

Stovepipe or Collaborate?

A call to increase education
for information related capabilities within the Marine Corps
by Maj Christopher Kearney

As the 31st Commandant of the Marine Corps noted, “any mission undertaken by the Corps will flow directly from our ability both to train and educate every Marine.” In order to meet our desired end state in education, substantial reforms are required in the organization of our training commands and our formal schools.¹ The Marine Corps has undertaken several organizational changes and adopted new innovations within the information domain. Specifically, the development of the cyberspace occupational field as well as the creation of the MEF Information Group. The 38th Commandant’s Plan-

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ning Guidance specifically highlighted one of the more foundational challenges facing the Marine Corps in that “we must change the Training and Education Continuum from an industrial age model, to an information age model.”² Part of this shift in model is evaluating if staff officers are effectively trained and educated in these new concepts to fight in a degraded environment across

all seven warfighting functions. Where do officers learn the capability and limitations to effectively plan and integrate new and in some cases highly technical capabilities like cyberspace operations that have classification requirements to cohesively merge into a synchronized plan to meet the commander’s intent? Recognizing the Marine Corps still has a foundational gap in the way that we educate and train our Marines to compete and employ resources within the information related capabilities, such as electronic warfare, military information support operations, combat camera, and cyberspace operations,³ the purpose of this article is to propose for the development of a career-level information related capabilities (IRC) specific course that would enhance the effectiveness of our IRC to meet the desired end state described within the newly published *Commandant’s Planning Guidance*.

According to MCWP 3-34.4,

Information operations are multidisciplined and include a variety of elements that must be employed together within an integrated strategy. Some of these elements are more offensive, defensive, or informational in nature, but it is their integration into the concept of operations that ensures successful employment of information operations in support of the MAGTF.⁴



Realistic training is essential to developing multi-disciplinary skills in the information environment. Here, Army Soldiers from 3rd Military Information Support Battalion (Airborne) participate as role-players for Marines at a simulated natural disaster site during a field training exercise. (Photo by Cpl Kevin Payne.)

In order to achieve the successful integration, the Marine Corps should establish a career-level, IRC-specific training that provides the technical officer IRC related MOS an opportunity to understand adjacent IRCs current capability, limitations, authorities required, operational examples, and an opportunity to discuss in a classified environment. Each IRC has unique employment considerations that could effectively disrupt other non-kinetic efforts and it is critical for planners and commander's to understand the IRC that they could effectively employ and operate within the information environment. The current educational model for IRCs leaves no venue or opportunity to collaborate or educate aside from operational experience. There are expected career and advanced-level training that falls under the portfolio of IRCs but individual Marines may not receive specific training based upon their initial tour such as, special technical operations, space operations, or even how to conduct non-kinetic targeting via the Joint Targeting School. Rather than attempt to have an IRC Marine attend each of these individual specific training skillsets, the Marine Corps should develop a service-specific career-level school to properly educate across all IRCs and address this educational gap. An educational template already exists in the MAGTF Intelligence Course at Dam Neck, VA, and could easily mirror a similar style and implementation within an officer's career path after the officer completes their first tour within the IRC. *MCWP 3-34.4* highlights the criticality of the collaboration:

some information-related capabilities (IRCs), such as electronic warfare (EW), military information support operations, combat camera (COM-CAM), and cyberspace operations, require trained specialists and equipment. However, each element of a MAGTF must be able to employ other capabilities.⁵

Entry-level Marines need to start thinking about the information environment just as critical as the conventional battlefield. Education and collaboration must be beyond entry-level training particularly in highly technical and special-



Effective OIE require a broad skill-set including cyberspace operations, military deception, and intelligence including collection and analysis of biometric data. (Photo by Sgt Luisa Torres.)

ized MOSs within the IRC community. These concepts must be continuously reinforced throughout a Marine's career, and a career-level IRC course is but one way that we can modernize and sustain our educational foundations.

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As the *Commandant's Planning Guidance* notes,

The complexity of the modern battlefield and increasing rate of change requires a highly educated force. While different, education and training are inextricably linked. Education denotes study and intellectual development.⁶

The Marine Corps needs to be extremely mindful of the training and education piece of its developing IRC and include the complexity and solution effort as part of the new Commandant's force design in order to ensure it is building future leaders and not just developing technically savvy individuals. Failure to educate appropriately will have lasting effects upon the Corps' ability to effectively train and employ its IRC. Creating multiple opportunities and

touch points within a Marine's career on IRC provides opportunities not only for wider employment, but for the entire FMF to recognize opportunities to integrate, collaborate, and synchronize efforts within the IE to achieve the vision within the new Commandant's desired end-state to "maintain the advantage in the information environment across all seven warfighting functions."⁷

Notes

1. Gen David H. Berger, *38th Commandant's Planning Guidance*, (Washington, DC: July 2019).
2. Ibid.
3. Headquarters Marine Corps, *Marine Corps Warfighting Publication 3-40.4, Marine Air Ground Task Force Information Operations*, (Washington, DC: August 2017).
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. *38th Commandant's Planning Guidance*.
7. Ibid; and Headquarters Marine Corps, *MAGTF IE Concept of Employment*, (Washington, DC: July 2017).

