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# MARINE CORPS Gazette
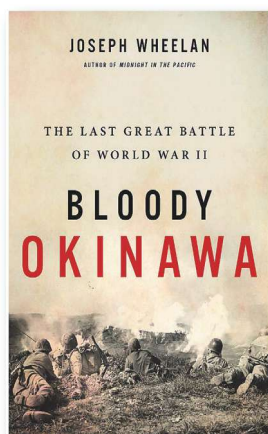### Professional Journal of U.S. Marines

**Cover**

*MajGen Jason Q. Bohm, the commanding general of Marine Corps Recruiting Command, speaks to the Marines of the 4th Marine Corps District (4MCD), New Cumberland, Pa. (Photo by LCpl Bernadette Pacheco.)*

## DEPARTMENTS

JOSEPH WHEELAN
AUTHOR OF *MIDNIGHT IN THE PACIFIC*

THE LAST GREAT BATTLE
OF WORLD WAR II

BLOODY
OKINAWA

## IDEAS AND ISSUES

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# MARINE CORPS Gazette
### Professional Journal of U.S. Marines

**JULY 2021**

## Editorial: Focus on Marine Corps Recruiting

For the first time in the recent history of the *Gazette,* this month's focus is on the Corps' recruiting enterprise and Marine Corps Recruiting Command (MCRC). Since the end of the draft and the advent of the All-Volunteer Force in the 1970s, recruiting Marines remains the Corps' single most important mission outside combat operations. Simply put, the nationwide efforts of the recruiting force bring thousands of the most qualified young Americans into the ranks of the Corps through the two Recruit Depots every year. This mission provides the Corp's "raw material" to organize, train, equip, and provide combat ready forces for employment by the Joint Force. Starting on page 8 with an introductory letter from the Commanding General of MCRC, MajGen Jason Q. Bohm, a true student of the profession of arm and long-time supporter of the *Gazette* and the MCA, introduces a comprehensive series of eight articles covering various aspects of recruiting the Marine Corps Total Force. Highlights include an overview of the subject by Col Jeffrey M. Morgan "All-Volunteer (Recruited) Force" and an examination of the role advertising and marketing plays in support of recruiting in "Brand Maneuver" by LtCol Christian Devine. On page 27, MGySgt Jared Cobb and Capt Brian Kiraly look at the foundation of the recruiting enterprise in "Recruit the Recruiter." In "Recruiting Diversity" on page 22, LtCol Ian Duncan and Capt Andrew Herbert examine how the recruiting effort supports a Marine Corps reflective of the Nation's values and demography.

Writing on the same important subject in "Diversity, Equity & Inclusion" on page 41, the Deputy Commandant for Manpower and Reserve Affairs, LtGen David Ottignon, and the Director of Manpower Policy, BGen Jason Woodworth, personally provide a detailed and fact-based update on the Corps' approach to the challenges of sustaining a diverse and cohesive force today and in the future. Readers can find further related content including constructive criticism, first-hand experiences, and historical examples in the discussion "thread" on the *Gazette* blog at https://mca-marines.org/blog/2021/05/21/call-to-action-race-in-the-marine-corps-lets-have-the-discussion/.

In addition to the content in this month's focus area, we have also included articles that continue the ongoing discussions of Naval Integration, Strategy & Policy, and Future Force design. Also of note, beginning on page 89, we present the three award-winning essays from the 2020 Hogaboom Writing Contest expounding on novel approaches to various aspects of Marine Corps leadership. We also present the next installment in the Maneuverist Papers series titled "On Defeat Mechanisms" on page 101. In this latest offering, Marinus introduces important concepts that were originally omitted from the Corps' Warfighting doctrine *FMFM-1* and *MCDP-1*.

Finally, it is appropriate to recognize the passing of a true public servant Senator John W. Warner III on 25 May 2021. He served as an enlisted Sailor in World War II and a Marine officer in the Korean War, earning the rank of captain. He would go on to serve as Undersecretary of the Navy from 1969 to 1972, and Secretary of the Navy from 1972 to 1974. In 1979, he was elected to the United States Senate where he represented the people of Virginia until 2009. His commitment to national security and professional military education coupled with his strong centrist leadership in the Senate were instrumental to making the Marine Corps University the world-class institution of professional development that it is today. Semper Fidelis.

