

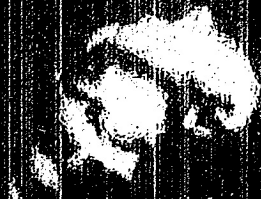
ATOMS ARE NO ANSWER

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Does our defense posture call for a special security force not restricted to nuclear tactics? It does, says the author, and proceeds to tell why the Marine Corps best fits such a role

ANY DISCUSSION ON THE ROLE OF THE MARINE CORPS today necessarily centers on the question of limited war. Those who ridicule the concept of limited war as impossibly optimistic can only present the even more utopian hope for total peace as the sole alternative to full-scale thermonuclear war. It has, therefore, become obvious that limited war, with limited weapons, must be maintained as an alternative to mutual annihilation.

The need for an alternative to unlimited war has led to an unusual convergence in the military thinking of the Army and Marine Corps. In the face of the technological revolution since WWII, both have been evolving into forces designed primarily for atomic combat. As the Army has been reduced in size it has increased emphasis on the mobility of paratroop and air-transported formations. These forces are characterized by concentrated firepower and high destructive capability per man. Traditional concepts governing the use of land armies in extended continental campaigns have been largely discarded.

The creation of an atom-armed STRAC (Strategic Army Corps) is indicative of current Army strategic thinking. The Army has come to use the Marine Corps terms, "force in readiness" and "fire brigade," in describing its mission. Both services use such terms to describe forces which may actually be unsuitable for obtaining limited (and not necessarily purely military) objectives.

The apparent convergence of roles is the inevitable result of the current confusion in determining the relationship between atomic and conventional forces and weapons, and the uses appropriate to each.

In assessing the role of armed forces in conflicts short of total war, both the Army and Marine Corps have relied on development of so-called "tactical" nuclear weapons. The dominant factor in the Army's planning has had to be its heavy commitment to NATO. To give the Atlantic Alliance any semblance of balance against the vast number of Russian and satellite divisions confronting it, the Army has been forced to rely on tactical nuclear weapons as a substitute for conventionally equipped forces.

The Marine Corps, however, is not governed by these same considerations. A brief inquiry into the advantages and limitations of tactical nuclear weapons leads

to the conclusion that a wide area of possible conflict remains. In this area, use of nuclear devices on even the smallest scale would be either disadvantageous or totally impossible.

We have only to look at the conflicts since WWII to see that, in most cases, nuclear weapons would not have been appropriate, even if available. Surely such weapon-

one would have been of little use against the post-war Communist guerrillas in Greece; or against the Communist bandits and rebels in Malaya and Indochina; or in the periodic crises in the Middle East.

The Korean War offered the most likely opportunity for the advantageous use of nuclear weapons. But considering the enemy, the terrain, and the objective (which was not total annihilation of the enemy forces), it seems doubtful that use of atomics would have been appropriate.

Furthermore, if we had used them, the immense damage to our cause in world opinion would have been irreparable. Recalling the propaganda capital the Chinese Communists made from utterly groundless charges of bacteriological warfare, it is not difficult to imagine the propaganda effect of American use of even the smallest atomic device—especially against an Asiatic enemy.

All of which is not to write off entirely the possibility of

limited conflicts in which use of atomic weapons would be the appropriate strategy. The point is that the US must not be caught in a position of exclusive dependence on tactical nuclear weapons to meet limited military emergencies.

