

Leadership for the Fourth Generation:

Preparing Leaders to Out-Think Our New Enemy

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The dogmas of the past are inadequate to the stormy present. The occasion is piled high with difficulty and we must rise to the occasion. As our case is new, so we must think anew and act anew.” Abraham Lincoln

This requirement was at the forefront of Secretary of Homeland Security Michael Chertoff's agenda as he took office on March 3, 2005. On the previous day, he told lawmakers, “thinking outside the box - it's what terrorists do to achieve surprise -- and I want my staffers to do the same thing¹.”

So how do we develop leaders who adhere to DOD Policies but are also trained and encouraged to think “Outside the Box” as indicated by Secretary Chertoff? This is the predicament we face as we find ourselves in the midst of this fourth generation of warfare.

The Marine Corps and Fourth Generation Warfare (4GW)

Our maneuver warfare doctrine originated from the relationship between the leader/thinker Gen Al Gray; William Lind, one of the founding fathers of 4GW; and Col John Boyd, USAF, creator of the Observe Orient Decide Act (OODA) decision cycle. This 3 GW doctrine has been successful in the last three major wars and other low-intensity conflicts during the past 25 years.

The concept of 4GW originated from the great minds of the Marine Corps over the last 20 years. In 1989 Col Gary Wilson, William Lind, et. Al., wrote: "The Changing Face of War: The Fourth Generation²" followed in 1994 by Col T. X. Hammes' article "The Evolution of War: The Fourth Generation³." In the years after the latter article was written few in the Marine Corps took notice of this new concept, instead the focus was on acquiring new technologies and refining cold war tactics (despite the absence of a cold war enemy).

After the bombing of the *USS Cole*, the attacks of Sept 11, 2001 and the current adversarial operations being conducted in Iraq , no military leader should doubt the validity of 4GW and the fact we are in a decades long battle with 4GW adversaries.

Why change a good thing?

The most important step for the Marine Corps to prepare itself to fight a fourth generation opponent is to educate our present and more importantly our future leaders on the concepts of 4GW to enable them to excel in this unpredictable and chaotic environment—teaching them skills to "think outside of the box" as suggested by Secretary Chertoff.

We have been producing exceptional 2nd and 3rd GW leaders for nearly 100 years; however, in the 4GW we face opponents that do not use greater fire power or better military tactics to defeat us. We are now faced with an opponent that will exploit every aspect of society in order to defeat us and there is only one rule he will follow to achieve victory – there are no rules!

If in the 1970s we discovered that the Soviet Union was teaching its officers a new system of war fighting and used this new system to defeat us in several small battles, we would have quickly developed our own leaders to be able to counter and defeat them. So why aren't we doing that for this new enemy? Our current military leadership development programs still view battling insurgent/terrorists as a temporary problem and feel that we still need to defeat a cold war model enemy.

As with any form of change there is resistance. Particularly from the group that I will refer to as the "What about China?" crowd. They are Cold War warriors hoping that China will replace the USSR as the Cold War II opponent so their style of warfare will be in vogue again. As outlined throughout the book, *Unrestricted Warfare: China's Master Plan to Destroy America*⁴ the authors assert China will wage a total war on the US using 4GW tactics as we witnessed on September 11 and others we have not seen yet. Some may argue they are shaping the battle space already. Therefore, if there is to be a Cold War II our leaders must be proficient in 4GW concepts.

So what's the difference?

Proficiency in 4GW requires leaders to be able to operate comfortably in a decentralized organizational structure, lead in the absence of SOPs or regulations, understand and thrive in a chaotic environment. They also need to not only process a vast quantity of information rapidly but discriminate between what information is relevant and what is not; then form logical decisions.

There are several new sciences that would form the foundation for the reform of our current officer education system. Complexity, Chaos Theory, Network Science and Information Technology should be an integral part of the core curriculum.

In addition to those subjects, it is critical that all 4GW leaders are well versed in the employment of Information Operations⁵ as “non-kinetic fires.” IO is essential to counter and hopefully neutralize the opponent’s effects on the society in which they operate. In 4GW, IO must be included in each phase of the decision making cycle.

4GW leaders must be as accurate and responsive with their non-kinetic fires as they are with their kinetic ones in order to deliver the desired effects on selected targets. Food, money, medicine, employment, respect, and information (real, mis-, dis-) are all forms of ammunition⁶ for this new weapon system.

To achieve proficiency using non-kinetic fires, just as with kinetic fires, we must allow leaders to train with these new weapon systems before employing them in combat. For years people around the world have enjoyed various simulation games – SimCity^{tm7} for example. These powerful simulations predict how various sectors of society react when external influence is applied. These commercially available programs can be quickly modified to allow leaders at all levels to see the results of their decision to employ or not employ these non-kinetic fires. After nearly 4 years in Afghanistan and Iraq there should be plenty of data points to develop an accurate version of SimCity: Insurgentville.

Officer Candidate School (OCS) / The Basic School (TBS) – AKA The 4GW Leadership Training Academy Phase I and II

For the sake of brevity I will not discuss the many changes I would propose for our current OCS syllabus in order to build 4GW leaders. I will, however, say that emphasis needs to be placed on operating from *commander's intent* rather than by rigid adherence to orders. More time must be devoted to developing tactical decision making and less on physical conditioning—the latter can be accomplished prior to OCS with prerequisite levels established for entry.

