

07XX Information Activities Occupational Field

Expanding information capabilities

by LtCol Antony J. Andrious & Capt John Parry

In more than 50 years and three strategic defeats later, the U.S. military enterprise now conceptually realizes that victory requires more than where it physically manifests its forces on the ground. In 2009, then-Gen James N. Mattis stated, “capturing perceptions is the new high ground in today’s conflicts, as moral is to the materiel as three is to one.”¹ Mattis, serving as Secretary of Defense, and Gen Joseph Dunford, serving as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, formalized information as a warfighting function in 2017. The Marine Corps now paves the way for the development of information after having established the Marine Expeditionary Force Information Groups (MIGs) three years ago and investing millions of dollars and thousands of people into building the Marine Corps’ information warfighting capacity and capabilities. From the new occupational fields (OccFlds) of Communication Strategy and Operations (COMMSTRAT), Psychological Operations (PsyOp), Civil Affairs (CA), and Cyber to new investments and developments in space and electromagnetic spectrum warfare, the Marine Corps has never seen such expansion in information capabilities. Since the establishment of the MIGs, it became evident in the early days that information capabilities are interdependent on each other with similar, complementary, core competencies.

However, the interdependent capabilities of COMMSTRAT, PsyOp, and CA lack the doctrinal tenants re-

>LtCol Andrious is a Communication Strategy and Operations Officer. Among his operational and exercise deployment experience, he has extensive operational and force planning experience from the MEF, MEB and HQMC level, as well as a special operations planner (SOPL) for Operation NOBLE EAGLE. He is a force designer and planner who is one of the architects of the new COMMSTRAT occupational field. His previous assignment was the CO, Marine Detachment, Fort Meade, MD. He is currently serving as the Operations Officer for the Headquarters Marine Corps, Communication Directorate (CD).

>>Capt Parry is a Communication Strategy and Operations officer and Instructor in the Public Affairs and Communication Strategy Directorate at the Defense Information School located at Fort Meade, MD. He has served at II MEF, the School of Infantry, U.S. Marine Corps Forces Korea, and the Communication Directorate. He has deployed in support of Operation ENDURING FREEDOM and Operation OAKEN LOTUS.

We must communicate with precision and consistency, based on a common focus and a unified message.
—Gen David H. Berger

quired to make them successful. First, the minimal integration of COMMSTRAT, PsyOp, and CA—which form the backbone of the inform and influence tasks under information—does not make the single battle concept easy to achieve as multiple messengers targeting the same audience can lead to information fratricide. Second, the COMMSTRAT, PsyOp, and CA OccFlds all fall under independent proponents, which leads to significant and costly inefficiencies for the Marine

Corps in allocated manpower, time, and money both for the Total Force Structure Process and the Fleet Marine Force. Finally, the Marine Corps grows each of these fields independent of the others where no true experts in communication emerge to support the legal, moral, and ethical influence needs of the Service. The Marine Corps must unify the information activities OccFlds for COMMSTRAT, PsyOp, and CA to build efficiencies, develop true experts for communication, and

improve support for the warfighter in planning and execution of the human aspects of military operations.

The establishment of the Deputy Commandant for Information (DC I) for the Marine Corps signaled that operations in the information environment (OIE) will have a central role in the planning and execution of military operations in the Service. It is something the military has always operated in; however, lessons learned from recent conflicts have led to a significant increase in U.S. military investment in resources and human capital to define and develop the suite of OIE warfighting capabilities. As stated in January 2020, the Joint Memorandum signed by the Deputy Commandants for Combat Development and Integration (DC CDI) and DC I establishes definitions for information-related terms to communicate with precision and consistency, based on a common focus and a unified message across the Marine Corps.² As defined, OIE are actions taken to generate, preserve, or apply military information power to increase and protect competitive advantage or combat potential within all domains of the operational environment.³

The current national objectives and hybrid warfare threat posed by the Chinese dragon and the Russian bear means these nations will continue to poke and prod the American eagle; the difference is these two nations do not have the earned trust and credibility the American eagle has demonstrated over two centuries.⁴ Currently, the Marine Corps, or the joint force for that matter, does not have an OccFld of subject matter experts in the human aspects of military operations. Specifically, communication influence capabilities are fragmented and provide stove-piped levels of expertise, which increase the time it takes for commanders to make critical decisions—which in turn reduces competitive advantage in informational power. OIE has also required heavy investment in cyber and electronic warfare. While these crucial capabilities are currently the “shiny object,” the focus on new technology can mislead and distract the military community from recognizing the reliance on the human

aspects of military operations. The cognitive, social-psychological aspects of human behavior in areas of persuasion and influence remain as effervescent as a rainbow—continuing to evade operational planning and capabilities necessary for strategic success. The Marine Corps must address this fragmentation by ensuring unity of effort and teamwork to improve the Service’s ability to address this center of gravity in the battlespace.

