

THE DECISION

The Role of Leaders on the Battlefield

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Class Outline

INTRODUCTION: Col Anthony Zinni, USMC – *No Decision* (video)

PART 1: The Leader Who Saved the Union at Gettysburg

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PART 3: The Decision-Making Environment

PART 4: The Process... From Start to Finish

PART 5: Decision-Making Techniques

PART 6: The Leader as a Synthesizer IN-TIME

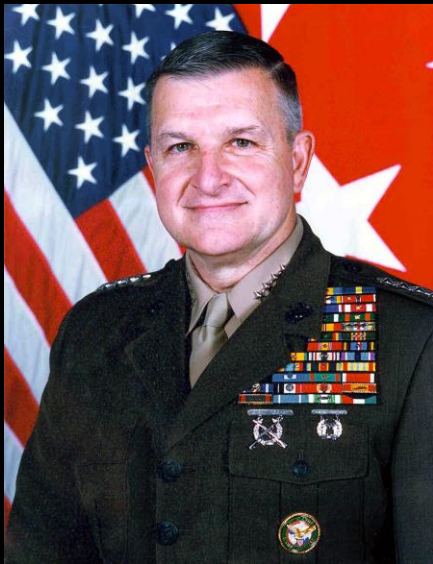
PART 7: EXECUTION...Doing It

PART 8: The AAR/Critique (Mac's Way)

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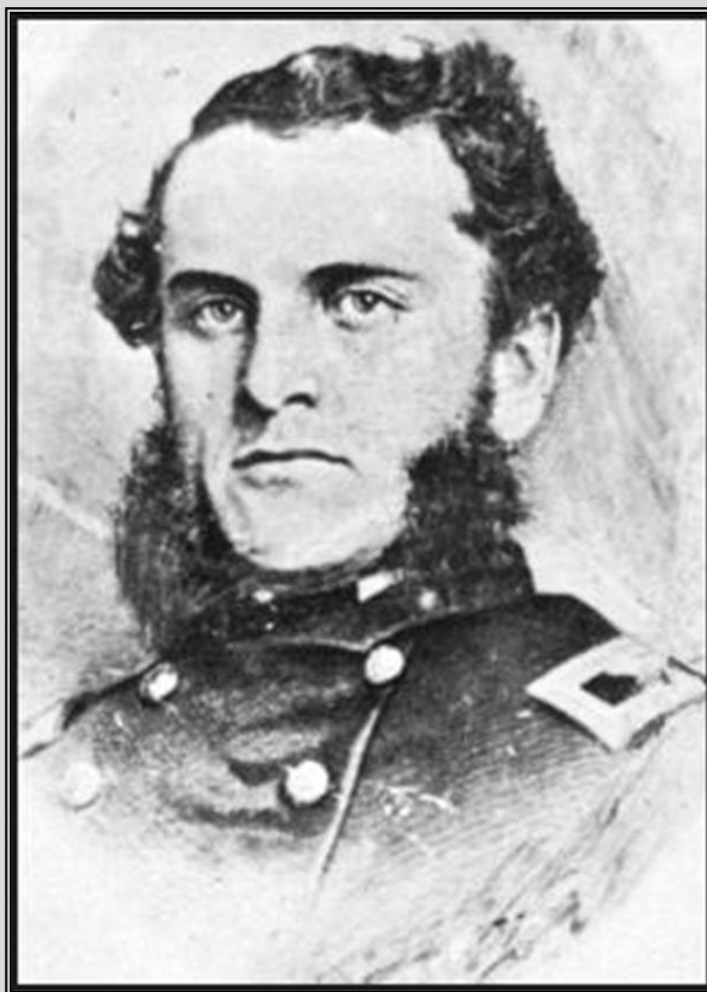
General Antony M. Zinni, USMC



You can watch Col Zinni's entire "Combat Concepts" presentation on the ALL MARINE RADIO YouTube Channel

PART 1

The Leader Who Saved the Union at Gettysburg



COLONEL STRONG VINCENT, US ARMY

3d Brigade Commanding Officer, 1st Division, V Corps, Army of the Potomac

Battle of Gettysburg

July 1-3, 1863

Col Vincent's Background and Billet at Gettysburg

BORN: Waterford, PA

PARENTS: B.B. Vincent, an ironworker, and Sarah Ann Strong Vincent.

PROFESSION: Lawyer. Graduated from Trinity College and Harvard University in 1859. Practiced law in Erie, PA

UNIT: Army of the Potomac (*Gen Meade*)

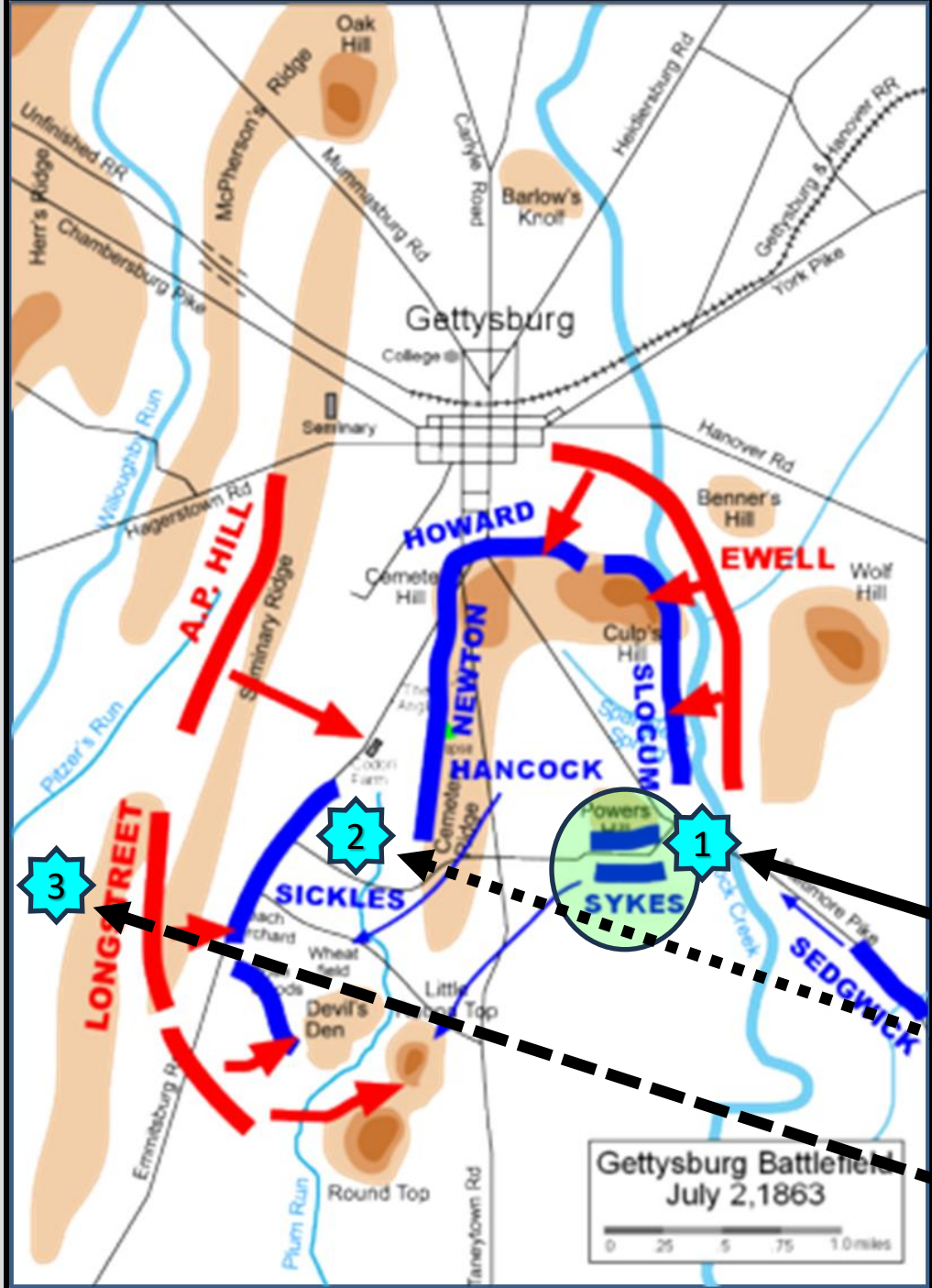
5th Corps (*MajGen Sykes*)

