



30 October 2020

Over the past two decades, our armed forces have rightfully been focused on the global counterterrorism effort. We concentrated our efforts on the skills required to be successful in the military fight against violent extremist organizations (VEO) and countering insurgencies, becoming highly effective in this arena.

As we move forward, however, it is clear that we must re-assess the skills and organizational capabilities required to maintain our military advantages in every domain. Our Commandant has set forth reimagining our force to answer this challenge through ongoing Force Design efforts. These changes have broad effects that compel the MARFORs, especially a functional MARFOR like MARFORSOC, to rapidly ensure we are bringing the capabilities and organizational construct required to conduct strategic shaping in support of the Joint Warfighting Concept and Service concepts like Expeditionary Advanced Base Operations (EABO) and Littoral Operations in a Contested Environment.

With our Marine ethos and “Gung-Ho” attitude, MARSOC is well suited as an experimentation force, test bed, and innovation engine for distributed operations in contested environments. As we continue to implement the tenets of *Marine Special Operations Forces 2030*, it will be of utmost importance to leverage our small size as an advantage to be the nimble, flexible, and pliable force that can understand, wargame, and experiment with developing operating concepts, leading edge technologies, and the latest equipment to refine employment and enable the joint force. As with the Marine Corps writ large, MARSOC is undergoing a capabilities review to ensure we integrate and enhance the capabilities to operate in the information environment, increase our understanding of developing situations, create asymmetric advantage, and further evolve the role of SOF in competition and conflict. The ability to compete in multiple domains simultaneously and synchronize those effects is an essential element as we define objectives derived from the decades of experience in counterterrorism.

In our role as a connector between United States Special Operations Command and our Service, MARSOC remains positioned to capitalize on the forward deployed placement and access to help prepare the operating environment for potential future operations in competition and conflict. As a complementary force in the contact layer, Marine Special Operations Forces are poised to do the advanced work to assess EAB locations, footprints, and capabilities while also working as part of the stand-in force to buy time and space for joint force physical and virtual maneuver. All aspects of operations in the information environment (Electromagnetic Spectrum Operations [EMSO], Cyberspace Operations, Space Operations, Influence Operations, Deception Operations, and Inform Operations) will need to be enabled by SOF, and MARSOC is positioning for such.

As we look ahead, we acknowledge the hard fought effort and skills learned during our continuing counter-VEO missions. Concurrently, we fully accept the changing world environment and the imperative to adapt. With the articles included in this issue, we look to challenge and question what and how we think in order to chart a path to achieve the Commandant’s intent and remain prepared as the Nation’s expeditionary force-in-readiness.

We thank the leadership of our professional journal for an opportunity to share our perspective and progress, and invite feedback from the Fleet. Semper Fidelis and Spiritus Invictus!

James F. Glynn
Major General, U.S. Marine Corps
Commander
Marine Forces Special Operations Command