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<p>ABSTRACT (MAXIMUM 200 WORDS)</p> <p>IT IS ENVISIONED THAT FUTURE URBAN WARFARE (OVER THE NEXT DECADE) WILL CONSIST OF AN ENVIORNMENT THAT LIMITS MAGTF CAPABILITY FROM BEING EMPLOYED TO SATISFY ALL MISISON REQUIREMENTS. COMMANDERS WILL EXERCISE DECENTRLIZED LEADERSHIP AND ENSURE THE MAIN EFFORT IS FOCUSED ON THE FOLLOWING THREE WARFIGHTING TENETS TO SUCCESSFULLY LEAD, FIGHT, AND WIN IN URBAN COMBAT. THESE THREE TENETS WERE FORMED THROUGH INTERVIEWS CONDUCTED WITH COMMANDERS WHO FOUGHT IN THE BATTLE OF HUE 1968 AND MY ASSESSMENT THROUGH PERSONAL EXPERIENCE IN COMMANDING A RIFLE COMPANY IN SANGIN DISTRICT, HELMAND PROVINCE, AFGHANISTAN – WHICH HAS BEEN REFERRED TO AS THE MOST KINETIC OPERATION IN AFGHANISTAN SINCE 2001.</p> <p>WARFIGHTING TENETS:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. LEADERSHIP IN THE FIGHT – FRONTLINE LEADERSHIP 2. WAR FIGHTING ETHOS INCREASES COMBAT POWER 3. TO UNDERSTAND HOW YOUR ENEMY FIGHTS AND OPERATES – YOU NEED TO UNDERSTAND THEIR DOCTRINE <p>THE BATTLE OF HUE SERVES AS A TIMETESTED HISTORICAL EXAMPLE OF WHAT IT TAKES TO SUCCEED IN AN URBAN FIGHT AND PROVES THESE TACTICS WILL CONTINUE TO BE DOCTRINALLY SOUND FOR THE FUTURE. OVER THE NEXT DECADE, COMMANDERS AT ALL LEVELS NEED TO ENSURE THROUGH TRAINING THAT THE CAPABILITY TO EXECUTE THESE WARFIGHTING TENETS REMAINS A PRIORITY WHEN PREPARING UNITS FOR URBAN COMBAT OPERATIONS.</p>				
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MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

TITLE:

VISION 2027: WARFIGHTING TENETS THAT WILL ENABLE OUR CORPS TO FIGHT
AND WIN

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
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Executive Summary

Title: Vision 2027: Warfighting Tenets that will enable our Corps to fight and win

Author: Major Ryan Cohen, United States Marine Corps

Thesis: USMC front-line leadership, knowledge of enemy doctrine, and a warfighting ethos will serve as the three operative maxims that enable success in the next urban fight. The Battle of Hue and enduring principles of war both illustrate these maxims.

Discussion: During the 1968 Battle for Hue, the United States Marine Corps (USMC) was involved alongside Joint and Coalition forces in the most intense close quarters urban combat action since World War II. The battle was chaotic, close, bloody and long. In other words, it offers a snapshot in the past that reflects the likely character of future urban combat. Hue offers an illustration of how tactical initiative combined with front-line leadership, understanding the battle-field, and effective employment of direct and indirect fires can create speed, surprise, and violence of action required to achieve a position of advantage in urban combat.

Success occurred through strong and decisive tactical leadership and the integration of fires in close quarters combat, enabling units to seize objectives against overwhelming enemy forces. Hue is an example of a battle where limited availability of airpower put a premium on close quarters combat. The nature of the urban environment, defined by complex terrain and human factors that can limit fires and difficulty of communicating, requires innovative tactics relying on decentralized decision making. Through it all, Marines thrived on the challenge and their actions in the fight became the details of new doctrine.

This paper assesses the key elements of the battle and analyzes their application to future warfare. The Marine Corps will continue to confront the challenge of urban fighting - either a near-peer adversary or violent extremist organization (VEO) in an environment overwhelmed with citizens/non-combatants. Hue is a timeless illustration of how tactical leadership, the importance of the will to fight, and applying urban tactics and decision making will enable success.

Conclusion: In the future war, Vision 2027 – Warfighting Tenets will prove tested through a historical lens (i.e. Battle of Hue) and personal combat experience as sound doctrinal maxims necessary to fight and win in a highly contested urban fight. As a commander, you are charged with building a unit with the skill and will to withstand the test of urban combat. Vision 2027 will serve as key tenets to ensure success.

DISCLAIMER

THE OPINIONS AND CONCLUSIONS EXPRESSED HEREIN ARE THOSE OF THE INDIVIDUAL STUDENT AUTHOR AND DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT THE VIEWS OF EITHER THE MARINE CORPS COMMAND AND STAFF COLLEGE OR ANY OTHER GOVERNMENTAL AGENCY. REFERENCES TO THIS STUDY SHOULD INCLUDE THE FOREGOING STATEMENT.

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Preface

This MMS examines the Battle of Hue 1968, Principles of War (Clausewitz, Jomini, Napoleon), USMC Doctrinal Tactical Tenets, and warfighting tenets required to fight and win in the future war. Vision 2027 provides three Warfighting Tenets personally developed through a battle study of 2nd Battalion, 5th Marines in Hue City and personal combat experience in Helmand Province, Afghanistan. The Battle of Hue serves as the optimum battle of choice to study in order to understand what it takes to operate, fight, and win when confronting a numerically superior fighting force who has already seized the initiative. At a minimum, Hue's relevancy will endure this lifetime and the next as it is the gold standard of Marines seizing ground and fighting in an urban environment. This study will focus commanders down the right axis - in preparation for future combat operations in an urban environment. As good as technology is/and will be, this study will reinforce the significance of commandership, leadership, and understanding how your opponent moves, thinks, and fights.

