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BY T. Nunn DATE 10/9/80

PLANS FILES

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D O C T R I N E

Navy Department,

Washington, D. C.,

December 1, 1917.

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Navy Department,

Washington, D. C.,

1 December, 1917.DOCTRINE.

Difficulties of coordination.

1. When a large number of units is cooperating under war conditions, the element of time, the separation of units and other interferences, and the difficulty of communications, will normally prevent effective coordination which depends only upon instructions issued previous to the operations, and upon signals and radio messages exchanged while operations are in progress.

Mutual support necessary.

2. Frequently the nature of a decision, when regarded as an isolated act, is of less consequence than is the degree with which such decision harmonizes with those of cooperating commanders. Among a large number of such commanders, decisions which unanimously support each other, in almost every case, will produce greater success than corresponding decisions which do not harmonize, even though the latter as a whole may be more nearly correct in principle.

Utility of doctrine.

3. Consequently there is required for the general guidance of commanders endeavoring to cooperate during war, in addition to the particular instructions governing the operations, a bond of mutual understanding, or doctrine, to coordinate decisions and to promote prompt and united action.

Basis of doctrine.

4. To be effective in accomplishing its role, doctrine must flow from sound principles and be based upon a conception

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of warfare which is common alike to the Commander-in-Chief ^{than} and his subordinate commanders; and rather/be imposed upon such commanders doctrine should emanate from their common convictions.

Germination of doctrine.

5. The general acceptance of one conception of war, together with the germination of common conviction with respect to doctrine, can be brought about only by means of a uniform system of special study and training, through which all of at least command rank shall have passed. Until this has been done, it is desirable that doctrine in a tentative form be prescribed for the use of the service to assist in accomplishing coordinate action before and during battle.

Promulgation.

6. The following general doctrines, necessarily tentative in character and therefore subject to such changes as experience may dictate, are prescribed. They will be regarded by all ranks as a basis for decisions before and during battle, until modified by the Department or the Commander-in-Chief. Commanders-in-Chief are authorized to change these doctrines only after repeated experience has conclusively demonstrated the necessity therefor, and preferably only when such change represents a consensus of opinion of the subordinate commanders concerned. The Department will be kept informed of changes.

Command Doctrine.

Loyalty to plan essential.

7. Loyalty to the expressed intentions and general plan of the officer in command is the most essential element of/successful coordination. In applying such loyalty, the spirit of the

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plan should be given greater consideration than its letter and detailed directions.

Loyalty to persons also necessary. 8. Loyalty to the persons of those in authority is essential to the preservation of good morale, discipline and general efficiency.

Flow of information required. 9. As complete information as possible, of own and enemy forces, should be given to every subordinate commander taking part in an operation. Information received subsequent to the issue of instructions should be forwarded promptly to all forces concerned either directly or indirectly.

10. Coordinating commanders must scrupulously inform all immediately concerned, of military information coming to their knowledge before or during an operation.

11. Coordinating commanders must keep all concerned adequately informed of their position, their local situation, and their intentions.

Instructions should be general. 12. Whenever important changes of circumstances which cannot be accurately foreseen are likely to occur before the completion of an operation, instructions in sufficient detail only to express general intentions and to prescribe the general features of a plan, should be issued to subordinates charged with the execution of such plan.

Formulate definite mission. 13. The embarking upon any undertaking must be preceded by a definite formulation of mission to which every subsequent decision should be referred.

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- Basis of Mission. 14. The instructions received from superior authority must be made the basis for the formulation by each commander of general and immediate missions.
- Estimate of Situation. 15. The determination of mission should be followed by an analytical estimate of the situation, and the formulation of a plan of action of which subordinate commanders should be informed.
- Discretion of Subordinates. 16. Whenever practicable the detailed manner of the execution of parts of a general plan should be left to the discretion of appropriate subordinate commanders.
- Initiative of Subordinates. 17. Subordinate commanders will exercise due initiative, but only in loyal support of the general intentions and general plans of their senior commanders, and in accordance with the doctrines in force. Principally on account of the time factor, the exercise of initiative by subordinate commanders is imperatively necessary; but obviously unless the restrictions cited in the preceding sentence are observed, initiative will produce confusion and failure instead of coordination and success.

Action Doctrine.

- Annihilate the enemy. 18. The principal objective is the annihilation of the enemy forces.
- Offensive brings Success. 19. Decisive success can be gained only by a vigorous offensive. Take and retain the offensive except
- (a) When opposed by overwhelmingly superior forces; even then assume as offensive attitude and disposition of forces as possible;

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(b) When one's mission is to avoid action.

(c) When a temporary defensive is essential to a more certainly effective offensive than is possible at the moment.

Utilize
Surprise.

20. Surprise is a great aid to the offensive; use it when possible, but do not rely upon it. Guard against surprise by the enemy.

Time is
Everything.

21. "Time is everything," never waste it, keep ahead of it, deny it to the enemy.

Seize and
keep the
Initiative.

22. Whether acting on the offensive or defensive strategically or tactically, the initiative should, whenever practicable, be seized and retained; thus causing the enemy to conform to our actions, and making it difficult for him to carry out his plans.

Deploy-
ments.

23. Deploy as late as consistent with the maintenance of the offensive.

24. Deploy in sufficient time to assure being in battle formation before coming under fire.

25. Deploy in the direction which will gain or retain advantageous weather conditions, IF TIME PERMITS.

26. Employ each component part of your force so that it will work at its highest efficiency, from the position of greatest vantage.

Don't Man-
euver too
much.

27. Maneuvers to gain a favorable position must not delay the action to such an extent as to prevent a decisive favorable action.

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Application of
Concentration
Principle.

28. Keep sufficiently concentrated to afford mutual support against enemy combinations which are reasonably possible.
29. Concentrate own masses against enemy fractions.
30. Do not accept action with superior detachments except when essential to the furtherance of the general mission.
31. Avoid detached engagements which do not harmonize with the general plan.
32. Support the point of major contact.
- Reap. 33. Follow up victory.
- Morale. 34. Elevate and sustain in all ranks confidence in the justice and ultimate success of our arms, and an ardent desire to conquer.
35. Always remember that while every effort should be made to have the material and physical factors intelligently disposed on your side, the final determining factor in every undertaking, great or small, is the spirit of the personnel. The will to win, guided by a clear conception of right and truth, is paramount.

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Future Developments.Special
Doctrines.

36. The correct application of the general doctrine to special activities will result in special doctrines harmoniously directing the initiative of the commanders of these activities. Scouting and Screening Doctrines, Battleship Doctrine, Destroyer Doctrine, Submarine Doctrine, Air Doctrine, Gunfire Doctrine, Mining Doctrine, etc., are desirable and will be evolved and reduced tentatively to writing by appropriate force commanders. They should not take the form of mere educational instruction, nor consist only of a citation of principles, but should be a statement of the manner in which principles are to be mutually put into practice. These doctrines should preferably represent a consensus of opinion of subordinate commanders. The Department will be furnished with copies of all such Doctrines.

W.S. Benson

Copies to

Commanders-in-Chief
Force Commanders,
Squadron Commanders,
Division Commanders,
Ship Commanders,
Commandants of Naval Districts,
" of Naval Stations.