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The Principles of War

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FOREWORD

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THE PRINCIPLES OF WAR

A Lecture delivered by
Captain Frank L. Johnson, USN
at the Naval War College
August 30, 1951

THE PRINCIPLES OF WAR
(AS ACCEPTED BY THE U. S. ARMY)

1. The Objective
2. Simplicity
3. Unity of Command
4. The Offensive
5. Maneuver
6. Mass
7. Economy of Forces
8. Surprise
9. Security

Source: DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY FIELD MANUAL (FM 100-5)

Part of the mission of the Naval War College is to further an understanding of the fundamentals of warfare. The "Principles of War" are considered to be one of those fundamentals. Accordingly, it is my purpose this morning to review with you the more widely accepted "Principles of War" and to give a few examples of their application in order to provide a better understanding and appreciation of their usefulness as guides in sound planning and in successful operations.

Captain Johnson is a member of the Staff of the Naval War College.

Paradoxically, the United States Navy—alone I believe of all major military services, U. S. or foreign—does not accept officially the Principles of War as such. They are not listed and no specific reference to them is made in the Navy's series of U. S. Fleet publications (the U. S. F.'s). However, as you either well know or would assume, all of the principles of war on this list are actually considered or are taken cognizance of in those same U. S. F.'s.

The Navy's attitude has been that they are permissable as maxims, precepts, factors, guides, or even basic considerations but it is questioned whether they can be accepted as principles. Also, in view of the many differences in the various lists both in concept and number and by reason of the continuous doctoring of the principles themselves as to scope and interpretation, their immutability has been challenged.

The Principles of War may be defined as "guides which should be considered by military commanders in the formulation of sound plans and in the conduct of successful operations." Uusually these principles are condensed into the form of a simple list of single words or short phrases which might be tabbed "labels". In order to add greater substance and meaning to these so-called symbols or labels there has been prepared and distributed to each of you a mimeograph of the Principles of War setting forth for each principle a brief statement of "What is it?" and "What does it contribute to success in war?"

(Editor's Note: For the convenience of the reader, the lecturer's briefed concept of the Principles of War has been included at the end of the lecture.)

In labelling some of the principles in these extracts I followed the preference of many students of naval warfare; as for example MOBILITY in place of the U. S. Army's MANEUVER.

The mere mention of the term "Principles of War" brings out the semantic beast in certain individuals. The word discussion goes something like this: "A principle is a basic or fundamental truth—an essential constituent. Therefore, to be valid as a principle each principle of war must be included in each plan or in each action. But since each principle of war is not always included it follows, ipso facto, that the so-called principles are really not principles at all—otherwise each would be a part of any plan or action."

So, for those who cringe at the term principle, meaning "a basic truth", I offer for your consideration this definition of principle: "A general law used as a guide to action." I like to consider the "Principles of War" as the guides or as the factors in the art of warfare which a successful commander must consider in his planning and operating. Granted, he may not use one or more principles in any specific plan or operation, yet the commander must have considered their use and discarded them only after careful weighing.

The "Principles of War" have been distilled from the history of warfare over a period of 2500 years. Sun Tzu, the famous Chinese general, came up with 13 principles in 500 BC. Napoleon is credited with 115 maxims. Clausewitz, I believe, is satisfied with but 7 principles. Nelson employed 10 tactical principles. The British Royal Navy now officially recognizes 10 principles. The U. S. Army first mentioned the Principles of War in 1921 in the War Department Training Regulation 10-5.

It is certainly not necessary for me to emphasize that an intelligent perception of the Principles of War is best gained by intensive and objective study of the principles and methods of great military leaders of the past, examined in the light of present and

possible future developments in weapons, equipment and techniques or, in other words, in the light of modern conditions of war.

Also, there is no need to stress the point that the underlying principles of warfare do not change; it is the application of these principles which is variable. New weapons and new techniques all dictate changes in the application of the principles of war.

The airplane, tank, motorized artillery, submarine, radar, fighter direction, and the amphibious assault are some of the weapons, developments or techniques which have exerted a profound influence on warfare and particularly, in the application of the principles of war.

