Currently, most infantry squad leaders are first term Marines with less than three years in service and have not attended the desired professional military education programs intended for this billet. This reality has created a squad leader that requires extensive guidance and close supervision. At best under this current system, the infantry squad leader is capable of executing a limited range of assigned tasks; at worst he is a liability. In order to execute maneuver warfare doctrine and thrive in the chaotic and uncertain future operating environment, the Marine Corps needs to develop a professional infantry squad leader able to serve as an independent combat-decision maker. Therefore, the Marine Corps needs a method for identifying, developing, and retaining the highest quality individuals for duty as infantry squad leaders during the Marine’s first enlistment. The Marine Corps has allowed these young Marines to be thrust into positions of great responsibility without providing the education and training to enable them to thrive as combat decision makers.
FUTURE WAR PAPER

TITLE:

The Decision Gap: Developing Squad Leaders for Future Operations

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

AUTHOR:

MAJOR T. R. POWLEDGE

AY 2010-11

Mentor: Gordon Rudd, Ph.D.

Approved: [Signature]

Date: 24 May 2011
# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DISCLAIMER</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PREFACE</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Problem</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Context of the Problem</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Solution</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOTES</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Disclaimer

The opinions and conclusions expressed herein are those of the individual student author and do not necessarily represent the views of the Marine Corps Command and Staff College or any other governmental agency.

References to this study should include the foregoing statement.

Quotation from, abstraction from, or reproduction of all or any part of this document is permitted provided proper acknowledgement is made.
Executive Summary

Title: The Decision Gap: Developing Squad Leaders for Future Operations

Author: Major Timothy R. Powledge.

Thesis: In order to execute maneuver warfare doctrine and thrive in the chaotic and uncertain future operating environment, the Marine Corps needs to develop a professional infantry squad leader able to serve as an independent combat-decision maker.

Discussion: The problem of having an unprepared infantry squad leader is the sum of three key factors: (1) the future operating environment will demand rapid and sound independent decision-making at the tactical level of war in a wide variety of situations that will require adaptive problem solving skills and rapid decision making in chaotic situations; (2) the existing education and training for infantry squad leaders is narrowly focused, incomplete, and largely unavailable to the Marines that will serve in the billet; (3) the Marine Corps’ current promotion and assignment systems prevent having a qualified squad leader in the operating forces.

The answer to the problem of the underdeveloped squad leader is conceptually simple and absolutely necessary for success in future war. The Marine Corps needs to accept the reality of the first enlistment squad leader. For the last several years the majority of Marines filling squad leader billets have been first enlistment Marines. Therefore, the Marine Corps needs a method for identifying, developing, and retaining the highest quality individuals for duty as infantry squad leaders during the Marine’s first enlistment. The Marine Corps has allowed these young Marines to be thrust into positions of great responsibility without providing the education and training to enable them to thrive as combat decision makers. Instead of pushing these Marines into duties they are ill prepared for, they should attend a comprehensive education and training course that will prepare them for combat leadership. The proposed solution would be called the Infantry Sergeant’s Program (ISP). This program would consist of four separate parts: (1) a selection process at the battalion level, (2) a 16 week (four month) Infantry Sergeant’s Course (ISC), (3) a meritorious promotion to sergeant and (4) a one year extension to the Marine’s current enlistment. All four parts of this proposed solution would require institutional adjustments and organizational change.

Conclusion: The Marine Corps is currently selecting and placing these young Marines into squad leader billets and sending them out into the operating environment without any formal training for the position. These young Marines meet the challenge with enthusiasm and vigor but without appropriate education and training. As the future operating environment becomes more complex and uncertain, this lack of capability at the squad level will limit the ways the Marine Corps can solve complex problems. By building independent judgment and sound decision-making capability at the infantry squad level, the Marine Corps will be able to thrive in the chaotic and obscure future operating environment.
Preface

This work is a result of my observation of trends in the Marine Corps infantry and the operating environment over the last ten years of my career. I became interested in the topic of squad leader development during my time as a company commander in 3rd Battalion, 7th Marines from 2003 to 2006. During this period it became apparent that the majority of squad leaders in the battalion were lance corporals on their first enlistment. Many of these Marines were unable to attend appropriate training courses prior to deployment to Iraq in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. While these Marines served with courage and dedication, they would have been better served by more complete professional military education.

