

Information



U.S. Marine Corps

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FOREWORD

Information is the foundation of all human interaction. It is the basis for how we sense, make sense of, and interact with our environments and each other. Rapidly evolving modern technologies have accelerated and expanded our ability to process, store, and communicate information with a tempo and scale previously unimaginable. Our globally interconnected world has deepened our collective dependence on information to the extent that the slightest vulnerability in how we handle, store, or transmit information could endanger Marines, their families, and all that we have sworn to defend. In a contest between hostile and irreconcilable wills, information is as powerful a tool as any weapon system in our military arsenal. Therefore, it is vital to the future of our Corps.

As our 29th Commandant, General Alfred M. Gray, wrote in his preface to Marine Corps Doctrinal Publication 1, *Warfighting*, “Like war itself, our approach to warfighting must evolve. If we cease to refine, expand, and improve our profession, we risk becoming outdated, stagnant, and defeated.” Our competitors and adversaries prey on worldwide technological and social vulnerabilities by using information as a target and as a weapon to destabilize our systems, networks, and partnerships, thereby

eroding our trust in each other and our institutions. We must meet this threat with an evolutionary approach to warfighting, which includes daily engagement at every level of the force. The purpose of *Information* is to introduce a conceptual framework for understanding and employing the information warfighting function and to provide Marines with increased flexibility in their operational approaches across all phases of the competition continuum, in all warfighting domains.

To aid in introducing the information warfighting function to Marines, this publication uses a series of vignettes to illustrate the enduring theory and principles that make up our newest warfighting function. Enclosed vignettes may use current events to highlight important ideas and provide current context with the expectation that future changes may be required as the events unfold and draw to a conclusion. While our theory and principles of the information warfighting function will endure, we must continually examine and adapt our application of them to keep up with the ever-changing characteristics of the information environment.

This publication must, therefore, be updated with a frequency that keeps it relevant. It is not a checklist and does not contain all the answers. It should be read from cover to cover to provide a baseline for all Marines. How we employ this foundation is limited only by the creativity, ingenuity, and foresight of all Marines, all of whom are practitioners of the theories and applications discussed within these pages. Every Marine has a role in information. Therefore every Marine should focus on their

role as discussed in this publication, whether as a commander, planner, or squad member.

The fight for and with information is a nonstop competition. Information is not the realm of specialists. It is a part of who we are, and our approach must reflect that mentality every day, at every level, in all things. We must rethink how we employ our traditional combat capabilities as part of this effort. To compete and fight effectively, we must evolve across every domain. We must engage daily or run the risk of ceding the advantage to our adversaries. We will challenge our competitors and adversaries at every turn, and we count on every Marine working together to ensure our Nation prevails.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. H. Berger', with a stylized, flowing script.

DAVID H. BERGER
General, U.S. Marine Corps
Commandant of the Marine Corps

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INFORMATION

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Chapter 1.

The Nature of Information

The essence of maneuver is taking action to generate and exploit some kind of advantage over the enemy as a means of accomplishing our objectives as effectively as possible.¹

—MCDP 1, *Warfighting*

These words from the Marine Corps' warfighting philosophy frame the way Marines should think about information. They provide a starting point for understanding information from two perspectives: a source of exploitable advantage and a potential source of disadvantage to overcome.

Information serves a vital role in every activity that Marines undertake. It is fundamental to intelligence, command and control, situational understanding, decision making, and all forms of behavior. It is central to the functioning of all societies, governments, and organizations. Information is also an instrument of national power, employed in concert with the diplomatic,

military, and economic instruments to influence strategic outcomes, impose our will, or achieve other policy goals.

Beginning in the mid-20th century, a series of information and technological advances made information a global phenomenon. Competitors and adversaries have since become skilled at navigating and exploiting this phenomenon to challenge some advantages the United States held throughout, and immediately after, the Cold War. The current era, often referred to as the information age, fundamentally undermines the presumption of persistent US information-based advantages.

Marines should never assume they will benefit from a specific information advantage without competing and fighting for it. We must approach information with a maneuver warfare mindset. Marine Corps Doctrinal Publication (MCDP) 1, *Warfighting*, states, “It is through maneuver in all dimensions that an inferior force can achieve decisive superiority at the necessary time and place.”² From an information perspective, the essence of maneuver is taking action in all dimensions, the warfighting domains (land, air, maritime, space, cyberspace), as well as the electromagnetic spectrum, to create and exploit information advantages. These actions apply to any competitive engagement or form of warfare.

MCDP 1-4, *Competing*, states that even when Marines are not at war, they are still in a state of competition. The very existence of the Marine Corps is a competitive act that signals to potential adversaries there are vital maritime interests the Nation will go to war to protect.³ Every Marine, therefore, has the potential to help

or hinder the Nation's competitions by reinforcing or detracting from the Marine Corps' narrative. Through their actions, words, and deeds—on and off duty—Marines can help or harm the Marine Corps' reputation of acting with boldness, professionalism, and high competency.⁴

We all, from private to general officer, leverage information to succeed in competition and war. Whether taking a mindful action to reinforce the Marine Corps' reputational narrative, selectively revealing capabilities to send a message, or applying technical acumen to defend or attack critical information networks—Marines need to know how to leverage information to accomplish the mission and ultimately impose our will at the decisive time and place. The purpose of this publication is to describe our foundational theory for leveraging the power of information through the information warfighting function and to guide Marines in thinking about information as a primary means to mission accomplishment.

INFORMATION EXPLAINED

The word *information* conveys different meanings depending on its use. However, to make the most effective use of the information warfighting function, it is essential to understand other relevant uses of the word.

Information as an Instrument of National Power

The diplomatic, informational, military, and economic instruments of national power provide a framework the United

States uses to assess potential competitors and describe the security environment. At the strategic level, competition and war involve using all instruments of power brought to bear by one political group over another. International actors apply information at the strategic level in two primary ways. First, they seek to synchronize their communication activities to influence the perceptions and attitudes of political figures, organizations, and other groups, or individuals they deem vital to their strategic objectives.⁵ Second, they strive to protect and secure their critical information capabilities, to include the means of gathering, exploiting, processing, and projecting information at the strategic level.⁶ The Marine Corps serves a supporting role in advancing US interests through the informational instrument of power.

Information in Command and Control and Intelligence

Information is the foundational element of command and control and intelligence. However, the command and control and intelligence disciplines use the word *information* differently. MCDP 6, *Command and Control*, describes information as “...all manner of descriptions or representations from raw signals on the one hand, to knowledge and understanding on the other.”⁷ According to MCDP 6, information categories range from data—raw or unprocessed signals—to more highly developed forms evaluated and integrated into meaningful knowledge and understanding, such as symbols, intelligence reports, and ideas.

MCDP 2, *Intelligence*, describes information as “unevaluated material of any kind... [used as] raw material from which intelligence is derived.”⁸ From this perspective, information is