Before presenting the principles, a few words of caution concerning their application would appear to be in order. They should not be regarded as religious tenets, but rather as reliable guides indicating the factors which should be evaluated in order to arrive at the desired results. This proper evaluation depends upon the experience, education, and training of the commander. It is not necessary that all of the principles be specifically included in any one plan or action. The correct application of any one, or of several of them, will not assure soundness or success. In fact, the correct application of all the principles of war may not assure success if the human elements—morale, discipline, leadership—are lacking or are inferior to those of the enemy.

Success in war depends more on morale than on physical qualities. Numbers, armament and resources cannot compensate for the lack of confidence in self and leaders, nor for the lack of energy, determination, skill and bold offensive spirit which springs from a national determination to conquer.

These principles are not all inclusive and they do not offer a magic formula to resolve any and all military problems. A mili-

tary commander must resolve for himself what the principles imply and how they should be applied.

This brings us to an examination of the Principles of War themselves. The first principle which we will consider is "The Principle of The Objective".

STATEMENT:

EVERY MILITARY UNDERTAKING MUST HAVE AN OBJECTIVE; THAT IS, IT MUST BE DIRECTED TOWARD A CLEARLY DEFINED GOAL AND ALL ACTIVITY MUST CONTRIBUTE TO THE ATTAINMENT OF THAT GOAL.

This principle is invariably placed first on listings of the principles of war, and rightly so because it is the dominating one in every act of war. Without an objective every other principle of war becomes meaningless. Some military personnel hold that it is the only true principle of war and that all other principles merely aid in achieving the objective. This viewpoint has merit but does it serve any practical purpose as such?

On the national level, military objectives support the national objective in peace as well as in war. During war, in addition, the military objectives should directly support the national war aims. By national war aims I mean that set of conditions which if fulfilled, should restore peace on satisfactory terms. In World War II the only war aim which the allies had or, at least the only one which they publicized, was "Unconditional Surrender". The results of that war aim are all too painfully evident. Let us hope that our strategic planners now have a realistic set of national war aims and that our war plans support those aims.

The British have a noteworthy title for the Principle of the Objective: "SELECTION AND MAINTENANCE OF THE

AIM". It is the selection of the proper objective which is the difficult decision. As you are well aware much study, time and effort goes into the selection of the proper objective. Here at the Naval War College a large portion of the curriculum is devoted to just that—the Naval Manual of Operational Planning and the operations problems are the tools.

The Battle of Midway provides an excellent example of a proper selection of the physical objective. Although the Japanese troop ships were tempting targets, the carriers were the main threat and were therefore chosen as the primary objective.

"Maintenance of the Aim" highlights an important feature of this principle. History is replete with examples of failures to maintain the objective. In 1942 the Germans in their summer offensive in Russia, supposedly started with one objective—cross the Volga, sweep around behind it to the north in order to capture Moscow and to envelope a large part of the Russian Army. Early successes went to their (more likely Hitler's) head and they split their forces for a second objective—the Caucasus oilfields. Disaster resulted.

Examples of commanders who did not deviate from their mission must include Admiral Spruance and his decision at the Marianas to defend the landing operations (his assigned mission) instead of rushing out to meet the Japanese fleet several hundred miles to the westward.

On the other hand, the problem of when NOT to maintain the aim or the objective is a difficult one. The considerations would be the same, as those governing the initial selection of the objective.

The application of this master principle involves consid-

eration of all the principles of war coupled with the most skilled judgment, especially as regards changing the objective.

The second principle is the "Principle of The Offensive".

STATEMENT:

VICTORY CAN NEVER BE WON BY PASSIVE DEFENSE; ONLY SUSTAINED OFFENSIVE ACTION, OR THE THREAT OF UNFAILING OFFENSIVE ACTION BRINGS SUCCESS.

Briefly stated the "offensive" means carrying the war to the enemy. Every military man understands the importance of the offensive. It has been said that the selection by the commander of the right time and place for offensive action is the decisive factor in attaining the objective.

A characteristic American trait is reflected in this principle. Our military doctrine in general is to keep the enemy off balance by offensive action. It does not signify headlong attack nor attack for the sake of the principle itself. The aim must be that of creating favorable conditions for attack. It is the timed attack that counts.