OCS is considered a screening tool for potential candidates and does well at ensuring candidates that complete the course have athletic prowess, are forceful in demeanor, pass basic academics and can pay attention to detail. But wait—aren't those the same qualities we look for in our enlisted marines? Where is the distinction in how we train/screen our leaders and those who are led? Is there any? OCS needs to screen, test and evaluate on those basic concepts to a lesser degree and focus more on the skills officers are really required to possess—sound judgment, planning and decision making.

One area of our current curriculum that needs to be reviewed is Military History. We must study military history not from the current prospective as a motivational tool but as a science. We must carefully analyze the tactical decision making of our great military leaders and study the 3GW and 4GW leaders of our opposition as well—such as Field Marshal Irwin Rommel, Mao Zedong, General V. N. Giap and especially Osama bin Laden. This will give us insight on how and why they achieved success against us

and possibly prevent it from happening again. We cannot learn from our mistakes if we continue to ignore them.

Throughout OCS and TBS the new sciences and the application of Boyd's OODA Loop need to be included in all aspects of the curriculum. These concepts need to be exercised and evaluated through practical application. During my time at OCS, students received remedial training for many of the physical events but never for decision making. It is more important for an officer to demonstrate proficiency in these areas than it is climbing a rope.

TBS needs to place more emphasis on decision making and reward innovative thinking as much as following doctrine. For example, during the combat orders examination, the current emphasis is placed on the format of the order rather than the plan formulated by the Lieutenant – in my opinion it should be just the opposite. TBS should consider incorporating simunitions or computer based simulations to allow the 2ndLt to see first hand the result of the plan he developed.

So now they know how to think out of the box, how do we keep them out of the Brig?

Now that we have figured out how to train free thinking leaders, how do we keep them operating within the boundaries of our current system? The answer lies in Boyd's OODA Loop, the ability to operate from commander's intent and trust in their leaders.

The orientation section of the OODA decision making cycle takes into consideration our background, personal beliefs and the environment in which we operate. In this phase, the boundaries in which we must operate are defined. These boundaries at times might be pushed or crossed but we need to take into consideration the consequence of those actions as well.

“It's all about commander's intent⁸” stated Gen Mattis when talking about the communications with his 1st MARDIV Marines in OIF I. This is key to operating in a decentralized structure when timely decision-making is required. Commanders must ensure they give clear guidance to subordinate leaders and allow them to execute. Subordinate leaders must ensure their actions are in concert with the desired end-state of their seniors.

Leaders must know that if they follow the previous two steps they will be supported by their seniors. This special trust and confidence is bidirectional and 4GW leaders making split second decisions have no time to wonder if they are going to be second guessed by their seniors. This has to be a known fact and this relationship must be developed before going into a situation where these types of decisions are required.

Conclusion

“Master the mechanics and techniques; understand the art and profession; and be smart enough to know when to deviate from it,”⁹ was an accurate statement made by General Zinni. The thinking outside of the box concept can be a dangerous one—leaders need guidelines in which to operate. They must understand the inside the box

concepts before they go outside of it. However, if we expect our officers to be the free thinkers that Commandant Gray attempted to develop, then we need to provide today's leaders opportunities for free play training/education as he offered to his Marines while in command¹⁰.

While the Marine Corps has demonstrated its commitment to defeating 4GW enemies by creating units such as the Chemical Biological Incident Response Force and the Anti-Terrorism Battalion, training the operating forces must be the priority. We need to continue forging this path to ensure the contributions made by our great visionaries are not wasted. The previous generations of leaders we have created were experts at winning battles now its time to create a generation of leaders who are experts at winning wars.

¹ <http://www.wreg.com/Global/story.asp?S=3021434>

² *Marine Corps Gazette*, October 1989 pp 22

³ *Marine Corps Gazette*, September 1994 pp 35

⁴ *Unrestricted Warfare: China's Master Plan to Destroy America*, Qiao Liang, Wang Xiangsui, Pan American Publishing Company, 2002

⁵ Information Operations are described as the integrated employment of the core capabilities of Electronic Warfare, Computer Network Operations, Psychological Operations, Military Deception, and Operational Security in concert with specified supporting and related capabilities to influence, disrupt, corrupt, or usurp adversary human and automated decision making while protecting our own. Joint Doctrine for Information Operations, Second Draft, 14 Dec 2004, pp I-1

⁶ "4GW and the OODA Loop Implications of the Iraq Insurgency" Col GI Wilson, LTC Greg Wilcox, Col Chet Richards; Apr 12 2005, http://www.defense-and-society.org/fcs/ppt/16th_strategy_conference.ppt

⁷ SimCity is a registered trademark of Electronic Arts.

⁸ "Marine General: Leading From Iraqi Battlefield Informed Key Decisions" *Inside the Pentagon*, October 16 2003, Elaine Grossman, pp1

⁹ *Joint Doctrine for Information Operations, Second Draft*, 14 Dec 2004, pp 64

¹⁰ http://www.defense-and-society.org/lind/lind_6_4_04.htm