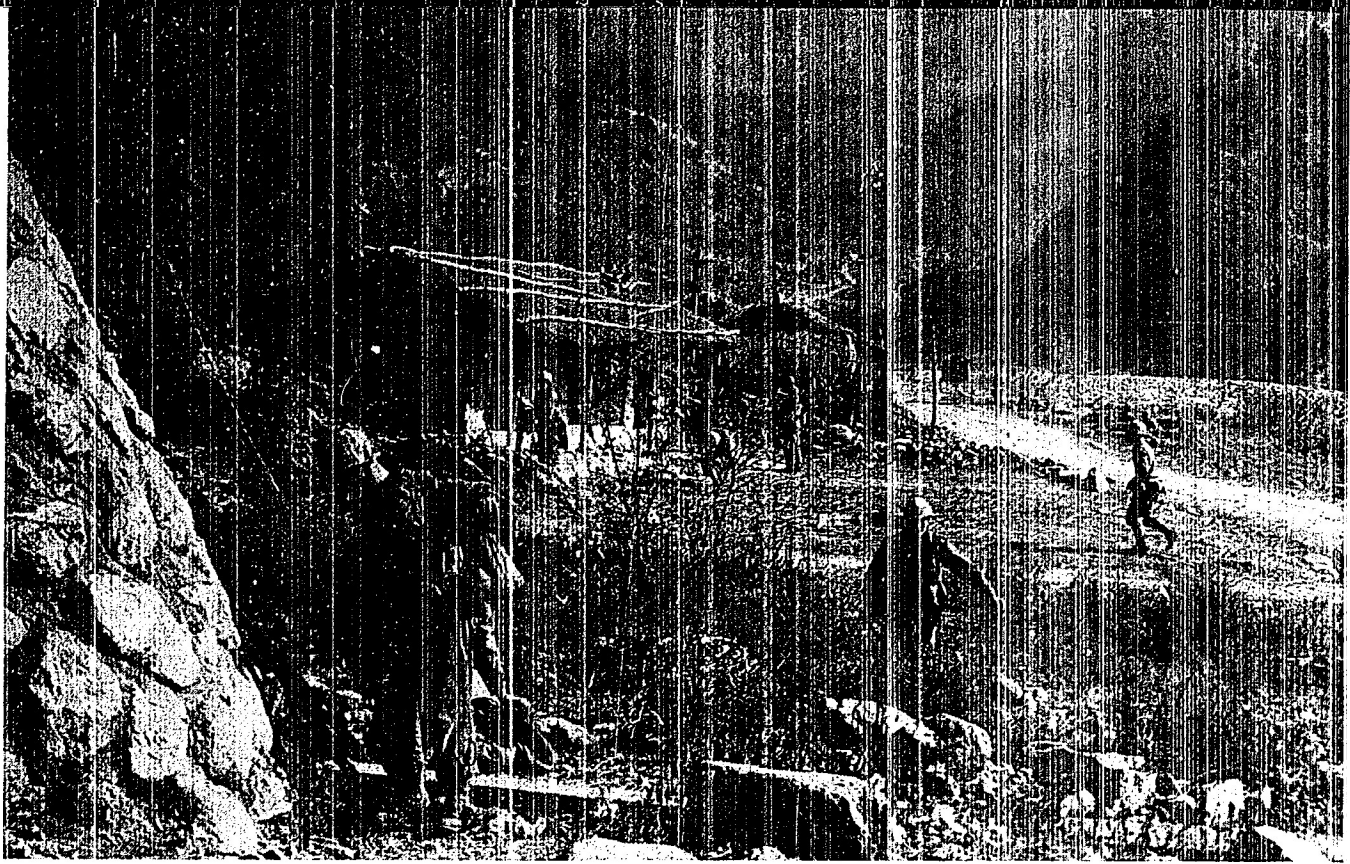
The Marine Corps should be especially prepared for commitment in situations in which it can hope to achieve its objectives without relying on nuclear weapons. There is a wide range of special functions, vital to the national interest and calling for a highly trained and professional force, which the Marine Corps is uniquely qualified to perform.

First, let's see why this sort of special security force, not restricted to nuclear tactics, would be invaluable for the execution of national policy. Secondly, let's see why the Marine Corps is particularly fitted to assume such a role. Then we may consider the way the Marine Corps could adapt itself to this role.

The many limited conflicts of the past 15 years have



**The individual Marine
". . . most efficient fighting
machine in the world"—CMC**



Marines maneuver against Communist sniper in Korea's Chosin Reservoir sector—since the "objective . . . was not total annihilation of the enemy forces," Marines did the job with conventional weapons.

shown that the use of force has been dependent upon political conditions, and has been directed toward political objectives. Furthermore, past experience indicates we can expect more such situations. Anti-Western elements throughout the world have gained immense flexibility by using subversion, guerrilla warfare, terrorism, and so-called "volunteer" forces. The more the West becomes committed to nuclear tactics, the wider is the area left open for Communist subversion and incursion. The object of this strategy is to leave the West with no alternative between total war and peace at unfavorable terms.

Free Nations Look for Protection

It seems clear that minor aggression—or what is awkwardly but accurately termed "externally supported internal subversion"—and artificially fomented rebellion, offer the most promising tactics for Communist exploitation in the immediate future. Lebanon, Tibet, and Laos offer recent illustrations of these methods.

The American policy for countering the Communist threat has been essentially one of maintaining the *status quo* throughout the world in order to assure stable political regimes, and the peaceful transfer of power. This implies that one of the most common of the Marine Corps' potential functions may be that of bringing order to localized conflicts, or of arresting trends toward political anarchy.

These situations may not always represent clear-cut conflicts between Communist and non-Communist elements. The international situation and balance is such that neither the US nor the Soviet Union can long tolerate a local conflict threatening to upset the world balance in favor of the other side. The partition of so

many nations by military truce lines representing generally the military front at the time fighting was suppressed, is ample evidence of the impossibility of local conflicts not involving the great world powers. Unless we maintain a force appropriate for protecting our interests in such conflicts, we will be at the mercy of any group of fanatics suddenly appearing on the scene in an inflammable area, with relatively small but politically effective forces.