The Principle of the Offensive does not mean that defense is never permissible. On the contrary, in war the offense and defense are mutually complementary. All war, strategically or tactically, must be both offensive and defensive. A good illustration of that is the paradox of air power in which the bombardment aircraft on offensive missions take defensive action in flight against the offensive attacks of interceptors whose mission is defensive in nature. Defensive measures, including defensive strategy, should be employed so as to permit going over to the offensive

as soon as the situation permits. During the early part of World War II it was necessary for the Allies to remain on the strategic defensive. In the Pacific area, our navy had to maintain the defensive until 1943. But even during this period, if you will recall, the U. S. Navy went over to a limited offensive on several occasions —Marshall Island raids, Wake and Marcus Island strikes, and Guadalcanal. Also, Doolittle's Tokyo raid definitely belongs in the list.

The offensive implies sustained pressure which is followed up and exploited. Here we encounter the term "pursuit" which is of such importance that some military students include it separately as a principle of war. Admiral Conolly likes the term "exploitation" which connotes more than just pursuit. He believes that there should be a "Principle of Exploitation." General Patton's Third Army sweep across France in World War II, the U. S. submarine offensive in the Pacific and the Carrier Task Force strikes in the South China Sea are examples of exploiting successes large and small.

The offensive confers the initiative and, with it, freedom of action. It tends to deny both to the enemy. In World War II when the Allies went over to the offensive, they had command of the sea and local command of the air. Invasions of North Africa, Sicily, Italy and finally Normandy resulted; all made possible for us by the use of that old but ever-present weapon—sea power—against a land-bound enemy. World War III, if it comes, may well find a duplication of this same situation against land-bound Russia.

Principle number 3 is the "Principle of Concentration".

STATEMENT:

TO ACHIEVE SUCCESS IN WAR IT IS ESSENTIAL TO

CONCENTRATE SUPERIOR FORCES (GROUND, SEA, AND AIR) AT THE DECISIVE PLACE AND TIME IN THE PROPER DIRECTION AND TO SUSTAIN THIS SUPERIORITY AT THE POINT OF CONTACT AS LONG AS IT MAY BE REQUIRED.

This principle goes by many names—mass, superiority, concentration of combat power, concentration of force. "Concentration" is a time-honored battle term in the U. S. Navy and it more nearly depicts to me the dynamic intent of the stated principle. It means superiority of fighting power at the point of contact—the superiority being maintained as long as required. This superiority of fighting power may be obtained by a combination of such factors as: personnel, materiel, weapons, fire power, organization, unity of command and unity of effort, leadership, combat readiness, morale.

In the naval action off Samar in the Philippines in 1944 the Japanese were superior in almost everything except leadership.

The time element is important in concentration since the application of this principle implies the simultaneous employment of force. This importance is emphasized by the successful heavy bombing technique used over Germany in the later stages of the last war. Operations of very large numbers of bombers were not only concentrated in space—on one target—but also in time, the actual attack being compressed into the shortest possible period. Pre H-hour bombardments by air and surface forces also emphasize the concentration of fire power both in time and space.

Strangely enough, the Germans applied the principle of concentration in their employment of submarine wolf pack tactics, but, in effect, neglected the principle in the Battle of Britain when it required 8 hours to send over a total of 800 planes thus failing to saturate the British defenses; they also failed to concentrate their V-1 weapon attacks in terms of time.

The interdependence of the principles of war are well illustrated by this principle. Attainment of concentration requires proper selection of the objective followed by the application of all other principles—mobility, economy of effort, surprise, security and cooperation.

The fourth principle is the "Principle of Mobility".

STATEMENT:

MODERN WAR DEMANDS: (1) THE POSSESSION AND USE OF THE CAPABILITY OF PHYSICAL MOBILITY (STRATEGICALLY AND TACTICALLY) TO TRANSFER FORCES ECONOMICALLY AND WITH RELATIVE RAPIDITY FROM PLACE TO PLACE AND TO MAINTAIN THOSE FORCES IN ACTION; AND (2) A HIGH DEGREE OF FLEXIBILITY TO ENABLE PRE-ARRANGED PLANS AND OPERATIONS TO BE ALTERED TO MEET CHANGING SITUATIONS AND UNEXPECTED DEVELOPMENTS.

