

**Tactical Fundamentals**

**MCI 7401**

**Marine Corps Institute, Washington, D.C.**



**1989**



**Warfighting Skills Program**



## STUDENT INFORMATION

This information is provided to assist you in completing your course/program of study. For additional information, refer to the MCI Procedures Manual.

### 1. Course Procedure:

- a. Read the text. Complete the chapter review and review exercise as you finish each chapter. It's important that you take the time to answer each question in the review exercise **thoroughly**. When you check the review exercise answer key, don't try to memorize the text solutions. Instead, pick out the key concepts in each answer and make sure you can express them in your own words. Use examples to highlight these concepts. The exam questions are similar to those in the review exercises. *You will not do well on the exam unless you do the review exercises properly!*
- b. Once you complete the text and feel that you are ready for the exam, report to your commanding officer. Your commanding officer will designate a testing officer to both administer and grade the exam. The exam includes 10 essay and problem-solving questions, and you will be allowed 1.5 hours to complete it. You will **not** be allowed to use your text or any notes during the exam. Your testing officer will notify both you and MCI of your score. To pass the exam, you need to score at least 75%.
- c. The appendices located at the back of the text are included only for your information. You are not responsible for this material in the course exam.

2. **Receipt of Examinations at MCI.** If you pass the primary exam, MCI enters the completion in the Marine Corps Manpower Management System (MMS). If you fail the primary exam, an alternate exam is automatically mailed to your commanding officer. If you fail **both** the primary and the alternate exams, an administration notice card (MCI-R6) is forwarded to your unit. The training officer makes an entry on the MCI-R5 card and has the SRB clerk note your Service Record Book/Officer Qualification Record (SRB/OQR). You are then administratively deleted from the remaining courses of the program. If you still desire to complete the program, you must **ENROLL** as a new student and submit copies of course completion certificates to receive prior credit.

3. **Disenrollment.** Disenrollment occurs upon reaching the Course Completion Deadline (CCD) date or the Adjusted Course Completion Deadline (ACCD) date (6-month extension) for the program. Reenrollment will be granted upon request within 3 months after disenrollment if a reenrollment was not previously granted for the program.

- a. You will be disenrolled if you do not complete your course by the course completion deadline (CCD). To avoid this, ask your training officer/NCO to request a six month extension allowing you more time to complete your course/program.



b. If you already have a six month extension and still cannot complete your course by your adjusted course completion deadline, you will automatically be disenrolled from the program. If you wish to continue the program, ask your training officer/NCO to reenroll you. **You are allowed only one extension and one reenrollment!**

**4. Program Completion.** A certificate of completion and a letter of transmittal with the course grade are forwarded to the commanding officer of each Marine who successfully completes a WAFSKIP course. The commanding officer has the completion recorded in the student's SRB or OQR and presents the certificate to the student. The certificate and the letter are mailed directly to the supervisor of non-Marines and a daily completions listing is sent to the Marine Corp Reserve Center (IRR). Upon successful completion of **all courses**, a program diploma is forwarded to your commanding officer who presents it to you at an appropriate ceremony.

**5. Reserve Retirement Credits.** Reserve retirement credits are awarded **only** to inactive duty personnel upon successful completion of each course. Reserve retirement credits are earned at the rate of one credit for every 3 hours of estimated student effort. The total number of reserve retirement credits is indicated on the course title page and is awarded upon the successful completion of the course. Credits are not awarded for MCI study performed during drill periods if they are also awarded for drill attendance.

**6. Mail-Time Delay.** If you do not receive a requested service within 30 days, call or write to MCI.

**7. Information/assistance From MCI.** Further information is found in the current MCI Procedures Manual. If you have a question about the **content** of a course/program, call commercial (202) 433-4109/4110 or autovon 288-4109/4110. For **administrative assistance**, use the enclosed MCI-R11/14 or the Unit Activity Report (UAR) or call commercial (202) 433-2299 or autovon 288-4175.

**8. Student Data.** If you need to request a change to your student data in the MCI database, e.g., rank, change of address, use the MCI-R11k (Old MCI-R14 Student Request/Inquiry) located at the end of each text.

**9. Course Evaluation Questionnaire.** Please take a few minutes to complete and return the course questionnaire located at the end of this course.



**PROGRAM:** WARFIGHTING SKILLS PROGRAM

**COURSE:** TACTICAL FUNDAMENTALS MCI-7401 (1989)

**ESTIMATED  
STUDENT  
EFFORT:** 12 hours

**RESERVE  
RETIREMENT  
CREDIT:** 4

**PURPOSE:** To teach you the fundamentals of company level infantry tactics.

**SCOPE:** This course studies the nature, styles, and levels of warfare, the development of modern tactics, the fundamentals of maneuver warfare tactics and their application, and how to educate and train subordinates in tactics.