**Christopher Woodbridge**

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## Marinus

📄 Marinus' latest article on defeat mechanisms offers great theoretical and historical insight (*MCG*, Jul21). Follow through on the suggestion of addressing the concept of defeat mechanism directly in *Warfighting* would fill an important doctrinal shortfall. We cannot afford to imply defeat of the enemy is the goal of our warfighting philosophy; it must be specifically addressed. Thinking about defeat mechanisms in planning places the focus where it should be—directly on the enemy. Too often the bulk of planning effort is invested in thinking about what we are going to do to the enemy. The impact of our actions on the enemy receives less consideration. The opaque nature of the cognitive effort, so much of what we think about the enemy rest on assumptions, leads us to a default focus on the more tangible and concrete friendly courses of action.

There are effective approaches to get at thinking about defeat mechanisms addressed in our warfighting publications. Our planning processes include war gaming and feature Red Team development and execution of enemy courses of action. Again, enemy courses of action developed as well as potential weaknesses or vulnerabilities identified rest on assumptions, but it is valuable to have an element of the planning team focused on providing the commander insight on the enemy.

From the point of view of our late 20th and early 21st century history, focusing on defeat mechanism would have been helpful, considering our experiences in Vietnam, Afghanistan, and in post-Operation IRAQI FREEDOM Iraq. It would moreover be helpful to extend the thinking and consider to what occurs after enemy defeat. Jettison the concept of "end state" because there is no end state. At the strategic and operational level of war, assuming the enemy is defeated, what comes next to lay the foundation for a sustainable and advantageous peace? All plans, to the tactical level, are nested within the campaign or operational plans and should describe mechanisms to both defeat of the enemy and set the stage for what happens when hostilities end.

The only part of the article that caused me pause, was the assertion the warfighters of World War I and Vietnam used attrition simply because they could not think of a better idea. Just as it is easy to fall into the trap of underestimating the enemy, it is common to dismiss our warfighting predecessors as simply not that smart. If you dig into first person historical accounts, you will recognize this is far from the case. In World War I and until the Germans developed storm troop tactics, there was simply no tactical solution to defeat the defense in depth. They thought of and tried everything imaginable. In Vietnam, political constraints precluded taking the fight to the enemy in North Vietnam. South Vietnam and her U.S allies were limited to fighting a campaign of not losing. When you fight not to lose, it turns out, almost every time, you lose.

**Alex Vohr**

## Dreikampf or Vielkampf

📄 The February *Marine Corps Gazette* includes an article in its series "Maneuverist Papers" titled "Introducing the *Dreikampf*" by Marinus. Its thesis is that Clausewitz's concept of *Zweikampf*, war between two opponents, is outdated:

> *Warfighting (the Marine Corps' foundational doctrine statement) steals a page from Clausewitz's* On War *by proposing the* Zweikampf, *or "two-struggle," as the essential, universal definition of war. It defines war as a violent clash between two independent and hostile wills.*

> *But after witnessing nearly twenty years of warfare in Afghanistan and Iraq, we cannot help but question if the* Zweikampf *is a universal construct after all. It strikes us as something of a stretch to argue that the two-struggle has applied cleanly to those concepts—as well as to many others throughout history. Perhaps the* Zweikampf *applies more narrowly to what we now call regular warfare, and there is an entire other category of war that the* Zweikampf *does not capture.*

> *For these other forms of warfare, we propose a construct we will call the* Dreikampf, *or "three-struggle," in which the third actor in the struggle is the common population that both belligerents struggle to impose themselves upon.*

I agree with the *Dreikampf* concept—as far as it goes. But it suffers from exactly the same problem it diagnoses in the *Zweikampf*, namely oversimplification. Fourth-Generation War theory says that what Marinus sees as one entity, the population, is in fact many entities that fight with each other as well as with one or both of the foreign states which have armies in the unhappy land that is serving as the battlefield.

Marinus sees this plurality but does not draw out its implications:

> *Finally, populations are not likely to be as monolithic as the two other belligerents, nor as consistent and coordinated in their actions. The contested population almost always will comprise multiple subgroups, each with different, if potentially overlapping, objectives, means, and methods. Again, this variability only tends to increase the complexity of the dynamics.*

The first implication is that these subgroups not only differ from one another but that some, perhaps many, will fight. From their perspective, their power balance with other local subgroups is usually more important than their relationships with either outside belligerent because they know the outsider will eventually go home. At the moral level of war, these local power balances may depend in part on who does the better job of fighting one or both outsiders. In other words, both outside powers are likely to find themselves fighting each other and a constantly shifting coalition of local elements. This is not *Dreikampf*, a fight among three, but *Vielkampf*, a fight among many.

