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Warfighting: Fleet Marine Force Manual 1

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However, it would be tedious to untangle the indisputable facts which are interspersed with exaggerations and one-sided recollections of conversations with those once in high place but now conveniently dead.

In the conventional sense, there is nothing new or illuminating in this book. But it is fascinating in its passion, and as a portrait of a wounded warrior—wounded in every sense. While many may consider the book to be Colonel Hackworth's way of getting revenge for having to leave the army under a cloud, it is more than that. Like Hackworth the man, the book has juice and no one who lived through his era in the U.S. Army will be neutral. But what might have been a sensation in the seventies is now just another layer of Vietnam sadness.

Be that as it may, nineteen years after the end for him in Vietnam, Colonel Hackworth's war is not yet over, and he is not letting either the issues or his antagonists rest in peace.

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Gray, A.M. *Warfighting: Fleet Marine Force Manual 1*. Washington: Dept. of the Navy, 1989. 88pp.

This small book is a classic on war. General A.M. Gray, Commandant of the Marine Corps, intends its message to be taken to heart. He has issued a copy to each of his officers to read—and reread. “The thoughts

contained here,” says Gray, “represent not just guidance for actions in combat, but a way of thinking in general.” Gray’s “way of thinking” can be extended to any field of endeavor where opposing wills conflict.

Military conflict is clearly the focus, however. One is immediately drawn to compare Sun Tzu’s *The Art of War*, both in congruence of philosophy and brevity of thought. Sun Tzu teaches “Now an army may be likened to water, for just as flowing water avoids the heights and hastens to the lowlands, so an army avoids strength and strikes weakness.” General Gray, with obvious reference to Colonel John Boyd’s often repeated lecture, “The Patterns of Conflict,” fully embraces the fluid doctrine of maneuver warfare, “to circumvent the enemy’s strength and strike him where he is not prepared.” Were it so easy we might all be generals!

In its pithy way, however, *Warfighting* goes much further in defining maneuver warfare, which has both spatial and temporal dimensions. It also includes a moral dimension that must be calculated carefully in order to achieve a focus of effort against the enemy’s critical vulnerability. The process—a combination of mental, moral and physical—constitutes Boyd’s OODA loop, an acronym for the four-step process: observation, orientation, decision, and action. By observing the enemy and evaluating or orienting to the situation, a decision and ensuing action can present the

enemy—if done swiftly enough—with a “succession of rapid, violent and unexpected actions which create a turbulent and rapidly deteriorating situation with which he cannot cope.”

Warfighting accepts chaos as the norm of battle and proposes maneuver warfare as a means of exploiting it. Leaders at all levels are expected to be speedy, bold, and enterprising—the elements of maneuver—so they can achieve their commander’s intent. Mission-type orders and a clear picture of the *purpose* of the commander’s intent, two echelons up, are essential to permit the decentralized decision making required of the OODA loop. The aim is to concentrate all available force at the decisive time and place. Victory depends on repetitive concentration, so a competitive rhythm, or tempo, must be created in order that the greatest combination of concentration and speed can be brought upon and sustained against the enemy.

By contrasting attrition to maneuver in style, operational to tactical in level, offense to defense in form, and general war to low-intensity conflict in spectrum, *Warfighting* presents the reader with a thoughtful analysis of the Marine Corps’ requirements. The four chapters, entitled “The Nature of War;” “The Theory of War;” “Preparing for War;” and “The Conduct of War,” are short and easy to read. They offer no prescriptive solutions.

Though this book has been widely discussed within the Corps, it

deserves more analysis and debate for its potential contribution to naval operations. It will be interesting to see how the Navy-Marine Corps team implements the maneuver warfare concept. In *Warfighting*, the Marine Corps has added philosophical meaning to its tactical doctrine.

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Smith, Charles R. *U.S. Marines in Vietnam: High Mobility and Stand-down, 1969*. Washington: History & Museums Division Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, 1989.

One of the criticisms we frequently hear about U.S. participation in the war in Vietnam is that we didn’t know what we were doing. I never agreed with that argument and this book doesn’t either. It begins with a lucid discussion of U.S. strategies in Vietnam followed by a detailed account of how III MAF (and other forces in I Corps) planned and fought the war in accordance with the broad goals of Vietnamization, Pacification, and continued pressure on the enemy.

U.S. Marines in Vietnam is not limited to the role of the III MAF Marines. It includes all of the forces operating in I Corps, as well as the contributions of other Marines: the Special Landing Force, advisors, ANGLICO, MACV staff officers and the embassy guards.

The heart of the book is the detailed account of the day-to-day