

Campaigning



U.S. Marine Corps

DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY
Headquarters United States Marine Corps
Washington, D.C. 20350-3000

4 April 2018

CHANGE 1 to MCDP 1-2
Campaigning

1. This publication has been edited to ensure gender neutrality of all applicable and appropriate terms, except those terms governed by higher authority. No other content has been affected.
2. File this transmittal sheet in the front of this publication.

Reviewed and approved this date.

BY DIRECTION OF THE COMMANDANT OF THE
MARINE CORPS

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Robert S. Walsh". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized 'R' and 'W'.

ROBERT S. WALSH
Lieutenant General, U.S. Marine Corps
Deputy Commandant for Combat Development and Integration

Publication Control Numbers:

Publication: 142 000008 00

Change: 142 000008 01

DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY
Headquarters United States Marine Corps
Washington, D.C. 20350-1775

1 August 1997

FOREWORD

Tactical success in combat does not of itself guarantee victory in war. *What matters ultimately in war is strategic success:* attainment of our political aims and the protection of our national interests. The operational level of war provides the linkage between tactics and strategy. It is the discipline of conceiving, focusing, and exploiting a variety of tactical actions to realize a strategic aim. With that thought as our point of departure, this publication discusses the intermediate, *operational* level of war and the military campaign which is the vehicle for organizing tactical actions to achieve strategic objectives.

The Marine air-ground task force (MAGTF) clearly has operational as well as tactical capabilities. Thus it is essential that Marine leaders learn to think operationally. Marine Corps Doctrinal Publication (MCDP) 1-2, *Campaigning*, provides the doctrinal basis for military campaigning in the Marine Corps, particularly as it pertains to a Marine commander or a MAGTF participating in the campaign. *Campaigning* applies the warfighting philosophies in MCDP 1, *Warfighting*, specifically to the operational level of war. It is linked to the other publications of the MCDP series and is fully compatible with joint doctrine.

MCDP 1-2 supersedes Fleet Marine Force Manual (FMFM) 1-1, *Campaigning*, of 1990. MCDP 1-2 retains the spirit, scope, and basic concepts of its predecessor. MCDP 1-2 further develops and refines some of those concepts based on recent experiences, continued thinking about war, and the evolving nature of campaigning in the post-Cold War world.

The new version of *Campaigning* has three significant additions: an expanded discussion of the linkage between strategic objectives and the campaign, a section on conflict termination, and a section titled “Synergy” that describes how key capabilities are harmonized in the conduct of a campaign to achieve the strategic objective. These additions have been derived from the development of the other doctrinal publications in the MCDP series and joint doctrine.

Chapter 1 discusses the campaign and the operational level of war, their relationship to strategy and tactics, and their relevance to the Marine Corps. Chapter 2 describes the process of campaign design: deriving a military strategic aim from political objectives and constraints, developing a campaign concept that supports our strategic objectives, and making a campaign plan that translates the concept into a structured configuration of actions required to carry out that concept. Chapter 3 discusses the actual conduct of a campaign and the problem of adapting our plans to events as they unfold.

Central to this publication is the idea that military action at any level must ultimately serve the demands of policy. Marine leaders

at all levels must understand this point and must recognize that we pursue tactical success not for its own sake, but for the sake of larger political goals. Military strength is only one of several instruments of national power, all of which must be fully coordinated with one another in order to achieve our strategic and operational objectives. Marine leaders must be able to integrate military operations with the other instruments of national power.

This publication makes frequent use of historical examples. These examples are intended to illustrate teachings that have universal relevance and enduring applicability. No matter what the scope and nature of the next mission—general war or military operations other than war—the concepts and the thought processes described in this publication will apply. As with *Warfighting*, this publication is descriptive rather than prescriptive. Its concepts require judgment in application.

This publication is designed primarily for MAGTF commanders and their staffs and for officers serving on joint and combined staffs. However, commanders at all levels of any military organization require a broad perspective, an understanding of the interrelationships among the levels of war, and knowledge of the methods for devising and executing a progressive series of actions in pursuit of a distant objective in the face of hostile resistance. Marine officers of any grade and specialty can easily find themselves working—either directly or indirectly—for senior leaders with strategic or operational responsibilities. Those leaders need subordinates who understand their problems and their intentions.

Therefore, as with MCDP 1, I expect all officers to read and reread this publication, understand its message, and apply it.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C. C. Krulak', with a stylized, cursive script.

C. C. KRULAK
General, U.S. Marine Corps
Commandant of the Marine Corps

DISTRIBUTION: 142 000008 00

©1997 United States Government as represented by the Secretary of the Navy. All rights reserved.

Campaigning

Chapter 1. The Campaign

Strategy—Tactics—Operations—Strategic-Operational Connection—Tactical-Operational Connection—Interdependence of the Levels of War—Campaigns—Battles and Engagements—A Comparative Case Study: Grant Versus Lee—*Policy—Military Strategy—Operations in 1864—Tactics*—The Marine Corps and Campaigning

Chapter 2. Designing the Campaign

Supporting the Military Strategic Aim—*Campaigning Under an Annihilation Strategy—Campaigning Under an Erosion Strategy*—Identifying the Enemy's Critical Vulnerabilities—The Campaign Concept—*Phasing the Campaign—Conceptual, Functional, and Detailed Planning—Conflict Termination*—Campaign Design: Two Examples—*Case Study: The Recapture of Europe, 1944–45—Case Study: Malaysia, 1948–60*—The Campaign Plan

MCDP 1-2 Campaigning

Chapter 3. Conducting the Campaign

Strategic Orientation—The Use of Combat—Perspective—
Surprise—Tempo—Synergy—*Command and Control—Maneuver—Fires—*
Intelligence—Logistics—Force Protection—Leadership

Conclusion

Notes

Chapter 1

The Campaign

“Battles have been stated by some writers to be the chief and deciding features of war. This assertion is not strictly true, as armies have been destroyed by strategic operations without the occurrence of pitched battles, by a succession of inconsiderable affairs.”¹

—Henri Jomini

“For even if a decisive battle be the goal, the aim of strategy must be to bring about this battle under the most advantageous circumstances. And the more advantageous the circumstances, the less, proportionately, will be the fighting.”²

—B. H. Liddell Hart

“It is essential to relate what is strategically desirable to what is tactically possible with the forces at your disposal. To this end it is necessary to decide the development of operations before the initial blow is delivered.”³

—Bernard Montgomery

This book is about military campaigning. A *campaign* is a series of related military operations aimed at accomplishing a strategic or operational objective within a given time and space.⁴ A *campaign plan* describes how time, space, and purpose connect these operations.⁵ Usually, a campaign is aimed at achieving some particular strategic result within a specific geographic theater. A war or other sustained conflict sometimes consists of a single campaign, sometimes of several. If there is more than one campaign, these can run either in sequence or—if there is more than one theater of war—simultaneously. Campaigning reflects the operational level of war, where the results of individual tactical actions are combined to fulfill the needs of strategy.

Military campaigns are not conducted in a vacuum. Military power is employed in conjunction with other instruments of national power—diplomatic, economic, and informational—to achieve strategic objectives. Depending upon the nature of the operation, the military campaign may be the main effort, or it may be used to support diplomatic or economic efforts. The military campaign must be coordinated with the nonmilitary efforts to ensure that all actions work in harmony to achieve the ends of policy. Frequently, particularly in military operations other than war, the military campaign is so closely integrated with other government operations that these nonmilitary actions can be considered to be part of the campaign.

In this chapter, we will describe how events at different levels of war are interrelated, focusing on the operational level as the link between strategy and tactics. We will examine the campaign as