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# GENERAL ALFRED M. GRAY'S Training and Education Letter on Professional Military Education

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*by General Alfred M. Gray Jr.*

From: Commandant of the Marine Corps  
To: Commanding General, Marine Corps  
Combat Development Command  
[MCCDC], Quantico, VA  
Subj: Training and Education<sup>2</sup>

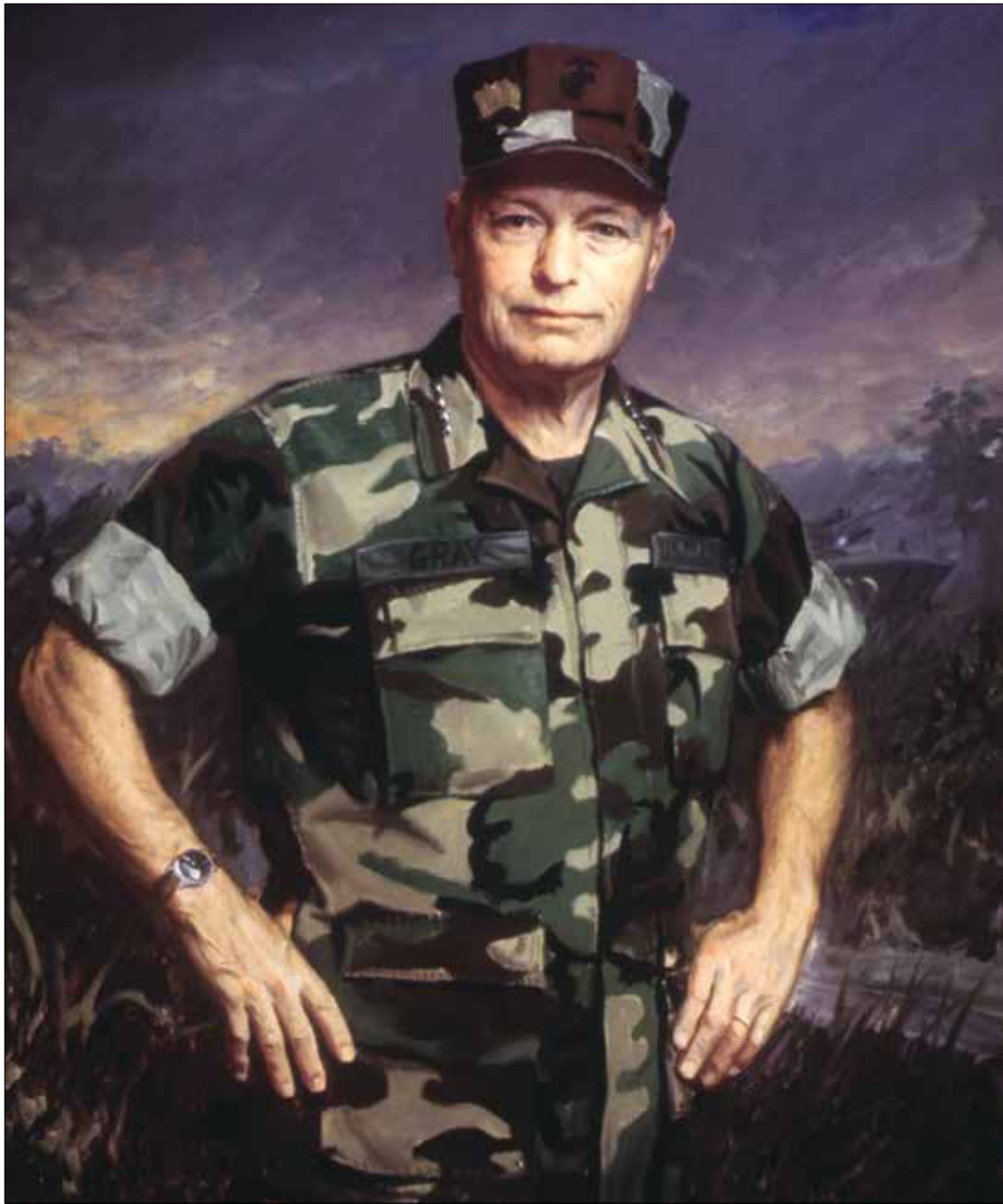
1. The full establishment at Quantico of our Marine Air-Ground Training and Education Center last fall marked the completion of the center's reorganization and relocation efforts. This particular reorganization and relocation was designed to achieve our overall objective of:
  - a. **Improved operational capability and warfighting effectiveness.**<sup>3</sup>
  - b. **Upgrade our high standards of excellence in training and education.**
  - c. **Focus and revitalize the training of our trainers.**