The Marine Corps must embrace a unique opportunity to demonstrate utility with its tactical influence capabilities which are necessary to win against the pacing threat and dominate near-peer competitors in a great power contest

take up exorbitant amounts of time in working groups, operational advisory groups (OAG), operational planning teams, etc. Authority naysayers must stop finding comfort in thwarting and monopolizing precious time in working groups. The Marine Corps can only demonstrate the utility of its current capabilities by consolidating them and developing true experts in planning and execution for shaping the human aspect of the battlespace.

The Marine Corps’ solution to this gap is the creation of a new OccFld with all the resident inform and influence capabilities necessary to effectively navigate and succeed within the human aspects of military operations. The

The Marine Corps’ solution to this gap is the creation of a new OccFld with all the resident inform and influence capabilities necessary to effectively navigate and succeed within the human aspects of military operations.

of perceptions. The U.S. military has established a unique place where it can weaponize truth and credibility to establish information superiority over enemies, adversaries, and aggressive state actors. MEF OIE capabilities currently exceed the ability of the DOD to delegate the level of authorities given to them. A path to demonstrate utility of the MIG, and then graduate to eventual delegation of said authorities, puts the Marine Corps in a position of strength when apportioning, allocating, and assigning MEF information warfighting capabilities to the geographic combatant commands (GCCs), which is where the authority lies for all military operations. As the MIG continues to demonstrate high, operational utility and tempo at the GCC level, the MIG will prove that the authorities currently exceeding the MEF level can reside at the MEF based on proof of concept via a record of proven responsibility during GCC-level operations. Nonetheless, the authority’s argument continues to

Marine Corps merely needs to use the current manpower to unify the COM-MSTRAT, PsyOp, and CA OccFlds under a single information activities OccFld, which means zero growth to personnel and zero budget increases: it just takes creativity, reorganization of current personnel structure, and devotion to Marine identity and not legacy OccFlds. Information capabilities are highly competitive professions and in high demand within the private sector. For the Marine Corps to compete with the private sector, “Marine opportunities” must be made available. Because current, petite OccFlds cannot offer similar opportunities in operations and command positions to create an effective career map, the Marine Corps will fail in manning and developing the required personnel to employ its capabilities focused on the human features of the battlespace.

The 07XX Information Activities OccFld model is based on the 02XX Marine Intelligence OccFld. Every

02XX Marine is a rifle Marine and then an intelligence Marine. The Marine intelligence community has built a relevant, necessary intelligence capability and capacity that exceeds Service-specific, joint, and interagency operational and tactical intelligence requirements. Additionally, the Marine intelligence community has established official, understood OccFld road maps that effectively compete for promotion and retention. The 07XX information activities OccFld also puts “boutique” and “straggler,” petite OccFlds in one OccFld affording the same opportunities similar to the big four OccFlds: infantry, aviation, communications, and logistics. This increases operational relevance and tactical application of like capabilities while simultaneously professionalizing petite OccFlds and increasing promotability and retention.

Built by merging current Marine Corps communication capabilities, the 07XX OccFld is comprised of COM-MSTRAT, CA, and PsyOps while absorbing the coordinating function of the legacy information operations specialties. This provides the Marine Corps with a better organized, equipped, and structured information unit that provide the MAGTF and Marine-Navy integrated forces with a tactical and operational influence capabilities. This OccFld takes the best of legacy capabilities and places them with the relevant parts and pieces the Marine Corps needs to “increase and protect competitive advantage or combat power potential within all domains of the operational environment.”⁵ The 07XX information activities OccFld will provide a professionalized OccFld capability with the commensurate level of education, organization, and operational applicability to be successful in the human aspects of military operations. There is no such OccFld in the DOD.⁶ The CPG states, “Joint operations are a warfighting advantage and the Marine Corps must fully embrace our role as a critical enabler to the Joint Force.”⁷ 07XX information activities OccFld achieves this important milestone.