Fourth-Generation Warfare theory adds that these subgroups fight not only for different objectives but for different kinds of objectives, many of which lie outside what we regard as the political process. Objectives range from impressing the local girls to attaining everlasting salvation. The fighters for these causes

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may range from a group of teenage friends who found guns or explosives through highly-trained, paid soldiers belonging to non-state entities such as ISIS. The resulting dynamics are not only complex, they are often too complex for an outside force even to grasp much less to leverage. To the outsiders, the game becomes not worth the cost because no political settlement is possible regardless of how long the outsider remains. Afghanistan is example A.

The third implication is perhaps the most threatening yet also the easiest to overlook. The various loyalties and causes the local entities represent can bleed over into the outside state forces. Intelligent Fourth-Generation combatants seek to take physically far more powerful opposing state forces from within, attacking at the moral level. Causes that are religious, racial, or ideological in nature are likely to have sympathizers inside the invading state forces. Smart 4GW elements will identify those sympathizers, encourage them to act against their own forces and at the same time help them spread their alternate loyalty. The U.S. military has already experienced this on a small scale, both in so-called "Green on Blue" attacks and in attacks by U.S. service members on their colleagues, motivated by Islam. 4GW theory says both could become much more frequent if enemies who represent trans-national loyalties make them their *Schwerpunkt*. So *Dreikampf* is bad news for state armed forces, but *Vielkampf* is worse. If *Dreikampf* is a complex problem, *Vielkampf* is a wicked problem, one that often will have no local solution. Generally, the only answer will be to stay out of the briar patch in the first place. That, coupled with effective control of our own borders, should be our strategic answer to Fourth-Generation warfare as a whole and to *Vielkampf* specifically.

**Bill Lind**

### Transforming the Maritime Prepositioning Force

▤ The Officers of HQMC PP&O (Expeditionary Policies Branch) & I&L (Logistics Operations Branch) March 2021 "Transforming the Maritime Prepositioning Force" article is well written. In retrospect, Maritime Prepositioning Ships Squadron-1 (MPSRON-1) actually became operational as MPSRON-1 Temporary (MPSRON-1T) in 1984, after the embarkation of the Cpl Louis J. Hauge, Jr. and PFC William B. Baugh in Wilmington, NC. The Hauge and Baugh were downloaded in the spring of 1985, as the 6th Marine Amphibious Brigade (later re-designated as a MEB) used the unloading of the Baugh at Wilmington, NC, for Reception Control Exercise 1-85. The Hauge and Baugh were reassigned to MPSRON-2, supporting the 7th MAB and their equipment embarked aboard the 2dLt John P. Bobo and Maj Stephen W. Pless.

The MPF concept was used in other exercises in the 1980s. It was tested successfully during Exercise BRIGHT STAR 1985 when the 6th MAB deployed to Egypt. It was tested again during Exercise AGILE SWORD 1986 at Eglin Air Force Base and Naval Air Station, Pensacola, FL. Some major highlights of this exercise included the deployment of almost 4,000 Marines and Sailors and cargo of the fly-in echelon and the "in-stream off-load" of the Bobo. MPSRON-1 and 6th MAB also participated in Exercise NORTHERN WEDDING/BOLD GUARD 1986 in Norway.

Finally, operators and "logisticians across the Marine Corps should study, experiment, evaluate, discuss, and debate the many details of how to create the 2030 Prepositioning Network to support the future Marine Corps" because the MPF concept is based on operational planning and operators, not logisticians have the lead. Gen Alfred M. Gray, the 29th Commandant of the Marine Corps, provided additional guidance regarding these relationships during the early to mid-1990s when he is quoted as saying, "Those who will employ our forces will plan for and execute deployment of our forces."