1st Division (*BGen Barnes*)

Col Vincent commands the 3rd Brigade of the 1st Division

Gettysburg Day 2: Early Afternoon

1. Vincent's Brigade was in reserve, located on the backside of Cemetery Ridge/Wheatfield.
2. MajGen Dan Sickles, CG III Corps, had deviated from Gen Meade's orders, moving elements of his Corps forward to the Emmitsburg Pike, with his left flank in a Peach Orchard...
3. In so doing... Sickles exposed the left flank of the Army of the Potomac to Longstreet's Corps' pending flanking attack.

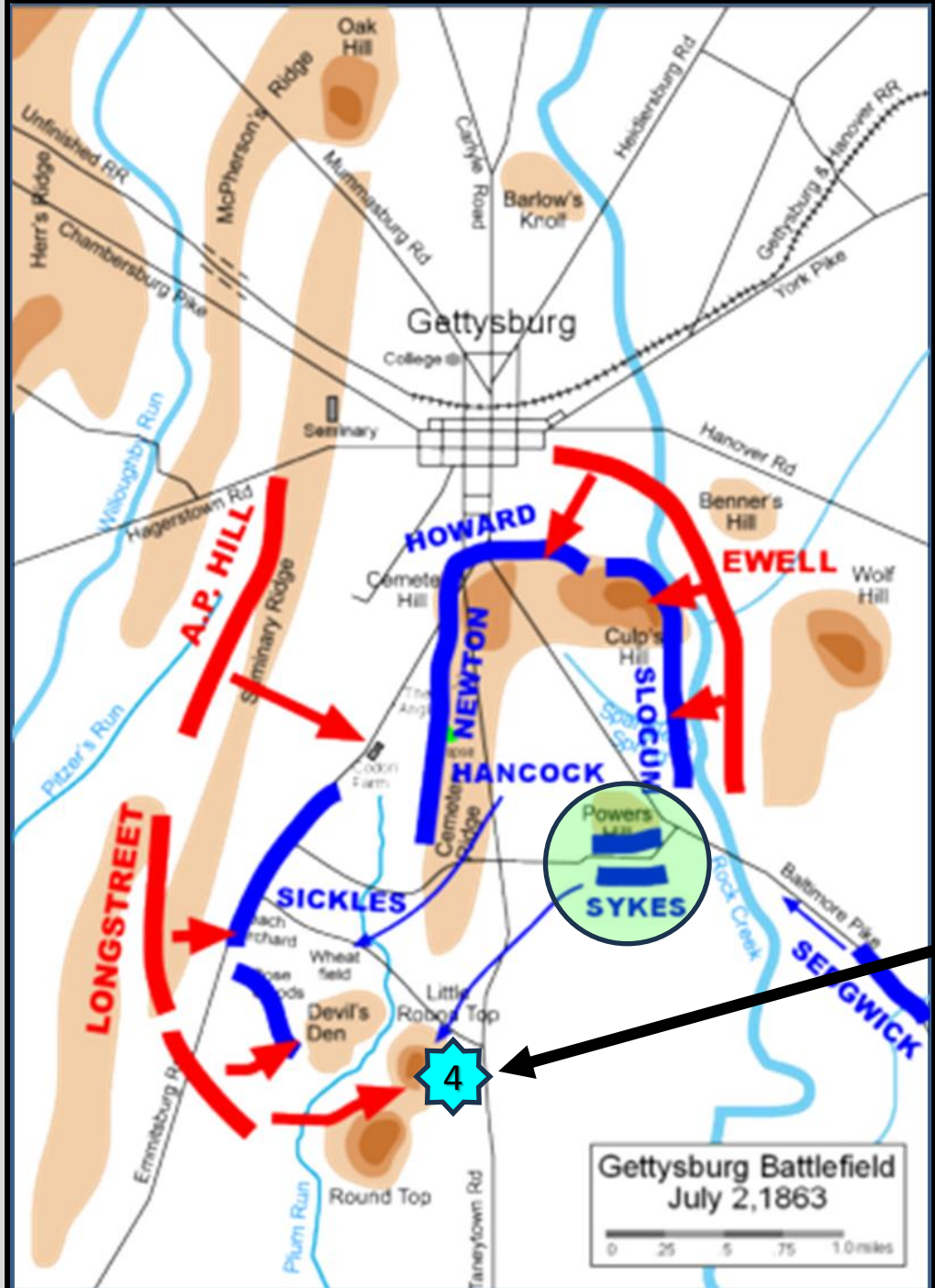


1200-1530

1. Sykes Corps' position in Reserve
 - The general position of Vincent's Brigade.
2. Sickles Corps... complete with its adjusted position and exposed flank
3. Longstreet's Corps... as it executes its flanking movement

Gettysburg Day 2: Early Afternoon

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3. Sickles movement exposes the left flank of the Army of the Potomac to Longstreet's Corps' pending flanking attack.
4. 1530: MajGen Meade's Chief Engineer, BGen G.K. Warren, spots Longstreet's movements from the summit of Little Round Top while conducting a reconnaissance of the Union left flank.
 - BGen Warren sends a courier with orders to MajGen Barnes (Vincent's Division CG) to move a brigade immediately to "...yonder small hilltop..."
 - That courier crossed paths with Col Vincent.



