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In My View

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IN MY VIEW . . .

“Institutionalizing Innovation”

Sir:

You are to be commended for publishing the excellent article by Captain Bradd Hayes, U.S. Navy, who challenges the Navy’s leadership to foster, recognize, incorporate, and reward change that enhances mission accomplishment. Bradd raises the question of whether change can be institutionalized at all. I think that it can, and that there is a fundamental role to be played by doctrine organizations within the military, to act as “learning organizations.”

Peter Senge tells us in *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization* that “learning organizations” are those where the individuals within “continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning how to learn together.”

Naval Doctrine Command recognizes this responsibility and has recently chartered an Academic Advisory Group specifically charged with assistance in creating the climate of a “learning organization” which will promote many of the excellent ideas raised in Bradd’s article. We would welcome the ideas of others who have considered this issue.

Doctrine organizations, as was alluded to in Bradd’s article by Dean Robert Wood of the Naval War College’s Center for Naval Warfare Studies, have a dual responsibility as both “keepers of the flame” and as “learning organizations.” Dean Wood stated that doctrine borders on dogma (I would have used another

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word), whereas innovation represents the opposite. A true "learning organization" should be able to perform the functions of "keeper of the flame" and also be the place where new ideas can have a hearing. Dean Wood was invited to join and head the Naval Doctrine Command's Academic Advisory Group.

When attempting to be both the "keeper of the flame" and a "learning organization," doctrine commands need to make sure that new ideas are clearly identified as such and are not mistaken for approved doctrine. One such method is the publication of technical reports and articles, signed by individual staff members and researchers. These are ideas, not yet fully matured, published for circulation and comment.

Bradd suggests in his article that most new ideas will come into the U.S. Navy from "ad hoc" groups, the SSG, the CNO Executive Panel, or "think tanks." There are, of course, other avenues for the introduction of new ideas. New ideas will come from everywhere, inside and outside the organization. A true "learning organization" will screen the plethora of new ideas that are "out there" to see which of them are of interest. The recent article by Wayne Hughes in the Summer 1995 *Review* includes many recommendations for doctrinal development which will be considered by the Naval Doctrine Command. Wayne is also a member of the NDC Academic Advisory Group. Naturally, if the CNO or Commandant of the Marine Corps determines that a new idea is of interest, they will expect naval doctrine organizations to develop more detailed concepts.

When the external debate on a non-mandated new idea is reaching a close, the doctrinal organization takes the idea inside and prepares concept papers and briefings. The purpose of such concept papers is to create consensus within the service—not necessarily to invite initial comment from outside the organization. Obviously there will be cases where the pressure of time requires the formulation of a concept paper simultaneously with original research. Concept papers and briefings are probably best handled by a specific group within a doctrine organization.

Finally, when the new concept has been briefed sufficiently around the organization, it is time to shift the new idea to the group which is chartered to develop the actual doctrine. The doctrine organizations of the military are well-equipped to do this and regularly interact with each other in a cooperative manner. The product of their efforts will be papers which will influence what is taught and the conduct of training exercises and actual operations.

The above represents one possible view on innovation and doctrinal development. It is not the only possible view. We would like to hear from others.

Bradd's article concentrates primarily on the "idea" part of innovation. The introduction of new ideas into organizations is a completely separate problem that requires different skills than deciding what needs to be changed. This

requires our consideration just as much as those ideas recommended by Bradd. I hope that we will be able to read about this other dimension of innovation on the pages of future *Reviews*.

James J. Tritten, Ph.D.
Naval Doctrine Command

Doctrine on the Wrong Foot

Sir:

I write in response to Wayne P. Hughes' "The Power in Doctrine" in the Summer 1995 issue of the *Naval War College Review*. There is so much that is constructive in this article that I am loath to criticize. I am also painfully aware that having married an admiral's daughter in no way qualifies me, a retired Air Force officer, as an authority on naval matters. It is evident to me that Captain Hughes has examined the problems of doctrine in considerable depth; however, in the era of jointness, it is singularly important that we employ common definitions for the key terms we use if we expect harmonious cooperation in joint operations. I think he is off on the wrong foot in trying to make doctrine prescriptive.

Much of what Captain Hughes has to say is valuable to the present discussion of doctrine. His analysis of the four echelons of doctrine, for example, is a real advance. The case he makes for the first echelon, at the very top, makes me rethink my stance on the use of the term "doctrine." I even think we should explore the possibility of establishing an officially sanctioned hierarchy of terminology, using the terms "policy," "doctrine," and "technique" rather more precisely than at present. Much of what the Air Force calls doctrine in AFM 1-1, *Basic Doctrine*, is in fact policy, and we might gain by so designating it. Each service is going to have to accept some concessions in its cherished practices if jointness is to become workable.

But the course Captain Hughes advocates with respect to the authority of doctrine is almost certain to cause bitter wrangling in the joint arena. He asserts that doctrine loses its power when it is optional: "When doctrine is not prescriptive, it is emasculated" (p. 12). However, at the same time he defines good doctrine as prescriptive without being constrictive, and he recognizes the need for order without undue restraints on freedom. This, to my mind, undercuts his call for prescription, for mandatory doctrine. Later in his essay he seems further to undermine his case for obligatory doctrine when he proposes the use of "should" rather than "shall" to allow decision-makers more freedom.

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If we fail to establish a common understanding, we will be doing a great disservice to national defense. Perhaps we can come to some accommodation that will satisfy those naval officers who have been skeptical of rigid "Fighting Instructions" and at the same time be acceptable to the Army and Air Force conception of doctrine as suggestive but not mandatory. A great deal of what Captain Hughes wants to call doctrine is what can appropriately be called technique and procedures. Technique is, by definition, the mechanical part of any art. Techniques are what we drill; we perform them automatically, almost without the exercise of thought or volition. By contrast, doctrine deals with those areas of the military art where choices have to be made, where the commander must choose a course of action suited to the particular situation. Doctrine has been defined as a statement of "what has usually worked best in the past." But as JCS Publication 1 puts it, judgment must be exercised in its application. If Captain Hughes will back off from his call for mandatory doctrine while retaining most of the "power" he seeks by encouraging greater emphasis on uniform techniques and procedures, we may yet achieve effective joint operations.

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(signed) Pelham G. Boyer, Managing Editor