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1. REPORT DATE (DD-MM-YYYY) 30-04-2018		2. REPORT TYPE Master of Military Studies Research Paper		3. DATES COVERED (From - To) 1951 to 2018	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE 98 Shades of Grey: The Minimum Number of Regulations Every Marine Must Know, Follow, and Implement				5a. CONTRACT NUMBER N/A	
				5b. GRANT NUMBER N/A	
				5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER N/A	
6. AUTHOR(S) Sharpe, Justin M., Major, USMC				5d. PROJECT NUMBER N/A	
				5e. TASK NUMBER N/A	
				5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER N/A	
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) USMC Command and Staff College Marine Corps University 2076 South Street Quantico, VA 22134-5068				8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER N/A	
9. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) N/A				10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S) N/A	
				11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S) N/A	
12. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for public release, distribution is unlimited.					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES N/A					
14. ABSTRACT In 2015 retired Army officers and Drs. Leanord Wong and Stephen J. Gerras produced a brilliantly simplistic paper titled <i>Lying to Ourselves: Dishonesty in the Army Profession</i> . Their study, captured in their paper, illuminated a disturbing yet instantly recognizable reality for anyone who has served at the battalion level or below in the Army or Marine Corps since 2003. The reality is that the organization places more requirements on the unit than the unit has time to complete to standard. Since non-compliance is not an option, unit leaders are forced to compromise their integrity in reporting completion of the unrealistic requirements for the sake of the greater good which ranges from saving soldier's time to not risking convoys down improvised explosive laden roads for the sake of administrative requirements. In this paper I will expand on the theory above with a focus on how irresponsible tasking is producing the exact opposite effect of the purpose for which the orders and regulations were designed. Rather than unity of effort and understanding of purpose, over regulation and misapplied directives teach subordinate leaders, all the way down to the fire team level, to decide when and to what extent they are going to follow orders. Rather than instant obedience, the organization is teaching indifference to orders due to the subordinate leaders' inability to feasibly achieve all of his many Highers' intents. While not presuming to have a simple answer as to which orders should be kept, and which should be disregarded, I recommend that the organization limit its focus in training requirements as well as regulations for conduct to those regulations that apply to completion of war time requirements.					
15. SUBJECT TERMS Lying to Ourselves, Doing What Matters With Less, Policy Prioritization, Ethical Fading					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT UU	18. NUMBER OF PAGES	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON Marine Corps University/Command and Staff College
a. REPORT Unclass	b. ABSTRACT Unclass	c. THIS PAGE Unclass			19b. TELEPHONE NUMBER (include area code) (703) 784-3330 (Admin Office)

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MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

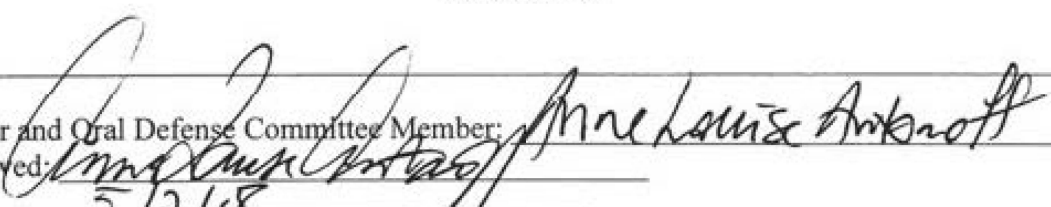
TITLE: 98 Shades of Grey
The Minimum Number of Regulations Every Marine Must Know, Follow, and Implement

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

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AY 2017-18

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Approved: 

Date: 5/2/18

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Approved: 

Date: 02 May 2018

Executive Summary

Title: 98 Shades of Grey: The Minimum Number of Regulations Every Marine Must Know, Follow, and Implement

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Thesis: Every time an unachievable, ill-prioritized, or dumb order is issued, it erodes the confidence of the executors in their superiors. Habitually issuing such directives not only trains indifference to orders within the ranks, but also forces subordinate leaders to decide which orders to follow and which to neglect in order to accomplish the essential tasks and care for their troops.

Discussion: In 2015 retired Army officers and Drs. Leanord Wong and Stephen J. Gerras produced a brilliantly simplistic paper titled *Lying to Ourselves: Dishonesty in the Army Profession*. Their study, captured in their paper, illuminated a disturbing yet instantly recognizable reality for anyone who has served at the battalion level or below in the Army or Marine Corps since 2003. The reality is that the organization places more requirements on units than units have time to complete to standard. Since non-compliance is not an option, unit leaders are forced to compromise their integrity in reporting completion of the unrealistic requirements for the sake of the greater good which ranges from saving soldier's time to not risking convoys down improvised explosive laden roads for the sake of administrative requirements.

In this paper I will expand on the theory above with a focus on how irresponsible tasking is producing the exact opposite effect of the purpose for which the orders and regulations were designed. Rather than unity of effort and understanding of purpose, over regulation and misapplied directives teach subordinate leaders, all the way down to the fire team level, to decide when and to what extent they are going to follow orders. Rather than instant obedience, the organization is teaching indifference to orders due to the subordinate leaders' inability to feasibly achieve all of his many Highers' intents. While not presuming to have a simple answer as to which orders should be kept, and which should be disregarded, I recommend that the organization limit its focus in training requirements as well as regulations for conduct to those regulations that can be understood by the troops and directly apply to completion of war time requirements.

Conclusion: Refusal to exercise such restraint and prioritization, will inevitably result in deliberate disobedience both in garrison and combat. Just as instant obedience becomes habitual during basic training, disobedience becomes habitual when requirements are unreasonable or unfeasible. Without a change in course, the Marine Corps will continue to breed disobedience down to the fire team level yet with strategic consequences, as we have seen demonstrated within the last ten years, in both garrison and combat.