**LtCol James W. "JW" Washington, USMC(Ret)**

### The Four-Block Littoral Force

▤ As I read MajGen Dale Alford's article, "The Four-Block Littoral Force" (*MCG*, Jun21), I could only utter the phrase, "Timing is Everything." President Biden is scheduled to submit his full fiscal year 2022 budget request within days of the *Marine Corps Gazette* June publication hitting your mailbox, and that document will identify priorities fundamental to the instruments of national power, across the joint force, and down through the individual Services. MajGen Alford's article is the piece missing to align the resources needed by the GCE within Paragraph 3.b (CONOPS–Scheme of Maneuver) of the Commandant's strategic *Force Design 2030* guidance. There is no doubt this will be a contested budget cycle with many predicting it will last well into the new year and involve multiple budget Continuing Resolutions over the course of the next six to eight months; the "Four-Block Littoral Force" is a phenomenal messaging tool that will resonate with lawmakers, defense comptrollers, and infantry squad leaders. MajGen Alford's article does not in any way suggest a reduction of infantry capability or competency as a means to achieve budgetary compromise across the MAGTF, but rather just the opposite, he acknowledges head-on that in order to accomplish *Force Design 2030* it requires a revolution of the infantry community. Despite some things I have recently read, it is still widely accepted that fires support maneuver, and critical that the force design message of EABO, F-35, and precision fires be in support of the Four-Block Littoral Force that Maj-Gen Alford lays out tremendously well for a multitude of audiences.

**Andrew Warren**

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The Commandant prioritized force design to best fulfill the Marine Corps' enduring role as the Nation's naval expeditionary force-in-readiness. Additionally, he identified talent management reform as an essential component in operationalizing force design to provide Marines with the maturity, abilities, and resiliency necessary to succeed in chaotic and uncertain environments against peer competitors.

More specifically, the Commandant established the goal to attract and recruit the "most talented" individuals and to replace them with "even more talented" Marines. Furthermore, he directed the adaptation of a talent management model that is focused on "accession to retention" and individual Marine progression, rather than accession to the end of the first enlistment.

Marine Corps Recruiting Command (MCRC) has a critical role to play in this regard. MCRC currently accesses about 36,000 non-prior service active and reserve Marines, 4,000 prior service Marines, and approximately 1,700 officers each year with a diversity that closely reflects American society. In addition to sustaining this no-fail mission to provide the lifeblood of the Corps, MCRC is modernizing its efforts to support force design by leveraging advanced technologies to access the most talented American youth with the potential to become 21st century warfighters. Some of these initiatives include:

**Attract & Recruit.** Individuals must meet minimal mental, moral, and physical standards to enlist in the armed forces. The Marine Corps consistently exceeds DOD standards and will now add an additional level of scrutiny to seek the most talented applicants. In addition to traditional methods, MCRC intends to leverage machine learning, artificial intelligence, and gaming methodologies to measure cognitive abilities against identified accession attributes, competitive spirit, and physical tenacity in its prospecting of those with the potential to earn the title Marine.

**Pool Development.** Recruiters understand their responsibility to "recruit to win our Nation's battles." They have a renewed focus on developing their poolees to succeed as future Marines, rather than just as recruits. The development of our future Marines will commence with the refinement of poolee cognitive abilities through individualized, scientifically based, progressive learning games. These games will build on the accession attributes used to define talent and are designed to jump-start the transformation process to develop an "intellectual edge" in our future Marines. Additionally, MCRC will institute additional civics training and expand poolee understanding of "competition" against one's inner-self and others.

**Total Force Retention.** Understanding the Commandant's desire to shift focus to a Subsequent Term Alignment Plan, MCRC has taken steps to assist commanders with the Commander's Retention Mission. It has assisted efforts to modify the Career Planner curriculum, begun to indoctrinate poolees on the benefits of service beyond a first term of enlistment, and leverage the expertise of its Career Recruiter force to produce "Career Retention" tools for commanders in support of their mission accomplishment.

**Quality Marines.** Attracting, recruiting, and developing quality applicants requires quality Marines. Understandably, this places a burden on Marine Corps units that lose Marines to special duty assignments. MCRC intends to help meet the Commandant's direction to man Fleet Marine Force units at 100 percent by increasing volunteerism of those assigned to recruiting duty, decreasing attrition and the overall requirements for special duty assignments screening each year, but we need your help. In June, MCRC will initiate a "Recruit the Recruiter" campaign to educate and inform Marines of the many benefits of recruiting duty. I respectfully ask for your assistance in spreading the word and helping your Marines decide to volunteer for this important duty. See the article in this issue of the *Marine Corps Gazette* for more information on this effort.

Finally, MCRC is collaborating with several HQMC agencies to support talent management reform in several other exciting ways. The following articles will provide further insight into these areas and more as MCRC endeavors to do its part to sustain the Marine Corps' vital role as the Nation's crisis response force.