I would like to extend my most sincere honors and thanks to four groups of our Nation's finest warrior leaders. The first tribute is to Dr. Benjamin Jensen and LtCol Rory Quinn for their valuable guidance, mentorship, and leadership in strengthening my paper. My second tribute is to LtGen Ron Christmas and BGen Mike Downs for their time and sharing a story that exudes (like no other) the battlefield values of honor, courage, and commitment. My third tribute is to a Marine warrior and commander who passed away in 2014 - LtGen Earnest Cheatham. His friendship from 2011-2014 will forever remain my greatest honor. My fourth and final tribute is to the Marines of Kilo Company, 3rd Bn, 7th Mar from our employment together in 2010. The front-line leadership, battlefield courage, and warrior ethos demonstrated in Helmand Province, Afghanistan remains second to none – I salute each and every one of you. Semper Fidelis.

INTRODUCTION

In the book, *The Gathering Storm*, Winston Churchill wrote, “the farther back you can look, the farther forward you are likely to see.”¹ History will always remain a predicate of the future. At some point in the future, U.S. forces will encounter a capability denied environment, whether it occurs as a result of natural phenomena or purposeful enemy action. Encountering battlefield restrictions due to the urban city of Hue or cyber-enabled denial of joint fires and effects, Marines will again have to rely on what they carry on their backs. Historical cases demonstrate that in urban environments, support from air and indirect fires is difficult. The same will likely be true ten years from now. Since current threats are investing, researching, and developing cyber and electronic warfare weapons that will create a degraded and denied future operating environment, Marines will have to rely on timeless principles to win. Seizing ground, fighting courses of action (COAs) based on sustainment, and possessing the mental, moral, and physical courage to win will be critically important. A future fight will be similar – not identical – to Hue when we have to seize a city or secure an objective.

THESIS

USMC front-line leadership, knowledge of enemy doctrine, and a warfighting ethos will serve as the three operative maxims that enable success in the next urban fight. The Battle of Hue and enduring principles of war both illustrate these maxims.

RELEVANCE OF THE THESIS TO FUTURE WAR

The Marine Corps requires an operating concept built around the principles that led to success in Hue. This operating concept should be the standing method the service adopts to fight in urban combat. I call the concept Vision 2027. Vision 2027 is comprised of three warfighting tenets observed in the Hue case: combat leadership at its core - leadership I personally

experienced as a commanding officer in Sangin District, Afghanistan in 2010. These fighting tenets will be just as important in urban combat over the next decade, especially in an environment that includes degraded command and control (C2), adversary unmanned aerial systems, and reduced fire support. Planners must assume an operating environment blanketed with cyber and electronic suppression that U.S. forces and allies cannot combat on their own, must be part of the decentralized planning factors.

METHODOLOGY

I attended a professional military education (PME) brief by Mark Bowden (Author of Hue, 1968) and conducted interviews with two Company Commanders from 2nd Battalion, 5th Marines (2/5) in Hue, Brigadier General Downs and Lieutenant General Christmas.

Additionally, I have spoken many times on the phone and in person between 2011 and 2014 with Lieutenant General Earnest Cheatham, who was the 2/5 Commander in Hue. The above interactions formed the base of knowledge and thought that led to the birth of Vision 2027 in my mind. Three essential Warfighting Tenets form the essence of Vision 2027. Hue is the best example I have found to understand the dynamics I think will be critical for victory in high intensity urban combat, especially in a capability and equipment denied environment.

Vision 2027 - Warfighting Tenets:

- 1. Leadership in the Fight – Front-Line Leadership*
- 2. Warfighting Ethos Increases Combat Power*
- 3. To Understand How Your Enemy Fights and Operates, Understand Their Doctrine*

These tenets create a tactical framework that, when applied correctly (i.e. 2/5 in Hue) in urban combat, will achieve mission success. The three tenets are bound by current USMC doctrine, an education continuum, and the service ethos that breeds front-line leadership. The

result is an ethic of, as required guidance, through commander's intent and monitored decentralized execution. Critics may claim front-line leadership already exists in the USMC chain of command, but I have seen uneven numbers of Soldiers and Marines move to the front lines when supervision in a Combat Operations Center (COC) or Forward Operating Base (FOB) is another option. COCs provide commanders an additional battlefield position to coordinate, resource, and orchestrate key warfighting functions, but in a block-to-block and room-to-room fist fight, commanders must share physical danger with those they lead to be fully credible. Through my Grandfather and Father's example (both retired Marine Officers), I observed the truest form of leadership from the front. It will always come down to where the commander resides on the battlefield to maintain awareness (i.e. common intel/operational picture), inspire, and force timely operational decisions that influence the outcome of the battle. This life lesson was reinforced early on in my career through combat operations and a battlefield lesson that the leaders in 2/5 exuded in our Corps most historical urban fights – Hue, 1968.

Tactical failure and devastating operational impacts will follow any unit that cannot fully implement these critical principles in the current and future fight. If applied correctly, these tenets will equip commanders and units with essential leadership and tactical skills required to succeed in an urban fight. Initiative-based tactics, decentralized execution, effective employment of maneuver warfare, a high morale in the worst of conditions, ethical conduct, belief in mission (no matter the odds), operating off of mission type orders and commander's intent, and outsmarting the opponent in complex and dynamic (four dimensional) urban environment will always bring success to the force that is trained to those capabilities.