**WARFIGHTING SKILLS PROGRAM (WAFSKIP)**

**PROGRAM OUTLINE**

---

<b>COURSE NUMBER</b>	<b>COURSE</b>	<b>ESTIMATED HOURS</b>	<b>RESERVE RETIREMENT CREDITS</b>
7401	<b>TACTICAL FUNDAMENTALS</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>4</b>
7402	Small Unit Tactical Problems	9	3
7403	Combat Missions and Techniques	9	3
7404	Combat Leadership	10	3
7405	Fire Support	To be published in FY 90	
7406	Combined Arms	To be published in FY 90	
7407	Infantry Logistics	To be published in FY 91	
7408	Special Operations	To be published in FY 91	

---

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<b>Page</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	1
<b>Chapter One-- Understanding War</b>	5
Section I.        Introduction	6
Section II.       Nature of War	6
Section III.      Styles of Warfare	8
Section IV.       Levels of War	13
Chapter Review	18
Chapter Exercise	19
<b>Chapter Two-- Development of Modern Tactics</b>	25
Section I.        Introduction	26
Section II.       First Generation Tactics	27
Section III.      Second Generation Tactics	34
Section IV.       Third Generation Tactics	39
Section V.        Conclusions	51
Chapter Review	55
Chapter Exercise	56
<b>Chapter Three-- Tactical Fundamentals</b>	61
Section I.        Introduction	62
Section II.       Tempo	62
Section III.      Mission Order Tactics	66
Section IV.       The Main Effort	69
Section V.        Soft Spot Tactics	71
Section VI.       Objectives and Aiming Points	74
Section VII.      Concept of Combined Arms	79
Section VIII.     The Ambush Mentality	84
Section IX.       Military Significance of Terrain	88
Chapter Review	96
Chapter Exercise	98
<b>Chapter Four-- Education and Training</b>	105
Section I.        Introduction	106
Section II.       Education	106
Section III.      Training	107
Chapter Review	115
Chapter Exercise	116
<b>Course Review Objectives</b>	119
<b>Course Evaluation Questionnaire</b>	121



<b>Appendices</b>		<b>Page</b>
Appendix A:	List of Recommended Books	123
Appendix B:	List of Wargames	A-1
Appendix C:	Selected Articles on Maneuver Warfare Tactics	B-1 C-1

## Introduction

*The art of war has no traffic with rules, for the infinitely varied circumstances and conditions of combat never produce exactly the same situation twice. ...each situation is unique and must be solved on its own merits.<sup>1</sup>*

This course is a study in tactics. It is a study in the **fundamentals** of tactics-- those things that are fundamental to your ability to think tactically or reach a tactical decision.

What is tactics? One dictionary defines tactics as "*The science and art of disposing and maneuvering forces in combat.*"<sup>2</sup> The U.S. Army defines it as "*The art by which Corps and smaller unit commanders translate potential combat power into victorious battles and engagements.*"<sup>3</sup> while The Department of Defense *Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms (JCS Pub 1)* defines tactics as:

1. *The employment of units in combat.*
2. *The ordered arrangement and maneuver of units in relation to each other and/or to the enemy in order to utilize their full potentialities.*

While all of these definitions have something in common, none of them gives you a good feel for what tactics is. To reach a clear understanding of what tactics is, it may be useful to define what tactics is **not**.

**Tactics** is not **strategy**. Military strategy is "*The art and science of employing the armed forces of a nation to secure the objectives of national policy by the application of force or the threat of force.*"<sup>4</sup> Strategy deals with the big picture-- how our nation's leaders plan on winning the war. Tactics applies at the lower level. It is the process by which military forces win battles.

**Tactics** is not **techniques**. Techniques are physical actions which you perform in combat, such as issuing an operation order, communicating on a radio, and conducting a frontal assault. **Combining** techniques to accomplish a mission is one aspect of tactics. Remember! All situations are unique, and the techniques that you used to get the job done in one case may not be right in another. Your **tactics** are the process where you decide which techniques to apply in your situation!

For your purposes then, **tactics is the process that unit leaders use to plan and accomplish a mission**. Fire team and section leaders are **tacticians** just like the Commanding General of the 1st Marine Division. The study of tactics is a lifetime pursuit. You don't become a master tactician by completing an MCI course or memorizing an intricate procedure. Great tacticians like Rommel and Patton were undoubtedly gifted soldiers, but they also educated themselves vigorously in the history and art of warfare. Great tacticians don't just memorize successful techniques from past battles. They use their education to give them an understanding of what **works** in combat, and apply it to a specific place and time.



Although this course focuses primarily on infantry tactics, the concepts studied here apply to all Marine units and MOSs. Future combat is likely to be very fluid with forces intermixed throughout the battlefield. Rear area units will be primary targets. Consequently, combat support and combat service support units will often use infantry tactics to provide their own security. The tactical principles and fundamentals are no different for a logistics unit than they are for an infantry unit.

Do not approach this course looking for explicit directions of *what to do* in combat. This course is educational: It presents concepts that you must study and think about before you use them. Read this text critically and compare the concepts and examples given here with those from your own experience. Think about how you can apply these concepts to train yourself and your subordinates, and then do it!

*...the leader who would become a competent tactician must first close his mind to the alluring formula that well-meaning people offer in the name of victory. ...he must learn to cut to the heart of a situation, recognize its decisive elements and base his course of action on these. The ability to do this is not God-given, nor can it be acquired overnight; it is a process of years.<sup>5</sup>*



### Notes

1. *Infantry in Battle*, (The Infantry Journal, Inc., 1939), p. 1.
2. *Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary*, (Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, Inc., 1986), p. 1201.
3. *FM 100-5 Operations*, (Washington, D.C.: Headquarters, Department of the Army, 1986), p. 10.
4. *FM 100-5 Operations*, p. 9.
5. *Infantry In Battle*, p. 1.