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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Table of Contents

	Page
FRONT MATTER	i
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	ii
DISCLAIMER	iii
TABLE OF CONTENTS	iv
PREFACE	v
REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE	vi
INTRODUCTION	1
THESIS	2
SCOPE AND DEFINITIONS	3
THEORY	5
HISTORY	13
CURRENT STATE	20
IMPLICATIONS	22
RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION	24
CITATIONS AND FOOTNOTES	27
BIBLIOGRAPHY	29

Preface

This paper is the distillation of themes and ideas that I have been intentionally thinking about since 2011 when I first read Major Pete Munson's article which I will reference throughout. Having spent the better part of 13 years at the executor level, and three of those years as a battalion operations officer, I have worked at the intersection of policy promulgation, implementation, and completion certification. I am convinced that failure to prioritize and limit policies and requirements levied on the force at that level will result in the erosion of integrity and obedience, and increase in misconduct that cannot be fixed by better small unit leadership or extra training classes.

Thanks is due first and foremost to Dr. and Professor Anne Louise Antonoff who has guided me through this process and the construction of what she aptly describes as this *thought piece*. Special thanks to Ms. Jeanne Chetnik of the MAGTF Training and Education Standards Division of TECOM who provided historical training documents available no where else in the Marine Corps. Thanks to Dr. Paolo Tripodi and LtCol Kevin Glathar for encouraging me to continue writing on an ethical issue and helped me sharpen my argument, if only in my own mind, through several hours of conversations on this and related topics. Lastly, thanks to dozens of active duty and retired Marines from across the organization who contributed their experience, insights, and observations to the research of the issues in this paper. My hope is that this work accurately reflects their sentiments and presents an incentive for leaders at all levels within the Marine Corps to ensure prioritization and purpose of their directives.

In February, 2007 a young Marine lieutenant was conducting live fire training at Rodriguez Range Complex, just a few miles south of the demilitarized zone in South Korea. The temperature hovered around 32 degrees Fahrenheit as his Marines began their first live fire iteration of their fire and maneuver training. Under the suppression of 25-millimeter chain guns, scouts from the four Light Armored Vehicles dismounted and began the flanking movement which would ultimately allow them to close with and secure the objective. Breathing heavy as they rushed across the rugged terrain, each scout began to shed the goggles and ballistic glasses that they wore due to steam from their body heat fogging the lenses in the near freezing temperature.

After observing the first live fire run, the lieutenant's company commander noted the lack of eye protection and said that it must be worn during live fire training. "Sir" the lieutenant protested, "they're eye pro is fogging up so bad that they can't see their optics, much less effectively acquire targets." "They're probably wearing too many warming layers" responded the company commander; "they've got to have their eye pro on."

The policy was Marine Corps wide. Over three years into the Iraq War, there was no question that eye protection as well as most other forms of personal protective equipment had saved life, limbs, and eyesight for many Marines in combat. It was well intentioned, with proven results, but these Marines were not in Iraq.

Returning to his platoon before the next live run, the lieutenant and his Chief Scout re-inspected each of the Marines for warming layers. As cold as it was, and as young as the platoon was, they had all stripped down for the time-honored tradition of the infantryman, buddy rushing. They were not wearing too many warming layers. The mix of hot breath from sweating bodies running across frozen terrain simply resulted in steam that floated up from their mouths

and down from their helmet covered heads into the plastic lenses meant to protect their eyes from any type of fragmentation.

The second weapons safety rule recited by Marines prior to all live fire training is "never point your weapon at anything you do not intend to shoot." The unofficial yet critical fifth safety rule is "know your target and what lies beyond it." These Marines could do neither without ditching or manipulating their eye protection so that it no longer served its intended purpose. But the written policy was clear, and the verbal order even clearer. The policy was well intended and the order was given by a well-respected Weapons Company Commander with the requisite knowledge and combat experience. The only problem was that the policy and the order negated the value for which the training was being conducted.

Seven months out of school, the lieutenant stood there with 34 sets of eyes watching and waiting to see what decision he would make. Would he follow orders or do what worked? If he disobeyed orders in the name of effectiveness, would the sergeants do the same? What about the lance corporals? Who has the position, rank, authority, or experience to decide which orders should be followed when it is not possible or feasible to follow all of the guidance and regulations that govern our actions?

Thesis

Over the last 65 years the Marine Corps has gone through a transition in which well-intended standardization of policy from the highest levels was implemented across the force in order to prioritize and produce the capability required by good stewards of tax payer dollars. Autonomy and discretion of commanders, particularly at the tactical level, was sacrificed for proficiency in common skill sets or completion of behavioral training that could be measured and evaluated at the highest levels of the organization. With standardization came compliance. With

compliance came certification aided by the promulgation of the internet which facilitated an increase in requirements that the force was unable to meet. Lack of prioritization, time, and competing requirements, in an organization where non-compliance is seemingly unacceptable, led to dishonesty in reporting and ethical fading. The very standardization of priorities which the transformation was meant to produce was replaced by an organization in which commanders at all levels must decide what matters, knowing they will never accomplish all that is required.

This paper will explore the way this transformation occurred chronologically, and the second order effects of ethical fading caused by lack of prioritization, unrealistic requirements, and irresponsible tasking at the highest levels of command. I will examine specific examples through the lens of the widely disseminated study produced at the Army's Command and General Staff College (CGSC) called *Lying to Ourselves: Dishonesty in the Army Profession*. This study, conducted by Drs. Leonard Wong and Stephen J. Gerras will serve as the base theory upon which I will build my thesis. Supporting this theory from a Marine Corps perspective is a similar yet shorter article by Marine Major Peter J. Munson titled *Doing What Matters With Less*. Finally, I will discuss the logical ramifications of this evolution if the organization does not change course and offer recommendations on where to begin that process.

Scope and Definitions

The scope of this paper is intentionally limited to the evolution of Marine Corps policy since 1970, though included in the history is the introduction of the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ) in 1951. Because the theory is based heavily on an Army study, terms such as Soldiers or Marines, and Army or Marine Corps should be treated synonymously throughout. Research suggests that the ramifications of that study and the results discussed in this paper are pertinent to both organizations. There are also contributing factors to what I assert is a problem

of lack of prioritization by the Marine Corps that partially stem from Department of Defense (DoD) wide policies. The intent is not to hold any one entity responsible for the current state of the organization. The current state of the Marine Corps was formed by many well-intentioned individuals at multiple levels over a period of decades. The intent is to highlight the erosion of purpose, followed by apathy and ethical fading that inevitably occur when unachievable directives are issued. The Marine Corps is currently at that point. Without a change in course, apathy and ethical fading will increase.