Movement, maneuver, flexibility are synonyms for mobility. As indicated in the statement both physical movement of forces and flexibility of plans are included in this principle. Also inherent in the intent of "Mobility" is the concept of adaptation of plans and movements to meet the changing conditions of warfare.

Mobility is defined, in a more narrow sense, as the means or vehicle that carries fire power to the position selected for best results. It is an inherent characteristic of naval forces but is, of course, greatly enhanced by the availability of advance bases. Mobility makes possible the more effective application of concentration, offensive, surprise, security, and economy of effort.

Since relative mobility or flexibility is a desired goal in combat the reduction of enemy mobility is an obvious consideration.

One of the primary missions of tactical air power is to interdict the battle area in order to destroy enemy means of movement.

Weapon development, present and future, concentrates on speed and range or radius of action—witness the jet plane, guided missile, the atomic-powered submarine. Reason—to gain the upper hand in the race for a relative advantage in mobility or in relative rapidity of movement. Here, air power comes into its own. The ability of an air force to assemble at a common point from widely dispersed bases in such a short period of time, and strike rapidly to the extent of its range in any direction, makes it the most mobile of all the armed forces.

I want to pause here for a possible provocative digression. The above flat statement regarding the mobility of air forces cannot be accepted at its face value. This mobility hinges on the availability of supporting air bases—possession of protected real estate and adequate logistics support in turn, govern that availability. General Eisenhower stated, in effect, that there was nothing as immobile as an air force until it had been carefully nested down in its protected air bases. He failed to mention the need of continually supplying those bases.

Let us now consider a flat statement on naval air power—"It is only when air power is wedded to free moving sea power that it achieves true mobility. This is so, whether it is operating from a carrier or from sea-supported bases in the forward area". Isn't it true also in this case that this mobility hinges on the possession of protected real estate—the aircraft carrier or forward base—and on adequate logistics support?

Carrier-based air power, in its possession of a mobile air field, does have one predominant advantage—its capability of ob-

taining and maintaining air superiority in areas of the world which are, at present, inaccessible to land-based tactical aircraft. In World War II the role of carrier aircraft was decisive in the support of amphibious operations at the Marianas, Philippines, Okinawa, among others. Adequate carrier air forces in possession of the British might have prevented the surprise German occupation of Norway. However, assuming that we do have both protected bases and logistic support there can be no question but that air forces, sea and land-based, are the most mobile or flexible weapon in existence. In contrast to armies and naval surface forces, air forces of all categories lack the inherent ability to maintain themselves in action in the medium (air) in which they fight. They depend on the land or on the sea for their operating support.

Strategically, the mobility of land-based air forces is seriously compromised by the heavy installations and tremendous logistics support it requires. The Air Force has recognized the validity of the statement and is overcoming this relative immobility, in part, by pursuing the development of aircraft with radii of action for true global coverage; and, for present type aircraft, by aerial replenishment,by the development of large airdromes around the periphery of the probable enemy, and by use of fly-away kits which provide partial support for 30 days operation for heavy planes at advanced bases (POL products and ammunition required in addition to these kits).

The demonstrated mobility of the Air Force long range bombing planes needs no further comment from me. The feat of the carriers Enterprise and Hornet with their embarked air groups in proceeding thousands of miles from Coral Sea early in May 1942—repairing battle damage and replenishing at Pearl Harbor—and in participating less than a month later at the Battle of Midway in

June 1942 is a classic demonstration of the strategic mobility of carrier task forces.

Some of you may have wondered where logistics and communications fit, if they do, into the principles of war. My concept is that both are essential tools or means by which certain of the principles are applied. This is particularly true for the principle of mobility which is the key to concentration and offensive action.

The "Principle of Economy of Effort" is the fifth principle for examination.

STATEMENT:

ECONOMY OF EFFORT IS THE JUDICIOUS EXPENDITURE OF RESOURCES AND THE BALANCED EMPLOYMENT OF FORCES FOR THE PURPOSE OF ACHIEVING EFFECTIVE CONCENTRATION(S) AT DECISIVE TIME(S) AND PLACE(S).

The principle of economy of effort, in general, serves: to permit the concentration of superior forces at the decisive point and place by allocating to secondary efforts only the minimum forces necessary for fulfillment of their planned contribution to the success of the main effort. It serves also to guard against the reduction of essential strength through detachments or assignments to relatively unimportant tasks or missions.

