

# Marine Corps Intelligence Activity

Organizational support to the Marine Corps

by LtCol Ryan Shaffer

**W**e live in an incredibly intricate and complex world. Globalization allows once disparate groups to connect at a rapid pace, and the result can either be beneficial or detrimental to the United States and the Marine Corps. With the threat of humanitarian disasters being an increasingly volatile threat, a growing interconnectedness among the global community can enable a faster and more accurate response by Marines and other entities. In contrast, increased globalization can cause persistent disorder and make it difficult to discern shifting alliances in instances of political upheaval, threatening American interests and citizens worldwide. Adversaries are determined to exploit the information environment, and the expanding dis-

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semination of advanced technologies makes it easier than ever for them to assault our allies and interests around the world. As the Nation's force-readiness, Marines must be prepared, trained, and equipped to respond to and operate in these complex and dynamic situations.

The Marine Corps Intelligence Activity (MCIA) serves as the Marine Corps' Service-level intelligence center. As the Service-level intelligence center, MCIA's mission is to deliver expeditionary intelligence products and services

to inform and prepare decision makers and warfighters for mission success.

- MCIA provides intelligence products and services in support of Marine Corps planning and decision making, doctrine and force structure development, systems and equipment acquisition, wargaming, training, and education.
- MCIA supports Marine Corps Operating Forces, the DOD, the intelligence community, and allied partners by providing comprehensive intelligence for expeditionary mission sets.
- MCIA facilitates the efforts of the Marine Corps Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance Enterprise (MCISRE) through coordinated planning and guidance to inform decision makers and enable success on the battlefield.

The MCISRE is the mechanism, via personnel, equipment, and processes, which merges disparate nodes of the Marine Corps intelligence effort into a cohesive, mutually reinforcing whole. The MCISRE is made up of intelligence professionals from the MEFs and their major subordinate commands (division, wing, and logistics group), as well as the Marine forces (MARFORs)—both regional and functional. By pooling its resources, the MCISRE is greater than its parts: where one unit's intelligence gaps exist, another unit can fill those gaps. Once known for its country hand-



**MCIA assists in providing intelligence support to units as needed. (Photo by Matt Lyman.)**

book production line, MCIA now serves as the nerve center for the MCISRE. MCIA communicates, coordinates, and provides a shared understanding of what Marine Corps operations are currently doing and what future operations are planned. This nerve center does not direct any of these operations; however, it coordinates with the Marine units supporting the operations and assists in providing intelligence support to those units as needed.

To ensure there is a shared understanding across the MCISRE, MCIA supports the MCISRE's Program of Analysis (PoA). The PoA facilitates collaboration across the enterprise to enable intelligence analysis and production as well as to support decision makers at all levels. Through an iterative process that integrates inputs from regional, functional, geospatial, open-source, and counterintelligence analysts from around the Marine Corps, the PoA harmonizes the planned analytic support by attempting to prevent redundant production and ensuring our analytical endeavors are concentrated and relevant. In accordance with the *2018 National Defense Strategy*, the current PoA focuses on peer competitors and adversaries. The PoA is also driven by



**Regionally aligned organizations can focus on operational-level intelligence requirements within combatant command areas of responsibility.** (Photo by Sgt Ronald Spotswood.)

ing Marine Corps acquisitions programs and also helps Marines to detect trends in warfare, ensuring they are prepared for the next fight rather than the last fight. MCIA is uniquely able to identify challenges to Marine Corps operations and potentially help mitigate those challenges by conducting in-depth regional, coastal, and targeted studies. MCIA also

cedures as the operational environment fluctuates, new technologies emerge, and resources permit. Although some of these tools, techniques, and procedures remain unique to MCIA, others are propagated across the MCISRE. Other examples of unique MCIA capabilities include:

- Enterprise operations center: Known as the EOC, it coordinates and integrates intelligence capabilities and activities across the MCISRE, the IC, the Defense intelligence enterprise, and coalition partners.
- Multi-intelligence: The regionally aligned divisions focus on long-term strategic and operational-level intelligence within combatant command areas of operation. These divisions comprise all-source, geospatial, and open-source intelligence analysts to provide foundational intelligence expertise in support of Marine Corps, joint, and coalition requirements.
- Science and technical: These divisions, as well as the foreign materials program, focus on long-term, strategic, and operational-level analysis of our adversaries' technology and equipment. They acquire and exploit adversaries' technologies and weapons systems to prevent technological surprise and to be aware of the enemy's technological capabilities.

