

A Marine Reserve Intelligence Detachment

The mission for exceptionalism

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Since 2018, one reserve unit embarked on a journey to create a collaborative relationship that integrates Marine Corps Reserve intelligence professionals into the broader U.S. intelligence community (IC). These efforts have resulted in long-term employment of Marines across the Marine Forces Reserve through active-duty operational support (ADOS) opportunities and support to analysis during drill weekends. These opportunities offer real-world experience using emerging technologies and capabilities, creating expertly trained reserve Marines prepared to deploy in support of the warfighter. This article will describe how Intelligence Support Battalion (ISB) has achieved these results, what impact this relationship has made, and how some of these best practices can be applied elsewhere.

Background

Leveraging preexisting authorities such as the *National Security Act of 1947* (as amended), *Dept of Defense Instruction 4000.19*, and other applicable provisions, ISB entered a collaboration with the National Geospatial Intelligence Agency (NGA). This effort is focused on increasing information sharing and collaboration to deepen the scope of knowledge within both organizations on critical intelligence and information assurance issues. As part of this collaboration, the ISB elements have access to NGA during drill weekends and the opportunity to augment the agency with analysis support. The NGA has a reserve integration office that manages resources

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that can employ personnel with combat support agencies, combatant commands (COCOMs), and the broader IC through ADOS funding. As a result of this collaboration, the NGA now has the highest proportion of reserve Marines on ADOS when compared to

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other IC and combat support agencies. This is in part due to effective recruiting strategies and an ever-increasing demand for cognitive power to support the warfighter.

Thesis

Marines supporting NGA via ADOS orders are funded in full by the sponsoring agency, requiring zero investment from the Marine Corps. This critical element greatly benefits the total force. Between fiscal year (FY) 20 and FY23, reserve Marines were postured by NGA to directly support conventional Marine Corps intelligence requirements, Marine Special Operations Command, SOUTHCOM (which the MARFORRES commanding general has made a priority for the reserve component), INDOPACOM (which *Force Design 2030*, EABO, and other significant initiatives have attempted to address), EUCOM, the Department of State, and several other federal agencies and organizations.

While on ADOS orders with NGA, Marines are assigned to a variety of offices engaging in various intelligence methodologies well beyond the baseline tradecraft taught in schoolhouses

and often beyond the capabilities employed in the fleet. Marines have the benefit of working side-by-side with tradecraft experts and producing for national customers, gaining a deeper understanding of the U.S. intelligence enterprise and how the Marine Corps can leverage these resources. Most importantly, upon completion of ADOS, Marines return either to the reserve unit to serve as mentors or prepare to leverage their knowledge, skills, and abilities to support global force management requirements.

Pre-ADOS/Setup

The variety of ADOS orders available has opportunities for both new accessions and seasoned professionals. The majority of personnel on ADOS at NGA are typically junior Marines who have recently completed pipeline training requirements and begun a six-year obligated reserve contract. There are typically limited opportunities to employ junior reserve Marines on orders supporting a COCOM or the Marine Corps. Most requests for support ISB receives from units are for sergeants and above. The ISB-NGA collaboration bridges the gap between entry-level training and operational experience, providing opportunities to develop junior personnel and prepare them for future employment. To take orders, Marines apply for a vacancy through the reserve liaison by submitting a civilian resume and reserve qualification summary. The office advertising the vacancy reviews candidates and selects accordingly.

ADOS Employment

Marines will typically check into NGA or another supporting agency to support a specific program office or vacancy that has been identified by that organization. The position being filled by a uniformed service member is a direct result of that agency or organization's desire to bring in military skills and experience to fill that role in addition to possible organizational human resource limitations to source much more expensive civilian or contractor personnel.

The Marine Corps Reserve footprint in NGA has grown significantly due

to the positive impact they had. From FY17 to FY23, the Marine Corps Reserve increased execution of NGA-sponsored ADOS funding fivefold. It is important to note that this initiative is wholly funded by NGA via the military interdepartmental purchase request process and then disbursed via standard pay channels. This represents the no-cost care, feeding, training, and

on to contribute to the Marine Corps total force, drilling reserve, operational forces, and IC in a variety of ways. A short summation of the post-ADOS career paths of these Marines illustrates the great value of the ADOS experience. Some Marines have served on policy boards and even executive-level special projects. Multiple Marines who have completed ADOS at NGA have gone on

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operational experience of more than 30 Marines annually between the rank of lance corporal to lieutenant colonel who provide daily impact on behalf of NGA to the Marine Corps, COCOMs, the IC, and policymakers. Similar collaboration opportunities are being explored with other agency reserve integration offices such as the Defense Intelligence Agency.

While the Marines are on ADOS orders they also receive additional training on skills and techniques that are at the forefront of the field. In addition to NGA-centric training, some Marines have been able to receive good training from other entities such as the Office of Naval Intelligence, Defense Intelligence Agency, and Special Operations Command.

Marines on ADOS often have the ability to extend orders beyond the fiscal year, allowing them to either continue supporting the mission they were brought on orders to support or potentially fill another vacancy to expand their aperture. Many Marines extend allowing them to figure out what civilian career paths interest them, what fields of study they might want to focus on in school, or even prepare to support an upcoming overseas deployment opportunity for the Marine Corps.

Post-ADOS

After completing a term of service on ADOS orders, reserve Marines go

to fill global force management mobilizations and augment operation forces across a variety of COCOMs—including multiple Marine Special Operations Command deployments.

Civilian employment is perhaps one of the most difficult facets of the reserve career path. Many military reserve-focused studies have identified the challenge that reservists face with underemployment and lack of a meaningful civilian career. Through this collaboration, these Marines have gained experience to prepare them for follow-on careers across the U.S. government and industry, with many continuing to serve as government or contract employees within the IC. With ADOS at NGA and other intelligence and combat support agencies, there is demonstrable evidence that reserve Marines can find meaningful employment and contribute as both civilians and service members. This aspect of the ADOS experience is invaluable to creating and retaining Marines motivated and ready when the time calls.

Future Considerations

The concept of increasing collaboration with government agencies has proven effective given talent and funding considerations. However, implementing a similar strategy at scale across the reserve component is not feasible with the current manpower management structure. Many of the

processes in place to facilitate bringing Marines on ADOS orders are supported by informal relationships driven by reserve Marines. More agencies are requesting Marines to provide support and the workforce structure in place to manage processes must be established and streamlined across agencies and COCOMs. To continue and expand successful execution, it would be advantageous to create a position within the Marine Corps intelligence division and the MARFORRES G2 that has regular engagement with IC agencies, combat support agencies, COCOMs,

and other stakeholders that seek to fund reserve talent. Having newly trained Marines on ADOS is something that Headquarters Marine Corps has identified as beneficial as demonstrated in the Officer One Year Experience Tour Program. This program sends post-MOS school reserve contract officers on ADOS within the FMF to give them experience and exposure to grow as officers before serving in the reserves. For technical fields such as intelligence leveraging existing funding programs can broaden the scope of the experience tour concept to include enlisted person-

nel. With more formalized structures to manage reserve intelligence integration placed appropriately, the Marine Corps Reserve; Marine Corps Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance Enterprise; and the total force can grow this process and reap the clear benefits.