Economy in the sense intended here means not parsimony but wise use. There must always be a compromise of distribution and employment of effort between the principles of the "Offensive" and "Concentration" on one hand and "Security" on the other. The correct balance, dictated by the Principle of "Economy of Effort", is governed to a large extent by mobility—the greater the mobility

the fewer forces required for an assigned task such as radar-equipped search planes for ASW work.

The ideal application of this principle is attained when we achieve concentration while at the same time forcing dispersion on the enemy. Both sea and air power typify this ideal of application by their inherent ability to concentrate great striking power quickly about an enemy's perimeter, thus making him disperse to meet this ever present threat. The Japanese throughout World War II were required to disperse their forces over the vast sea and land perimeter of their conquered empire. Germany in the last war dispersed her forces on a line running from Norway through France to Africa while the Allies, with mobile sea and air forces, were able to strike in force at selected points. The vast but vulnerable land perimeter of the Soviet Empire would require the same dispersal of forces in any World War III in order to counter mobile allied sea-air power. Strategic air strikes from encircling bases should profit greatly by this dispersion as should amphibious assault operations and carrier-based air strikes.

Strategically the global demands against limited resources for the next war will call for difficult decisions in the application of the principle of economy of effort. If the European Theater is assigned top priority the pressure will be tremendous for assignment of disproportionate forces to the Far East, Southeast Asia and Middle East theaters. Public opinion in this country will clamor for the allocation of more than reasonable defense forces to protect the continental United States against threat of attack.

The next principle is the "Principle of Cooperation".

STATEMENT:

A NATION'S FULL WAR POTENTIAL AND THE FULL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE COMBAT POWER OF ITS MILITARY

FORCES CAN BE DEVELOPED AND PROPERLY APPLIED ONLY BY THE COMPLETE, FREELY-GIVEN, AND EFFECTIVE COOPERATION BETWEEN ALL COMPONENT PARTS OF THE NATION, ITS ALLIES, AND ITS MILITARY FORCES.

This principle, in effect, strives: for the decisive application of maximum power of available forces toward the objective by unity of effort achieved through unity of command, directed coordination, and through full, voluntary and intelligent co-operation. It also strives for the elimination of confusion and wasteful duplication of effort, and for the harmonious and concerted action of various efforts toward a common goal. It is a unifying principle like the principle of the objective—"Objective" designates common aim; "Co-operation" results in common endeavor.

The full effectiveness of the principle of co-operation depends mainly upon: (1) correct organization including unity of command, (2) common, combined, or joint training, (3) thorough and correct indoctrination, (4) mutual knowledge of the characteristics, employment, capabilities and limitations of own forces and of those of other services (including allied), and (5) upon the selection of a definite objective, clear to all.

As was noted at the beginning of this presentation the U. S. Army calls this principle "Unity of Command" but their concept of its meaning and application is quite similar to that indicated above.

There were innumerable examples familiar to all of you of excellent cooperation amongst the military (including allies) and between the military services and the civil government during World War II. Examples were the JCS, the Combined Chiefs of Staff, SHAFE, Close Tactical Air Support, amphibious assaults

in the Pacific and particularly the Combined Amphibious Operations on the Normandy Beaches.

The "Principle of Security".

STATEMENT:

THE PRINCIPLE OF SECURITY EMBRACES ALL MEASURES WHICH MUST BE TAKEN TO GUARD AGAINST ANY FORM OF COUNTERSTROKE WHICH THE ENEMY MAY EMPLOY TO PREVENT THE ATTAINMENT OF THE OBJECTIVE.

The application of the principle of security, in general, provides: for the protection from unacceptable damage or restrictive interruption of that which is vital or highly important in accomplishing the objective. It further provides for the avoidance of surprise; for the retention of freedom of action; for the maintenance of the integrity of plans and of classified information; and, in its entirety, for the preservation of the capability of gaining the objective.

This principle as a mission of protection does not necessarily imply a defensive attitude; it may often be better performed by offensive action. Security is elemental, being associated with all forms of warfare. It contributes, to a marked degree, to the successful application of the principles of the objective, offensive, concentration, mobility, economy of force, and surprise.