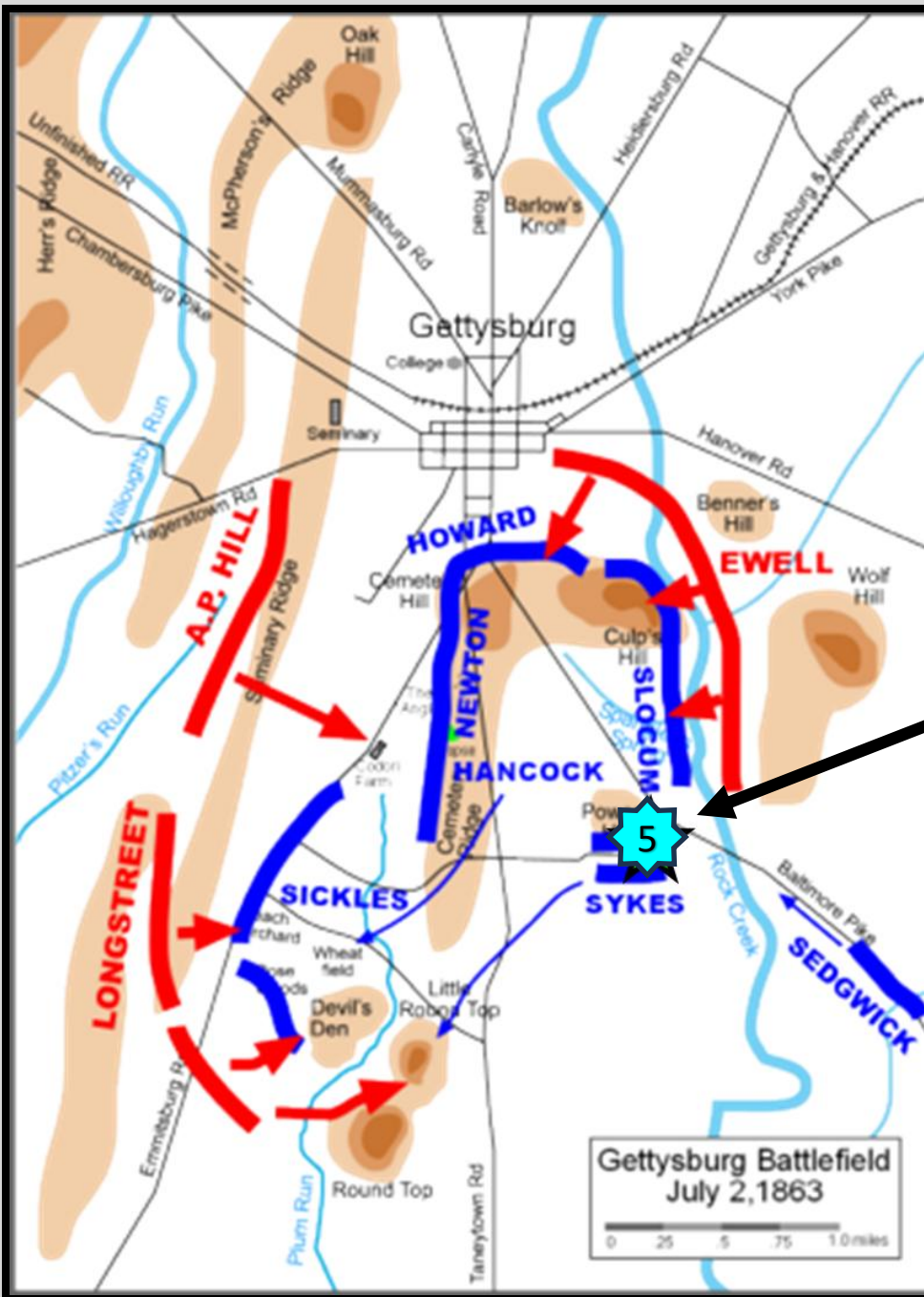
1530: General Warren's conducts a reconnaissance of Little Round Top

Gettysburg Battlefield
July 2, 1863
0 25 5 75 10 miles

Gettysburg Day 2: 1530-1600

The Courier Event

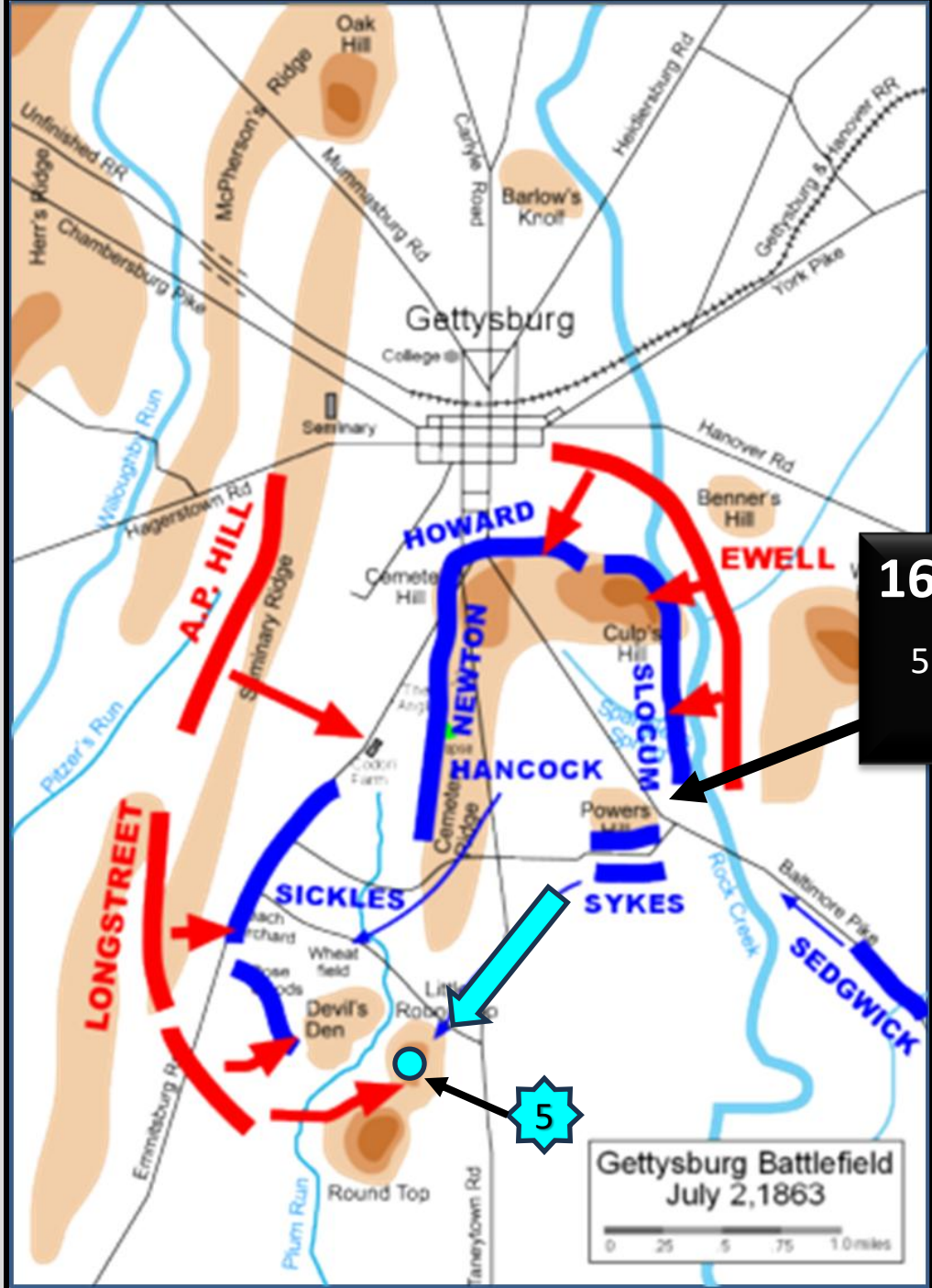
- Col Vincent halts BGen Warren's courier (*an uncommon practice at the time*) and read the message intended for BGen Barnes. He then told the courier: "Tell BGen Barnes, I will take the responsibility to take my brigade there." (**Coordinated-Initiative**)
- Pvt Oliver Norton, Vincent's standard bearer and bugler, later wrote that he and Vincent then moved ahead of the Brigade to Little Round Top.
 - Once there, they observed the lead elements of Longstreet's Corps (Hood's Division) as they made a reconnaissance of Union left flank... the base of Little Round Top.
 - Vincent's Brigade is closing on Little Round Top from the opposite direction...