The term ethical fading was introduced in 2004 in an article by Ann Tenbrunsel and David Messick who described the "psychological forces that promote self-deception allowing one to behave self-interestedly while, at the same time, falsely believing that one's moral principles were upheld."ⁱ Applied to the civilian business sector, the term focused on practices commonly believed to be unethical, but accepted as the only way to get things done and meet organizational goals. In the Marine Corps, ethical fading occurs the same way, but often to best accommodate the interests of one's subordinates or unit. In 2015 Dr. Wong and Dr. Gerras described ethical fading in the Army as allowing "us to convince ourselves that considerations of right or wrong are not applicable to decisions that in any other circumstances would be ethical dilemmas. This is not so much because we lack a moral foundation or adequate ethics training, but because psychological processes and influencing factors subtly neutralize the 'ethics' from an ethical dilemma."ⁱⁱⁱ Those influencing factors are unique in the Marine Corps because of the hierarchal structure of the organization and the potential consequences of following dumb¹ or

¹ In 2006 the Marine Corps purchased 84,000 Modular Tactical Vests (MTV) as a replacement for the interceptor vest and plate carriers that were previously issued. While offering more protection from fragmentation and added weight distribution, the increase in weight and surface area of the MTV decreased mobility and breathability for the warfighters. Beginning in April 2007, the Marine Corps policy required Marines in combat units to pack and or wear the MTVs regardless of their negative side effects. Not until the senior Marine in the Corps, General James Conway, visited Marines in Iraq in November 2007 and refused to wear the vest himself did the Corps revisit its policy, in search of a better solution for those executing combat operations. For eight months, subordinate leaders

unreasonable requirements.ⁱⁱⁱ Rather than ensuring purpose and unity of effort, the hierarchy often allows for dissemination of disjointed or competing requirements from different levels within the chain of command. The consequences, which could include injury or death, allows decision makers to rationalize non-compliance or disobedience.

Another term worth clarifying up front is policy. Throughout this paper, I will discuss the lack of prioritization in the Marine Corps which manifests itself in written policy. Marine Corps policies can take the form of Navy and Marine Corps Orders (NAVMCs), All Marine Corps Orders (ALMARS), Marine Administrative Message (MARADMINs), and unit level orders or policy letters. As stated above, some policies which impact Marines such as the UCMJ are dictated at the DoD level. Refinement or reprioritization of such policies would require action outside of the Marine Corps. The intent, once again, is not to assign blame to any specific entity, but do illustrate how the combination of directives above often result in unachievable requirements at the battalion level² and below. For the remainder of this paper, the words policy, directives, orders, etc... will all be used interchangeably as they are interconnected and result in time or resource requirements for those they impact.

Theory

The base theory that I will apply in this thesis was captured in a comprehensive study conducted by professors Wong and Gerras at the Army's CGSC in 2015 called *Lying to Ourselves: Dishonesty in the Army Profession*. In their study, these two retired Army officers added up all of the requirements levied onto a company at the time. They then used Army doctrine to determine how much time it would take to complete each requirement to standard and

were faced with the decision to either disregard the policy or hinder their units' ability to conduct ground combat operations.

² This level is fitting as the majority of Marines deployed around the world deploy as or attached to battalions.

compared that number with the average time each company had available to train before redeployment. What they found, after questioning numerous officers not only at the tactical level but midlevel and senior officers who collected the reports from those at the tactical level, was a no-win situation in which commanders and staff officers at the tactical level were forced to lie about meeting requirements or self-select reprimand and eventual removal from the organization. The result is an entire officer corps that views itself as principled and fundamentally honest yet routinely compromises their integrity for the greater good or to make mission. Their study highlights three causal factors; lack of time, certification of completion, and a zero-defect mentality as the catalysts for ethical fading. I will examine and apply those factors throughout the body of this paper before discussing the greater detrimental effects on the organization which are not limited to the officer corps and which have much more consequential ramifications than vague half-truths on a color chart or quad slide.

The first causal factor in *Lying to Ourselves Theory* is lack of time to complete or complete to standard the requirements levied on the force. Everything in the military is a function of time which is the most valuable commodity leaders can give back to their subordinates yet rarely do because of the requirements cited below. Unrealistic requirements are codified in orders, directives, and training doctrine which by themselves could be attainable. However, those requirements combined and applied to units with varying dwell times, personnel turnover, natural disasters, and emergency stand downs, routinely become a bridge too far. When the study was conducted, the authors of *Lying to Ourselves* found that Army company commanders had 297 days of training to fit into 256 available training days.^{iv} While the casual observer accepts the fact that completing all of the assigned requirements is unfeasible, staff

officers and commanders are required to certify and report completion which is the second causal factor in this theory.

Readiness reporting, like all directives, was well intentioned and served a functional purpose at its inception. It served as a system of assessing whether or not units and their equipment were prepared for the foreseeable challenges of deployment. Before the days of mass mobilization where every unit knew roughly where and when they would deploy, readiness reporting offered senior leaders objective criteria with which they could choose which unit to mobilize for a specific task. As training, exercise, and employment plans (TEEPs) were standardized to facilitate the manpower requirements of Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) and Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF), that function of readiness reporting lost value. Units deployed and re-deployed whether they had completed all of their training requirements to standard or not. While training priorities changed due to newly developed tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs), the number of requirements did not shrink with the reduced deployment to dwell time. Instead the number of requirements grew, and the function of reporting changed.

Senior leaders in the administrative chain of command during OEF and OIF did not have the option to refuse sourcing units to the operational chain of command due to lack of readiness. The war required that those units deploy, yet no one in either chain would acknowledge that they were sending Marines to combat unprepared. Readiness reporting thus became a certification by commanders and their staffs that each individual in their unit had met all of the requirements for deployment. Commanders at the tactical level, could refuse to deploy an individual who they deemed not ready, but the unit would deploy regardless, and most units preferred to deploy with more able-bodied personnel rather than less.