Security of classified information, as you noted, is only a part of the "Principle of Security". The protection of bases (including the Zone of the Interior—or Continental United States) and the protection of sea, land, air lines of communications—are most important.

A partial list of security measures would include the protecting of bases, vulnerable points and areas (including LOC) which are vital or highly important; the minimizing of enemy interference with own plans and freedom of action; and would include the denying to the enemy of the means to gain intelligence. Security implies the gaining of intelligence of the enemy.

This protection must form the basis for War Plans and for supporting operational plans. Primary purpose of this security is to give freedom of action to commanders in carying out the War Plans. Need I mention the restrictions which would be placed on our freedom of action in carrying on the war, if an initial surprise attack on the U. S. destroyed 25% of our industrial capacity.

At the top level, practically our sole national objective, in peace or war, is that of SECURITY—political, economic, and military security—having for its purpose the preservation of the American way of life. The maintenance of that objective is the whole purpose of our foreign, domestic, and military policies. Even more directly our military objectives in war support the national war aims which have been set up to insure the continuance of our security as a nation.

The United States probably for the first time in its history is becoming "security" conscious but only because the very security of this country itself is being directly threatened—from within by espionage, subversion, and sabotage and from without by A-bombs, guided missiles and other weapons.

In peace, relative strategical security is obtained: by good intelligence, security forces such as the FBI, and by military readiness for war. In war, it is best obtained by the bold and resolute execution of well-conceived offensive plans—(air strikes, submarine and mining offensives, amphibious assaults for example.)

At a lower level all military facilities and units require relative security: bases—including air fields, aircraft, ships, and ground units. This security may be partially obtained by such measures as air defense, anti-submarine screens, fighter cover, and outposts.

Over-emphasis on security may vitiate the principles of the offensive, concentration and economy of force among others. At the start of a war, democratic nations in particular, usually enter into a defensive or build-up phase which is primarily concerned with the security of industrial and military facilities and with Lines of Communications in order to build up military effort for the offensive phase. After the shift to an offensive stage, security receives relatively much less emphasis for obvious reasons.

In this connection since the more critical military decisions have to be made and the supporting plans initiated during about the first year of a war it has been suggested that our top level military colleges would do well to place more stress on the solutions of problems involving the plans and operations for the first months of war.

The "Principle of Surprise".

STATEMENT:

SURPRISE RESULTS FROM CREATING UNEXPECTED SITUATION(S) OR FROM TAKING COURSES OF LEAST PROBABLE EXPECTATION—BOTH CONSIDERED FROM THE ENEMY POINT OF VIEW AND BOTH DESIGNED TO EXPLOIT THE ENEMY'S CONSEQUENT LACK OF PREPAREDNESS.

The value of surprise in warfare is well known by all of you. Best results are obtained when the other principles of war are

applied with surprise. The element of surprise may be in time, place, direction, force, technique and weapons and may be obtained by such means as: secrecy, deception and diversion, careful planning, rapidity of execution and rapidity of movement. Intelligence and counter-intelligence are major factors in the Principle of Surprise.

Surprise can be a two-bladed weapon. It boomeranged on the Japs at Pearl Harbor (by unifying the American war effort) and also backfired on the Japanese at the Battle of Midway.

Mobility greatly aids in surprise. One of the intrinsic strengths of air power and sea-air power, including amphibious lifts, is that of achieving surprise, both strategically and tactically.

The last principle to be considered will be the "Principle of Simplicity".

STATEMENT:

SIMPLE AND DIRECT METHODS OF PLANNING AND OPERATING, BY FACILITATING THE OBSERVANCE OF THE OTHER PRINCIPLES OF WAR AND BY REDUCING THE POSSIBILITY OF MISUNDERSTANDINGS AND MISTAKE, AFFORD GREATER POSSIBILITY OF SUCCESS IN WARFARE.

The British and Canadians do not consider "Simplicity" to be of sufficient importance to include it in their listings. Those of you who remember the increasing complexity of light force tactics during the years just prior to World War II will also recall the relative simplicity of war-time tactics which frequently were simplified, by necessity, to a brief "Follow-me". Also anyone, who has had occasion to familiarize himself with the stack of operation plans and annexes now standard issue for a single post-war amphibious exercise, understands the need and desirability of simplicity in the conduct of warfare.

