

Marines Will Not Have Blue Hair or Mohawks

Focus on discipline and standards; we do not need a cyber force

by Maj Shawn F. Carian

On 21 August 2019, an article written by Nina Kollars and Emma Moore was published by *War on the Rocks* entitled “Every Marine a Blue-Haired Quasi-Rifleperson?” Negative, Marine Corps, let’s not go down a path that will lead the Corps astray.

The article addresses the Marine Corps’ desires to grow its cyber force through the buildup of auxiliaries and to lobby for talent through the adjustment of standards. I disagree with the article and with the premise that the Marine Corps needs a cyber force. *The Marine Corps should abstain from a cyber force, focus efforts toward improving our lethality within our statutory mission, and avoid compromising discipline and standards.* Our Service is designed to conduct the amphibious seizure of beaches, gain a foothold, and allow for follow-on forces to come ashore. Sure, the Marine Corps can also respond to crises as needed, such as embassy reinforcements or disaster relief efforts around the globe. Our heritage, history, and performance have developed our reputation and stigma as a force of “shock troops.” Marines are different, and our discipline and standards are part of what makes us different.

We, the Marine Corps, must realize we are designed to be a small, agile force ready to respond to crises abroad. We cannot be lobbying for additional forces that do not directly contribute to our primary mission. We are not supposed to be the Army, nor are we supposed to be a gigantic force. Yet, every year it seems

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we are trying to grow. When do we get too big, or when do we have too much? I argue 185,000 is too big for the Marine Corps. Do we need special operations, tanks, or a cyber force? No. Special Operations Command could simply recruit from our ranks. If we need tanks, we can ask the Army for support. We can rely on the Navy or Air Force for cyber support, and we can allow Marines to serve in cyber as a broadening assignment to bring greater understanding to our Service. We do not need, nor should we advocate for, these specialties within our Service. Doing so presents the



Recruits with L Co, 3d Recruit Training Bn, participate in their initial drill evaluation at MCRD, San Diego, CA, 14 December 2019. Recruits learn and perform drill movements as a platoon throughout recruit training to eliminate individualism and instill discipline. (Photo by LCpl Zachary T. Beatty.)

appearance of the Marine Corps trying to be a “small Army.” We are a joint force and need to start using the strengths of our fellow Services more often.

Marines do not want standards adjusted for a cyber auxiliary with blue Mohawks who cannot do pull-ups. We want to know that everyone who puts on our eagle, globe, and anchor meets our standards. That is why parents allow their children to join our Service; we are the best, so they entrust us with their children. If we compromise the standard and violate their trust, we will lose some credibility with the people of our great country.

We should not conform to something we want but do not need. I understand the Marine Corps wants the ability to wage war in all domains, but we must be realistic. The Marine Corps does not need to fight in the cyber domain, and we do not need to fight in the space domain. We should remain out of these domains and rely on the other Services for support. We have an identity, and we have a purpose; we do not need a cyber force. The military becomes more joint every year, and the Corps needs to begin requesting support as required from our fellow Services.

Part of the argument for the cyber auxiliary is to protect our networks. I argue that the Marine Corps should not have a network; rather, we should be using a Department of the Navy network and require the Navy to protect that network. Kollars and Moore state,

If the Marine Corps wants to compete with other services, the federal workforce, and the private sector, and set an example for the Navy, it needs to be more realistic. For cyber auxiliary to be successful, the Marine Corps must seriously consider how to attract existing talent rather than assuming talent will come.¹

We do not want to compete; the Corps leadership in Washington, DC, is fighting for funding and additional personnel without perspective on how our force is being run into the dirt through operational tempo and overextending our forces. We need to refocus on accomplishing our mission, our statutory mission:

10 U.S. Code § 5063. United States Marine Corps: composition; functions

(a) The Marine Corps, within the Department of the Navy, shall be so organized as to include not less than three combat divisions and three air wings, and such other land combat, aviation, and other services as may be organic therein. The Marine Corps shall be organized, trained, and equipped to provide fleet marine forces of combined arms, together with supporting air components, for service with the fleet in the seizure or defense of advanced naval bases and for the conduct of such land operations as may be essential to the prosecution of a naval campaign. In addition, the Marine

want to have some Marines with this specialized skill set, then we should augment personnel to the Navy to support cyber operations as a broadening assignment. We should not have a fully functional Marine Corps Cyber Command but rather a small component command that advocates on our behalf to U.S. Cyber Command. We can provide augments to support other Services within the cyber operations community and help to build experience within our Service to understand the cyber domain. While on operations, we should seek to establish liaison officers around cyber elements to coordinate support and planning as needed.

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Corps shall provide detachments and organizations for service on armed vessels of the Navy, shall provide security detachments for the protection of naval property at naval stations and bases, and shall perform such other duties as the President may direct. However, these additional duties may not detract from or interfere with the operations for which the Marine Corps is primarily organized.

(b) The Marine Corps shall develop, in coordination with the Army and the Air Force, those phases of amphibious operations that pertain to the tactics, techniques, and equipment used by landing forces.

(c) The Marine Corps is responsible, in accordance with integrated joint mobilization plans, for the expansion of peacetime components of the Marine Corps to meet the needs of war.

The cyber fight is not a part of our mission. The Marine Corps should not try to compete with our fellow Services, the Federal Government, or the private sector for cyber warriors. We are small and should not waste valuable numbers and funding on this endeavor. If we

When the Marine Corps decides to create units, such as a cyber auxiliary, the personnel count against our overall force strength. The manning is pulled from across the Corps to establish these “good ideas.” As such, these decisions are a detriment to the fleet. Therefore, we should abstain from a cyber force and focus efforts toward improving our lethality within our statutory mission and avoid compromising our discipline and standards. We can support these endeavors with augmentation, but we should not establish and source such entities at our peril.

Note

1. Nina Kollars and Emma Moore, “Every Marine a Blue-Haired Quasi-Rifleperson?,” *War on the Rocks*, (August 2019), available at <https://warontherocks.com>.