THE BATTLE OF HUE

The Vietnam War divided Americans as has no other foreign conflict since the War of 1812.² According to Jeffrey Record, the declared U.S. war aim in Vietnam was the preservation of a noncommunist South Vietnam.³ The context leading up to the conflict is critical to understanding. During WWII Japanese forces invaded Vietnam and due to the opposing will of the Japanese occupiers and French influence, Ho Chi Minh formed the Viet Minh (i.e. the League for Independence of Vietnam). Following WWII Vietnam was faced with a French educated Emperor Bao Dai. Bao Dai desired a unified Vietnam with western ties, but Ho Chi Minh was more geared towards a communist modeled country.

There was a U.S. and South Vietnamese partnership in the early 1950's, which consisted of equipping and advising efforts to prevent a communist expansion in South East Asia. Military advisor and resource support to the South Vietnamese Government endured for approximately a decade followed by a sequel of U.S. limited and targeted air strikes to affect enemy force operations. In 1965 the U.S. launched a 3-year strategic air campaign called OPERATION ROLLING THUNDER, which ultimately failed at achieving the desired end state to neutralize the North Vietnamese Army (NVA) and Viet Cong (VC). The air strikes and bombardment in the North actually increased resolve, tenacity, and fighting power for the NVA, which created an opportunity to launch and counter American information campaign due to the induced collateral damage. The Taliban Forces and Afghan citizens conducted an identical anti-American information operation campaign some 45 years later – with the goal of increasing local populace support and delegitimizing the west – and it worked.

From 1965-1968 during the gradual U.S. build-up of capability and personnel, U.S. Leaders believed that committing troops to South Vietnam would not only safeguard the South

Vietnamese People from communism, but would also serve much broader aims in strengthening regional safety and security by containing Chinese expansionism.⁴ A pre-condition to war - that exists today, is gaining the support from the American People. From WWI to through the Vietnam War history provided that a gradual military build-up will not occur unless public support is achieved. With the prediction of a communist uprising the U.S. Military involvement was necessary. With growing influence and resourcefulness of an NVA and VC threat to South Vietnam and the expansion of communism, U.S. political leadership desired a more aggressive strategy (i.e. ground campaign). The air campaign aimed to neutralize and destroy the NVA and VC, but instead it just increased resiliency. The failure was a result of a piecemealed approach to a ground campaign and the lacking of clear operational and strategic objectives that supported diminishing and degrading NVA and VC capability. The strikes did not achieve neutralizing or destroying command and control nodes, sustainment efforts, reserves, or decisive terrain... and frankly there was no accountability for the South Vietnamese Government – which is similar to today in Iraq and Afghanistan.

General Anthony Zinni stated in an interview, *“If we didn’t capture the hearts of the people, if we couldn’t give them something to fight for, if we weren’t willing to ensure that the government was responsible to people, and we weren’t willing to cut off a base of supply that was endless, we eventually could not win that conflict, despite all the victories on the battlefield.”*⁵

General Zinni, an advisor to the ARVN, coordinated fire support and air, along with living, eating, and fighting with the Vietnamese – all over South Vietnam.⁶ With ongoing advise and enable efforts and an air campaign, ground forces were deployed to secure key ground/airfields to enable the commencement of - OPERATION ROLLING THUNDER. Battle

history (Vietnam, Kuwait, Iraq, and Afghanistan) has highlighted that air campaigns must complement ground forces seizing terrain to ensure tactical and operational success. General Zinni wrote, “he blames America’s elected officials for dragging the country into conflicts without clear objectives, and for failing to provide the world’s most powerful military with the political leadership required to succeed in modern conflicts.”⁷ “The coherent strategy of increasing U.S. presence and capability was initiated in 1965 in fear of appearing weak against communism... and a complete shift in world power”.⁸ As the air campaign continued and the increase of combat power was deployed into South Vietnam, the tactical and operational objectives focused on suffocating NVA leadership and preventing the rise of a communist government – which contributed to the offensive operation known as the Tet Offensive in 1968.. This does not imply that Tet was a manifestation of the success or failures from OPERATION ROLLING THUNDER. Tet was an uprising by the National Liberation Front (NLF) and NVA to exploit perceived operational and strategic failures by the U.S. – which led to commencing a full-scale attack on multiple objectives, which included Hue City.

The heavily populated and historically significant city of Hue was a main effort objective for the NVA, National Liberation Front (NLF), and VC at the commencement of the Tet Offensive. According to one study, “Hue is the country’s third largest city, with a population of over 140,000... and predominantly the culture, spiritual, and educational center of Vietnam.”⁹ Hue resided off of Highway 1 (a main north to south axis along the eastern coast) connecting Da Nang to Quang Tri and stretched north to Hanoi. Additionally, Hue fell between two main avenues of approach (AoA) that ran west to east out of Laos (Highway 9 and 45) that should be assumed were key AoAs that fed the A Shau Valley and the Ho Chi Mihn Trail being employed by the NVA and VC to move



Figure 1-Bing.com Image

supplies, forces, and weapons. The Battle to seize Hue commenced in late January of 1968 and continued through the first week of March – approximately 5 weeks of fighting that today is considered the bloodiest and most significant battle in the Vietnam War. LtGen Cheatham stated “Hue was small unit combat at its core.”¹⁰ The amount of friction and uncertainty that existed during the battle of Hue cannot be easily captured in words. Hue is one of the greatest of urban combat demonstrations of how small unit leaders adapted during execution, when fighting a tough and determined foe (i.e. room-to-room, building-to-building, street-to-street). LtGen Cheatham studied USMC doctrine in Phu Bai before Hue to ensure his battalion was mentally and physically equipped for the street brawl that awaited.