We look forward to reading your feedback and ideas in future *Gazette* articles.

MajGen Jason Q. Bohm
Commanding General, Marine Corps Recruiting Command

# All-Volunteer (Recruited) Force

### Then, now, future
### by Col Jeffery M. Morgan

> *"Recruiting is where it all begins. Recruiting high-quality applicants for the Corps is terribly expensive, but the price of not doing it is disaster. We must be able to bear the pain of having to do without our best and brightest while they serve a tour on recruiting duty. Otherwise, we mortgage our future, with bankruptcy an eventual certainty."* [1]
>
> *—Gen Walt Boomer,*
> *Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps.*

To appreciate where we are and where we are going, it is necessary to understand the long, tough, and, at times, ugly road we have travelled. The story starts in 1973, when the country transitioned to the All-Volunteer Force. The United States had just emerged from the long Vietnam War with the government and military suffering a significant loss of public faith. The Marine Corps faced rampant drug use, racial tensions, and the worst disciplinary and absentee rates in history. There was substantial criticism of viability of the amphibious mission, a lack of training opportunities, and decreased readiness. The Marine Corps was unprepared; recruiting was under manned, under resourced, not considered a desirable duty, and had a recognized culture of malpractice.

Despite accessing applicants with the lowest quality standards in the DOD, in 1973, the Marine Corps barely made their accession mission, and by spring of 1974 when Congress passed law increasing the minimum accessions of high

>*Col Morgan is the Chief of Staff, Marine Corps Recruiting Command.*

school graduates from 45 percent to 55 percent, then Commandant Cushman testified, requesting relief of the requirement. The entry-level training pipeline was challenged to turn convicted felons, high school dropouts, and low mental category recruits into Marines. In response, boot camp became increasingly brutal, where we instituted special motivational platoons and abuse was common. In 1974 and 1975, 360 Drill Instructors were punished for recruit mistreatment—three times the amount of other services combined. By 1975, the Marine Corps enlisted force consisted of only 50 percent high school graduates, 25 percent of which in the upper mental groups; 40 percent admitted drug use in last 30 days, and there were over 18,000 desertions. The recruiting moniker was, "If it walks and talks, test it and ship it."

Commandant Louis Wilson (1975–1979) recognized the institutional crisis and was determined to win the long, tough fight. He started by assigning LtGen Robert Barrow (former Commanding General of Parris Island and later CMC) as Manpower Chief, who then immediately enacted reforms to recruiting and recruit training. Together, their leadership, influence, and interest would ultimately extend to every process of making Marines. They knew the core strength of the Marine Corps was, and would always remain, the quality of the individual Marine. To begin, an unbroken chain of accountability was established by organizing recruiting and recruit training under the same Commanding General, the only Service to do this. The accession goal was raised to 75 percent high school grads, while implementing aggressive actions to get rid of those who did not belong (~5000 discharges) with the intent to continually replace with better Marines. They knew these actions would improve institutional health, climate, and combat effectiveness and were ultimately required to save the very existence of the Marine Corps.

After recruit McClure was beat to death at Marine Corps Recruit Depot (MCRD) San Diego, Gen Wilson abolished motivation platoons, doubled the number of officers assigned to each company, increased drill instructor screening scrutiny, and established recruit personal interviews—all without any easing of standards. Just as significant, he aggressively pursued recruiting reforms, with none more substantial as hand picking BGen MacMillan as his director of personnel procurement, which then was responsible for

the recruiting mission. As the previous director of 1st Marine Corps District, MacMillan had developed the initial concepts of systematic recruiting. These concepts and other best practices were quickly published in 1977 as *Volume 1: Guidebook for Recruiters*. That summer, he sent a trusted team to every district, station, and substation in the Nation to personally install the components of systematic recruiting, forever standardizing processes across the Marine Corps.

To complement these efforts, manpower screening teams were sent to every major command to select quality NCOs and SNCOs with best fit for recruiting duty. A national training team was established to reinforce, train, and assist subordinate units in maintaining systematic recruiting discipline. The administrative oversight of reserve units was transferred from the recruiting districts to Marine Forces Reserves and a Recruiting Management Course was developed to teach officers, career recruiters, and sergeants major how to effectively lead at the recruiting station level.