This change in function of readiness reporting without a change to the requirement itself is indicative of the larger dilemma. The task no longer met the purpose, yet the requirement to report completion or readiness remained. As US military and Iraqi civilian casualties rose during OIF, so did the level of scrutiny given to the readiness reports. Rather than a tool to determine whether or where to deploy units, the reports became evidence which senior leaders could use to defend a unit's level of training after it deployed. Like hundreds of requirements that would follow over the next ten years, certification of completion or readiness no longer served as determinant information for senior decision makers to reprioritize or reallocate time and resources. Rather, they became data points to be used in assigning culpability after every civilian casualty, vehicle accident, mishap, misconduct case, suicide, etc.

With the promulgation of the internet and on-line databases, certification of completion and compliance reporting expanded from core training requirements to ancillary training requirements to refresher and immediate safety stand down training completion. Depending on the nature of the latest accident, mishap, or misconduct incident; tasks would be generated for commanders or their staffs to report 100% completion to higher headquarters in accordance with an arbitrary timeline that typically did not account for the subordinate unit's current operations. "As a result, an officer's signature and word have become tools to maneuver through the Army bureaucracy rather than being symbols of integrity and honesty."^v

Failure to comply or failure to report 100% completion of compliance results in adverse action which is the third causal factor in *Lying to Ourselves Theory*. After analyzing the flood of requirements placed on military leaders, the authors of the study found that it was "literally impossible to execute to standard all that is required yet reporting non-compliance with the requirements is seldom a viable option"^{vi} for several reasons. First, the reporting tool may not

allow for exceptions faced by organizations on different training cycles,³ made up of several hundred or thousands of individuals. Second, the issuing authority on a given directive may be so many levels up the chain of command that attaining an exception to the policy may take longer than the unit has to complete the task. Finally, there may be very serious repercussions for both the commander and the unit for telling the truth if only one command reports 85% completion while everyone else reports 100%.^{vii}

The combination of these circumstances represents what the authors of *Lying to Ourselves* call a tendency toward zero defects. If reporting noncompliance is not an acceptable alternative because of that tendency... then it is important to examine the resultant institutional implications.^{viii} Those implications listed in the study included “deceit... in maintenance, supply, or other official reporting”^{ix} as well as manning and training readiness reports. Because the dishonesty and ambiguity is so prevalent in the reporting “nobody believes the data: [senior leaders] take it with a grain of salt... The data isn’t valued, probably because they know the data isn’t accurate.”^x Finally, the report found that soldiers were increasingly displaying what behavioral ethics experts call ethical fading. “Ethical fading occurs when the ‘moral colors of an ethical decision fade into bleached hues that are void of moral implications.’”^{xi} This behavior is facilitated by the exponential growth in requirements and confirmation of compliance,^{xii} especially when the requirement is unreasonable or dumb.^{xiii} For the remainder of this paper we will focus on the development of policies that result in ethical fading and the ramifications of this behavior which extend far below the level of battalion readiness reporting.

³ In 2012, as the Operations Officer for a Marine Corps Security Force Battalion, I was told by the Defense Readiness Reporting System (DRRS) officer at our higher headquarters that our battalion was not allowed to report as high of readiness levels as we had submitted because we were a newly formed unit in the DRRS system. It did not matter that the battalion, previously a company, had been training and operating for decades. Because we had only recently become an independently reporting unit, the system did not recognize our actual readiness level.

Before discounting this study as an Army problem, we look to a similar article that Major Peter J. Munson published in 2010 titled *Doing What Matters With Less*. In this article Munson asserts that the same zero-defect mentality and lack of prioritization by senior leaders, discussed years later in the *Lying to Ourselves* study is prevalent in the Marine Corps. He attributes the growing number of requirements in the Marine Corps to the following two phenomena. “First, information technology has made it far too easy for disconnected staff sections at echelons above reality to levy training and other requirements...with little thought given to the accumulated man-hour cost and the other priorities with which they compete.”^{xiv} Similar to the findings in *Lying to Ourselves*, Munson states that “these requirements... often come with a demand for rapid action and ‘by name’ reporting of completion that can be tracked back up at the stratosphere.”^{xv} The second phenomena that Munson cites is that “the Marine Corps’ culture and promotion system prevent the sort of feedback that is needed to signal the absurdity of the situation.” While the absurdity of the current climate is clear, Munson states that “a near-zero-defects promotion system and... lack of moral courage,”^{xvi} among other things, prevent leaders from providing the feedback necessary to change that environment. Besides the time issue, the result is “undue focus on superficialities erodes Marine’s confidence that the institution cares about what truly matters.”^{xvii}

Before examining the historical evolution of this phenomena, I offer a recent anecdote that exemplifies the type of well-intended yet mis-prioritized policy that inherently lacked purpose and was destined to erode confidence in the institution as soon as the directive was issued. Several years ago, a Marine or service member in Okinawa, Japan was involved in a drinking and driving incident that resulted in serious injury or death of a local national. As has become routine in Okinawa, the incident was met with outrage directed at US service members

from many of the local inhabitants. In response, the 3d Marine Division Commander took action in order to placate the local populace and protect the strategic interests of the US DoD which heavily relies on US basing in Okinawa. The actions taken included an immediate 24-hour safety stand down for all Marines in Okinawa to review responsible drinking guidelines, responsible Personally Owned Vehicle (POV) policy, etc... The training was to be completed by all hands by the end of the week.

At the time I was the operations officer for the Marine Rotational Force, a unit made up of 1200 Marines, stationed in Darwin, Australia (MRF-D). The MRF-D falls under 4th Marine Regiment and 3d Marine Division in the chain of command, and therefore was given the training requirement along with everyone else in the Division. With limited success, I protested that the last-minute requirement and timeline was not feasible, as the MRF-D was in the process of staging and deploying for field training and would not be able to accomplish the task until after the required due date. More importantly, I stated that the stand down was not applicable because the training audience was all Marines in Okinawa which the MRF-D was not. Further, none of the Marines in Darwin were allowed to own or operate POVs therefore there was no need to conduct refresher training on drinking and driving at that time.