The Tet Offensive was launched on 30 January 1968, involving thousands of NVA, NLF, and VC fighters. The infiltration/offensive action went nearly undetected, minus the ARVN forces located in Hue commanded by BGen Truong. The composition of U.S. and South Vietnam Forces consisted of three USMC Battalions (1st Battalion, 5th Marines, 2/5, Alpha Company, 1st Battalion, 1st Marines, and Lima Company 3rd Battalion, 5th Marines), four Army Battalions (Calvary Unit), and an ARVN Division matched up against a numerically superior NVA and VC force (approximately 7,500 communist fighters).¹¹ After a successful infiltration by NVA and VC forces on 29 January, 1968 it was a matter of hours before the entire city of Hue was seized - minus a small sector in vicinity of the Citadel where the ARVN Division command post was located and the MACV Compound south of the Perfume River.¹² This is when the urban fight began.

Deploying U.S. forces into the southern portion of Hue City (south of the Perfume River) to support associated ARVN forces to the north of the Perfume River commenced with a foothold being secured by Alpha Company 1/1, which was eventually reinforced by Golf

Company 2/5 due to overwhelming enemy resistance encountered. With the Citadel controlled by NVA forces, orders were issued to reinforce the BGen Truong (ARVN HQ) north of the Perfume River, but the several attempts were unsuccessful due to composition/disposition of enemy strongholds postured and the amount of resistance encountered. Of note, Task Force X-Ray had an inaccurate sensing of the intel/operational picture and what LtCol Gravel (1/1 CO), Alpha Company, Golf 2/5, and ARVN forces were confronting north and south of the Perfume River with regards to enemy resistance. BGen Downs told me the mission to push north of the Perfume River in the initial stages of Hue was suicide and after many attempts of tactfully explaining the situation Gravel and forces attempted to push north to the Citadel, but were unsuccessful.¹³ According to a separate study, “in a two-hour firefight, Company G succeeded in taking the bridge, but was forced to retire back to the MACV compound... due to the surmounting enemy attack.”¹⁴

While the fight was ongoing (north and south of the Perfume River) by USMC and ARVN units, an Army Cav unit was deployed to the northwest of the city to interdict and isolate NVA and VC forces. The isolation was unsuccessful and the NVA forces had sustained a key LOC to support offensive operations.¹⁵ As the battle continued, the more apparent it became that General Westmoreland and Task Force X-Ray Leadership, at their own command failures, lacked the necessary situational awareness from the beginning - initial estimates of NVA, VC, and NLF forces in Hue was significantly underestimated.¹⁶ This led to a clear disconnect in the depth and breadth of the enemy situation in Hue City throughout the entire higher headquarters and chain of command, which catastrophically affected resource allocation and priority to prosecute the fight for 2nd Battalion, 5th Marines.

General Downs called it an all-day fight.¹⁷ LtGen Christmas termed it as a *gentlemen's war*, as his Marines would heroically fight from 0700 – 1700 every day and at night both blue and red forces would go firm to rest and refit for the next day of fighting.¹⁸ Approximately four days into the battle, LtGen Cheatham and the rest of his Battalion weredeployed into Hue. LtCol Gravel and Alpha 1/1 supported LtGen Cheatham by conducting interdiction operations along Hwy 1, while Cheatham commenced clearing operations through the city of Hue south of the Perfume River (i.e. Regimental Command Post forward).¹⁹ During the offensive clear Marines from 2/5 were severely restricted by the mandated rules of engagement (ROE) and complex nature of fighting in an urban environment (collateral damage considerations), especially in a city with the historical significance as Hue. Dr. Jensen provides a brilliant point in that these aspects will be enduring and that sound tactical leadership finds ways to adapt to constraints and restraints. According to a Hue documentary, the ARVN forces did not apply the same conservative approach with fires north in the Citadel, as did the Marines north and south of the Perfume River – which shows how disjointed of a sensing leadership had from the regimental and task force level.²⁰ According MajGen Cooling, restrictive U.S. ROE precluded the employment of aircraft munitions, naval surface fires, mortars, and artillery.²¹

During an interview with LtGen Christmas, he describes the employment of smoke and tear gas to deceive and delay the enemy to gain time for troop movement from block to block. He stated that, “the time it took the enemy the enemy to react to the tear gas and smoke was just enough time for my Marines to advance across a danger area and make entry into the next intermediate objective and kill the enemy.”²² It was in this creative and out-of-the box thinking that initially offset the lack of supporting arms and limited collateral damage in Hue. As MajGen Cooling stated in his article, the use of tear gas and smoke also forced the NVA and VC

out of the buildings and in the open, which limited the risk of non-combatant casualties and accurate engagement of the enemy.²³ It is in these two examples that paints the relevance behind these tenets and how they related to a theory of warfare (i.e. decisive operations and audacious acts).

During the clearing operation (east to west) using the Perfume River as a clear guiding feature, 2/5 (reinforced) was fighting for every inch gained against a heavily NVA and VC strong-pointed city. During the first week of fighting a tough, determined, and relentless enemy the Marines of 2/5 confronted enemy tactics that involved NVA employing non-combatants as shields – which was a relevant tactic I encountered in Sangin District, Afghanistan (42 years later). In a knock down street brawl, LtGen Cheatham's force cleared and secured decisive terrain south of the city and declared Hue south of the Perfume River was seized by 10 February. While this fight was ongoing, north of the Perfume River (i.e. Citadel) Major Thompson and 1/5 were in a similar fight combatting enemy resistance beyond comprehension that consisted of sniper fire, enemy strongpoints, and main axis and danger areas covered by frontal and flanking machine gun fires. Similar to 2/5, they were fighting for every inch clearing compounds and rooms infested with NVA and VC. After fifteen days (25 February, 1968), sustaining approximately 50% casualties, Maj Thompson and 1/5 declared the Citadel cleared.²⁴ The seizure of Hue did not come without paying a heavy price in loss of life – Civilians, NVA, VC, ARVN, and U.S, and will forever remain a battle enriched in honor, courage, and commitment by Sailors, Soldiers, and United States Marines.