As the commandant transitioned from Gen Wilson, Gen Barrow continued to shepherd these needed reforms. He instituted Service-wide mandatory drug testing, expedited discharges, challenged recruiters to access 100 percent high school graduates, and established the Commandant's Superior Achiever Award to personally recognize every recruiting station that met or exceeded all quality and quantity goals. Gen Barrow also focused on maintaining Service relevance by refining the Marine Corps' ability to operate as forward deployed crisis response force, and he knew he had to have the right Marines to do it.

Throughout the remaining 1980s and early 1990s, recruiting received quality support from subsequent commandants to implement these changes, with the next substantial recruiting innovations coming under Commandant's Mundy and Krulak. In 1994, Gen Mundy directed the formation of Marine Corps Recruiting Command (MCRC), which would report directly to the Commandant and provide a



**Shortly after Pvt McClure is beaten to death at MCRD SD.** *(Cartoon from Los Angeles Times 2 May 1976.)*

*Gen Mundy directed the formation of Marine Corps Recruiting Command (MCRC) ...*



| AFQT Category | Score Range |
|---|---|
| I | 93-99 |
| II | 65-92 |
| IIIA | 50-64 |
| IIIB | 31-49 |
| IVA | 21-30 |
| IVB | 16-20 |
| IVC | 10-15 |
| V | 1-9 |

"Alphas" (I, II, IIIA)
"Bravos" (IIIB)
"CAT IV's"...the Marine Corps did not access any last FY and will not access any this FY. (IVA, IVB, IVC)

*Figure 1. USVAB chart.*

unity of effort, facilitate standardization of a one Corps approach, and propel steady improvement. In 1995, he established the recruiting ribbon to recognize, "the only regiment in the Corps that is in constant contact with its objective 30 days a month, without let up."[2] The ribbon remains prestigious today and referred to by some as the CONUS combat action ribbon.

As the international landscape changed, Gen Krulak, now Commandant, recognized the need for a "Strategic Corporal" to succeed in his operational concept of the "Three-Block War," and he too understood that it all starts with recruiting. In 1995, while all the Services were struggling to meet accession goals and lowering standards, Gen Krulak raised them. He required 95 percent high school graduates (DOD standard 90 percent), 63 percent Mental Group I-III Alphas (DOD Standard 60 percent), and no more than 1 percent CAT IVs (DOD standard up to 10 percent). He then created the Recruiting Warrant Officer MOS of 4810 modeled after the Infantry Battalion Gunner Program to incentivize MCRC's best enlisted leaders to apply

| Enlisted Accessions | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Category | DOD Standard | USMC 5-Yr Avg |
| Males | I-IIIA % | 60% | 69.94% |
| | Tier I % | 90% | 99.75% |
| Females | III-IIIA % | 60% | 70.85% |
| | Tier I% | 90% | 99.85% |
| Combined | I-IIIA% | 60% | 70.05% |
| | Tier I% | 90% | 99.76% |

*Figure 2.*

and support the need to build more career recruiters (8412 MOS created by Gen Wilson). Finally, and perhaps most significant, Gen Krulak directed Manpower to implement a formal command screening process to select Recruiting Station Commanding Officers. This would instantly transform recruiting duty from a career ender to a sought after and professionally rewarded duty for our most competitive majors (top four percent selected).

Although, Gens Wilson and Barrow recognized the need for systematic focus on quality high school seniors and placing them in a pool for development, from 1987 to 1995, the Marine Corps consistently failed to make its level-loaded accessions strategy in the second trimester (February, March, April, May-FMAM). This was partially because of dependency on the direct market (enlist and ship) resulting in shifting portions of the FMAM mission into June, July, August, and September. Therefore, another significant Gen Krulak contribution to *Making Marines* success, was directing a transition to trimester phasing in FY1996. This decision reinforced the high school as the primary market, which produces applicants who score in the higher mental categories, have lower incidents of moral disqualifications, and have the lowest attrition. It is also where the Marine Corps maintains a competitive advantage over other Services and remains the bedrock of systematic recruiting.

### Now

For the purpose of this article, "Now" is defined as the period from 2005 (the last time MCRC missed contracting mission) to present day. The before mentioned reforms and institutional commitment cemented a simple but proven recruiting formula for success. A quality recruiting force + systematically trained + adequate funding for operations and advertising = mission success (high quality Marines).

