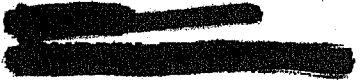


KOREAN WAR PROJECT

BRIEFING CONCERNING CONCEPT OF MARINE CLOSE AIR SUPPORT

Headquarters
1st Marine Aircraft Wing, FMF
c/o Fleet Post Office, San Francisco

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From: Commanding General
To: Distribution List

17 AUG 1952
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Subj: Briefing concerning concept of Marine Close Air Support given by Major General Clayton C. JEROME, USMC, at 5th Air Force Headquarters on 7 August 1952, to Lieutenant General William E. KEPNER, USAF, CinCAL

Ref: (a) CG, 5th AF Conf disp 050618Z of August 1952

Encl: (1) Copy of subject briefing

1. Reference (a) requested that the Commanding General, 1st Marine Aircraft Wing brief Lieutenant General William E. KEPNER concerning the Marine Corps system of close air support on 7 August 1952.
2. Enclosure (1) is a copy of the subject briefing and is forwarded herewith for information.
3. This letter is downgraded to Restricted upon removal of enclosure (1).
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William R. Wendt

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The Marine system is founded upon the following principles:

1. All Marines are required at all times to be qualified first most as infantrymen, and then in additional specialties such as Marine Aviators in KOREA thus are qualified by training to understand and assist their Marine comrades on the ground. Both Aviation personnel and ground personnel in KOREA share the same name: "Marines".

2. The major tactical air and ground units: The Marine Division and the Marine Wing normally train and fight as a balanced team under a single leader, the senior Marine ground or aviation officer. The normal organization of the Marine Wing provides: Two or more tactical groups, a control group, a transport unit, a helicopter group, an observation squadron, a composite squadron, and service units. Within this framework there is discernable a balanced force capable of discharging practically every mission that can be assigned to tactical aviation. Moreover, the Wing is flexible as evidenced by the fact that it is employable in amphibious assaults, and it operates in the Far East with equal facility from the decks of carriers in KOREAN waters or from land bases ashore in JAPAN and KOREA. Here in KOREA, it has been deemed necessary to split the Marine Air-Ground team because of the tactical situation. At present, as the senior Marine reporting to the Commander, Naval Forces Far East, when not assigned specific priority missions by CINCFE, I have been ordered to exercise command of Marine Forces in the Far East. This is a role in the Air-Ground team which General SELDEN, as my senior, would normally occupy. General SELDEN, as Commanding General, 1st Marine Division, is separated from the normal close relationship that exists between the Marine Air-Ground Commanders by virtue of his mission in I Corps as a Division Commander reporting to the Commanding General, Eighth Army. The land-based units of my Wing in KOREA when not in execution of CINCFE/ComNavFE missions operate in support of the overall effort of Commanding General, FEAF/Commanding General, Fifth Air Force. At this time General Kepner, I wish to say that under the operational control of the Fifth Air Force, I feel I am receiving from General Barcus every consideration possible under the current situation. The existing intricate command relationships have required considerable adjustment of our Marine Air Ground concept of Close Air Support. It has not been possible to provide the

General Kepner, distinguished guests - - - - -

The message I received from Fifth Air Force was to the effect that you were to be briefed on the system of Marine Close Air Support. In preparing this short briefing I was not certain as to whether you desire a briefing on the Navy-Marine concept or whether you desire to know just how we are carrying it out here in KOREA. The fact that the 1st Marine Division and the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing are operating as a part of the Eighth Army and the Fifth Air Force respectively and therefore conform to the Army-Air Force system, the fact that we are currently employed in a type of operation not entirely normal to that for which we are organized, trained and equipped, that furthermore the current ground situation being quite static more like the World War I situation with little change in real estate as compared with the war of movement of World War II: All these factors have resulted in certain deviations from our standard concept. I wish to state very definitely at this time that in any of the remarks that follow it is not my intention to question or debate the efficacy of one system or the other or the reasons which caused the deviations from our standard system. We are all out here to do a job. Every service has to give and take to get the job done. Every service is giving and taking to get that job done.

A further point I would like to make is that much confusion exists in some peoples minds concerning the size and potential of a Marine Aircraft Wing. Our Groups more or less correspond to Air Force Wings and our Wings to Air Force Divisions.

Basically the Marine system of Close Air Support is designed to give the man on the ground the benefit of the shock and fire power of air as a result of the expeditious handling of his request through an integrated system of control. Each request for close air support whether it originates at the battalion, regimental or division level, is transmitted directly to the air support section of the control center which directs the aircraft to execute the mission. The system is effective because each request is monitored by all levels of command and silence means concurrence. Also, each level of command can, for sufficient reason, recommend cancellation of the requested air strike. The request does not go through channels, it goes direct. This system does not deprive intermediate commands of command prerogative but does permit simultaneous evaluation at all levels of command and the rapid execution of approved requests.

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Commanding General, 1st Marine Division with the amount of Close Air Support, expected from the Wing. Moreover, the present chain of command has greatly increased the time required to execute a request from the Division for Close Air Support.

3. The Marine Wing trains and provides the United States and Korean Marine Corps units of the 1st Marine Division with Marine Aviators who under the Division's operational control perform the following tactical roles:

- a. Division Air Officer, and Assistant Division Air Officers.
- b. Air Liaison Officer and Forward Air Controllers at each infantry level; Division, Regiment, and Battalion.
- c. Observation aircraft pilots who are qualified as airborne controllers for Close Air Support strikes and are accompanied by tactical observers who adjust and coordinate both artillery and naval gunfire.
- d. Helicopter pilots who carry out a multitude of missions not the least of which is evacuation of casualties.
- e. Operate an MPQ-14 radar control system which is capable of directing both automatic and manually controlled bombing flights under instrument conditions, in marginal weather, and at night.
- f. Operate an air support section equipped with radar and VHF Direction Finding facilities.

