



DDP-R. D. WARD

Copyright © 2006, U.S. Naval Institute, Annapolis, Maryland (410) 268-6110 www.usni.org

“LETHAL, SCALABLE, & RESPONSIVE”

General James T. Conway,
U.S. Marine Corps

As he begins walking point, the new Commandant of the Marine Corps says troops in combat are his top priority.

As I assume the responsibilities of 34th Commandant of the Marine Corps, I want to say how very proud I am of our Marines and Sailors. To echo the Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Mike Mullen, I believe the Navy-Marine Corps Team is a national treasure and, together with the CNO, we will further enhance those capabilities that our team provides the nation. In concert with our Army, Air Force, Coast Guard, and interagency partners, we will win the current fight and meet head-on the challenges that await us in the future.

My Priorities

Let there be no doubt, our Marines and Sailors in combat are our number one priority. Those brave men and women who unflinchingly go into harm's way when our nation calls deserve the very best support we can give. Our country is in a tough fight and will be for some time. Here I've listed my focus areas for the way ahead. Success in these areas is critical for the future health of the Marine Corps and the security of our nation. We must:

- Achieve victory in the Long War.

- Right-size our Corps to achieve a 1:2 deployment-to-dwell ratio for active duty Marines and a 1:5 ratio for our Reserves. These ratios relate to how long our forces are deployed versus how long they are home.
- Provide our nation a naval force that is fully prepared for employment across the spectrum of conflict.
- Reset and modernize to “be most ready when the nation is least ready.”
- Improve the quality of life for our Marines and their families.
- Rededicate ourselves to our Core Values and warrior ethos.
- Posture the Marine Corps for the future.

The Commandant's Planning Guidance speaks to these in detail, but I want to touch on a few issues, embedded in these areas, that are particularly salient to the readers of *Proceedings*.

I believe that the challenges facing our nation in the 21st century will be significant and unlike anything we have ever experienced before. In the coming years, the American people will witness chaos and crisis around the

world brought about by diverse adversaries. America will face complex threats ranging from antagonistic nation-states with conventional military forces to transnational actors who embrace terrorism as a means of achieving their political and ideological objectives.

The Navy-Marine Corps Team

When anticipating future requirements, we are acutely aware that the “arc of instability,” those subregions of the world where conflict is most likely to occur, is primarily a maritime domain—and a naval force is uniquely suited for response. In light of this truth, as we consider the requirements of the naval force, it’s clear that the integrated capabilities of the Navy-Marine Corps Team must not only be maintained, they must be enhanced! Our mission is to build a multi-spectrum, responsive naval force for this complex strategic environment.

We will face the challenges of the 21st century shoulder-to-shoulder with our sister service, the U.S. Navy. Together, as America’s naval force in readiness, we will represent this great nation on the high seas and on every continent, and will continue to play a pivotal role in protecting vital interests. Further, we will be prepared to maneuver forward-deployed expeditionary combat forces to troubled areas of the world at a moment’s notice, and sustain them indefinitely.

In order to fulfill our nation’s security requirements and meet the demands beyond the horizon, the Navy-Marine Corps Team of the future must be a *balanced* force, with integrated capabilities that span the full spectrum of warfare. When called upon by our combatant commanders, our naval force must be equally capable of bringing stability, security, and hope to suffering people across the globe or unleashing overwhelming combat power to bear against our enemies. Working closely with our Navy and Coast Guard shipmates, no other military partnership is better suited or more adept at coordinating joint, interagency, civilian, and military operations; synchronizing intelligence activities; and integrating air and ground combat power in the accomplishment of mission objectives.

The Role of the MAGTF

We will build the Corps for the future on the solid foundation of the Marine Air Ground Task Force (MAGTF). Lethal, scalable, and responsive, the MAGTF has served the Corps well throughout its recent history. Coupled with our institutional and individual adaptability, the MAGTF has demonstrated uncommon versatility in combat environments. In the opening stages of the Iraq campaign, our MAGTF took the fight to the enemy during major combat operations, subsequently shifted to stability and security operations, and rapidly transitioned to counterinsurgency operations.

In the future, we expect our adversaries to evolve and modify their tactics in an attempt to find and exploit weakness. In order to counter this threat, we will draw on this inherent adaptability of the MAGTF and embrace initia-

tives and technologies designed to improve flexibility, responsiveness, and lethality. Doing so will enable our Corps to defeat our enemies and prevail over the multitude of challenges that will bring closure to the Long War.

Right-Size the Force

As we face the future, I have confidence in the great young Americans who have chosen to become Marines. The colors of our Corps have been passed to a new generation. The warriors filling our ranks are a special breed, equal to every generation that has gone before them. They are combat-tested, smart, tough, and rightfully proud. We are asking more of them than ever before. In return, we owe them the best equipment and training to enable their continued success on a dynamic battlefield.

Overcoming the challenges before us will require the efforts of all Marines, active and Reserve. Our Reserves have fought in Iraq and Afghanistan with heroism and distinction. In the fight ahead, we will continue to call upon their capabilities as an integral part of our Total Force. Fulfilling our 1:5 deployment-to-dwell ratio for the Reserves along with the 1:2 deployment-to-dwell ratio for our active forces is more than a goal; it is an obligation to our Marines and to our combat readiness. Our Corps must be structured and manned accordingly. Our deployment cycles must not only support training for the counterinsurgency mission, they must also provide sufficient time for the recovery, maintenance, and training for other contingency missions.

Our Marines

We ask our Marines to be experts in both conventional and irregular forms of warfare. They are expected to have the skills needed to kill a tank and walk a beat, feed a machine gun and feed a village. To paraphrase Sun Tzu, Marines must be well educated and knowledgeable; they must “know themselves” and “know their enemy.” One cannot underestimate the importance of professionally educated officers and staff noncommissioned officers as we prepare ourselves for the future fight. Decisions made in the heat of battle will have far-reaching impact, possibly with strategic consequences. It is imperative that we continue to foster the Corps’ culture of a disciplined and studied approach to the profession of arms—which has been the bedrock of our success throughout our history.

Answering the Call

As in generations past, magnificent young patriots have answered the call to service for their nation—and they do so with grit, determination, and honor. I am proud of the Marines and Sailors of the Navy-Marine Corps Team. Their accomplishments during the Long War have been nothing short of spectacular. Together, as the world’s finest naval force, I have every confidence that their accomplishments in the years ahead will be even more so.

General Conway was sworn in as the 34th Commandant of the Marine Corps on 13 November 2006.