As I worked with my counterparts at higher levels in the chain of command to exclude my unit from an irrelevant requirement, the initial answer I received was that even though the letter from the general explicitly stated that the training was for all Marines on Okinawa, everyone in the Division needed to complete the training. After taking into consideration the time restraints we were under due to the previously scheduled, coordinated, and resourced training event, those at higher headquarters told me to scale the safety stand down back so as to complete the task on time without overly interfering with the unit wide field training that was

already underway. After negotiating between Australia and Japan, and including the executive officers and chief of staff, this requirement was reduced to a small unit level discussion about the incident and its strategic implications. Once each element of the MRF-D reported completion to me, I passed the information up the chain of command certifying 100% compliance in accordance with the division commander's directive.

This example is not an indictment against anyone in the division chain of command at that time. The division commander had good reason for taking action after the incident. The staffs at each level of the chain of command who were implementing the general's policy tried to meet his intent without adversely impacting their subordinate units in a significant way. But even well intended actions at their level can result in loss of confidence at the executor level. Checking the block mentality flourishes when an irresponsible individual action on another continent results in a new top priority, that supersedes a unit training plan that took months to coordinate and culminates in certification of ill-timed refresher training to Marines who are about to conduct live-fire training. They recognize that type of policy for what it is, and the message we are sending them is; *This was not your fault. This does not apply to you, but we're going to half-heartedly spend time on it anyway so that we can say that we completed it.*

The example above is common. Reactionary, and ill-thought out or misapplied policy most frequently occurs in the realm of safety training and conduct issues, but it can also result from recent lessons learned in combat that equate to an added training event before the next unit deploys. Regardless of the subject matter, the common consequence is an additional training event and standard levied on those at the executor level vice replacement of an old event and standard. Priority for that new event and standard is rarely matched against a unit's mission essential task list (METL), deployment schedule, or training plan. Rather, the completion date is

determined based on the severity of the circumstances that necessitated the new requirement, or the size of the training audience. As Munson pointed out, however, information technology allows for instant dissemination of new requirements which can result in inaccurate perceptions of the time it will take to complete said requirements.

History

The next question for consideration is how the organization reached a point in its policy development and dissemination that seemingly strips orders of their purpose vice providing purpose to tasks. At least all of the decision makers within the DoD were on the receiving end of such policies before they began contributing to the problem. Those influencing policy outside of the DoD presumably did so to improve the armed forces vice distract or weaken them. Yet the current state is one in which senior leaders' "failure to properly prioritize their requirements has handed small unit leaders the impossible mission of doing everything with less,"^{xviii} specifically less time. The paragraphs below highlight key policy changes since World War II that have shaped the current state of policies and priorities in the Marine Corps.

The first key policy change worth noting was the replacement of the Articles of War with the UCMJ as the new military justice system following World War II. This was a deliberate move enacted by Congress to reduce the discretion of commanders and standardize military justice across all services.^{xix} The UCMJ was created in response to what was perceived by many service members as unlawful command influence and abuses by commanders during the war. As a protection against such abuses, the UCMJ acts as a "code that provides the statutory framework for handling today's cases."^{xx} What it is not is a ten commandments style document for the military designed to guide the regular activities and actions of service members.

Yet, "the primary purpose of the military justice system is to maintain good order and discipline by holding military offenders accountable for their misconduct."^{xxi} The most frequently applied part of the UCMJ is Part IV *Punitive Articles* which covers conduct that is "prejudicial to good order and discipline; service discrediting; or a crime or offense not capital."^{xxii} The standards covered therein include 55 chargeable offenses, exponentially more lesser included offenses, and at least one catch all article that could incorporate disobedience to innumerable orders issued by someone in the member's chain of command. In an attempt to protect service members and standardize military justice, Congress and the DoD created an unwieldy system that no one outside of the judge advocate community knows except perhaps for a few skilled senior enlisted leaders. Though written by lawyers for lawyers, the UCMJ is applied to every junior enlisted member and officer that completes basic training.

The reason this policy change is pertinent to the larger discussion of lack of prioritization and ethical fading is because of the precedence it sets. Why issue punitive directives that few will read, fewer still will understand, yet all will be held accountable for? One could argue that most of the punitive articles are intuitive, and that if a member kept their nose clean and acted professionally, they would not have to worry about breaking the rules. That is missing the point. Any time a leader issues an order that they do not expect to be read, understood, and followed, they are conditioning their subordinates. Rather than instant obedience to orders that all members are taught during initial training, that leader is teaching his unit indifference to orders, while eroding their confidence in the leaders who spends time crafting orders and policies that do not matter.

Marine Major Evan Munsing compared the disciplinary system of today's Marine Corps to that of Julius Caesar's Roman Legions in an article in 2013. He lists *focusing your control* as

one of Caesar's five pillars of leadership. Caesar, he writes, paid "attention only to those attributes that directly contributed to one's usefulness on the field of battle."^{xxiii} Of the Roman version of the UCMJ, he wrote "although these punishments were harsh, they were all tied directly to combat performance. Thus, they served a well-defined military purpose and because of that there was good reason for the rank and file to 'buy into' the disciplinary system."^{xxiv} Understandably, modern US military members are held to different standards than ancient legionnaires. That does not negate the fact that our system lacks focus, and consequently purpose. When most field grade officers know only a handful of the punitive articles of the UCMJ, is it surprising that our Marines and Non-Commissioned Officers display such little buy in? Once conditioning towards indifference begins, it is beyond the institution's ability to dictate where that indifference ends.

The next step in the evolution of non-prioritized policy took place gradually over a period of 30 years beginning around 1970. For the next four decades the Marine Corps implemented standardization, first of education followed by training and finally of procedures, in an effort to improve and objectively assess readiness. As discussed in the introduction, standardization would lead to compliance, which would ultimately lead to certification. This is where it began.