1530-1600

5. THE CARRIER EVENT

- Col Vincent encounters BGen Warren's courier who is searching for BGen Barnes, his Division CG.



1600

5. The Race to Little Round Top

- Will Vincent's Brigade get there in time?

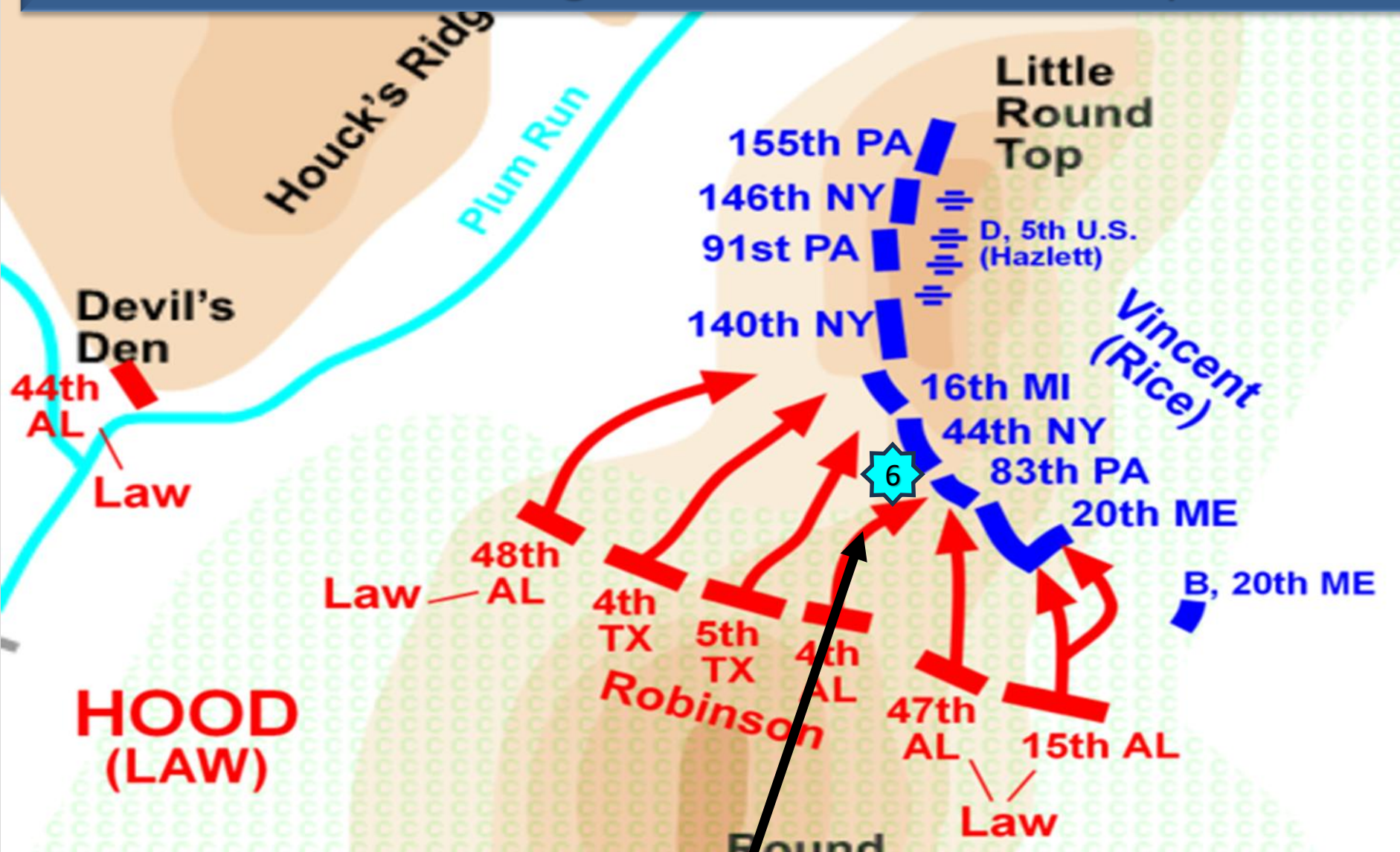
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Gettysburg Day 2: 1600-2000

A meeting engagement on the forward slope of Little Round Top

- The lead elements of Vincent's Brigade went straight into the attack from the column formations they were moving in during their movement to Little Round top... they immediately encountered MajGen John Bell Hood's Confederate troops coming up the southwest slope of Little Round Top.
- Vincent then placed his following regiments in position on the military crest of Little Round Top.
- As the fighting raged... Col Vincent noticed that the 16th Michigan was starting to yield to enemy pressure.
- Vincent mounted a large boulder, brandished a riding crop given to him by his wife, and shouted to his men, "Don't give an inch!"
- A bullet struck him through the thigh and the groin area, and he fell. He was carried from Little Round Top to a nearby farm, where he would die of wounds five days later.