The 07XX information activities OccFld will provide more than 22 leadership billets, which, over time, justify

command slated status and general officer growth. Resident within these leadership positions are the commensurate, implied officer positions of platoon commander, executive officer, operations officer, battalion commander, regimental/MIG commander, and enlisted positions of company master sergeant/first sergeant, operations chief, battalion master gunnery sergeant, etc. Additionally, this new OccFld will create information activities companies within each MIG, and eventually, information activity battalions. The aforementioned leadership billets are currently stove-piped in legacy OccFlds of PsyOp, CA, and COM-MSTRAT with little to no chance of ever serving in such a billet. Currently, as petite OccFlds, there are three PsyOp companies, three COMMSTRAT companies, three CA battalions (command selected), nine CA companies, and three CA groups (regimental command colonel billets). Let’s call a spade a spade. As these petite OccFlds stand, competitiveness, retention, and promotability is low; furthermore, the MAGTF has demonstrated that as they currently stand in their entirety, each OccFld is used for parts and pieces for influence and not in their entirety—this is good! It forces each legacy OccFld to find its relevance and place among military operations. The 07XX information activities OccFld does just that, providing the best, high-demand core competencies necessary “to generate, preserve, or apply military information power to increase and protect competitive advantage of combat power potential within all domains of the operational environment.”⁸

Tactical action(s) must be relevant to the strategic desired state. Therefore, the Marine Corps becomes an integral player in our Nation’s strategic goals using maneuver units to break down an adversary in the cognitive domain:

Excellent tactics and physical capability are irrelevant if they do not achieve strategic aims. Physical destruction rarely defines strategic success. More often, strategic success is defined in the cognitive domain, which is manifested by collective social behaviors. Second, implementing the information function is not an argument for massive investment in influence capabilities.

While new investments are necessary, the first and most effective approach is to better use the force at hand by improving the way the joint force employs its current assets. Information capabilities are less expensive than physical combat power capabilities.⁹

The 07XX OccFld does not require heavy investment into doctrine and policy, organization, training and education, materiel, leadership and communication synchronization, personnel, and facilities in support of the Total Force Structure Process. Once the 07XX OccFld is established, each Marine would attend the Defense Information School. This entry-level school will teach enlisted Marines to use communication tools such as videography, photography, and graphic design, develop digital media strategies using creative content, and understand how to and use social media tools as creative mediums to influence target audiences—all areas to influence human behavior, which is why PsyOp uses such service members. For Marine officers, each will understand the planning process, communication strategy planning, research and assessment, media operations, crisis communication—all of which are built on a common understanding of truth and credibility by building strength through truth. After an 07XX Marine’s first tour as a legacy COMMSTRAT Marine (0702), they now qualify for additional military occupational specialties (AMOS), which qualify them to become a tactical influence Marine (PsyOp–0720/21), or CA Marine (0730/31), or OIE planner (0750). Along a Marine’s career within the 07XX information activities OccFld, they are able to stay within an OccFld, diversify their level of expertise, and maintain competitiveness with the same opportunities as a Marine in one of the big four OccFlds, which will ultimately build a path for senior levels of command with the requisite experience to provide the appropriate advice and counsel to general officer staffs and the joint force. If each OccFld stands alone, they will continue to fight for relevancy, marginalize themselves by ending up in the “special staff,” and

