



# Marine Corps Training, Doctrine, and Strategy



Nicholas J. Pietrucha  
California State University Maritime Academy

## Abstract

The United States Marine Corps, since its creation on November 10, 1775, has been the primary amphibious warfare branch of the United States Military. They have the longest basic training, longest basic officer training, and highest physical standards out of the entire military. For most of its history, the Marine Corps has had a unique purpose within the military and have been integral to the United States national defense, often due to their superior training and unique doctrine and strategy. However, since the United States entered the Global War on Terror (GWOT), the Marine Corps have essentially become a secondary land army that is being used to augment the United States Army.

## Training

The U.S. Marine Corps enlisted basic training is 13 weeks long, and their Officer Candidate School is 10 weeks long, with the 6-month long The Basic School following. After basic training, both officers and enlisted go to follow on training in their specific specialty. Basic training is focused primarily on Marine Corps history, customs and courtesies, discipline, basic marksmanship and basic tactics. There is some training in amphibious operations, but it is not significant.



## Doctrine

The doctrine of the U.S. Marine Corps is centered primarily around the idea that every Marine is a rifleman. In adhering to this doctrine, the Marine Corps ensures that any Marine, regardless of their job, will be an effective warfighter. This allows for a more well rounded and better trained force. However, the strict adherence to this doctrine sometimes takes away from other aspects of warfighting, such as training with new technology or maritime training.



## Strategy

Marine Corps strategy is currently consistent with being a land Army. While they try to be as amphibious as possible, they have fallen into a more land-based routine since the beginning of the GWOT. Their primary strategy is built around counter-insurgency operations, which may have diminished their ability to fight larger wars. The Marines do still have an expeditionary strategy, which they frequently use.



## Policy Recommendations

In order to adapt to the changing nature of warfare in the modern age, as well as to remain unique in their purpose within the United States military, the United States Marine Corps needs to adjust their training, doctrine, and strategy in the following ways:

- Expand their training to include more technical training on advanced systems
- Continue to expand their cyber warfare training, and focus more of their resources on cyber and technological warfare
- Move away from their insurgency-based strategy and train to fight more advanced enemies
- Expand training and operations in the expeditionary and amphibious realm
- Shift their strategy towards the maritime and littoral space, and stop focusing strictly on land
- Continue to focus on small unit tactics
- Embrace the special operations mindset and the mission of USSOCOM

## Further Research

The nature of war and the kinds of wars being fought are always changing. In the 20<sup>th</sup> Century alone, wars went from being fought with bolt-action rifles and horses to machine guns and jet aircraft. As the nature of warfare changes, the Marines will need to continue to change with it. Their training, doctrine, and strategy will never be perfect and will always need to be adjusted. More research needs to be done on other ways to improve training, doctrine, and strategy to benefit the individual Marine and the Marine Corps as a whole. Marine Corps Doctrinal Publications offer an expanded view of these subjects, and websites such as warontherocks.com and militarytimes.com offer more in depth analysis and news about the changing Marine Corps and US Military as a whole.