Taking Charge – Practical Guide for Leaders written by Major General Perry M. Smith (Retired/USAF) astutely provides twenty key fundamentals of leadership that are the basis of a leadership philosophy to successfully lead any large organization.²⁵ *Taking Charge* is a

tremendous resource to strengthen one's leadership ability but remains incomplete in defining how leaders operate in close combat. The author fails to effectively capture what it means to be a leader in a chin-to-chin fight against a tough adversary who will eagerly fight till the death no matter if his back is to a wall or not. Lieutenant General Cheatham stated, "to win in a street fight is to never let your back get to a wall, you get their backs to the wall in a street brawl and you will win..."²⁶ In interviews conducted with Brigadier General Downs and Lieutenant General Christmas the most motivating and consistent theme discussed that led to overall mission success was the fighting spirit of a United States Marine and Gen Cheatham's Leadership.²⁷ LtGen Christmas described Gen Cheatham's leadership as one who built an environment that fostered comradery, a team approach, leading from the front, being a master in your trade, never giving up an inch in the attack, and listening to your men, which was demonstrated by the commanders of 2nd Battalion, 5th Marines leadership during the Battle of Hue in 1968.²⁸

Commanders (Battalion to Platoon) in the Battle for Hue (2/5), represent one of the most effective leadership examples in warfare in an urban environment since WWII. The Battle for Hue is clearly one of our Corps greatest examples of hardened, effective, and fearless combat leaders who literally led from the front in what General Christmas called a "35-meter fight."²⁹ This battle illustrates timeless maxims and principles that can empower future combat leaders to create a leadership system that will withstand the dynamics and complexities of an urban fight. The next portion of my study will provide a glimpse through the lens of doctrine and great captains.

PRINCIPLE OF WAR

According to MCDP 1, “in practice, the conduct of war becomes extremely difficult because of the countless factors that affect combat. These factors collectively have been called friction, which Clausewitz describes as the force that makes the apparently easy so difficult.”³⁰ Friction is a doctrinal element described in MCDP 1, that overlays every scenario confronted in a combat footing. MCDP 1 states, “that we must effectively fight despite the existence of friction... and we prevail over friction through persistent strength of mind and spirit.”³¹ Leadership effectiveness in a combat environment can be measured on how to reduce friction through planning, rehearsing, and tactical leadership. It is merely a fantasy to believe that friction can be totally divorced from military operations, but critical to remember as a planner and commander it can be reduced to a manageable degree in order to achieve mission success. An attribute that injects friction into the nature of warfare is the constant of uncertainty.³² MCDP 1 states that uncertainty can never be eliminated, and leaders/units must learn how to fight effectively under this condition.³³ Similar to friction, uncertainty in combat operations can be reduced by effective training, planning, rehearsals, command, and control (i.e. synchronize supporting arms) in a way to influence the outcome of the engagement.

Vision 2027 tenets enable commanders and units to reduce and adapt given core elements describe in MDCP 1: friction, uncertainty, disorder, complexity... Friction and uncertainty can be contributing factors to units failing to achieve their mission. I have personally observed USMC officers and enlisted Marines request to be relieved (i.e. quit) during combat operations due to fear, fatigue, friction, and uncertainty that accompanies high intensity close quarters combat. These environments are real and cannot always be avoided. They can overwhelm a force and induce amounts of fear that will most likely manifest into unethical actions or no action

at all, unless managed and or controlled - which will in turn benefit the adversary. Not only do Vision 2027 tenets support doctrinal considerations out of MCDP 1, but they also relate to Principles of War by Carl von Clausewitz.

Principles of War dates back before 1812 and is based on the experience of Frederick the Great and the wars with the revolutionary France and Napoleon.³⁴ The essay highlights how critical the three warfighting tenets are and their relation to the principles of warfare.

Clausewitz's theory of warfare describes massing materials and forces at the right place and time, a decisive point.³⁵ According to MCWP 3-35.3 (Military Operations on Urban Terrain), the four phases to an urban attack are as follows; *Phase I: Reconnoiter the Objective, Phase II: Isolate the Objective, Phase III: Secure a Foothold, and Phase IV: Seize the Objective.*³⁶ Phase III being the most decisive in nature when fighting street-to-street and house-to-house. As Clausewitz's describes above (i.e. decisive point), the secure a foothold phase is the when and where you mass combat power (fires, smoke, gas, overwatch, deception, people, and noise) to gain entry and maintain momentum. Clausewitz implies that the most decisive and audacious will become the victor.³⁷ The warfighting tenets focus on leaders being positioned to gain and maintain a common operational and intelligence picture to maximize combat power and deception at critical points in the fight (i.e. isolation and securing a foothold), which forces the enemy to remain reactive.

Clausewitz's *Principles of War* in the offense relate to the warfighting tenets and maneuver warfare. Clausewitz describes a litany of general principles for the offense, but I will highlight three; 1.) *Selecting an attack point and attacking it with great superiority, leaving the rest of his army in uncertainty but keeping it occupied, 2.) Directing the main thrust against an enemy wing by attacking it from the front and from the flank... only when you cut off the enemy's*

*line of retreat are we assured great successes in victory, and 3.) One of the strongest weapons of the offensive warfare is the surprise attack.*³⁸ These three examples more or less define maneuver warfare as it is today. Cutting ground lines of communications, massing combat power to penetrate at one or two points, achieving a flanking position, and cutting off egress routes is how you defeat the adversary. This is achieved through systematically building up combat power and sustainment, shaping operations (i.e. fires, recon, and deception), decisive actions (offensive penetration to achieve a flank), and flexibility (i.e. a reserve positioned to exploit success). It is through the lens of military genius's like Carl von Clausewitz and USMC doctrine (MCDP 1) that proves the validity of Vision 2027 to the urban fight.