| | |
|--|--|
| OccFld Name: Information Activities OccFld Designator: 07XX | The 7 represents the 7th warfighting function of Information |
| Notional OccFld MOS Series: | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 0700/1: Entry level • 0702: COMMSTRAT Officer <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Baseline MOS for all AMOSs • 0703: Info Activities Visual Info Officer • 0705: COMMSTRAT Planner (Graduate Program) • 0711: Videographer • 0712: Photographer • 0713: Graphics • 0714: Marketing and Advertising (MCRC) • 0791: Info Activities Chief (E6-E9) Additional MOSS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 0720: PSYOP Officer • 0721: PSYOP Specialist • 0725: Advanced PSYOP Planner • 0730: Civil Affairs Officer • 0731: Civil Affairs Planner • 0732: Civil Affairs Specialist • 0734: Female Engagement Officer • 0738: Female Engagement Specialist | Career Roadmap PME <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 0735: CMO Planner • 0739: CMO Chief • 0750: OIE Officer Planner (Replaces IO Planner?) • 0751: OIE Chief • 0755: MILDEC Planner includes advanced education • 0760: Information Strategy and Political Warfare Planner (Graduate Program) • 0762: CAOCL Planner • 8041: AC/S G-3/9; COLONEL; Director of Info Activities, COMMSTRAT LEADER - PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICER / Director <i>*Owning our COI increases Officer competitiveness, retention, and attractiveness to the service*</i> <i>* Each Marine a communicator first, then becomes an expert influencer throughout career*</i> *Potential to include Space Marines?* |

Figure 1.

get drunk off self-importance, which this legacy PA officer can tell you all about sometime!

The Marine Corps can accomplish this by the end of fiscal year 2020 (FY20). Actions can be taken right now to update the FY22 Training and Readiness Manual (T&R) and MOS Manual. The new 07XX information activities does not require additional resources, such as changes to current structure (which means zero growth), increases in personnel, additional training and educational resources, or additional funding requirements. This provides a quick and easy win and forces a new way of thinking inside and outside of the 07XX information activities OccFld regarding the human aspects of military operations. As former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, Gen Dunford stated at the 17 November 2018 Halifax International Security Forum during his interview by BBC World News,

areas where increased investment is required by the United States and its allies and partners ... and we know the areas where we will be challenged. It's a

question of ideas and technology. The topline is the degree of predictability that will allow us to use resources more wisely.¹⁰

The 07XX information activities OccFld not only achieves this and what the CPG orders us to do, this new OccFld meets the FY20 *National Defense Authorization Act* under the expansion of OIE; specifically, the

Selection and Organization—Cross-Functional Teams established to—determine the collective set of combat capabilities that will be treated as part of operations in the information environment, including cyber warfare, space warfare, military information support operations, electronic warfare, public affairs, and civil affairs.¹¹

Three of the five would fall and should fall under the 07XX information activities OccFld (see Figure 1).

Notes

1. James N. Mattis, "Launching NATO's New Strategic Concept," (speech, Brussels, July 2009).

2. Headquarters Marine Corps, *Joint Memorandum, Definitions for Information Related Terms*, (Washington, DC: 2020).

3. Ibid.

4. The White House, *National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, (Washington, DC: December 2017).

5. Ibid. See also *Joint Memorandum*.

6. Some will argue that psychological operations, civil affairs, and public affairs are those OccFlds. All three OccFlds are stove-piped and do not meet the CPG intent to divest of legacy think. The Marine Corps has demonstrated that, as a Service, it has not invested heavily into an organic PsyOp OccFld by only authorizing 200 enlisted personnel structure with no officer PMOS personnel structure; Civil affairs was decimated during Future Force 2025; Public affairs and combat camera are dead and the Marine Corps no longer does either—only aspects of. Additionally, U.S. Army PsyOp belongs to Special Operations Command and not the conventional forces. In the case of the Marine Corps, the Service has shown where its investment is focused regarding an influence capability; COMMSTRAT. This OccFld has an authorized personnel strength of 1,059.

7. Gen David H. Berger, *Commandant's Planning Guidance, 38th Commandant of the Marine Corps*, (Washington, DC: July 2019).

8. Ibid. See also *Joint Memorandum*.

9. Scott K. Thomson and Christopher E. Paul, "Paradigm Change: Operational Art and the Information," *Joint Force Quarterly*, (Washington, DC: 2018).

10. Gen Joseph F. Dunford statement at the 17 November 2018 Halifax International Security Forum. Available at <https://www.whs.mil>.

11. FY20 National Defense Authorization Act; Section (1) STRATEGY AND POSTURE REVIEW REQUIRED—the Secretary of Defense, acting through the Principal Information Operations Advisor under section 397 of title 10, United States Code (as added by subsection (a)) and the cross-functional team established under subsection (f)(1), shall—(E) determine the collective set of combat capabilities that will be treated as part of operations in the information environment, including cyber warfare, space warfare, military information support operations, electronic warfare, public affairs, and civil affairs.

