and seamlessly integrate ground, aviation, and logistics elements at the lowest tactical level. Marines prefer decentralized decision-making rooted in good character and based on commander's intent. The Corps is committed to providing two vital services to the nation: making Marines and winning battles. The Marines it "makes" must live up to the legacy of valor established by their ancestors in emerging environments of increasing complexity. The transformation of a young person in mind, body, and spirit to become a Marine is a lasting change, and when America "sends in the Marines," it knows they will achieve extraordinary results on every occasion. To Marines, failure is never an option.

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¹ T. R. Fehrenbach, *This Kind of War*. (Washington, DC: Brassey's, 1963), 455.

² Phillip S. Meilinger, "American Military Culture and Strategy," *Joint Forces Quarterly*, No. 46, 3d Quarter 2007, National Defense University, 80.

³ As a result of the failed British operation in Gallipoli during World War I, most leading military thinkers of the day dismissed the viability of amphibious operations against modernized enemy forces. The Marines uniquely rejected this view.

⁴ Secretary of the Navy James V. Forrestal to Lieutenant General H. M. Smith, 23 February 1945. Taken from P. J. O'Rourke, "Sulfur Island," *The Atlantic Monthly*, June 2004, <http://www.theatlantic.com/issues/2004/06/orourke.htm>, accessed 15 February 2008.

⁵ General Eisenhower, then the Army's Chief of Staff, engineered a proposal to emasculate the Marine Corps permanently. Although the War Department led most of these attempts, President Truman himself voiced his own opposition to maintaining a sizeable Marine Corps, later writing in a letter to Representative Gordon L. McDonough dated 29 August 1950, "The Marine Corps is the Navy's police force, and as long as I am President that is how it will stay." On 6 September 1950, Truman later wrote to General Clifton B. Cates, USMC, "I sincerely regret the unfortunate choice of language which I used in my letter of August 29 to Congressman McDonough concerning the U.S. Marine Corps." See Robert Debbs Heinl, Jr., *Dictionary of Military and Naval Quotations*, (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1966), 184.

⁶ General Alexander A. Vandergrift, U.S. Marine Corps. Oral testimony before the Senate Naval Affairs Committee, 5 May 1946. Taken from Lieutenant General Victor H. Krulak, USMC (Ret), *First to Fight*" (Annapolis, MD: U.S. Naval Institute, 1984), 37.

⁷ U.S. Congress, National Security Act of 1947. Taken from Krulak, *First to Fight*, 51. The Act goes on to further define Marine Corps roles and missions to include providing organizations for service on armed vessels of the Navy and fielding security detachments for the protection of naval property at naval stations and bases. The Act acknowledges the need for the Corps to continue to serve as a utility force by performing "such other duties as the President may direct," but prohibits such additional duties from interfering with the operations for which the Marine Corps is primarily organized. Finally, the Act charges Marines with developing, in coordination with the other Services, the tactics, techniques, and equipment used by landing forces during amphibious operations.

⁸ U.S. Congress, U.S. Public Law 416, Section 206 (c), "Amendment to the National Security Act of 1947," 28 June 1952. The Douglas-Mansfield Act also charges the Marine Corps with expanding to meet the needs of war, consistent with integrated joint mobilization plans. To date, the Marine Corps remains the only Service with its minimum size fixed in law. The closest equivalent is the Navy which has a fixed number of carriers in law.

⁹ Krulak, xv. A distinguished combat veteran, Lieutenant General Krulak earned the Navy Cross during World War II, gained further distinction during the Korean War, and served as the Commanding General of Marine Forces Pacific during the Vietnam War. A member of the famed "Chowder Society" that helped General Vandergrift fight for the Marine Corps' survival following World War II, he was an outspoken critic of the Army's search and destroy approach in Vietnam.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ General Krulak and his staff created the "Three Block War" concept as a means of articulating the emerging operational environment, and the "Strategic Corporal" concept as a means to articulate the type of individual needed to succeed in that environment.

¹² The Navy and the Department of the Navy later adopted these core values as well.

¹³ The Marine Corps Martial Arts Program, introduced by General James Jones, is the method by which Marines develop their close combat skills. This program is far more than a physical conditioning regimen complemented by rifle, bayonet, and weapons of opportunity drills. Rather, in the truest tradition of the martial arts, it focuses as well on the development of the individual Marine's spirit and character. The program is rooted in a number of both offensive and defensive traditional martial arts.

¹⁴ U.S. Marine Corps. *Marine Corps Doctrinal Publication 1, Warfighting*. (Washington, DC: Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, 1997), 3 and 16.

¹⁵ In addition to its mandated role in the development of amphibious doctrine and its continuing role in the development of small wars doctrine, the Marine Corps is currently the lead agent for the development of doctrine for urban warfare, close air support, and non-combatant evacuation operations.

¹⁶ While Joint Task Force commanders deconflict and attempt to integrate air, ground, and logistics elements at the operational level, Marine Air Ground Task Force commanders integrate these elements down to the lowest tactical level.

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¹⁷ The Abrams Doctrine, named for former Army Chief of Staff General Creighton Abrams, resulted from the Vietnam War. It shifted required warfighting capabilities from the active Army to their reserve component so that the President could no longer commit the Army to significant operations without the Congress supporting the endeavor because Congressional action is required to mobilize the necessary reserve forces.

¹⁸ This statement may appear odd in light of the fact that the Marine Corps is the only Service to conduct gender segregated recruit training, but the Corps has found that this methodology is actually the best way to approach inculcating a shared identity and respect. Many recruits enter the Corps with immature social behaviors, particularly with regard to members of the opposite gender, which are best corrected prior to being placed in a gender-integrated environment. Accordingly, recruit training is segregated, while all subsequent training, including combat and MOS training, is integrated.

¹⁹ For the six percent investment, the Marine Corps provides the nation with approximately 20 percent of the nation's ground combat maneuver battalions, 20 percent of its fighter/attack squadrons, and approximately one third of its combat service support structure in the active component.

²⁰ General Carl E. Mundy, Jr., "Foreword," *Marine Corps Warfighting Publication (MCWP) 6-11, Leading Marines* (Washington, DC: Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, 3 January 1995), ii.