Vincent's Brigade on Little Round Top



6. 1600-2000: The battle for Little Round Top Rages

- The Initial meeting engagement occurs as Vincent's Brigade reaches Little Round Top just prior to MajGen Hood's soldiers come over the crest. The rest is history.

Gettysburg Day 2: The Rest of the Story

- Col Vincent was promoted to BGen on the evening of July 2.
- His wife gave birth to a baby girl two months later. The baby died before reaching the age of one and is buried between her mother and her father.

The moral of this story...

- Leaders have their heads in the game...
- Leaders use initiative...
- Leaders make decisions...
- Leaders coordinate their initiative... and put those they lead into positions that lead to victory... that is the job.
- Col Strong Vincent may be one of the most significant leaders in American history... his professional example is certainly worthy of our study.

PART 2

The Leader's Mandate

Decision-making in TIME

ACTION in a Time-Competitive Event

The essential thing is **ACTION**.

Action has three pieces:

- A **DECISION** born of thought
- An **ORDER** that prepares the unit to execute
- The **EXECUTION** itself

This entire script unfolds **IN-TIME**... and therefore managing **TIME** is a critical responsibility for every leader.

Creating “A Bias for Action”

Russell Stolfi, PhD

*The Senior commanders in 7.Pz.D. allowed subordinated leaders to make mistakes. The tolerance of these leaders was never an excuse for slipshod performance; it was the calm recognition that rapid action in the face of uncertainty will result in errors – **errors that can be overcome by more action.***

“Coordinated-Initiative”

The German Truppenfuhrung (Troop Leading Manual) of 1933... addressing decision making & initiative:

*The decision arises from the mission and the situation. Should the mission no longer suffice as the fundamental vehicle for success, or the situation is changed by events, the decision must take these considerations into account. **He who changes the mission or does not execute the one given must report his actions at once and assumes all responsibility for the consequences.** He must always keep in mind the whole situation.*

PART 3

The Decision-Making Environment

BATTLEFIELD DYNAMICS

Friction

Uncertainty

FRICTION

“In war, *everything is slowed* by the influence of innumerable insignificant circumstances which cannot be evaluated on paper, and which lead one to fall far short of his aim.”



Karl von Clausewitz
“On War”
Book 1, Chapter 7

UNCERTAINTY

- Successive acts in war are most often not premeditated acts; they are improvised adjustments to a changed situation.
- Adjustments occur because *your head is in the game*, so you SEE the changed situation occurring in front of you... and adjust to it.
- Your knowledge and confidence guide your decisions...
- In all situations, the challenge is:
 - To discover the situation in spite of *the fog or war*
 - To evaluate ***well*** what is known
 - To estimate what is unknown
 - To reach a decision quickly
 - To execute that decision powerfully and unhesitatingly
 - To keep your *head in the game*
 - To continue to evolve decisions until the mission is accomplished
 - **REMEMBER**: poor decisions are quickly overcome by subsequent good decisions

THE ESTIMATE OF THE SITUATION

- a) FOCUS on the enemy... the red stuff
- b) Make “Educated Assumptions” in your estimate to fill in intelligence gaps...
 - Assume the enemy is smart and will fight smart
 - Assume they want to live...
 - Ask yourself: “What would I do if I were them?”
- c) Understand in your head the level of “risk” associated with each different enemy Course of Action (COA).
 - Ask “*what could I lose if he executes each of the COAs he’s capable of...*”
 - Know the answers to that question... so that IF the enemy begins to execute the most dangerous course of action... your reaction is executed quickly and ferociously.

The Decision-Maker's Natural Habitat

Limited information...

- You won't have nearly the amount of information that you'd like to have...
- Assuming that all the information you've been given is correct is foolish...

A dynamic situation...

- Any intelligence is a snapshot in time unless you happen to be watching full-motion live video... so treat it as such.
- Assuming the enemy is intelligent and is making constant adjustments to what they're doing is something experienced warfighters do.

PART 4

The Process... From Start to Finish

From Start to Finish...

- **WARNING ORDER**
 - Sets everyone in motion, gives them the Timeline for the operation.
 - A critical component for high-performance units.
- **ESTIMATE of the Situation...**
- **DECISION...**
- **ORDER...** articulates the decision
- **BACK-BRIEF...** from each subordinate
- **REHERSALS...** for the unit, more is better!
- **EXECUTION...** that is violent & relentless
- **REFINEMENTS...** as you conform the plan to reality and WIN.

REMEMBER: all of this takes place in time...

PART 5

Decision Making Techniques

There are two models...

Recognitional model

Analytical model

Both models are proven and work...

Decision making techniques are neither good nor bad unto themselves. The problem with decision making techniques is their misapplication by leaders IN-TIME.

TIME will dictate which decision-making technique you should use.

- It is foolish not to utilize all the time you can as a leader in planning in order to give your unit the best chance to succeed.
- It is irresponsible and reckless to use too much time to make a decision... which allows no time for that decision/order to be disseminated... for back-briefs and rehearsals to happen... and get subordinate units into position IN-TIME.

