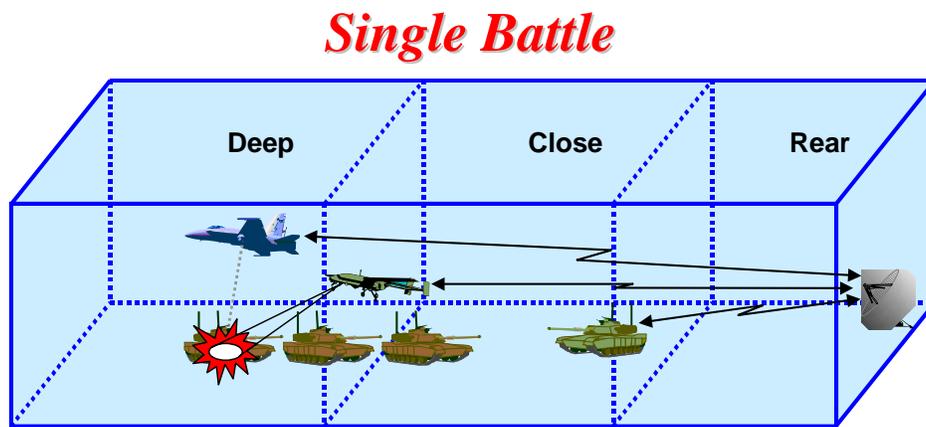


MARINE CORPS GAZETTE ARTICLE # 10, THE REAR AREA AS PART OF THE COMMANDER'S SINGLE BATTLE

The rear area is a vital part of the Marines' concept of single battle as *an action occurring in any part of the battlespace effects actions in other parts of the battlespace*. While rear area operations provide security for the force, they have the larger purpose of providing *uninterrupted support to the force*. The amphibious operation at Inchon, and subsequent disruption of the North Korean rear area by allied forces during the Korean War is a classic illustration of the vital importance of the rear area. By attacking in the rear area, the allies severed the principal lines of communications used by the enemy for the movement of men and material. North Korea's ability to support and protect its forces was so seriously degraded that it could no longer conduct offensive operations. More recent operations, such as Operations DESERT SHIELD and DESERT STORM and subsequent military operations other than war in Somalia and Haiti, remind us that rear area operations extend well beyond just rear area security.

Under the single battle concept, we conceptually divide the battlespace into a deep, close, and rear battle area to assist with planning and execution. (See Figure 1.) As such, the rear area is part of that battlespace whether the battlespace is linear or non-linear, contiguous or non-contiguous. We need to plan, synchronize, execute, and assess rear area operations with as much vigor, thought, and detail as we do operations in the close and deep battle areas in order to bring the full potential of the force to bear. In planning for and executing the single battle, the commander must allocate resources to the rear battle area based on the factors of mission, enemy, terrain and weather, troops and support available–time available (METT-T), just as he does in the close and deep battle areas to ensure the operational tempo of the force is maintained.



An action anywhere within the battlespace is related to actions elsewhere within the battlespace.

Figure 1

Doctrine for the Rear Area

The doctrinal basis for rear area operations is established in Joint Pub 3-10, *Joint Doctrine for Rear Area Operations*. The key points of Joint Pub 3-10 can be summarized as:

1. "The joint rear area (JRA) is designated by the joint force commander (JFC) to facilitate protection and the operation of installations and forces supporting the joint force..."
2. "The JFC normally designates a joint rear area coordinator (JRAC)..."
3. "The JRA will typically evolve and expand as a theater develops..."
4. "Operations occurring within the JRA either protect the JRA or support the joint force."
5. The eight rear area operations "are best described as broad functions and include:" security, communications, intelligence, sustainment, area management, movements, infrastructure development, and host-nation support.

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The Marine Corps builds upon joint doctrine in Marine Corps Warfighting Publication (MCWP) 3-41.1, *Rear Area Operations*, adapting the above joint doctrine to the Marines' inherently expeditionary character. MCWP 3-41.1 describes the Marine Corps' approach to rear area operations and provides general doctrinal guidance for the Marine Corps component commander, the Marine Air-Ground Task Force (MAGTF) commander, and the associated staffs responsible for executing rear area operations. We begin developing a framework for applying this guidance by answering two broad questions:

1. How does the Marine Corps component commander interface with the JRA?
2. How does the MAGTF organize internally for rear area operations?

How Does the Marine Corps Component Commander Interface with the JRA?

Interface with the JRA and the JRAC is the responsibility of the Marine Corps component commander (COMMARFOR). COMMARFOR will coordinate the execution of all eight functions of rear area operations between joint and assigned Marine Forces. The JFC additionally could task COMMARFOR to be the JRAC or assign COMMARFOR certain executive agent responsibilities within the rear area. Regardless of the rear area missions assigned to the COMMARFOR, his challenge will be to establish the structure required to meet his responsibilities without drawing resources away from the MAGTF.

How Does the MAGTF Organize Internally for Rear Area Operations?