This paper will briefly describe the impact of having under-trained squad leaders in a complex operating environment. Its focus will be on proposing a four step solution I call the Infantry Sergeant’s Program. The intent of this proposed solution is to develop the decision-making skills and provide the technical training required for squad leader in the future complex operating environment. Most importantly, the solution is directed at selecting and developing these future squad leaders during their first enlistment.

This paper addresses only the 0311 infantry squad leader and does not discuss the other military occupational specialties (MOS) in the infantry or other combat arms fields. This is not to imply that other MOSs would not benefit from a similar program, but the solution proposed here would not address the particular needs of different specialties and would require a much longer paper than is allowed for this assignment.

Writing this paper would not have been possible without the unwavering support of my wife, Lori, and my daughters, Lisa and Cora. It is also the culmination of leaning from the faculty of the School of Advanced Warfighting and my peers of Class 2011.
THE PROBLEM

Today the United States Marine Corps (USMC) infantry is facing a serious problem. The Marine Corps has created a situation where its most junior combat leaders, the infantry squad leader, is in the greatest danger, has the least amount of time to make decisions, is untrained and forced into a leadership position for which he is unprepared. Currently, most infantry squad leaders are first term Marines with less than three years in service and have not attended the desired professional military education programs intended for this billet. This reality has created a squad leader that requires extensive guidance and close supervision. At best under this current system, the infantry squad leader is capable of executing a limited range of assigned tasks; at worst he is a liability. In order to execute maneuver warfare doctrine and thrive in the chaotic and uncertain future operating environment, the Marine Corps needs to develop a professional infantry squad leader able to serve as an independent combat-decision maker.

When considering the Marine rifle company as a whole, the danger of having unprepared squad leader becomes frighteningly apparent. Being composed of nine rifle squads, the employment options for a rifle company is dependent on the capabilities and limitations of the squad leaders. Enlisted Marines are becoming squad leaders two years into their first enlistment. They usually have completed one deployment and are gearing up for a second when they are assigned as a squad leader. Most will not have the opportunity to attend a non-commissioned officer (NCO) development course or the Infantry Squad Leader’s Course (ISLC) prior to their second deployment as a squad leader. These Marines have proven themselves ready for increased responsibility during their first deployment, however, they are serving in a challenging combat leadership billet with only their entry level training to guide them.
This creates a situation where squad leaders cannot be held accountable for their performance. How much can a lance corporal with only entry level instruction and on-the-job-training (OJT) be expected to do? The answer is whatever that Marine does has to be good enough. Unfortunately, this is a common situation and leads to a lack of professionalism in the NCO ranks and a reduced capability in the rifle company. When a lance corporal with two years in service completes his first deployment as a rifleman or automatic rifleman, whether he knows it or not, he is being considered for a squad leader position. The best riflemen will most likely skip the fire team leader position and move directly to squad leader. The result is a situation where the company commander must limit the size and scope of missions assigned to platoons and platoon commanders must focus on details within their squads rather than employing the platoon in a manner to best accomplish a mission. Instead of having a second lieutenant armed with quality training and relying on experienced NCO, today’s rifle platoons have layers of inexperienced leaders attempting to execute a broad range of missions in a dangerous and uncertain environment.

CONTEXT OF THE PROBLEM

The problem of having an unprepared infantry squad leader is the sum of three key factors: (1) the future operating environment will demand rapid and sound independent decision-making at the tactical level of war in a wide variety of situations that will require adaptive problem solving skills and rapid decision making in chaotic situations; (2) the existing education and training for infantry squad leaders is narrowly focused, incomplete, and largely unavailable to the Marines that will serve in the billet; (3) the Marine Corps’ current promotion and assignment systems prevent having a qualified squad leader in the operating forces.
(1) Future Environment. The predictions for the future operating environment paint a daunting picture. Numerous sources within the Department of Defense indicate that in the future operating environment, Marines can expect to respond to a wide variety of missions in complex operating environments. The potential enemies of the United States are numerous, resourceful, and adaptive. Marine infantry, the focus of this paper, can expect the traditional missions of amphibious, expeditionary and conventional combat operations to be expanded significantly. Additional missions like foreign internal defense, security cooperation, nation-building, counter-drug operations, and cyber warfare operations can be expected requirements in the next ten to fifteen years. Also, the scope and complexity of traditional missions like counter-insurgency operations (COIN), anti-piracy, and humanitarian assistance/disaster relief (HA/DR) can be expected to present multi-dimensional challenges for small infantry units.