"The Marine Corps formally adopted the systematic approach to education early in 1969,"^{xxv} but did not implement a similar approach to training until the late 1970s, following the Army's adoption of that methodology. Like the Army, the Marine Corps could help justify budgets by breaking down training into individual proficiency codes which would later become individual and collective training standards (ITS/CTS). Beginning in Marine Corps schools and then spreading to the fleet, this system of standardized training and proficiency codes which allowed leaders to track progress further reduced commander's discretion in favor of community

or service wide requirements. "Designed to serve as a guide for commanders, managers of instruction, and instructors throughout the Marine Corps"^{xxvi} Marine Corps Order (MCO) P1510.23B began to codify fleet wide standardized training.

In 1980 the Marine Corps officially recognized the strain on time and other resources due to standardization in MCO 1500.40. That order stated "in those cases where requirements severely tax a commander's capability to conduct training, priority must be given to the training most critical to the unit/organization commensurate with mission accomplishment and the welfare of individual Marines."^{xxvii} The order went on to prioritize training in the following order; mission-oriented, skill progression, functional training, professional development education, essential subjects training, and related training. This prioritized list was an attempt to establish and maintain the focus of the force, while at the same time maintaining control of what training battalion commanders completed. The order stated "authority to defer and/or exempt training will rest with the Commanding Generals of the Fleet Marine Forces."^{xxviii} Given the operational tempo and the number of requirements at the time, that policy may very well have been feasible. Yet it still required a battalion commander to request training exemptions from four levels up the chain of command including three general officers which proved problematic.

In 1984 the Marine Corps formalized its Systems Approach to Training (SAT) with the explicit purpose of establishing "policy and assign responsibilities for the development of performance-oriented training standards and the systematic design, development, implementation and evaluation of training programs."^{xxix} At the time, only the air combat element had codified standards for training in the form of a Training and Readiness (T&R) Manual, which the ground combat element would not produce for another 15 years. While ground commanders still had greater latitude as to how they would train their units, Phase five of the SAT included *Evaluation*

which would come in the form of the Marine Corps Combat Readiness Evaluation System (MCCRES). The significance of the *Evaluation Phase* is taken for granted 34 years later by those who have always participated in unit evaluations during a MCCRE, or unit assessments conducted during service level exercises.⁴ The takeaway at this point is the verification process that sowed the seeds of certification twenty years later. During this time of relatively low operational tempo in the Marine Corps, units that did not meet their Mission Performance Standards^{xxx} could remediate. What would happen to the evaluation reports when a war required less than 1:2 deployment to dwell ratios and units no longer had the time to remediate deficiencies? What purpose would those reports serve in that type of environment?

Up until this point in the evolution, the focus of training policy was oriented on mission specific requirements. In 1986, over ten years after the Vietnam War and almost three years after the bombing of Marines in Beirut, the Marine Corps issued its *Essential Subjects Training Program* Order 1500.44A. While this order re-emphasized the "practice of those personal and professional traits that distinguish men and women as Marines"^{xxxix} it also opened the door for training now known as *Formal* and *Ancillary Training* that Marines "regardless of grade, military occupational specialty, billet, or unit to which assigned"^{xxxix} would be required to complete. Thirty years later the list of these types of requirements would include not only marksmanship, water survival, and antiterrorism training, but also violence prevention, equal opportunity, tobacco cessation, and family advocacy.^{xxxix} Though the later would be classified as

⁴ Assessments are conducted by outside agencies like TTECG or EOTG who determine if units are trained, partially trained, or untrained in their core METs. That information is forwarded up the training unit's chain of command, but it is not designed to be a report card. Evaluations are facilitated by the next higher level in a unit's chain of command. Successful completion of that evaluation is supposed to act as certification that the higher-level agency and force provider deem the training unit ready for deployment to a combatant command.

lower priority than Mission Oriented or Formal Training, all would be "directive in nature;"^{xxxiv} and by the mid-2000s all would be tracked by individual in electronic databases.

Less than six months after Operation Desert Storm, the Marine Corps issued Order 1553.3 *Marine Corps Unit Training Management* (UTM). Incorporating the SAT, the purpose of UTM was to "establish a Marine Corps-wide Training Management process whereby all individual and collective training conducted by units within the operating forces... shall be performance-oriented and prioritized by the commander relative to the assigned missions."^{xxxv} Of note, this order allowed establishment of training priorities and deferment authority to be delegated down to battalion and squadron commanders vice FMF commanders; a shift that would later swing back up the chain of command. The updated MCO1553.3A refined the *Formal Evaluation System* to be used by all units and supervised by their higher headquarters.^{xxxvi} Results of the evaluation would be forwarded up the chain of command by the evaluating higher headquarters and reflected in the evaluated unit's readiness report^{xxxvii} which at that time was the DoD wide Status of Resources and Training System (SORTS), the predecessor of the DRRS reports discussed earlier.^{xxxviii} What is not included in these documents or anywhere else in the Marine Corps' training policies are the ramifications of performing poorly or unsatisfactorily during a unit's evaluation. As with the earlier evaluations, what were the implications for deployment if a unit did not demonstrate proficiency at core mission essential tasks (METs)?

The last significant event worth mentioning in this evolution is the promulgation of computer-based administration and command and control. By the end of 2005, commanders were requested to ensure all of their personnel had Marine on Line accounts.^{xxxix} By 2006, morning reports were required to be submitted on line, and all other administrative requirements

followed within the next two years. While newly available information technology allowed the Marine Corps to increase efficiency in many of its administrative and supply processes, it also increased the appetite of leaders and their staffs for greater amounts of more timely information. Their ability to instantly disseminate tasks, requirements, and requests for information through emails or official messages placed a disproportionate tax on those at the executor level.