Simplicity, of course, is relative. The carefully coordinated and timed sequence of events in an amphibious assault especially the ship-to-shore movement is complicated. Modern warfare is complex.

One must guard against the tendency to confuse simplicity with personal convenience—meaning "easiest to accomplish". Simplicity is the most difficult of all principles to attain in practice. We must strive for it both in peace and war.

That concludes our examination of the "Principles of War". These principles have stood the test of time. They have been officially recognized by all major military services except the U. S. Navy.

We have seen that the various principles of war overlap and complement each other, are dependent on one another, and can, on occasion conflict with each other. They are the tools, the guides, or the methods which commanders must consider, weigh and blend skillfully for success in war.

The making of sound plans and their bold execution requires mastery of the art of war. The master of any art is he who adapts most skillfully new methods to established principles. The objective of each student of war should be just that "To adapt new methods to established principles".

In conclusion—A summary of the nine (9) "Principles of War": "Select the proper *objective.* Make the plan of such *simplicity* that it will be understood easily, thus facilitating perfect *cooperation,* the proper timing of all effort through familiarity with the objective and the intentions. *Surprise* the enemy if possible, at the same time taking steps to insure *security,* the preparation and protection against surprise by the enemy. Keeping in

mind the single important aim, take the *offensive*, forcing the enemy to act on the defensive, a situation in which every advantage must be exploited by the aggressor. In accordance with the principle of *mobility*, "get there first", using an *economy of effort* (but without stinting), in order to guarantee *concentration*, superiority at the point of contact, the most vital principle of all."

PRINCIPLES OF WAR

1. THE PRINCIPLE OF THE OBJECTIVE.

STATEMENT:

Every military undertaking must have an objective; that is, it must be directed toward a clearly defined goal and all activity must contribute to the attainment of that goal. It is axiomatic that military objectives support the national objective(s)—in peace as well as in war—and, more directly, support the national war aims during conflict.

CONTRIBUTION: *

This principle focuses all military activity upon the objective; supplies connecting links that impart coherence to war; simplifies the problem; promotes coordination and continuity of effort; facilitates the correct application of the other principles of war; and, if properly selected, supports the attainment of the war aims or of the objectives of the larger force of which it is a part. The principle of the objective, properly applied, provides the prerequisite for success in any undertaking—a specific, realistic, and clearly defined goal.

2. THE PRINCIPLE OF THE OFFENSIVE.

STATEMENT:

Victory can never be won by passive defense; only sustained offensive action, or the threat of unfailing offensive action brings success.

* To sound planning and successful operations.

CONTRIBUTION:

In general, this principle serves: to exploit at every practicable opportunity the initiative inherent in offensive action; to bring vigorous, timely concentration of forces against a weaker concentration; to create favorable conditions for attack; to raise morale; to preserve the commander's freedom of action for imposing his will on the enemy; and, in exploiting the offensive, to insure maximum gain. The selection by the commander of the right time and place for offensive action is the decisive factor in attaining the objective.

3. THE PRINCIPLE OF CONCENTRATION.

STATEMENT:

To achieve success in war it is essential to concentrate superior forces (ground, sea, and air) at the decisive place and time in the proper direction and to sustain this superiority at the point of contact as long as it may be required. Concentration produces superiority at the vital point through an effective combination of the factors: personnel, materiel (including weapons), fire power and fire concentration, organization (including unity of command), leadership, morale, combat readiness, and unity of action among others.

CONTRIBUTION:

The principle of concentration, in general, serves: to achieve decisive combat superiority and desired results at the points or in the areas where the enemy is inherently weak and cannot reinforce in time; to employ the proper economy of force at or in the less decisive points; and to enable maximum total effective force to be exerted in achieving the objective. The correct and skilful application of all the other principles of war should lead to one single end: concentration of the required superior combat power at a selected time and place, projected in the proper direction, striking an overwhelming blow at the decisive point(s) in order to achieve the objective.

4. THE PRINCIPLE OF MOBILITY.

STATEMENT:

Modern war demands: (1) the possession and use of the capability of physical mobility (strategically and tactically) to transfer forces economically and with relative rapidity from place to place and to maintain those forces in action; and (2) a high degree of flexibility to enable prearranged plans and operations to be altered to meet changing situations and unexpected developments. It is axiomatic that success in battle depends on mobility.