It is a well known paradox that many non-Communist nations are extremely wary of giving any appearance of dependence upon the US—yet constantly fear the US may not give them adequate support when their security is threatened. We must have a force prepared to meet this sort of political contingency—a force prepared to give maximum military support with a minimum effect on the political independence of the nation aided. If we deny ourselves the ability of responding adequately to requests for support, we are thrown back closer to the alternatives of "power without force" or total war.

It is, therefore, obvious that a security force not pre-committed to nuclear tactics, or to a single military doctrine, is essential to our defense establishment.

Next we must consider the characteristics of the Marine Corps which suit it uniquely for such a security force role. Traditionally the Marine Corps has been used in situations calling for the threat or use of force for limited political objectives.

LtCol Charles A. LeClaire, in his article, *The Marines Have Landed* (GAZETTE: July '59), clarified the reasons why international precedents make the use of Marines much less likely to be considered an act of war than the commitment of other forces, in many circum-

History and tradition mark the elite professional
fighting force esteemed in all quarters,
by all people. The Marines are such a force.

stances. Speaking of the American "right and duty to protect its lawful and legitimate interests whenever and wherever necessary," he concludes that "The President has the authority to employ the armed forces under his command for this purpose, and the Congress has specifically provided the Marine Corps for such use. The ordering of Marine Corps units into foreign countries for this purpose is in accord with international law, custom and precedent . . . [and] furthermore, is in strict accord with the law of this nation on this subject."

The nature of the Marine Corps as a balanced force of extremely versatile capabilities makes it peculiarly suitable as a non-nuclear security force. Its close relationship with the Navy, organic air and ground supporting arms, mobility and flexibility, amphibious and airborne potential, all combine to make the Corps an unusually self-contained and versatile force. Assumption of a primarily non-nuclear role would demand this sort of versatility. What is termed "conventional" warfare may well, in this day and age, turn out to be exceedingly unconventional. Indeed, the employment of nuclear devices tactically reduces military flexibility. Their use necessarily requires special conditions, elaborate calculations, high level decisions, and large safety margins.

The Corps . . . can do the job

The Marine Corps as a professional force, with a long history of military successes and a tradition of the highest integrity, is a fighting organization commanding respect in all quarters. Such a professional force can be viewed much more objectively by the public than forces raised by conscription or by a suddenly stimulated recruitment. The Corps is, in a word, a force which can be detached from much of the dangerous cant surrounding the commitment of American troops overseas. This detachment would be invaluable in engagements necessary to defend the national interest, but not necessarily related to the ideological presuppositions usually attending recent American engagements abroad. We must tailor our ideological enthusiasms to the facts of each situation. No longer can we hope to impose attitudes of total mobilization, total war and unconditional surrender upon situations indiscriminately. Negotiation, mediation and adjustment are essential today in American foreign policy. It is logical that a military force which could be used to further these ends, without bringing into play political absolutes, would be of the highest value.

Having outlined the special qualifications of the Marine Corps for assuming the responsibilities of a non-nuclear security force, we should next consider some of the consequences of such duties on the future develop-

ment of the Corps. It is apparent that the basis for this type of force already exists. However, the new requirement for the Corps to maintain a high degree of readiness for non-nuclear warfare would cause some significant changes in organization and training.

These changes largely represent the development of additional capabilities, with only a minimal subtraction of existing tactical nuclear capabilities. The techniques of so-called conventional warfare would not eliminate the possibility of rapid conversion to a tactical nuclear force should the occasion demand.

Crash programs demand crash action

Consideration of the situations in which nuclear tactics are not feasible reveals that they largely call for the organization of forces along lines similar to those necessary for the use of nuclear weapons. The principles of unit separation, high mobility, and extended communications are in fact the same principles necessary for dealing with irregular forces, mountainous terrain, guerrilla warfare, and coverage of extended fronts with limited forces.

It should not be overlooked that even in situations ostensibly suited for the use of tactical nuclear weapons, the very possibility of their use will cause both offensive and defensive tactics to be centered around principles denying lucrative atomic targets to the enemy. This leads to the obvious conclusion that, other things being equal, the advantage will probably go to the side best prepared in the techniques of non-nuclear warfare as well, since conventional weapons would probably determine the outcome. For all these reasons it is apparent that a force prepared primarily for conventional limited warfare would maintain a very high degree of readiness for tactical nuclear warfare as well.

