



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY
HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS
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MARINE CORPS ORDER 1500.55

From: Commandant of the Marine Corps
To: Distribution List

Subj: MILITARY THINKING AND DECISION MAKING EXERCISES

1. Purpose. To implement Military Thinking and Decision Making Exercises throughout the Marine Corps.

2. Background

a. There is a critical need for all Marines to prepare themselves mentally and physically for the rigors of combat. Physical preparation has long been ingrained in our culture and Marines are well known for their physical conditioning. Mental preparation needs to receive the same emphasis. Since success in combat depends in large part on our collective capability to make and execute effective military decisions under physical and emotional stress, it is imperative that all Marines make every effort to exercise and develop their decision making abilities.

b. Two means by which decision making skills could be developed are through the use of tactical decision games and through daily discussions about warfighting. This Order brings these two together in a single, wide ranging program entitled Military Thinking and Decision Making Exercises.

c. Knowledge gained through individual reading and study provides the intellectual framework for warfighting study and the raw material necessary to develop critical thinking skills. This Order outlines the means to hone that raw material by daily exercise.

d. The use of technological innovations, such as personal computer (PC)-based wargames, provide great potential for Marines to develop decision making skills, particularly when live training time and opportunities are limited. Policy contained herein authorizes Marines to use Government computers for approved PC-based wargames.

e. Decisions made in war must frequently be made under physical and emotional duress. Our mental exercises in peacetime should replicate some of the same conditions. Imaginative

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12 Apr 97

combinations of physical and mental activities provide Marines the opportunity to make decisions under conditions of physical stress and fatigue, thereby more closely approximating combat.

3. Resources. The following resources are available:

a. Professional periodicals and journals, such as the Marine Corps Gazette (which publishes a monthly Tactical Decision Game) and Leatherneck Magazine, provide a wide selection of articles and vignettes to stimulate warfighting discussions. Commercial books and board-based wargames provide excellent scenarios for this program. Many of these commercial products, as well as the professional reading list, are available through the Marine Corps Association and base libraries.

b. The Marine Corps University's Staff Ride Handbook enables Marines to organize on-site studies of battlefields. Designing Tactical Decision Games: A Tactical Decision Games Workbook, another Marine Corps University product, teaches Marines how to write useful and thought-provoking exercises. These resources are available electronically via the Internet from the Marine Corps University.

c. The Marine Corps Modeling and Simulation Management Office, Training and Education Division maintains the PC-based Wargames Catalog of commercial computer wargames which have been evaluated and found suitable for Marine Corps use. This office also identifies customized commercial games for specific Marine Corps usage and is developing additional customized and original wargames. These resources are also available electronically via the Internet from the Marine Corps Modeling and Simulation Management Office.

4. Policy

a. Regardless of MOS, duty assignment, or location, Marines will participate in daily Military Thinking and Decision Making Exercises.

b. All commanders and staff supervisors have a fundamental leadership responsibility to implement this policy and allocate resources for implementation. Accordingly, commanders and supervisors will develop and institute programs that will institutionalize daily warfighting discussions within their respective organizations.

12 Apr 97

c. The Commanding General, Marine Corps Combat Development Command will provide Military Thinking and Decision Making Exercises materials to support the above efforts and continue development of new training tools. Individual Marines and units are encouraged to identify or develop additional Military Thinking and Decision Making Exercises training resources and submit them to Commanding General, Marine Corps Combat Development Command, (Marine Corps Modeling and Simulation Management Office), 2006 Hawkins Avenue, Quantico, VA 22134-5069 for Marine Corps validation and distribution.

d. Use of PC-based wargames on Government computers is the subject of some necessary restrictions. This Order supersedes previous policy which prohibited playing of games on Marine Corps computers. Commanders may now authorize the use of government computers for the games listed in the PC-based Wargames Catalog. Marines finding games which support Military Thinking and Decision Making Exercises objectives can request approval for their use by submitting a recommendation, complete with supporting justification, to Commanding General, Marine Corps Combat Development Command (Marine Corps Modeling and Simulation Management Office), 2006 Hawkins Avenue, Quantico, VA 22134-5069. Software installed on Government computers must be legitimately procured and licensed in accordance with all copyright restrictions. To avoid introduction of computer viruses, only commercial shrink-wrapped software or software downloaded from trusted Government network sites shall be installed. The unit S-6/G-6 must be consulted before installing software to avoid impact on mission-essential operations and network traffic.

5. Action

a. Commanding Generals, Commanding Officers and Officers-in-Charge. Develop and implement Military Thinking and Decision Making Exercises program. Ensure PC-based wargames are employed consistent with the policy delineated above.

b. Commanding General, Marine Corps Combat Development Command

(1) Assume responsibility for the development, exploitation, and approval of PC-based wargames. In addition, maintain the PC-based Wargames Catalog on the Internet accessible via a world wide web browser. As new games are reviewed and approved, update the on-line catalog providing Marines the most current information. Collect and post Military Thinking and Decision Making Exercises materials and information on the Internet as they become available from Marine Corps schools and organizations.

MCO 1500.55

12 Apr 97

(2) Assume responsibility for Designing Tactical Decision Games: A Tactical Decision Games Workbook and the Staff Ride Handbook. Incorporate material from these publications into the curriculum at Marine Corps University schools. Determine distribution and review the guides periodically for currency and continued relevance.

c. Public Affairs Officers. In concert with local commanders, provide a forum in base publications for sharing ideas and experiences related to Military Thinking and Decision Making Exercises.



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