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*As operating environments change, budgets get challenged, and competing requirements emerge, leaders with the best intentions may make risk decisions that negatively impact the recruiting mission.*

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Although simple, it can be difficult to remain institutionally disciplined to this formula. As operating environments change, budgets get challenged, and competing requirements emerge, leaders with the best intentions may make risk decisions that negatively impact the recruiting mission. Recruiting struggles are predictable and cyclic. A Service that makes mission for years may decide to cut endstrength and subsequently reduce recruiters and advertising funding.

Additionally, plans call for lower accessions, which do not fully materialize, leading to lower quality and less diverse accessions. Lower quality accessions increase MCRD and premature first term attrition. Eventually the Service responds by re-doubling resources and repeating the cycle, which costs significantly more in the long run.

Current successes in diversity, gender, and reduced attrition are related to the sustained recruiting of a higher quality force, a stable trimester shipping model, preparation time in the Delayed Entry Program (DEP), which all stems from institutional commitments in recruiting (people and money) since 2009. As mentioned, the Marine Corps missed it annual contracting mission in 2005, and a contributing factor was the significant underfunding of the advertising budget for the previous decade. This compelled Gen Hagee to nearly double MCRC's advertising budget. Addition-ally, MCRC was authorized 600 more recruiters to support an endstrength increase of ~15,000 to 202,000.

In 2009, when 202k was realized, the recruiter drawdown began. This time with appropriate analysis and institutional support, the Service decided to only recoup 400 of the 600 Marines and ultimately right size the recruiter force to sustain the predictable annual 36k–38k Total Force quality accessions mission at 95 percent high school graduates and 63
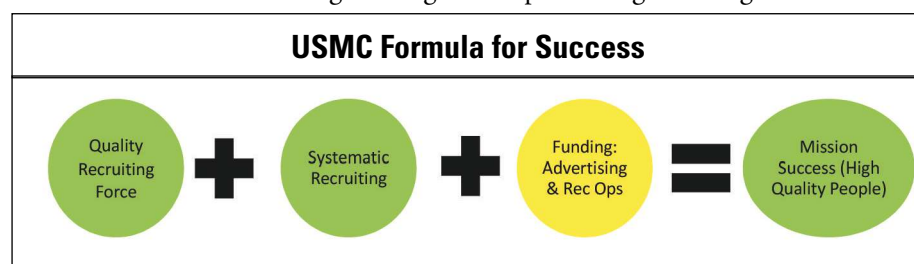
*Figure 3.*

percent MG I-IIIA. Additionally, and although not fully funded, advertising received moderate support. All of which in the last decade has led to historic lows in MCRD attrition, sustained quality (99 percent graduates and 70 percent MG I-IIIA), increased diversity (33 percent to 43 percent of enlisted accessions), as well as increased female accessions (7 percent to 14 percent for officers). All of which are contributing factors to reduced first-term attrition and ultimately saves the institution countless workhours and millions in replacement, retraining, and retention costs.

Another, often overlooked, institutional savings gained by our service approach to recruiting is enlistment bonuses. Since we focus on the younger high school market and sell intangibles, like pride of belonging, challenge, and commitment to service vice tangible benefits like specific jobs and money for education, the Marine Corps saves millions in enlistment bonuses. For example, last year, we spent ~$9M, while the Army and the Navy spent ~$260M and ~$400M, respectively. Additionally, this method creates a culture of belonging vice service as a job opportunity, which improves retention and produces a more prideful veteran population.

The institutional commitment since 2009 has not only yielded the above mentioned historic achievements, but it also created a momentum that has optimized the time in Delayed Entry Program to better prepare applicants for recruit training and produce quality shippers year round, which was previously unheard of during FMAM. This momentum was absolutely necessary to weather the perfect storm of COVID, political turmoil, generational change, civil unrest, and natural disasters starting in 2020 and continuing today. In 2019, it was normal for MCRC to close out the contracting mission in the first two weeks of the month and having the majority of next month's mission accumulated for assessing on the first day of the following month. A struggling station may take the contracting mission into the third week of the month, but even then, those new accessions were being placed in the pool to develop and ship 90 to 180 days later.

Although the Marine Corps survived the brunt of the proverbial storm, the sustained impacts are taking their toll. With school and community closings, we have lost access to a more disinterested market and reduced support programs like boot leave and recruiter's assistance. Previously accumulated contracts for future month's success have disintegrated. CDC safety guidelines have reduced throughput capacity at the recruit depots, which has forced a flattened shipping model, driving stations into the direct market to accommodate increased shipping requirements in FMAM. All of which has manifested in more recruiting stations missing their monthly contracting and shipping missions while facing modernization challenges and potential budget and personnel cuts. Regardless, Marine recruiters continue to accomplish the mission and exceed all DOD quality standards, but we must not take anything for granted.