(2) Current Infantry Squad Leader Training. The only training available for the infantry squad leader is the Infantry Squad Leaders Course (ISLC) offered by the Marine Corps Advanced Infantry Training Battalions (AITB). ISLC is a 45 training day course offered a total of twenty times per fiscal year (eight classes per year at AITB East, eight classes per year at AITB West, and 4 classes per year at Kaneohe Bay, Hawaii). Each class has an optimum capacity of 39 students intended for infantry corporals or sergeants. While this may appear to offer Marines sufficient opportunity to attend training, the reality is that classes are often merged together or canceled due to insufficient numbers of eligible students being able to attend the courses.

The training focuses on conventional warfare tasks such as, offense, defense and patrolling at the squad level. Other training includes call for fire, land navigation and combat orders. If today’s squad leaders were getting ready to take the beach at Iwo Jima, this course...
might be appropriate. ISLC is an infantry squad leader's first chance to receive additional infantry specific leadership and decision-making training after graduating from the School of Infantry (SOI). The training at SOI is entry level and focused on individual weapons employment, movement, and continuing actions. Currently, a course for fire team leaders does not exist. The enlisted Marine infantry leader will progress from individual skills to learning to employ a 13 man rifle squad composed of three, four man fire teams with no intermediate step along the way.

In a 2009 assessment of ISLC by the ground advocate at Plans, Policy, and Operations (PP&O), Headquarters Marine Corps, it was discovered that 40% of ISLC's instruction consisted of retraining Marines on tasks designated for lance corporals and below\textsuperscript{4}. This means that in a 45 training day course, 18 days are being used to review rifleman's skills and 27 days are left to train the Marine for duty as a squad leader. This means that even if a platoon commander is able to send one of his lance corporals to ISLC, he will have a squad leader with two years in the Marine Corps separated from the other riflemen and team leaders in the platoon by 27 days for training.

(3) Current Promotion and Assignment System. The existing promotion and assignment system is making the sergeant infantry squad leader a rare individual. In the 0311 occupational field, a corporal can expect to be promoted to sergeant with four years and two months time in service. This requires a Marine to reenlist or extend his existing enlistment to become a sergeant. If the Marine reenlists, he will almost always take orders to a B-billet where he can expect to serve the next three years. When you find a sergeant serving as a squad leader in the operating forces, one of two things is usually the case. The Marine extended his original contract one year to stay with his current unit for an upcoming deployment or they are returning to the
operating forces from a three year B-billet and have about one year before being promoted to staff sergeant. Currently infantry Marines are promoted to staff sergeant, on average, with eight years and four months time in service. This combination of reenlisting for orders and promotion flow points prevent infantry Marines from becoming sergeants during their first enlistment in the operating forces and prevent them from returning with adequate time to serve as a squad leader.

THE SOLUTION

The answer to the problem of the underdeveloped squad leader is conceptually simple and absolutely necessary for success in future war. The Marine Corps needs to accept the reality of the first enlistment squad leader. For the last several years the majority of Marines filling squad leader billets have been first enlistment Marines. Therefore, the Marine Corps needs a method for identifying, developing, and retaining the highest quality individuals for duty as infantry squad leaders during the Marine's first enlistment. The Marine Corps has allowed these young Marines to be thrust into positions of great responsibility without providing the education and training to enable them to thrive as combat decision makers. Instead of pushing these Marines into duties they are ill prepared for, they should attend a comprehensive education and training course that will prepare them for combat leadership. The proposed solution would be called the Infantry Sergeant's Program (ISP). This program would consist of four separate parts: (1) a selection process at the battalion level, (2) a 16 week (four month) Infantry Sergeant’s Course (ISC), (3) a meritorious promotion to sergeant and (4) a one year extension to the Marine’s current enlistment. All four parts of this proposed solution would require institutional adjustments and organizational change.