The Commanding General, Fifth Air Force has charged me as Air Defense Commander, Southern Defense Sector, with the conduct of the active air defense of that part of KOREA South of the parallel 36° 30'. This mission in part has necessitated the present deployment of the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing. One tactical group is located at K-3 with one squadron at K-8. The major elements of the control group are located at K-3, K-8 and CHEJU-DO, in the Southern Defense Sector. Other Wing units are deployed in the Northern Defense Sector as follows: One tactical group at K-6, a surveillance element at CHODO, and in the zone of action of the 1st Marine Division our helicopter and observation squadrons, plus the air support section of the control group reinforced by the MPQ-14 air support radar team.

4. The heartblood of the Marine Close Air Support system is the communications network which permits rapid transmission of requests and positive

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control of aircraft executing Close Air Support strikes. Air-Ground teamwork is a must. Let us assume a target or opportunity is discovered in the zone of action in front of one of the front line battalions of the 1st Marine Division. Right at this level, the Battalion Commander, assisted by his Air, naval gun fire and artillery liaison officer plus his weapons company commander, can decide whether or not the target is suitable for the use of Close Air Support. When the Battalion Commander decides it is a suitable target for the use of Close Air Support, his air liaison officer has only to come up on the tactical air request net and request a strike. This net is monitored simultaneously by all tactical air control parties from the battalion to the division level. If adjacent or any other front line battalion commander envision no danger to their troops or scheme of maneuver in allowing the strike to go on, they remain silent and their silence indicates concurrence. Similarly, at the regimental level, the regimental commander, if he believes other battalions should have a higher priority, or for other reasons the strike should not be flown, may come up on the same net or may remain silent indicating his concurrence. On the Division level the same process is followed. The fire support coordination center acts on the request in so far as restrictive fire planes and coordination with other arms is concerned. When the request is approved, the strike is directed and the originator is immediately so informed. The Air Support Section of the Control Center directs airborne or ground alert aircraft to make the attack, and exercises appropriate control. In a fast moving situation we believe in providing for on-station, on-call aircraft. This is most desirable to take targets of opportunity under almost immediate air attack. In KOREA, however, the Divisions request has to be further processed at Corps and JOC level and a flight on JOC alert must be scrambled or if a flight is airborne in the vicinity it may be diverted.

When the originator is informed that his request for close air support has been approved, he is given an ETA of the flight in the target area. Front line units of the Battalion are alerted to display identifying fluorescent front line panel markers if called for by the flight leader. The Forward Air Controller, if not already there, proceeds to a position in or just in rear of the front

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lines from which he can best observe and/or direct the incoming strike. The artillery and supporting weapons officers now concentrate on arrangements for marking the target to the attacking planes if it appears necessary, directing a restrictive fire plan if it is desirable to keep the artillery firing, and directing execution of a flak suppression fire plan to minimize the enemy's counter air efforts. At this time, a tactical air coordinator, or the strike leader of the Close Air Support strike, locates the target from the air. On the basis of who can best observe the determination has been made as to whether the tactical air coordinator or the ground forward air controller will act as the primary strike director. Other controllers assume a standby status ready to take over in the event of a communications failure or if there is danger to friendly troops. Smoke or ECM aircraft may be phased into the attack to screen the strike and to confuse enemy gun laying radars. Tactical, artillery and NGF air observers are directed into positions to observe and coordinate the ground efforts of the Marine infantry and supporting arms. The tactical air coordinator is normally equipped with smoke rockets and tracer ammo to mark the target. The MPQ-14 radar team assisted by the Air support section monitors the flight and is ready to assume control if visibility requires it. If the strike is to be delivered in very close proximity to the front lines the forward air controller is generally in the best position to direct the strike, insuring by his own position that the front line troops will not be endangered and yet will get air support as close to them as it is possible to bring it with safety. The forward air controller of a battalion in reserve may be sent forward of the front lines in a "porcupine" tank to direct the strike from a more advantageous position. The Forward Air Controller or tactical air coordinator establishes communications with the flight leader. Everything now depends upon the training and ability of the strike leader and the individual pilots as well as the effectiveness of their ordnance against the enemy target. The routine training of Marine pilots emphasizes the Close Air Support role. Frequent practice in this role will insure that these pilots can be depended upon to deliver the steel where it will do the most good.

When the strike is completed, damage is assessed by the controller and the flight, and the strike leader is given appropriate orders for return to

[REDACTED]

base. In execution of these orders the flight may be aided by our electronics and communications facilities. At their base, the pilots are debriefed, and an effort made to glean additional information of enemy activity they have observed coincidentally, and to exploit any ideas they may have acquired which will improve our effectiveness.

Marine photo pilots should have previously photographed the area. When the strike is completed photo coverage should be repeated, and an analysis made to determine the strike results.

This discussion could cover many additional ramifications and refinements which are too detailed to be included in this short briefing. The 1st Marine Aircraft Wing is currently receiving its major employment in close support and close in interdiction up and down the entire Eighth Army Front. Ceaseless effort is aimed at improving our Marine system of Close Air Support. The Marine Wing and the Marine Division share in this effort for they know it is not the size of the team in a fight that counts, it is the size of the "fight in the team!"

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