Principles of War

Scholarly and practitioner interest in principles of war emerged during the Enlightenment.³⁹ In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, French thinkers published textbooks that tended to abstract the exercise of war in search of general principles. The best definition I have found for principles of war link to truths on how war should be practiced or executed. In modern times and study as a professional warfighter, we employ terms like tenets, maxims, traits, and principles. As a military philosopher and practitioner, Napoleon developed what is known to be military maxims. I am focusing on his second maxim "A plan of a campaign should anticipate everything which an enemy can do..."⁴⁰ a pattern of perceived operational success by the enemy will eventually lead to their demise based on your ability to do the following; you determine how they fight and as a result you apply the MAGTF capability to defeat and or destroy the enemy unit.

Jomini was no different than Napoleon in developing truths in the practice of war. Jomini developed eleven maxims⁴¹ that apply today on the modern battlefield. Jomini's main principle was to mass and concentrate fire power at a decisive point in battle. This principle proved effective

when employed against fractions of the enemy's army, attacking, and massing against a center of gravity to achieve destruction.⁴² The best example I have found of exercising the principle of mass is Operation DESERT STORM/DESERT SHIELD. Jomini wrote "in order to make superior shock of mass decisive, the general must give care to raise the morale of his army..."⁴³ In Hue, BGen Downs, LtGen Christmas, and LtGen Cheatham continuously walk the lines to maintain a temperature on the force, endure frontline hardships, and ensure the men remained motivated to seize the initiative and smash the enemy. Jomini's maxims were exercised in Hue and reinforce the first two tenets of Vision 2027.

Military organizations still publish principles as a mechanism to help officers conceptualize operational art and strategy. Soviet doctrine held that there were twelve "classical Russian military principles."⁴⁴ During the Cold War, *Senri Nyumon* (Introduction to the Principles of War) was required reading for Japanese Self-Defense Forces.⁴⁵ Current U.S. Joint doctrine lists twelve principles: objective, offensive, mass, maneuver, economy of force, unity of command, security, surprise, simplicity, restraint, perseverance, and legitimacy.⁴⁶ Current British doctrine lists ten principles.⁴⁷ Australian doctrine lists eleven principles.⁴⁸

TACTICAL TENETS

Under the assumption that these tenets are scalable from the tactical to operational just as mass and maneuver, as principles, operate at the strategic, operational, and tactical. At the tactical level, the USMC outlines tactical tenets in MCDP 1-0 Ground Operations, which are defined as a methodology to achieve a desired end state and goals from the tactical to strategic level. The analysis will use the Hue case, analysed through the principles of war and the tactical tenets to illustrate Vision 2027.

VISION 2027

Principle	US DOD Definition	UK BDD Definition	Link to Vision 2027
Economy of Force/Effort	The purpose of economy of force is to expend minimum essential combat power on secondary efforts in order to allocate the maximum possible combat power on primary efforts	Economy of effort is the judicious exploitation of manpower, materiel and time in relation to the achievement of objectives	Frontline leadership and knowing your enemy doctrine enables you as a commander proactively posture and employ shaping and decisive operations at the right place and time.
Maneuver	The purpose of maneuver is to place the enemy in a position of disadvantage through the flexible application of combat power		The goal is to employ a combination of deception and maneuver to achieve a flank - Achieve a flank, Achieve a flank, Achieve a flank.
Mass / Concentration of Force	The purpose of mass is to concentrate the effects of combat power at the most advantageous place and time to produce decisive results	Concentration of force involves the decisive, synchronized application of superior fighting power (conceptual, physical, and moral) to realize intended effects, when and where required	Leadership in a position to maintain a common operational and intelligence picture enables you to achieve mass and surprise at a geographical point and time of your choosing.
Objective / selection and maintenance of the aim	The purpose of specifying the objective is to direct every military operation toward a clearly defined, decisive, and achievable goal	A single, unambiguous aim is the keystone of successful military operations. Selection and maintenance of the aim is regarded as the master principle of war	Frontline Leadership is the key to inspiring and providing a sense of purpose to your force.
Security	The purpose of security is to prevent the enemy from acquiring unexpected advantage	Security is the provision and maintenance of an operating environment that affords the necessary freedom of action, when and where required, to achieve objectives	
Surprise	The purpose of surprise is to strike at a time or place or in a manner for which the enemy is unprepared	Surprise is the consequence of shock and confusion induced by the deliberate or incidental introduction of the unexpected	You need to know who you are fighting and enemy force doctrine is just a departure point. The enemy adapts and evolves.

Table 1: Tactical Tenets

The first tenet of Vision 2027 is frontline leadership. Frontline leadership relates to the principle of objective. LtGen Cheatham was a frontline combat leader who described exactly what needed to be accomplished south of the Perfume River and endured every aspect of the battle

with his men. I remember LtGen Cheatham telling me a story in his living room on how he motivated and educated his subordinate commanders. Like my father, LtGen Cheatham was a white board teacher/mentor. As a Battalion Commander, he would walk and talk through tasks, intent, and vision. He was not only a planner well beyond his years in 1968, but he dedicated the next 29 years (and more) to becoming a master in teaching and fighting large scale forces. It was in his early ages as a battlefield commander in the city of Hue where the tenet of Frontline Leadership applied the principle of objective.