Part 1: Selection
The infantry battalion is, by default, identifying lance corporals to serve as squad leaders two years into the young Marine’s first enlistment. These individuals, usually referred to as “senior lance corporals”, are the Marines that remain in a rifle battalion after a deployment. When a battalion returns to CONUS after a deployment, it is common to have 50% of the Marines leave the battalion for one reason or another. This leaves mostly junior Marines on their first enlistment in the unit. Platoon and company commanders are forced to select from the most talented and reliable Marines that remain and groom them to be squad leaders during the pre-deployment training program (PTP) before the next deployment. This would be an acceptable practice if the selected Marine was provided appropriate training and allowed to wear the rank (and collect the pay) associated with the squad leader billet. After all, these Marines are demonstrating the ability to handle the responsibility of executing assigned tasks, however, they are not afforded the training to enable them to function as independent decision-makers.

If infantry leaders at the company and battalion level view the lance corporals in their units as a pool of potential squad leader candidates, they would identify the individuals with leadership and decision making ability during the first two years of a Marine’s enlistment. The top performing individuals at the two year mark in their first enlistment would be selected for training as a squad leader. Each year a battalion would select the top ten lance corporals in their units and send them the Infantry Sergeant’s Course (ISC). With 27 infantry squads in a battalion, it would take three years for a battalion to have all of its squad leaders trained under this program. By staggering the personnel flow each year, the battalion would not lose all of its squad leaders at one time and they will be able to select the top performers from each year group.

Part 2: Infantry Sergeant’s Course
Once selected by their battalion, those Marines would enter the proposed Infantry 
Sergeant’s Program. The next step in becoming a squad leader would be to attend a four month 
long course designed to prepare them for their duties as squad leaders. The Infantry Sergeant’s 
Course (ISC) would be a single location school where all selected Marines would learn the 
fundamentals of combat leadership and decision making similar to the Infantry Officer’s Course 
in Quantico. Currently, the Marine Corps is training squad leaders at three separate locations 
(California, North Carolina, and Hawaii) running a total of 20 eight week courses per year using 
a total of 35 instructors. The current model creates a wide variation in the experience of the 
students based on the instructor personalities, training facilities, terrain and weather of the 
location they attend and does not allow the students to exchange experiences and information 
among the Marine Corps. A single location school would allow the Marine Corps to provide a 
consistent training experience for its squad leaders and increase organizational agility and focus. 
Additionally, by bringing all future squad leaders to a single location, the student population 
would have the opportunity to build relationships and share information Marine Corps wide.

The education and training piece of developing infantry sergeants for future conflict is 
more complex and will require some organizational and institutional adjustment. The purpose of 
the proposed ISC would be to produce a squad leader capable of exercising independent 
judgment in chaotic and uncertain situations. The intent of the four month course would be to 
build on the student’s foundation of experience during his first two years in the Marine Corps. 
The course would provide a combination of education and training in the tradition of 
Scharnhorst’s Berlin Academy where students developed a problem solving intellect based on 
practical field exercises and objective study of relevant military history. While fundamental 
squad tactics in offense, defense and patrolling will be the foundation of the training, the course
must develop and hone the future squad leader’s judgment. Emphasis must be placed on the
distinction between the squad leaders as a decision-maker rather than an executor of assigned
tasks. This would be accomplished by designing all the training to place the future squad leader
in a situation that forces him to make a decision. Sand table exercises (STEXs), tactical
evolutions without troops (TEWTs), field exercises (FEXs), guided discussions, and classroom
instruction could all be designed to develop judgment by placing the student into a situation that
forces them to solve problems and make decisions.