An example of the increase in policies and directives as a result of computer-based dissemination can be found in the number of official messages released on line between 2003 and 2017. The number of MARADMINs released by the Marine Corps increased from 616 in 2003 to 761 in 2007. Similarly, the number of ALMARs released by the Marine Corps increased from 32 in 2007 to 51 in 2008.^{xl} Many of those messages included new requirements for the force. While not all of those messages were directive in nature, they still require time from leaders to maintain currency on Marine Corps policy. Munson said of this type of tasking "the ease with which such requirements are levied means that little cost-benefit analysis is done, and there is no appetite suppressant mechanism to prevent over tasking."^{xli} The spike in the number of released MARADMINS and ALMARs appears to plateau in 2013 and 2014 respectively, but the trend coincides with the increased expectations that accompany instant communication.

Sixty-five years of Marine Corps policy development, beginning in 1951 with the implementation of the UCMJ, can be summarized as a steadily increasing list of requirements. Depending on the time period, those increased requirements were sometimes in reference to training standards, and other times in reference to conduct, but all require time to complete which the authors of *Lying to Ourselves* proved inadequate. While the Marine Corps has not produced a similar study, at least from an ethical perspective,^{xlii} anyone serving in the Marine Corps during the past 15 years would immediately recognize the similarities.

Current State

I will define the current state of the Marine Corps as the last 15 years since the invasion of Iraq because OIF so significantly shaped global force management, training cycles, and requirements for the operational forces. While the number of units deploying directly to Iraq and Afghanistan has decreased significantly since 2014, the deployment to dwell ratio specifically for ground units has not returned to the standard 1:3 ratio that it was prior to OIF. The takeaway is that while training requirements for everything from enhanced marksmanship and counter improvised explosive devices (IED) training, to cultural training, to Sexual Assault Prevention and Response training have all increased, the time which units have to complete those requirements has decreased since the start of OIF.

Along with the increased number of requirements; the precision, frequency, and scrutiny of readiness reports, training databases, and medical and dental hit lists has increased and come with the requirement for commanders and staff officers to certify completion. With the promulgation of computer technology down to the company level, standards for reporting formats went from voice communicated situation reports (SITREPs), to 9-line report formats, to 32-line report formats, to storyboards. It is not uncommon for staffs to spend time producing a written SITREP, briefing slide, and storyboard slides for higher headquarters that all contain the same information, but are required for the next level of bureaucracy. Rarely do those reports at the tactical level, support commanders' decisions or result in reallocation of forces or resources, which again calls into question the function of such reporting.

Readiness reporting in the form of DRRS-Marine Corps (MC) is the most common and blatant example of a highly prioritized reporting process, completed by every battalion at least

every 35 days, that is lacking purpose. The DRRS report is designed to meet the Marine Corps' Title 10 responsibility to "investigate and report upon the efficiency and preparation to support military operations by combatant commander (CCDR)."^{xliii} The DRRS reporting guidance states that "readiness information supports in priority order: crisis response planning, deliberate or peacetime planning, and management responsibilities to organize, train, and equip combat-ready forces for the combatant commands."^{xliiv} If those statements are indeed what DRRS reports are designed to support, how is that a unit can fail to demonstrate proficiency in a core MET, during a service level exercise or their certification exercise yet still deploy as scheduled in support of a combatant command? Since 2003, and likely before then, not one infantry battalion was delayed or held back from deployment due to lack of training proficiency.⁵ Some of those battalion commanders or subordinate commanders were relieved and replaced, but the unit deployed whether ready to or not. That can only mean that the level of readiness they reported in DRRS was inaccurate, highly qualified, or irrelevant which contradicts the stated purpose of the report. Either way, continuing to enforce this reporting policy and process, which does not fulfill its stated purpose, breeds the type of indifference described by Drs. Wong and Gerras.

The authors of *Lying to Ourselves* assert that institutionalized dishonesty and ethical fading are the result of lack of prioritization, conflicting or competing guidance, and dumb orders that are not applicable to the situation. Munson wrote "the commander knows what is important and what is not, but the signals the institution is sending to his Marines are ambiguous at best. Often the most trivial of tasks in the grand scheme of our true mission are tracked by 'hit lists,'

⁵ In researching this specific topic, the author questioned dozens of infantry officers and Chief Warrant Officers with experience levels ranging from 10 to 30 years on active duty and as civilian support personnel to training commands. While listing several battalions that performed poorly or failed to demonstrate proficiency during either an assessment by Tactical Training Exercise Control Group (TTECG) or Expeditionary Operations Training Group (EOTG), or during an evaluation/certification exercise (MCCRE), none had ever witnessed a battalion that was delayed or denied a deployment due to failure to demonstrate readiness.

yet the institutional leadership does not get a list of what Marines forgo in order to get these trivial tasks done."^{xlv} By boxing subordinate leaders into no-win situations in which they cannot meet all of the requirements, or cannot carry out their assigned task while adhering to orders and caring for their Marines; the institution is training subordinate leaders at the tactical level to decide for themselves what is applicable and what is not. And like the lieutenant in the introduction, once a leader sets a precedent like that, they must expect that their subordinates are going to follow suit. Much like lying becomes easier after each consecutive fib; disobedience, once unleashed, is not limited to trivial matters like protective equipment and deceptive color charts on power point slides.

Implications

Thus far, my focus has been at the tactical level, centered on commanders and staff officers making decisions mainly on behalf of battalions. In that realm, lack of purpose and ethical fading seems to have been contained to less than accurate reporting or half-hearted completion of tasks. I now want to draw the connection between ethical fading at that level and that of the squad and team leader using two well-known examples from recent history. They illustrate the concept and consequences of actions by *the strategic corporal*, and thus the need for purposeful tasks and unity of effort vice indifference to orders. As stated earlier, non-prioritized directives and irresponsible tasking by senior leaders leads to no-win situations in which subordinate leaders must choose which orders to follow and which to neglect. That pattern of neglect is what laid the foundations for the following two case studies.