The second tenet of Vision 2027 is warfighting ethos. Warfighting ethos relates to the principle of maneuver. Leaders who inspire their men create a fighting power that goes unmatched. The objective for maneuver is to get behind your enemy, create a gap, and achieve a flank. This can be done through information operations, tactical raids, deception, multiple penetration points, shaping operations and more... but the endstate will always be to achieve a flank. LtGen Christmas stated the best lesson learned was “that the imagination and aggressiveness are the best weapons in a commander’s arsenal.”⁴⁹ Leadership forward blowing room-to-room, compound-to-compound, and block-to-block created a fighting force that could not lose – no matter the odds or technology. If leadership (small unit leader level to battalion) are not in a position to continuously assess execution the probability to lose the initiative increases.

The third tenet is knowledge of the enemy. Knowledge of the enemy is what enables one of the foundations of maneuver warfare, the principle of surprise. Commanders need to know enemy doctrine in order to defeat them with minimal cost in resource. Knowing how your enemy thinks, fights, and operates provides a home court advantage that exponentially increases the likelihood for mission success and saving lives. During battle it is important to remember that your enemy’s tactics, techniques, and doctrine will evolve as what worked for your force will not

work again - so tactical patience and measured restraint will enable decisively massing combat power to destroy your enemy's known center of gravity.

FUTURE WAR

Frontline leadership, warfighting ethos, and knowledge of the enemy will enable Marines to close with and destroy the enemy in 2027. The warfighting tenets of Vision 2027 are mission essential to overcome technological advances in the future – a degraded and contested battlefield.

Frontline Leadership is required in the future urban fight to overcome a C2 degraded environment through the use of the tactical principles of objective and mass. When the enemy effectively employs electronic warfare and cyber offensive and defensive capabilities – with the added operational challenges of fighting in urban terrain, leadership need to be in a position to influence decisive outcomes. A commander who loses situational awareness the force and mission are at risk. The enemy employs all means necessary to encourage draining resource, with a tactical patience that could never be captured in words. Leaders and commanders **MUST** remain at the point of friction so they can lead & inspire their troops or unit through the limit of advance.

Any operational environment in which the organization operates without its full complement of information and communications capabilities is considered to be degraded or denied.⁵⁰ Leadership in the fight in the “*as is*” model or “*to be*” model of 2027, will always be a determining factor of mission accomplishment. Combat requires making time sensitive decisions on advancing under close range enemy fires from position to position to seize terrain, leading the charge to ensure momentum and initiative are maintained during an attack, and remaining poised and motivated from action to action – which will result in mission accomplishment. The “to be” model will not replace leading from a vantage point in the fight. Taking charge and being able to influence the outcome of every tactical engagement or battle by

your physical location and command presence, will always be integral to success when the fight is up close and personal. Possessing overwhelming firepower for every engagement with the enemy will not be the constant over the next ten years. The constant will be upfront decisive leadership from unit commanders –The Battle of Hue serves as an example, approximately 50 years ago that leaders in the fight will always remain a (or the) key operational factor for mission success.

For empirical data over the last 17 years of war, look at leaders like LtCol Grayson, LtCol Quinn, and MajGen Kennedy who fought in the Battles of Fallujah and Ar-Ramadi or Maj Calvin and Maj Sparks who fought in the Battle for Sangin and Marjah in Afghanistan. These examples validate that “take charge” leaders positioned to assess (and react to) current and future operations will remain a constant for success in chin to chin fighting, especially in the future war.

Once the deployment begins and kick off commences, leaders in the fight ensure rehearsals are executed to the point of combat “readiness” and initial planning remains deliberate in nature, providing the foundation for crisis planning/decision making when the war fighting scenario warrants change to the base order. It is in the planning and rehearsals conducted that enabled success in Hue and it will be in the deliberate and crisis planning, and rehearsals that ensure Marines fight and win in 2027. Leaders in the fight know when the sailors and Marines need rest in the fight, as Commanders dictate the tempo. Rest ensures your Sailors and Marines make sound decisions and have the mental and physical energy to fight the way they were trained to fight. Leaders in the fight ensure the troops remained resourced, motivated, and focused which will equate to mission success at the tactical level. WWII to Vietnam to Combat Operations in Iraq and Afghanistan cover a timespan of approximately 78 years blanketed with technological initiatives/advancements that have significantly strengthened the USMC’s ability

to offensively and defensively fight and win. A key fundamental that can't be constructed in a warehouse or designed by a robotics or computer engineer expert is *Combat combat Leadership leadership* and it is in this attribute that will ensure battlefield success in 2027. In Hue City, 2/5 Commanders remained up front and led and inspired their men in a street fight from block to block, house to house, stairwell to stairwell, and room to room. Today's fight and in 2027 the same commander actions will apply. Commanders at the tactical level must have a comprehensive understanding of the battle and are also obligated to ensure HHQ is aligned with the threat picture. Additionally, they must understand resource requirements, morale of their force, enemy capabilities and will to fight, and terrain. There is no greater example of leading and making decisions from a vantage point than Col Clay Tipton and SgtMaj Troy Black (former 3/7 Battalion Commander and SgtMaj) and Major General Kennedy (former 2nd Marines Regimental Commander). Their understanding of how and when to lead from the front and set the example for all subordinates became a force multiplier. Commanders were able to timely act and react to battlefield situations resulting in outsmarting, overwhelming, and overpowering the enemy. The other benefits were ensuring the Marines maintained motivation, momentum, and tempo in a street fight.