- d. **Develop and implement our training and education process throughout the Corps.**
2. We are off and running—you and the members of your command have made significant progress and—we have momentum! **Now, let us make it happen and institutionalize as we implement!**
3. My HASC [House Armed Services Committee] testimony on 12 July 1988 regarding professional military education [PME] was **designed to conceptualize our training and education process of the future.** As my commander for Combat Development, I want you to **develop and implement a concept for PME within the total Marine Corps training and education process.** My intentions were clearly stated during my testimony and during numerous meetings with you and others during the past year. This further **amplifying guidance** includes a **philosophical direction** for schools,

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<sup>2</sup> The original letter was written by Gen Alfred M. Gray Jr. to Commanding General, Marine Corps Combat Command, "Training and Education," 1 July 1989. Minor revisions were made to the text based on current standards for style, grammar, punctuation, and spelling.

<sup>3</sup> Emphasis (bold) found in the original document.



On 1 August 1989, the 29th Commandant of the Marine Corps (1987–91), Gen Alfred M. Gray Jr., established Marine Corps University in Quantico, VA.

*Art Collection, National Museum of the Marine Corps*

which are key players in the training and education process, and **specific guidance** regarding the training needs associated with concurrent actions.

4. **My intent in PME is to teach military judgment rather than knowledge.** Knowledge is, of course, important for developing judgment,



Warner Hall, named in honor of Senator John Warner, is home to the Marine Corps Command and Staff College and School of Advance Warfighting, and is connected to the BGen Edwin H. Simmons Marine Corps History Center. It was completed in 2015.

*Marine Corps University Foundation*

but should be taught in the context of teaching military judgment not as material to be memorized. **I want Marine NCOs and officers who know how to think about and in war**, who know how to conceptualize an engagement, a battle, and a campaign and then execute the concept. **The focus of effort should be teaching through doing**, through case studies, historical and present-day, real and hypothetical, presented in war games, map exercises, sandtable exercises, free-play, force-on-force “three day wars,” and the like. As education progresses, from The Basic School through Command and Staff

College, the material should grow more complex, but the essence should remain the same: **teaching officers and NCOs how to win in combat by out-thinking as well as out-fighting their opponents**. In order to implement this order, the following should be considered:

- a. The selection, preparation, and subsequent professional evolution of instructors, especially at [the] Amphibious Warfare School and Command and Staff College. Consideration should be given to forming a small permanent faculty of perhaps half a dozen world-class scholars on the military

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- art. Incoming instructors would spend a period of time, perhaps as much as one year, studying this faculty in preparation for teaching. This period of time should also be used to draw on intellectual resources available in the Quantico-Washington [DC] area. The objective is to develop instructors who are truly expert in the areas they teach.
- b. The prerequisites required of individual officers and SNCOs [senior noncommissioned officers] for selection to the next higher grade and for attendance at appropriate level schools. Such areas as tests, individualized professional development, prior self-study, and experience are some examples of prerequisites.
  - c. The mission of each Marine Corps school in preparing Marines for leadership demands and for assignments of increasing responsibility.
  - d. The current evaluation process, based on lesson plans, ELOs [enabling learning objectives] and TLOs [terminal learning objectives], is inappropriate for education, although it may have use for training in techniques. A new evaluation process must be devised that recognizes the inherent impossibility of “objectively” or quantitatively measuring an art.
5. Concurrent actions in the training and education environment may have an impact on the development of a PME concept and present areas, which should be examined and validated. These include:
- a. Examine the relationship of the transients and trainees portion of patients, prisoners, transients, and trainees to the training days prescribed in POIs and the efficiency of movement to and from training and education opportunities. Provide a plan to this Headquarters to reduce, streamline, and more efficiently control the process of conducting training and education.
  - b. **Training must be focused on winning in combat.** This requires recreating the conditions of combat as realistically as possible in peacetime field exercises **at all levels**, from squad through MEF. The uncertainty, confusion, fog, and friction that characterize combat must be essential elements of the training environment. Usually, this can best be done through free-play, force-on-force exercises.
  - c. We must institutionalize this kind of training by improving our ability to structure, umpire, and critique field exercises. **I consider this a high priority.**
  - d. Examine the procedures (i.e., command, maintenance, development) employed regarding our training ranges to include range improvements; develop a Marine Corps Training Range Master Plan (to include a Range Improvement Plan); provide the Master Plan to me for approval.



Recruits from Company H, 2d Recruit Training Battalion, read about Col Chesty Puller during a history class aboard Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego, CA, on 28 June 2013.