The first scenario is the 2006 rape of a 15-year-old girl and murder of her and her family by a group of US soldiers in Mahmudiyah, Iraq. Experts who have analyzed this case attribute it to the psychopathic behavior of at least one of the soldiers as well as lack of or poor supervision

of the entire unit. I will not argue the mental health of the ring leader and rapist, but the pattern that lead to the other four member's participation in this atrocity reflects the dilemma discussed throughout the body of this paper. In this case the deficit was in manpower vice time. The unit was being asked to secure a patrol base without the manpower to maintain the position for weeks and months on end. There is a reason the atrocity took place over six months into the deployment. Soldiers do not decide to start drinking alcohol on post and plan retribution killings during their first month in country. It begins when they are given a task they cannot accomplish. It continues when combat losses and economy of force dictate that only one man stands post at a time vice two. As time went on and the unit's ability to operate according to its own standard procedures proved unfeasible, disobedience became habit and the scope of disobedience steadily expanded until it culminated in an atrocity.

The second scenario is the 2011 incident in which members of the Scout Sniper Platoon, 3d Battalion, 2nd Marines urinated on dead Taliban fighters whom the team had recently killed and brought back to their base in Helmand Province. Similar to the previous case, researchers of this incident have attributed psychopathic behavior and mental illness to the primary actors. I do not discount the expertise of those diagnosis, but I offer a more common and more obvious contributing factor to this scenario. Anyone who has ever served in an infantry battalion knows the potential that the scout sniper platoon has of becoming *cowboys*. They are a small, tight-knit unit, with specialized training, and specialized gear, that operate relatively independently. By nature, they do not look or operate like 95% of the rest of the battalion. Without mature leadership, the potential for them to begin acting like the rules for the rest of the battalion do not apply to them is high. In this case, the platoon lacked an officer as their platoon commander. I speculate that while the acting Staff Sergeant was highly proficient as a troop leader and sniper,

that platoon began neglecting certain battalion wide standards several months prior to the incident. A unit recognized for their stellar performance in combat, this incident was the culmination of their pattern of habitual indifference to selected standards.

The point of these two references is the erosion of integrity and, with it, obedience that takes place when a unit or individual cannot reasonably meet all of the requirements placed on them by their superiors. This was proven by Wong and Gerras to be the case for company and battalion commanders and staff officers. For corporals, this process begins when policy letters and directives are produced and implemented but are too long to read or apply. It continues when 37 Marines are made to file through the same government computer in two hours in order to complete a new 30-minute, on-line training requirement. It continues further when core training is interrupted or cancelled because of an incident that took place on an opposite coast. It culminates in the need to execute a special convoy over IED laden roads in order to visibly inspect serials numbers of weapons belonging to Marines on a separate base in order to fulfill an administrative requirement. At some point, even non-psychotic subordinate leaders who want to serve honorably have to decide what orders to neglect in order to make mission or take care of their subordinates. Senior leaders' failure to prioritize results in subordinate leader's requirement to choose when and why they will sacrifice their own integrity, and the pattern begins.

Recommendations and Conclusion

As stated above, the dilemma of lack of time, too many requirements, and lack of prioritization is self-evident to anyone who has served in the Marine Corps during the last 15 years. The institution itself has recognized this and encouragingly shown signs of attempts to reverse the trend. During the height of OIF and the shortest deployment to dwell ratios infantry

divisions suspended the requirement to conduct battalion level MCCREs; returning time back to the battalions that would be evaluated, the battalions needed to facilitate the evaluation, and the regiments needed to lead the entire evolution. In the last two years the institution has also consolidated some of its ancillary training requirements in order to save time for units and individuals. Those are small steps in the right direction.

Other recommendations include a review of the UCMJ and an initiative to Congress to shorten and simplify that document. Perhaps reducing the 55 punitive articles to the 26 combat and non-combat related articles that are not redundant or covered in other legal systems would facilitate Marines actually reading the document. Combining evaluations (MCCRES) with assessments (SLEs) is another way the organization could maximize the value of those two all-consuming events while reducing the tax on supporting agencies. The point is not to simply eliminate work. The intent is to give purpose back to those requirements the organization deems necessary.

Admiral Elmo R. Zumwalt, former Chief of Naval Operations, understood this principle when he penned Z-Gram #57 in November of 1970. Titled *Elimination of Demeaning or Abrasive Regulations*, the admiral explicitly discontinued policies and regulations that cost his sailors' time and lacked purpose that was understandably linked to their mission.^{xlvi} As the Vietnam War was winding down, support for the US military was at an all-time low, and budgets were about to drop; Admiral Zumwalt understood the importance of purpose in recruiting and retaining quality individuals. While not challenging the discipline system emplaced twenty years earlier, Zumwalt worked within his capacity to rid his organization of policies that no longer contributed to his organization's primary mission. It is time the Marine Corps did the same.

From the beginning of officer training, lieutenants are taught the importance of correlating task and purpose. That principle does not lose relevance once beyond the platoon level. Marine leaders should view every policy as an opportunity to either give purpose to the actions of their subordinates or erode faith in their own ability to responsibly task. Marines do not join the organization because they are lazy. Nor are they stupid. If the Marine Corps continues to promulgate policy that is unachievable or dumb, that policy will yield more dishonesty and more disobedience, and eventually the institution will cease to function as a military organization. It is time to prioritize.

Notes

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- ⁱⁱⁱ Wong and Gerras, *Lying to Ourselves*, 20.
- ^{iv} Wong and Gerras, *Lying to Ourselves*, 4-5.
- ^v Wong and Gerras, *Lying to Ourselves*, Summary.
- ^{vi} Wong and Gerras, *Lying to Ourselves*, 2
- ^{vii} Wong and Gerras, *Lying to Ourselves*, 26-27
- ^{viii} Wong and Gerras, *Lying to Ourselves*, 5
- ^{ix} Wong and Gerras, *Lying to Ourselves*, 9
- ^x Wong and Gerras, *Lying to Ourselves*, 12
- ^{xi} Wong and Gerras, *Lying to Ourselves*, 17
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^{xl} Timothy Reimann, e-mail message to the author on January 30, 2018. Major Reimann works as a staff secretary, Marine Corps Combat Development Command, Combat Development & Integration.

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^{xlii} Paolo Tripodi, e-mail message to the author on March 29, 2018. Dr. Tripodi is the Ethics Branch Head at the Lejeune Leadership Institute, Marine Corps University.

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