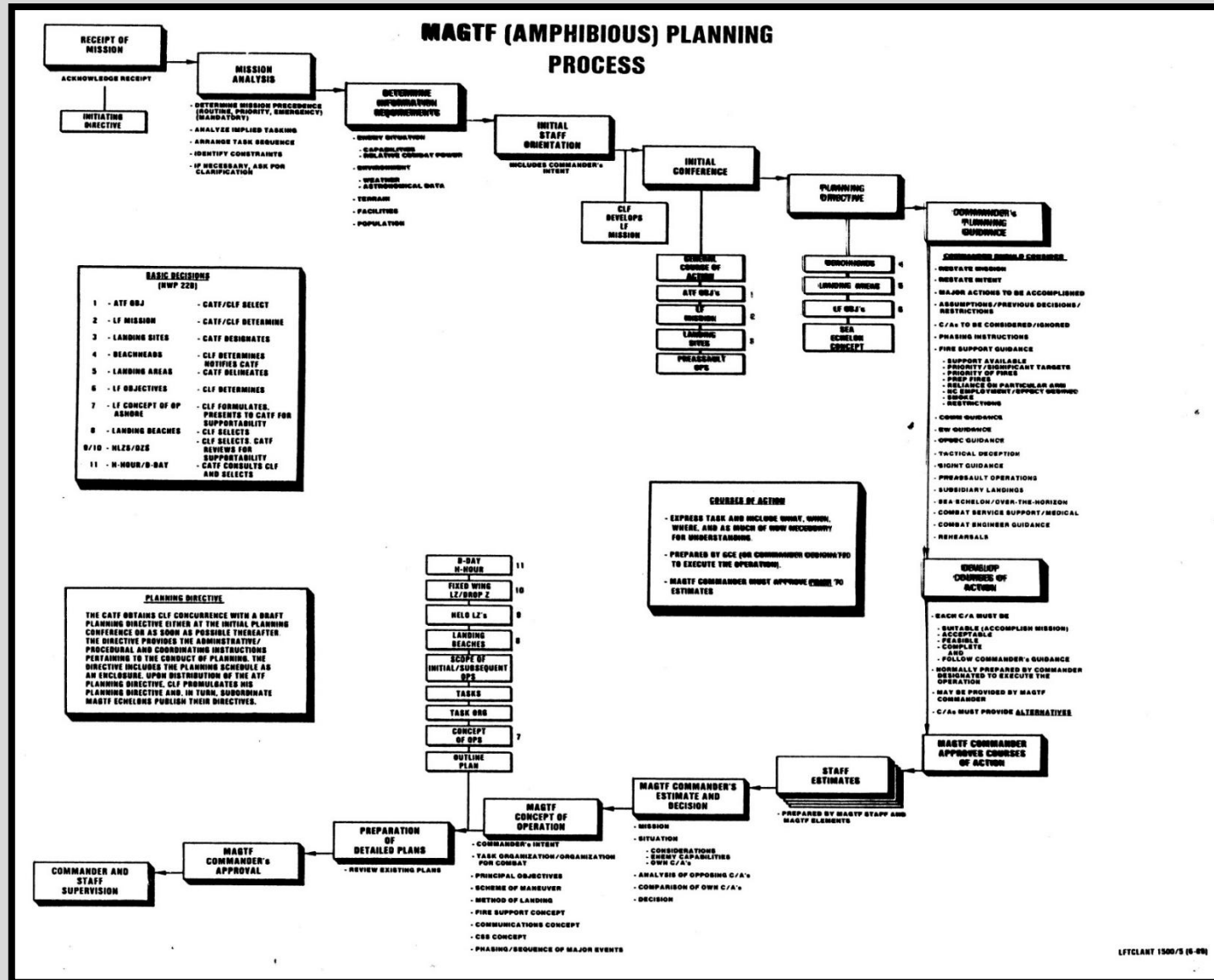
Recognition Primed Decision-making

X's next move?