Educating the infantry squad leader for success in future war should focus on developing
judgment. Judgment is the ability to discern, that is, the quality of being able to grasp and
comprehend what is obscure. When Carl Von Clausewitz wrote about the unchanging nature of
war, uncertainty, or what he called “the fog of war” is one of the foremost defining
characteristics that military leaders must learn to cope with. Uncertainty, or obscurity, will be
the defining characteristic of future war. The fog of war in future conflict will be composed of
numerous layers of variables that will challenge the military leader’s decision making ability to
the fullest extent. The counter to uncertainty is what Scharnhorst called “bildung”. Bildung is
a community of educated and experienced military professionals that work together to
accomplish a goal. The primary goal of ISC should be to develop the judgment of the future
infantry squad leader in order to enable rapid and sound independent decision-making in
complex and uncertain environments.

To accomplish this goal, ISC should educate future infantry squad leaders in decision-
making theory and relevant military history. Decision-making theory seeks to determine how
individuals and organizations arrive at decisions. Critical thinking, objectivity, problem framing
and problem solving are the critical components of decision-making that the future squad leader
must have to develop and hone judgment. This line of study must be accompanied by a study of military historical cases that provide opportunity for the developing squad leader to make decisions based on historical reenactment. Historical reenactment seeks to create "the intellectual and emotional challenge" faced by a past military leader. When guided by a capable instructor, the historical reenactment, or case method, can serve as an able substitute for actual combat decision-making experience. The ISC student has the benefit of entry level training and eighteen months of operating force experience to serve as a contextual foundation for a study focused on developing judgment. It will be the responsibility and driving purpose of the Infantry Sergeant’s Course to capitalize on this foundation and provide every opportunity to develop and hone decision-making capability.

Decision-making theory and historical reenactment should be supported by three focus areas: expeditionary maneuver warfare, a regional country study and war in the information age. These focus areas will support the development of the infantry squad leader by providing an understanding of current doctrine and specific detailed information on the operating environment. The purpose of studying expeditionary operations and the tenants of maneuver warfare is to provide the infantry squad leader with conceptual framework for character of the types of operations they may be called to participate in. This study provides a link between operational and tactical decision-makers and creates a shared understanding of means and ways the Marine Corps may approach a particular problem. A regional country study provides the squad leader with language skills and cultural understanding of a place he is likely to be employed. The country study provides an opportunity for objective comparison between a historical example and a current situation, as well as, useful language skills and relevant cultural information on a potential operating environment. The impact of information technology on
modern military operations must be understood by every military leader, especially one at the point of contact with the authority to employ deadly force. An understanding of warfare in the information age enables infantry squad leaders to better understand the operating environment in a larger context and provides a framework for considering the second and third order effects of their decisions.

The educational component of developing an infantry squad leader for future war should be integrated and supported by training based on building relevant capabilities. To determine what capabilities are relevant, some predictions about the future operating environment must be made. As discussed earlier, the future operating environment can be expected to be complex, uncertain and violent\textsuperscript{10}. What is resoundingly clear is that Marines will be called on to use force outside US territory to accomplish political goals in a sensitive international setting. This means that the infantry squad leader should be trained to lead and decide in conventional wars and small wars with an understanding of the effect their decisions can have at the national and international level.

Developing infantry squad leaders for future conventional war must focus on providing him with the ability to employ supporting arm during operations. Communication and target location technology, along with air and ground fire support platforms, have advanced significantly in recent history. These advancements have made it possible to put a complete and comprehensive combined arms capability in the hands of the squad leader. A lack of training is holding the Marine Corps back. Because current squad leaders are young and untrained, it is a celebrated event when a rifle squad calls for and receives some form of non-organic fire support. One of ISC's primary training missions should be to train infantry squad leaders to serve as capable forward observers for indirect fire and enable them to control supporting attack aircraft.
ISC will bridge the gap that is currently preventing infantry squad leaders from fighting their unit as a combined arms capable element.

Remembering that we are dealing with a Marine with two years of experience and only entry level training as a foundation, many of the timeless infantry skills will require attention during this course. Five paragraph orders development, combat patrolling, offensive and defensive planning consideration and land navigation will require as much attention as supporting arms. Familiarization with tank-infantry integration, motorized and heliborne operations, infiltration tactics and cordon and search must be staples of ISC if the infantry squad leader is going to effectively employ his squad in combat.