The rear area functions and how they integrate into the Marine Corps warfighting functions must be understood before we can answer how the MAGTF organizes internally for rear area operations. The Marine Corps parallels the joint descriptions of actions that occur in the rear area, preferring to identify them as rear area functions rather than operations. Marines, because of their tailored organizations, expeditionary nature, and the growing use of non-linear and non-contiguous battlespace, view the rear area functionally rather than geographically. Marines describe the functions associated with the rear battle area and their importance to the conduct of operations this way:

1. **Security.** A primary concern in the rear area that enables the support required and extends the capabilities of the force.
2. **Communications.** Good communications throughout the battlespace is critical to the success of the activities that spring from the rear area and are associated with supporting the force.
3. **Intelligence.** Required to allow forces in the rear to plan and execute with a greater degree of confidence and likelihood of successfully supporting the force as a whole.
4. **Sustainment.** This entails the receipt, maintenance, and delivery of those personnel, supplies, services, etc. required for the force as a whole to accomplish its mission.
5. **Area Management.** Maximizing the use of terrain and facilities in order to facilitate force protection and enhance support to the force as a whole.
6. **Movements.** Positive control of movements in and through the rear battle area are critical to the timely flow of supplies, personnel, and equipment to support the accomplishment of the mission of the force.
7. **Infrastructure Development.** Facilities—fixed or fabricated—are needed to support actions within the area of operation. These facilities contribute to the overall effectiveness of the other rear area functions by enhancing security, ensuring positive command and control, increasing or maintaining capability.
8. **Host-Nation Support.** The use of host-nation support, whenever and wherever possible, will reduce the strain on our forces, equipment, and supplies.

While the battlespace is conceptually divided into deep, close and rear battle areas, the commander must always view the battlespace as an indivisible entity. The warfighting functions are used to integrate planning and execution of the MAGTF's single battle. As a part of the single battle, the eight rear area functions are addressed within the overall context of the six warfighting functions in order to ensure a cohesive approach during planning and unity of effort during execution. (See Figure 2.)



The rear area functions are considered in the broader context of the warfighting functions.

Figure 2

After analyzing the functions occurring in the rear area in light of the overall operation, the MAGTF commander will establish a command and control structure that supports its execution. The Marine commander has three options for command and control in the rear battle area:

1. Retain direct control, exercised through the existing unit staff, of all rear area functions.
2. Designate a rear area coordinator.
3. Designate a rear area commander.

If the commander chooses either of the latter two options, he must also delineate which rear area functions are the responsibility of the rear area coordinator or rear area commander, what level of authority the coordinator or commander has to carry out those tasks, and provide the commander or coordinator the resources to successfully execute those responsibilities.

To assist us in understanding rear area terminology, figure 3 provides a glossary of terms so that we can distinguish between coordinators and commanders, and their corresponding HQs, at the component, MAGTF, and MSC levels. The easy way to remember this language is that commanders always have the “COM” designation and work from a CP, or command post. If an acronym starts with the letter “M” it then refers to the Marine Corps component.

Echelon	Title	Facility
Marine Corps Component	Marine rear area coordinator (MRAC)	Marine rear area operations center (MRAOC)
	Marine rear area commander (MRACOM)	Marine rear area command post (MRACP)
MAGTF or Major Subordinate Command	Rear area coordinator (RAC)	Rear area operations center (RAOC)
	Rear area commander (RACOM)	Rear area command post (RACP)

Figure 3

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Remembering that the rear area evolves over time, the MAGTF commander may initially retain direct control of his rear area by executing the eight functions of rear area operations through his various staff sections. (See Figure 4.) At some point as the MAGTF area of operations expands, the commander's ability to command and control through his staff may be significantly challenged. Therefore, the commander may appoint a rear area coordinator or rear area commander to improve his ability to command and control a larger battlespace.

Rear Area Function	Component	MAGTF
Security	MRAC	RACOM
Sustainment	MLC	FSSG
Communications	MRAC	G-6
Intelligence	MRAC	G-2
Movements	MLC	G-4
Area Management	G-3	G-3
Infrastructure Development	MLC	FSSG
Host-Nation Support	G-4	G-4

Figure 4

The key to the successful planning and execution of rear area operations is the inclusion of appropriate rear area representation within the operational planning team (OPT) from the beginning of any planning effort through to mission completion. The planner designated as the rear area "proponent" in the OPT must ensure that operational planning reflects the evolving nature of rear area operations from minimal combat service support to early entry forces to a fully developed rear area to support sustained operations by a Marine expeditionary force. He must also ensure that appropriate organization, structure, and resources necessary to sustain and protect the force are provided.

Conclusion

Rear area operations must be integrated into overall mission planning as part of the commander's single battle, vice being conducted as an afterthought. The evolutionary nature of rear area operations must be recognized and dealt with. The commander and his staff must envision the ultimate organization, structure, and resources necessary to conduct a given operation and then conduct reverse planning to support that vision. Simply put, they must "begin with the end in mind."