O		O
O	X	
X		

- Relies on experience
- Required in compressed time situations

Analytical Decision-Making: USMC, WW2



Analytical Decision-Making: USMC, 1990

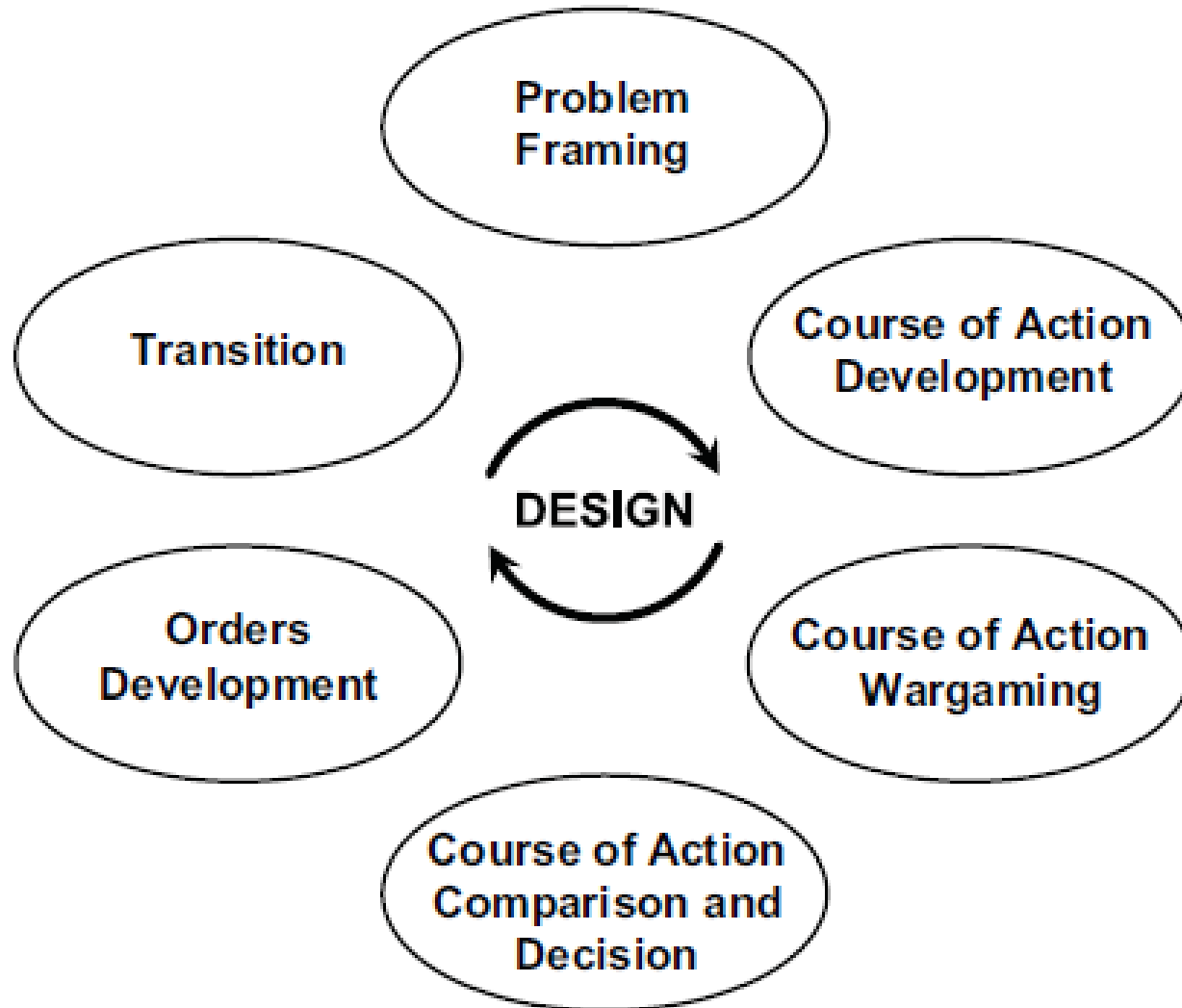


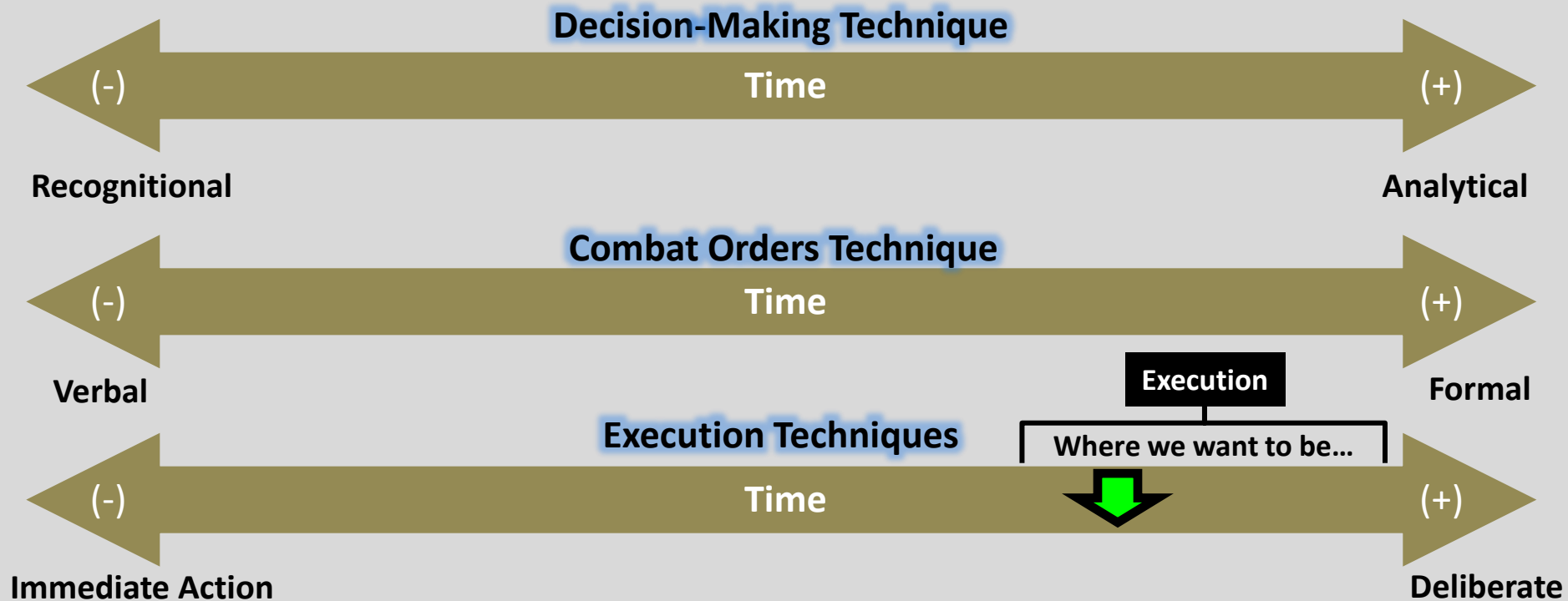
Figure 1-1. Overview of the Marine Corps Planning Process.

PART 6

The Leader as a Synthesizer in TIME

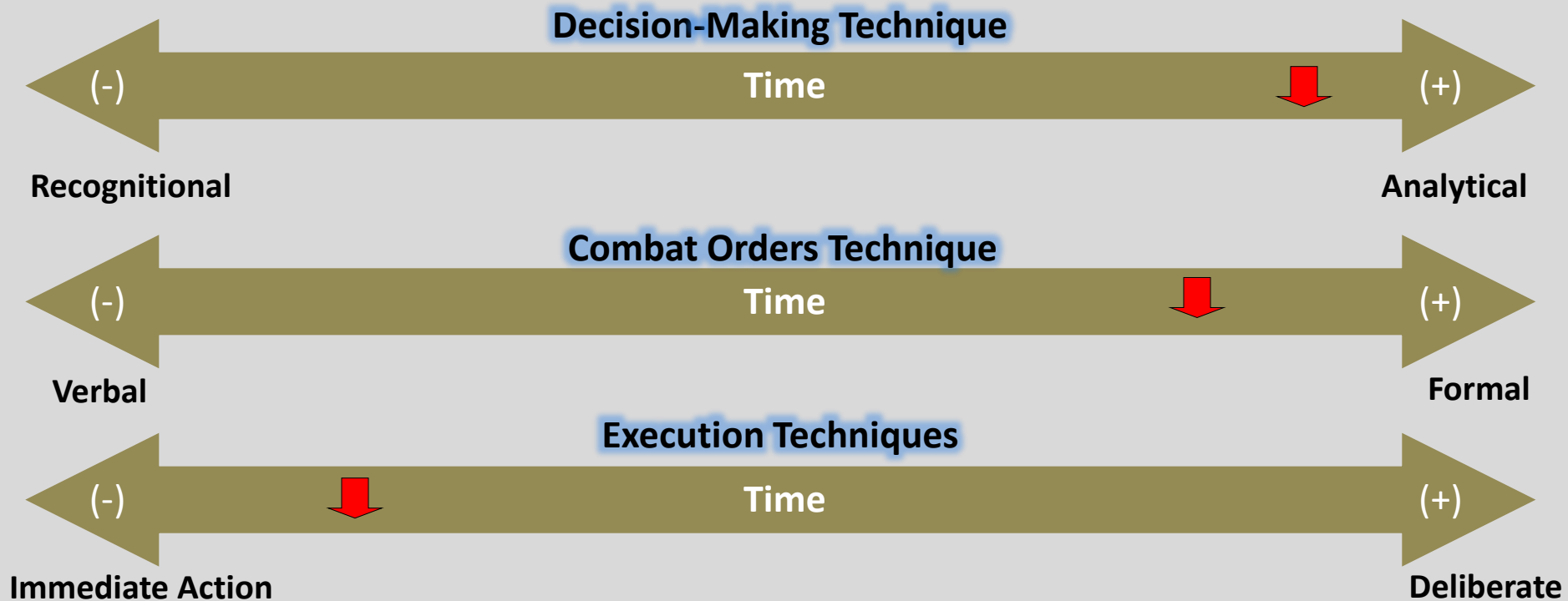
THE ART OF MAKING DECISIONS IN TIME

- A **DECISION** should allow enough TIME for orders to be issued, and back-briefs & rehearsals to be done
- Back-briefs and Rehearsals allow a unit be in a “more deliberate” execution mode in TIME, which is one of the leader’s objectives