All the areas listed above serve the squad leader well in both future conventional conflict and small wars; however, small wars require some additional specific capabilities. In small wars the infantry squad leader can expect to deal with civil affairs operations, key leader engagement, training and operating with host nation security forces and the integration of his efforts with interagency partners or non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

Additionally, the squad leader will need to understand and be able to operate with Special Operations Forces (SOF) from the joint community. Given the expeditionary and rapid response capabilities of the Marine Corps, the infantry squad is likely to be employed alongside SOF units in rapidly developing situations. ISC should introduce the future squad leader to basic considerations for operating with SOF units. Information operations and cyber warfare considerations are also necessary areas of study for success of an infantry squad in future conflict. Squad leaders should be introduced to the core, supporting and related components that makeup information operations and gain a basic understanding of how information operations are integrated in small wars operations. An understanding of offensive and defensive cyber
warfare is required to ensure the infantry squad conducting independent operations is not vulnerable to cyber exploitation by the enemy and can identify cyber threats operating in their areas. ISC is not intended to make the future squad leader an expert in these area, but is intended to provide an introduction to these topics so the squad leader is not exposed to these considerations for the first time during an operation.

This four month course would be designed to challenge the student mentally, physically and emotionally as would be expected of a Marine Corps school preparing Marines for leadership in combat. It should be emphasized that this is a education and training course intended to develop the student as much as possible in the time allotted. These students have been selected by their battalion leadership for their demonstrated talent and leadership potential. However, it should be anticipated that not all students will graduate from the ISC for one reason or another. These Marines that don’t graduate for whatever reason, would be returned to the battalion they came from at their current rank and carry out the remainder of their enlistment. Those that successfully complete ISC would continue on to the next step in the Infantry Sergeant’s Program.

Step 3: Promotion

Upon successful completion of the ISC, the future squad leader should be promoted to sergeant. With approximately two years and three months time in service this individual would have demonstrated leadership potential, been selected for a combat leadership position by his battalion staff, successfully completed a challenging three month course to develop the skills required of a squad leader in combat and is on the verge of assuming those duties. The table of organization states that squad leader is a sergeant’s billet. This promotion is a necessary incentive to ensure selection and retention of the highest quality Marines. This Marine, through
his performance and talent, would have earned the position of squad leader and deserves the rank, pay and privileges associated with the responsibility.

Currently, time in service and time in grade are the driving factors in determining when a Marine is to be promoted. Under this proposed program, the Marine Corps would set aside these factors and focus on the individual’s ability and talent. The thought of a Marine jumping from lance corporal to sergeant may raise some concerns, however, those Marines would have been selected by a platoon sergeant, company first sergeant, and battalion sergeant major that have directly observed their performance in the operating forces for two years. Compare this with selecting a second lieutenant based on ten or twelve weeks of Officer Candidate School. Which of these leaders is going through a more rigorous selection process and which has operating force experience? The battalion is looking for the ten best lance corporals it has across all three rifle companies. This is the largest population of Marines in the battalion and this program would select the top 1 or 2 percent each year. Considering that many lance corporals are currently serving in squad leader billets, it is only appropriate to promote them to the rank they would have earned under this proposed program.

Step 4: Extension and Return

This step is concerned with maximizing the amount of time a fully trained infantry sergeant would spend in the operating forces. The investment, both in time and resources, would be substantial and maximizing the return on that investment should be essential. As a condition of accepting promotion to sergeant, the Marine would be required to extend his current enlistment an additional year. Most Marines come into the infantry on a four year enlistment. On the ISP, a Marine would graduate from ISC approximately two years and four months into this first enlistment. By extending the enlistment one year at this point, the new sergeant squad
leader would have approximately two and a half years of service remaining in the Marine Corps to serve as a squad leader. The impact of having an experienced and trained squad leader in a rifle platoon for two and a half years would be substantial. Continuity, knowledge, and experience at the platoon level would be greatly enhanced. The squad leader would have a sense of ownership in his squad and have a vested interest in the training and development of the rifle squad he will work with for the next 2.5 years.