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***MCIA develops and deploys new tools, techniques, and procedures as the operational environment fluctuates ...***

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*Marine Corps Operating Concept: How an Expeditionary Force Operates in the 21st Century; A Cooperative Strategy for 21st Century Seapower; and Littoral Operation in a Contested Environment.*<sup>1</sup> The MCISRE's PoA is a plan for intelligence support, and all plans have branches and sequels; the PoA is updated every six months to enable requirement shifts from the Operating Forces.

Although MCIA focuses on current and planned Marine Corps operations, we also support intelligence requirements for analyzing the future operating environment. This has value in support-

maintains a situational awareness of potential crises; assesses political, social, and technological trends; and evaluates factors that could affect the future operating environment. These efforts inform the development of future warfighting concepts and capabilities within the senior levels of the Marine Corps.

Although MCIA provides intelligence support to acquisitions and serves as the nerve center for MCISRE operations, what other unique capabilities does MCIA have that other MCISRE elements do not? MCIA develops and deploys new tools, techniques, and pro-

- **Open source:** Known as OSINT, these analysts exploits publically available information to discover trends, vulnerabilities, and strategies in the operational and informational environment. Although the OSINT capability is inherent to MCIA, we provide analysts and reachback support to all the MEFs. MCIA's OSINT team also collaborates with other DOD, IC, academic, industry, and foreign partners.
- **Identity intelligence analysis cell (I2AC):** This team provides 24/7/365 near-realtime identity intelligence reachback support to Marines worldwide. I2AC assists with identifying individuals who might pose as a security or operational risk. Identity intelligence is a mission enabler for force protection, counterintelligence/human intelligence, counter-improvised explosive device operations, law enforcement, maritime boarding operations, and counter-insurgency activities.

- **Production, exploitation, and dissemination (PED):** MCIA operates a 24/7/365-PED cell that provides tactical-level intelligence through full-motion video exploitation from airborne intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance platforms. In conjunction with the Deputy Commandant for Information and Intelligence Division, MCIA's PED branch is laying the foundation for the MCISRE's plan to have six operational PED cells across the Marine Corps by providing training and establishing standards for all PED nodes to follow.


The list above is not all-inclusive but is an example of distinctive capabilities that MCIA provides in support of the Marine Corps. Additionally, MCIA continually evolves to meet emerging and unique requirements of the operational and tactical environment. MCIA is made up of dedicated intelligence professionals who help prepare units prior to deployment and support

units throughout their deployments. MCIA has finite resources and manpower, just like any other organization, but by working the MCISRE, we can prioritize production goals and assess capability support based on the guidance set forth by Marine Corps' senior leadership. As our adversaries' capabilities evolve, MCIA will evolve to support the dynamic and complex operating and information environment that Marines operate in every day.

**Note**

1. Headquarters Marine Corps, *Marine Corps Operating Concept: How an Expeditionary Force Operates in the 21st Century*, (Washington, DC: September 2016); Headquarters Marine Corps, *A Cooperative Strategy for 21st Century Seapower*, (Washington, DC: March 2015); and Headquarters Marine Corps, *Littoral Operation in a Contested Environment*, (Washington, DC: March 2017).







# SCALING

## TO DIFFERENT MISSION SETS

MEF/MSC COC




Squadron/Battalion COC




**INTEGRATED SCALABLE MODULAR**


MEU




Tactical Radios



Early Entry



Initial Entry



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