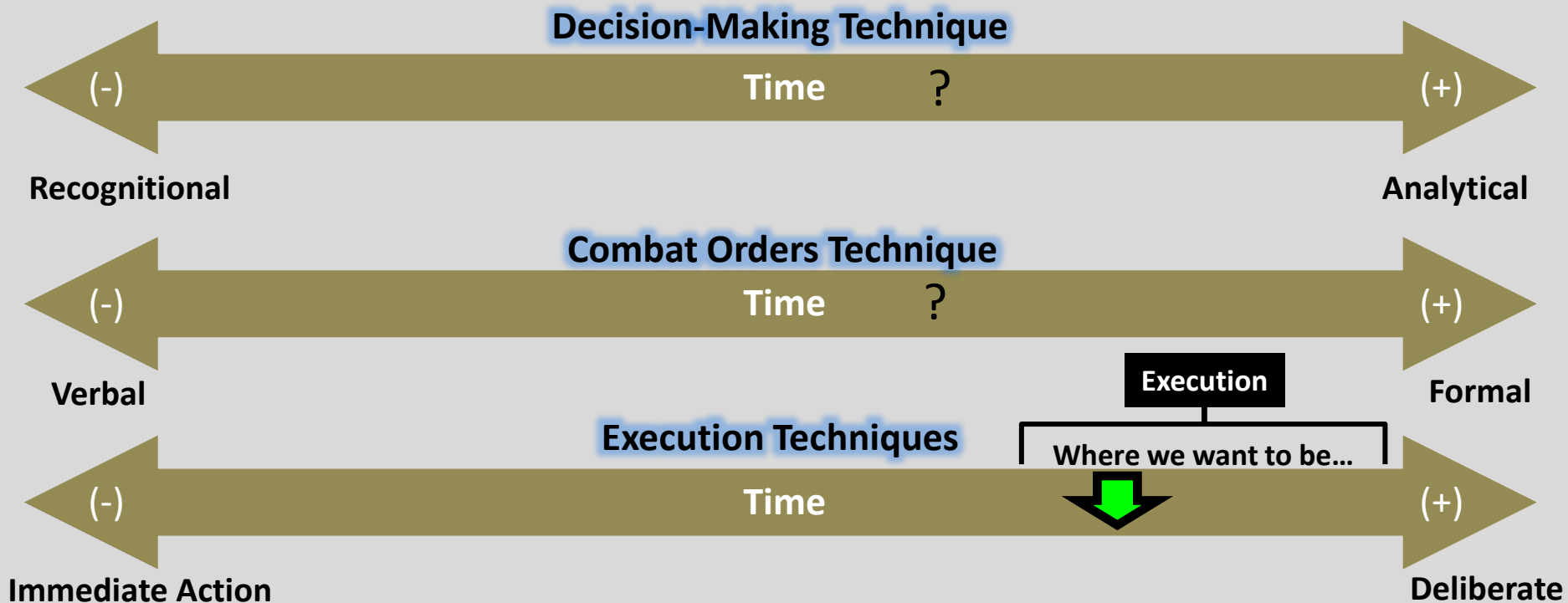
THE ART OF MAKING DECISIONS IN TIME

- Drawn out DECISIONS, long ORDERS, no back briefs and no rehearsals **FAIL** those who will risk their lives in the execution phase
- Below is the exact situation all leaders should seek to avoid!



THE ART OF MAKING DECISIONS IN TIME

- Putting those we lead in a more deliberate EXECUTION mode is one of the goals of an effective decision making & the combat orders process – remember, it is all done in TIME.
- The Decision-Making technique and the Combat Orders Technique should both be managed so that we're executing more deliberately.



PART 7

EXECUTION...Doing It

MENTAL FLEXIBILITY

“I did not know before hand mistakes the enemy would make which I took advantage of; I simply studied my map.”

Napoleon Bonaparte

“His successes were not due to the gifts of a magician, but to those of a great general who was continuously working out possibilities on a map, and who in this way knew more about the enemy’s capabilities and limitations than did the enemy himself.”

*F. von Freytag-Larinhoven
on Rommel’s achievements as a leader*

Commander's Intent & Mission Orders

Allow me to Function with:

1. A Changed Situation
2. An irrelevant Mission
3. No Communications

THE ORDER

1. Only use defined Tactical Missions
2. Back-Briefs are always done to confirm that subordinates understand their specific tasks
3. Rehearsals allow us to quickly correct mistakes that would otherwise be made during execution
4. “Branch Plans” reflect reality

EXECUTION

1. Should be violent & relentless... which can only be done by disciplined units
2. “Battlefield Reads” are made by leaders... we know the battlefield is a dynamic place, just like in a sports game. These reads will be the basis for adjustments
3. As the situation evolves... adjustments must be made
4. Knowing the difference between “*forcing the plan...*” & “*being steadfast in believing in the plan...*” is a function of your head in the game and your experience level – not an easy thing... and only done by leaders... nobody else makes those decisions.

PART 8

The AAR/Critique

The Two-Part AAR/Critique

1. **PART 1:** The Decision-Making Process and the Orders Process
2. **PART 2:** How did we EXECUTE?

Evaluation Criteria for BOTH Parts

1. Logical Combat Thinking
2. Good Tactical Judgment
3. Timely and Aggressive Application of Principles
4. Seizure and Maintenance of the Initiative

AAR/Critique... but MAC'S WAY!

PART 1: The Thinking/Decision-Making part of the AAR/Critique

Have the leader of the problem brief the following:

1. Present your *Estimate of the Situation* to the group
 - *Turn the map around, tell me what the enemy is doing*
 - *Who are they? What is their level of experience? What is their mission?*
2. What did you believe the enemy's "*Center of Gravity*" was, and what "*Vulnerability*" did they seek to exploit to accomplish your mission?
3. Discuss any *Assumptions* that you made
4. What was the Friendly COA, and the "Dilemma" that is to be created for the enemy leader?
5. What was the Tactical Mission used IOT "engineer" the dilemma
6. Recite the "Mission" and "Execution" paragraphs of the order exactly as they were given by your subordinates
7. How did we manage the *Time* allotted to us before we began the operation?

AAR/Critique... but MAC'S WAY!

PART 2: How did we EXECUTE?

NOTE: This is a very pointed and blunt discussion, and leaders should not be afraid to be assholes when critiquing execution. Part 2 is not an intellectual exploration like Part 1... it is hammering the need to be outstanding in execution.

1. Did the *Warning Order* give us what we needed relative to our logistics and communications?
2. Did we rehearse?
3. Did we camouflage ourselves appropriately and conduct pre-combat checks?
4. Did we commence the operation at the designated time?
5. Did we execute the techniques and procedures of this mission like a well-trained, well-disciplined unit? If not, why?

PART 9

Final Thoughts

Final Thoughts

1. If you do these things ***consistently*** over time:
 - Your unit will be Action-Oriented and always “in the game”
 - Your unit will become masters of *Decision-Making* *IN-TIME*
2. All Leaders must get repetitions doing it
3. This is what Marines signed up to do
4. If you create a vibrant learning and decision-making environment, they will perform at a level that will exceed all of your expectations

Colonel Zinni began this presentation by talking the greatest problem confronted by decision-makers, making NO decision.

Great practitioners of this art in history understood that mistakes happen on a dynamic battlefield... and that those mistake could be overcome by additional decisive action.

Col Strong Vincent did all of this at Gettysburg... and saved our nation.

Good Luck!