CONTRIBUTION:

In general this principle serves: to position forces in the most favorable position to accomplish the objective; to maintain forces in action once they are in position; to increase the freedom of movement and the flexibility of plans and operations; to increase the fire power and effectiveness of forces; to increase the opportunities to gain or to prevent surprise; to make possible the conduct of sustained offensive action; and to exploit advantageously the battle phases of penetration and pursuit.

5. THE PRINCIPLE OF ECONOMY OF EFFORT.

STATEMENT:

Economy of effort is the judicious expenditure of resources and the balanced employment of forces for the purpose of achieving effective concentration(s) at decisive time(s) and place(s). It can also be stated as "the proportional distribution of forces to accomplish assigned tasks most effectively."

CONTRIBUTION:

The principle of economy of effort, in general, serves: to permit the concentration of superior forces at the decisive point and place by allocating to secondary efforts only the minimum forces necessary for fulfillment of their planned contribution to the success of the main effort; to guard against the reduction of essential

strength through detachments or assignments to relatively unimportant tasks or missions; and to encourage the wise expenditure of resources for present needs in order to preserve offensive power for final concentrated blows.

6. THE PRINCIPLE OF CO-OPERATION.

STATEMENT:

A nation's full war potential and the full effectiveness of the combat power of its military forces can be developed and properly applied only by the complete, freely-given, and effective cooperation between all component parts of the nation, its allies, and its military forces. It is a unifying principle like the principle of the objective—"Objective" designates common aim; "Co-operation" results in common endeavor.

CONTRIBUTION:

This principle, in effect, strives: for the decisive application of maximum power of available forces toward the objective by unity of effort achieved through unity of command, directed coordination, and through full, voluntary and intelligent co-operation; for the elimination of confusion and wasteful duplication of effort; and for the harmonious and concerted action of various efforts toward a common goal.

The full effectiveness of the principle of co-operation depends mainly upon: (1) correct organization including unity of command, (2) common, combined, or joint training, (3) thorough and correct indoctrination, (4) mutual knowledge of the characteristics, employment, capabilities and limitation of own forces and of those of other services (including allied), and (5) upon the selection of a definite objective, clear to all.

7. THE PRINCIPLE OF SECURITY.

STATEMENT:

The principle of security embraces all measures which

must be taken to guard against any form of counterstroke which the enemy may employ to prevent the attainment of the objective.

A partial list of security measures would include: the protecting of bases, vulnerable points and areas (including LOC) which are vital or highly important; the minimizing of enemy interference with own plans, with freedom of action and with employment of other principles of war; and the denial to the enemy of the means for gaining intelligence. Security implies the gaining of intelligence of the enemy.

CONTRIBUTION:

The application of the principle of security, in general, provides: for the protection from unacceptable damage or restrictive interruption of that which is vital or highly important in accomplishing the objective; for the avoidance of surprise; for the retention of freedom of action; for the maintenance of the integrity of plans and of classified information; and, in its entirety, for the preservation of the capability of gaining the objective.

8. THE PRINCIPLE OF SURPRISE.

STATEMENT:

Surprise results from creating unexpected situation(s) or from taking courses of least probable expectation—both considered from the enemy point of view and both designed to exploit the enemy's consequent lack of preparedness.

CONTRIBUTION:

The principle of surprise, in general, serves: to strike the enemy when and where he is unprepared and thus achieve confusion and a slackening of enemy effort and initiative; to give our forces a moral and a material advantage over the enemy which is too late for him to entirely overcome; and to permit the attaining of maximum effect from a minimum expenditure of effort.

9. THE PRINCIPLE OF SIMPLICITY.

STATEMENT:

Simple and direct methods of planning and operating, by facilitating the observance of the other principles of war and by reducing the possibility of misunderstandings and mistakes, afford greater possibility of success in warfare.

CONTRIBUTION:

In general, the principle of simplicity serves: to facilitate the observance of the other principles of war; to keynote correct planning; and to promote more effective execution of plans and operations. Simplicity is the most difficult of all principles to attain in practice; usually the simplest plan which insures victory is the best.