To provide the special quality of leadership necessary for such a special role, intensive training in the tech-



Capt McDonald, Phillips Academy '50; Yale '54; St. Antony's College '58; and now a graduate student at Oxford, reverts to type here (PltLdr 1/3, 1955-56), and discusses the role of the Marine Corps in the atomic age. Marines, he says, should be especially prepared for situations in which reliance on nuclear weapons is unnecessary in gaining their objectives. He is convinced that a force not "pre-committed to nuclear tactics, or to a single military doctrine is essential to our defense establishment."

niques of coordination with political authorities, and of cooperation with foreign armed forces, would have to be undertaken. It would be essential as well that the Marine Corps develop permanent lines of liaison and coordination with the negotiating arm of American policy, the State Department.

The Lebanon crisis demonstrated the need for some working arrangement of this sort. The crash program preceding the landings in July 1958, for creation of an *ad hoc* command and coordination structure between the diplomatic troubleshooting team and the military forces, had to bypass many established inter-departmental staff patterns. A force trained and equipped in combined operations and prepared to meet any politico-military situation, however fluid, would be a valuable adjunct to American diplomacy. It follows that this force would need to have immediately available such staff officers as interpreters and foreign area specialists for intelligence and liaison use.

All Marine officers would need periodic indoctrination in the ramifications of limited operations in volatile situations. Troops in turn would have to be oriented in this respect, and the necessity for the highest standards of discipline and conduct in such a role would be clear. Education in propaganda and counter-propaganda techniques would be essential both to prevent the inadvertent provision of grist for the enemy propaganda mills, and to prepare members of the force to cope with psychological warfare offensives.

It hardly needs saying that the Marine Corps would continue to maintain and develop its helicopter and amphibious landing capabilities. These tactics would continue to play a key role in all planning and training. New emphasis would be given to training to deal with terrorists and guerrillas. Skill in combat in built-up areas would assume great importance. Indoctrination in foreign weapons systems, and in the military organization of other nations, would be valuable. Night training and systematic preparation for fighting in all climates and in all types of terrain, and for jungle and mountain warfare in particular, would have to be undertaken. All ranks would have to be prepared to operate as a much lower standard of amenities than American forces have become accustomed to. The Corps must be able to operate with only skeletal supply and administrative apparatus, with little room for non-essentials. Finally, even greater emphasis would be placed on operation in independent commands of all sizes.

It is well to emphasize at this point that this concept of a primarily non-nuclear security force role for the Marine Corps does not envision any fundamental

change in the Navy-Marine Corps relationship. Indeed, it must be recognized that the Corps would probably depend even more than before on Navy teamwork in fulfilling this kind of role.

Two obvious consequences of the standards necessary for the preparation of an effective security force of the type proposed here are: first, the desirability of longer minimum enlistments; and, second, the maintenance of the highest standards in recruiting and in officer procurement. The intensive specialized training necessary to provide such a versatile and professionally competent force would make rapid personnel turnover economically wasteful, as well as strategically dangerous to the extent that it reduced the readiness of the force. Concurrently, the requirements of the force would demand men of first-rate ability to meet the high standards that would necessarily prevail.

Meeting the challenge

In weighing the possibility of a Marine Corps assumption of the role of a limited war security force, primarily designed for non-nuclear warfare, three questions must be answered.

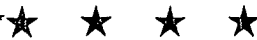
First: does the national interest demand such a force? I hope I have at least outlined the arguments calling for an alternative to tactical nuclear warfare by describing the occasions when atomic weapons would be either disadvantageous or impossible for tactical, geographic or political reasons.

Second: if there is a need for such a security force, can the Marine Corps logically provide it? I have indicated several characteristics uniquely fitting the Marine Corps for such a role, not only because of its traditional use in a similar role, but also because of its size, composition, and versatility—along with its reputation and professional quality.

Finally, what would such a role mean in the future development of the Corps? I have pointed out the extent to which the Marine Corps already conforms to the requirements of the type of force projected. I have further suggested how far present capabilities should be maintained, while adding the preparation in special techniques necessary for facing engagements in which conventional weapons would be appropriate.

Taking all this into account, we can only conclude that the professional versatility required of such a security force would possibly be beyond that previously demanded of any military organization. Nevertheless, it is a role the Marine Corps can adopt with confidence that it will meet the challenge—and not be found wanting.

USMC



If At First . . .



☛ IN PREPARING for the most powerful bomb ever fired at Desert Rock, Marines were positioned in trenches only a few thousand yards from ground zero. All was in readiness.

A Marine fighter plane loaded with instruments circled above. The pilot's mission was to fly through the mushroom cloud. A radio jeep, entrenched near the commanding general, blared the final countdown. "Four, three, . . ." counted the announcer, while over the same frequency was heard conversation from pilots overhead. "Two, one," Everyone tensed, but nothing happened. Then after a few moments of complete silence, the loudspeaker echoed the question of the puzzled young pilot, "Who wet the fuse?"

\$15.00 to Maj Norman W. Hicks