Information Warfare

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Information Warfare: Forging Communication Strategies for Twenty-first Century Operational Environments.

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Through the long and varied history of the U.S. Marine Corps, one thing has remained consistent: its ability to recognize when change is needed and adapt to the situation. A significant factor that contributes to the Corps’ adaptability is the constant focus on training and education that every Marine—officer and enlisted—receives throughout the length of their career. In the *36th Commandant’s Planning Guidance, 2015*, General Joseph F. Dunford Jr. highlighted how the Corps can continue to meet those changing needs: “The challenges of an increasingly uncertain, complex, and decentralized operating environment will continue to place new demands on our leaders at all levels. Our recruiting standards, manning policies, training, and education must constantly evolve to produce Marines who can meet those challenges.”

As a Corps, we must move away from the Industrial Age educational approach of listening to a lecture, memorizing facts, and then regurgitating those facts. For Marines today, training and education must be understood as vastly different exercises of the mind and body. Marine Corps *training* refers to job-oriented training aimed at accomplishing the tasks associated with the military mission. It prepares us for what we know we will have to do in combat. The concept of education itself seems intuitive: learning in an academic setting. However, distinctions for our purposes must be made because education entails much more than that simple concept—it also prepares us for dealing with the unknown in combat. For our purposes here, though, *higher education* generally refers to a university education that qualifies the degree holder to work in a professional field. *Further education* generally includes postgraduate studies focused on a master’s or doctoral degree. As one of the youngest Service schoolhouses, where does that place Marine Corps University (MCU) on the degree-granting spectrum and what is our responsibility to the servicemembers who attend?

In July 2018, when I assumed command of Training and Education Command, I looked at studies of the university, such as the *U.S. Marine Corps Officer Professional Military Education 2006 Study and Findings*, from prior commanding generals including my own tenure as president and the current administration. While much good is being accomplished at MCU, there is always room for improvement. In particular, MCU must offer an Information Age approach focused on active, student-centered learning, through which students are challenged to work as groups to learn by doing and also to learn from each other. Our graduates should have the ability to think critically, recognize the need for change, and act
without waiting for instructions. Our measure of effectiveness needs to be our students’ capabilities once they leave MCU rather than how they perform while they are here.

One of the most important aspects of MCU is its strong publishing program that helps to add knowledge across many different areas. These publications are representative of much of the great thinking and writing going on at MCU and they are the basis for what we are trying to do as we prepare our students for future challenges. A perfect example of this publishing effort is the book you are currently reading.

James Farwell’s book offers MCU the opportunity to bridge the gap between classroom instruction and real-world action with a thorough discussion of communication and strategy. Farwell builds on the foundation laid by national strategy thinkers who recognize the need to develop a comprehensive communication strategy to conduct effective information warfare. This text provides a concise treatise on the steps for developing and implementing a communication strategy and includes key historical and contemporary examples for deeper insight. The military concept of operational art is fully supported by examples that illustrate the environment, the problem to be addressed, and the approach to be used. As the title indicates, Information Warfare is intended as an easy-to-use workbook that guides the student step by step, while posing the questions necessary for executing an effective communication strategy. It also includes lengthy footnotes that will fully inform and illustrate how to accomplish classroom and mission goals.

I firmly believe that this book will have a significant impact in an area that has too often been neglected in our operations. We need to understand information operations better and integrate it into everything we do in the operating environment. It is a growth industry that we have mainly paid lip service to in the past—to our own detriment, as amply demonstrated in the book. I encourage all MCU faculty and students to read and study the contents of this book as a start in the process of reaching a better understanding.

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Endnotes