*Official U.S. Marine Corps photo, courtesy of Sgt Liz Gleason*

- e. Examine the education programs associated with command and control (i.e., Communication Officers School, Computer Science School); assess the requirement for a specific, dedicated C4 [command, control, communications, computer] Systems School; and, if appropriate, develop a plan to create a C4 Systems School in lieu of our existing schools. We need to develop a philosophy of command and control, and not simply define it in terms of systems.
- f. Examine the current process for the development of MAGTF tactics and techniques; create an organization, procedures, etc., for the development of MAGTF tactics and techniques and the method of introduction into training and education programs.
- g. Examine the current process for incorporating doctrine and changes to doctrine into our training and education system; and, if appropriate, institutionalize this process or methodology (i.e., a better understanding of doctrine as it applies to strategic, operational, and tactical level of operations).
- h. Develop the plan for a Marine Corps University at MCCDC: a focal point for planning, doctrine, training, education, etc.; it should provide insight and guidance on

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- naval strategy, national strategy, etc.; it should not be a consolidation effort, but a strengthening of our process.
- i. Examine the contribution an upgraded library and research facility will have on training, education, and warfighting.
  - j. Examine the increased incorporation of history in our training and education process. History should be used to teach officers military judgment, not to make academic historians or simply teach facts.
  - k. Examine our methods of training the trainers; determine what standardization and upgrades are needed and institutionalize the process.
  - l. Examine marksmanship training from the perspective of warfighting. Determine the changes needed to ensure:
    - (1) emphasis on basic marksmanship training, and field and requalification training;
    - (2) enhanced training for mission-unique requirements; and
    - (3) enhanced MOS training for marksmanship instructors and range officers.
6. **Philosophical direction** regarding our officer/SNCO/NCO schools:
- a. Training and education will emphasize the dictums I consider important to win: maneuver warfare; combined arms; deception and surprise; electronic warfare; fully developed communications capability (C3 [command, control, communication] superiority); flexible mobile logistics; stressed NBC [nuclear, biological, chemical] (tactical nuclear planning and offensive/defensive chemical capability); exploitation of existing mobility; active/passive ground-based air defense; and operational security.
  - b. The education process will **emphasize how to think**, and stress the development of a logical thought process.
  - c. The training and education environment **should challenge** all officers, SNCOs, and NCOs to bring out their best.
  - d. Formal process of **feedback from graduates** will be institutionalized and shared by all educational staffs.
  - e. **The environment of training and education** should emphasize the use of mission-type orders, history, battle studies, and low-intensity conflict.
  - f. **Emphasize a generalist perspective** among our career force.
  - g. The **focus** of all training and education for officers should be at least two grades beyond their current grade, deal in a balanced way with joint requirements, and challenge the student.
  - h. The **focus** of PME for SNCOs will be centered on the preparation of assuming duties of greater responsibility. This will encompass the basic, career, advanced, and senior levels.





Marines conduct a military education exercise at Antietam National Battlefield in Sharpsburg, MD.  
*Official U.S. Marine Corps photo, courtesy of PFC David Staten*

- i. **The SNCO Academy will focus** on a continual strengthening of the leadership development/professional warrior environment addressing battle skills in a platoon/section through battalion/squadron level. An added emphasis will be toward professional self-study/reading program.
- j. **The Basic School will focus** on “basics” and the emphasis will be on leadership of a rifle platoon. The basics should not be defined simply as techniques. They include the basic concept of a Marine officer as someone who is a vital part of a corporative, not a bureaucratic officer corps and who, therefore, is an active, contributing member of the total team, someone who takes initiative in furthering the goals and values of the Marine Corps and its ability to win in combat. He is a thinker as well as a leader. A professional warrior environment will be the focus with sufficient emphasis to ensure continued influence throughout the company-grade assignment. An important residual will be the continued need and importance to professional development of a self-study/reading program.
- k. **Amphibious Warfare School**

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- should focus** on MEB level of operations and the conduct of such operations in a joint environment. An important adjunct to the course will be the development of professional study/reading programs.
1. **Command and Staff College [C&SC] will focus** primarily on MEF-level operations **in the sense of operational art** and the conduct of such operations in a joint environment. Joint/combined operations and exercises, global wargames, national/international strategy, and associated thought processes and orientation will also be emphasized. Self-study/reading programs will be focused on matters pertinent to the high level/joint staffs, international strategy and high-level command. Provide for a portion of C&SC to receive joint accreditation.
  7. We are close to getting the education system to where it must be as we round out this decade and enter the new century. To get there, the following must happen:
    - a. Do not staff or examine these issues to death; let us get on with it—you have the charter.
    - b. Keep me and the force commanders informed.
    - c. Not later than 15 September 1989, I will expect the first of what should be a quarterly in-progress review (IPR) on all aspects of our effort.
    - d. IPR meetings will be at Quantico. Any roadblocks should be identified with COAs [courses of action] for removal. Decisions will be made!
  8. Use the **philosophy** expressed in **FMFM 1, *Warfighting***

A. M. GRAY