The final part of this step would be to return the new squad leader to his battalion of origin. This practice would ensure that battalions are selecting their top performers for the program because they know at the end of ISC they will be getting them back. This would provide the infantry battalion with an experienced and capable sergeant that would provide consistent leadership for the next two and a half years. This period of time would be spent in a leadership position in a combat ready infantry battalion where this Marine can expect to be deployed repeatedly or for extended periods to execute a wide variety of missions on short notice in any environment. At the end of this period, this Marine would have been in the operating forces or in high intensity training environments for a total of five years. This would alter the Marine Corps current assignment practice by moving the Marine after four years at a duty assignment instead of at three years. Because of the relatively small number of Marines this change would effect, this would not be a major disruption for Manpower assignments to B-billets.

CONCLUSION

The proposed ISC may seem ambitious for an enlisted Marine with two years of experience. The Marine Corps is currently selecting and placing these young Marines into squad
leader billets and sending them out into the operating environment without any formal training for the position. These young Marines meet the challenge with enthusiasm and vigor but without appropriate education and training. As the future operating environment becomes more complex and uncertain, this lack of capability at the squad level will limit the ways the Marine Corps can solve complex problems. In the mid-1800’s Prussia was faced with a powerful French Army lead by a military genius, Napoleon. Prussia recognized the importance of developing every leader in their army through billdung to meet the French juggernaut. Today, the Marine Corps faces a different kind of juggernaut, one of complexity and uncertainty, but the method of meeting the challenge is the same. By building independent judgment and sound decision-making capability at the infantry squad level, the Marine Corps will be able to thrive in the chaotic and obscure future operating environment.
Bibliography


2 AITB East, Infantry Squad Leader Course Program of Instruction, 2011, 5.
3 AITB East Personnel, telephone interview with author, April 5, 2011.
8 White, 16.
11 White, 34.
Developing Squad Leaders for Future Operations

Major T. R. Powledge
School of Advanced Warfighting AY 2011

In order to execute maneuver warfare doctrine and thrive in the chaotic and uncertain future operating environment, the Marine Corps needs to develop a professional infantry squad leader able to serve as an independent combat-decision maker.

1. THE PROBLEM

THE SOLUTION

- Infantry Sergeant's Program
  - Part 1: Selection
  - Part 2: Infantry Sergeant’s Course (ISC)
  - Part 3: Promotion
  - Part 4: Extension
THE SOLUTION

Infantry Sergeant’s Program
  - Part 1: Selection
  - Part 2: ISC
  - Part 3: Promotion
  - Part 4: Extension

Each year a battalion would select the top ten lance corporals (2 yrs into their enlistment) in their units and send them to the infantry sergeant’s course (ISC).

Part 1: Selection

The battalion would not lose all of its squad leaders at one time and they will be able to select the top performers from each year group.

Part 2: ISC

This Marine, through his performance and talent, would have earned this position of squad leader and deserved the rank, pay and privileges associated with the responsibility. Currently, time in service and time in grade are the driving factors in determining when a Marine is to be promoted. Under the proposed program, the Marine Corps would set aside these factors and focus on the individual's ability and talent.

Part 3: Promotion

With 27 infantry squads in a battalion, it would take three years for a battalion to have all of its squad leaders trained under this program.

Part 4: Extension

As a condition of accepting promotion to sergeant, the Marine would be required to extend an additional year. On the ISP, the Marine would graduate approximately two years and four months into his first enlistment. By extending the enlistment one year at this point, the new sergeant squad leader would have approximately two and a half years of service as a squad leader.

Maximize the amount of time a fully trained infantry sergeant would spend in the operating forces.

Questions?

6. CONCLUSION

As the future operating environment becomes more complex and uncertain, this lack of capability at the squad level will limit the ways the Marine Corps can solve complex problems.

In the mid-1800’s Prussia was faced with a powerful French Army lead by a military genius, Napoleon. Prussia recognized the importance of developing every leader in their army through building to meet the French juggernaut.

Today, the Marine Corps faces a different kind of juggernaut, one of complexity and uncertainty, but the method of meeting the challenge is the same.

By building independent judgment and sound decision-making capability at the infantry squad level, the Marine Corps will be able to thrive in the chaotic and obscure future operating environment.