“Technology will change but the constant will be human will.”⁵¹ exemplifies the significance behind a warrior ethos equating to combat power. The Marine Corps continuously experiments with cutting edge technology to lighten the load and increase lethality. In 2027, The United States Marine Corps will surely be outfitted with new and enhanced equipment (weapons, optics, vehicles, radios, munitions, armor) that enhance reach and capability across all seven warfighting functions, but the fighting spirit of a Marine closing the last 300 meters will always remain the main effort of leaders in the fight. As General Christmas stated, “*The Nature of*

Urban Warfare is not going to change with additional tools to employ. It is about learning to achieve expediency with weapons as his Marines did in the battle of Hue with the 106mm Recoilless Rifle – young Marines will always make it work, you just need to tell them your commanders desired endstate.”⁵² In reflection, General Christmas stated that “Control” was the greatest lesson learned in fighting and leading in Hue. When the enemy would flee or evade out the back of a building, the Marine (and or) unit would desire to aggressively pursue, but in order to prevent rushing into a deliberate enemy ambush, control was the answer.”⁵³ The function of control in 2027 will become more complex, due to having more equipment and weapon systems to prosecute the fight, but the role of a leader synchronizing capabilities and controlling his force in the attack will never change.

Up-front leadership that was displayed by USMC leadership in Hue City will be even more important in 2027, as the shift towards relying on advanced weapons and surveillance systems may detract from leadership from the front. As General Neller has stated on several occasions, leaders walk the lines and are always there. There is no greater example of walking the lines and courage of being there than LtGen Cheatham, LtGen Christmas, and BGen Downs in the Battle of Hue, 1968. With the emerging cyber and EW threats, we have to ready to fight in a C2 and capability degraded environment. It will come down to a fighting ethos, leadership, and outthinking and deceiving your opponent. It is in these tenets that will determine success or failure.

An enduring constant; as the rate of innovation increases, the rate of military adaption will increase.⁵⁴ If you don't know your enemy, they will surprise you with new concepts and capability faster than you can respond. The knowledge maxim is grounded on surprising them. In 2027, similar fighting patterns will be executed by the enemy - fight during the day and refit/prep/recon

operations during the hours of darkness. They will know the terrain, they will know the surroundings, they will know maneuverability, and they will be watching. Most critical, the enemy will know how you think and fight and will be students of your doctrine. What worked in previous engagements will not work again, as your enemy evolves and adapts. As the Marine Corps evolves in capability and in doctrine, leaders at the tactical level MUST remain present in this well versed in enemy doctrine. Read their doctrine and know how your enemy thinks and fights. Know his center of gravity, and what makes him feel uncomfortable and exploit his vulnerabilities. General Christmas knew if he employed gas on the next block, he knew it would force the enemy to drop defense of their sector, place their weapons down and grab their mask – this afforded the time for his Marines to close the necessary distance to seek cover, seize key terrain (i.e. gas enabled his Marines to seize the capital) or kill enemy. In the “as is” or “to be” model, the one who gets their METT-T Analysis right will have a greater chance of success in the nastiest of urban fights.

Leadership in the fight, knowing the terrain, and knowing your enemy will enable tactical commanders to create shock and awe by overwhelming the threat with fires and maneuver. The enemy gets extremely uncomfortable when Marines begin to effectively and aggressively maneuver, which generally forces the threat to fall back. Leaders must measure and weigh how much risk is acceptable when maneuvering their force, by assessing enemy disposition, composition, and next move. General Christmas stated his Marines thought the enemy was everywhere, but in actuality there were seams to be exploited.⁵⁵ It was the leaders on the ground like LtGen Cheatham who executed a thorough map study and effectively employed tactical resources to know enemy strong points and gaps that could be exploited for success. General Christmas stated that once Hue University was seized, LtGen Cheatham set up a class room with a white board and would hold class to ensure alignment in the fight.⁵⁶ The operative theme is to

make the enemy think one thing - the wrong thing (i.e. deception), but it takes resources for it to work. Col Ray Cole, G-3, 1st Marine Division for OPERATION DESERT STORM, stated Commanders should be willing to employ one-third of their combat power to understand the enemy's disposition and their next move. I agree. Hue is the greatest example of a Marine Unit numerically outnumbered by the thousands, but relied on the basics of warfare and executed combat leadership in an urban battle from the front. LtGen Christmas recalled it's how you use what is available to you, as the basics of urban combat remain the same. It came down to Leaders in the fight who knew their trade and had the confidence to take charge of the battle.

As my father ingrained in me at an early age, "leaders never put your men through anything you wouldn't put yourself through first," which enabled me to succeed in commanding Sailors and Marines in Laghman, Kunar, Farah, and Helmand Province, Afghanistan over combat tours in OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM. Tactical commanders in Hue City in 1968, like their counterparts in Helmand Province over 40 years later, provided front-line leadership by positioning themselves at the point of friction to lead, inspire, and drive fires and maneuver against enemy forces. Marines from either era would know success was not dependent on a technology enhanced battlefield, but derived from the effective employment of the basic tenets of war. In Hue, Marines fought with what they had on their backs and a fighting spirit that cannot be measured in words. Employing line of sight technology (field phones, VHF, HF Communications), bayonets, direct/indirect fire weapon systems, and a warrior ethos as LtGen Cheatham describes, creates a fighting power that wins wars at the tactical level.

As an Urban Warfare Coyote at the Urban Warfare Training Center in 29 Palms California, I observed the most successful teaching and mentoring centered around these three warfighting tenets. These training experiences combined with deployments to Afghanistan

reinforced my knowledge of the capability restrictions of the MAGTF in an urban environment. The Basic School runs a field exercise that simulates a cyber / EW attack and the Marine leaders have to still carry out and complete the mission in a degraded communication environment – which forces them to work through the problem, shoot, move, and communicate to accomplish the mission. In the future urban war, it will not be technology or weapons systems that turns the tide, it will be a warfighting organization that understands how to decentralize execution and lead through the lens of Vision 2027.

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