## Future

Comparable to Gen Krulak's recognition of the need for a strategic corporal, Gen Berger recently identified Talent Management Reform as his Second Priority in order to support *Force Design 2030*. In his *Commandant's Planning Guidance*, Gen Berger wrote, "Our desired endstate also requires elite warriors with physical and mental toughness, tenacity, initiative, and aggressiveness to innovate, adapt, and win in a rapidly changing operating environment."[3] This vision requires total Service effort across the accession, training, education, and retention continuum, but unlike previous commandants, improving accession "quality" cannot be just about more high school graduates or raising test score requirements, as we already top the market capacity in these areas. Similar to the Wilson-Barrow mandate, CMC challenged MCRC to find, attract, and recruit the "most talented" individuals and replace them with even "more talented" Marines.

Understanding the nuances of Generation Z (see Devine article), the competition for talent, and the Commandant's goal for force design, MCRC broadened our assessment in order to enhance our contribution to the Ma-

rine Corps' long-term success. A Marine only reaches this desired endstate by going through a transformation process that includes training, education, leadership, and experience, but it all starts with a young man or woman with the potential to become that person. Our current system has proven effective but remains limited in scope. Accepting this reality, we set out to identify measurable attributes, which may help detect young men and women with the most talent and potential to become the leaders of *Force 2030*. Those attributes are Physical Tenacity, Competitive Spirit, Memory, Processing Speed, Pattern Recognition, Problem Solving, Flexibility, and Adaptability. MCRC then devised a plan to operationalize a method for finding and attracting this talent.

Although not yet fully funded or realized, the idea is to transition prospecting, information technology, and human performance strategies into the modern age with Artificial Intelligence/Machine Learning, Cognitive Gaming, Mobile Applications, and augmented reality platforms. We intend to use the talent attributes as determinants in algorithms tied to games that will cue players to measure their abilities. This will help focus our prospecting efforts on those who demonstrate the greatest potential to become the 21st Century Warriors.

Additionally, a personally tailored advertising approach, similar to those used in consumer markets, requires expanded legal authorities in which we are working with the other Services and the Office of Secretary of Defense to lobby Congress. In the meantime, we have fully embraced available social media and digital communications methods to engage applicants in the space they occupy. This played to our advantage and was further accelerated out of necessity during the pandemic.

To synergize the personal approach to marketing, cognitive gaming, and pool development, MCRC developed a new mobile application called Squad Bay as a tool for recruiters to initially track applicants, develop poolees, manage referrals, and provide applicants with a personalized recruiting and pool ex-

perience. Future versions will expand Squad Bay's capabilities to fuse all these efforts to include prospecting, as it will electronically tie applicants directly into digitally connected recruiting events and potentially measure improvements in the aforementioned attributes.

Equally complex, the Commandant's desire to "mature the force" simply cannot be higher rank structure or age, which is cost prohibitive. Therefore, is it possible to accelerate the maturity of the individual Marine by using these technologies and attributes to better develop the cognitive abilities of our poolees prior to shipping to boot camp or Officer Candidate School? Obviously, we prepare those in the pool today, but success is dependent on available preship time and focused on entry-level training. With the intent of jumpstarting the transformation process and emphasizing their responsibilities as a professional Marine, we will employ modern technology to expand cognitive abilities by having poolees conduct daily scientifically-based, individualized learning games to develop those identified attributes and gain the intellectual edge we desire over our adversaries. Taken further, we can use these concepts to instill a competitive warfighting spirit by increasing the level of competition on two levels: against self and against others in both the cognitive and physical spaces. Finally, certain aspects will assist recruiters mentor poolees on the meaning of the Oath of Office, Values Based Training, and Core Values—all designed to accelerate understanding and long-term success.

Additionally, we are working closely with other HQMC agencies in developing analytic and predictive analysis tools that will help to increase the effectiveness and efficiencies of the recruiting force. For example, the Enhanced Shipping Model is being designed to better match a poolees ship date with the expected start date of their MOS producing school. We are exploring a new tool called the Marine Corps Occupational Specialty Matching tool used to match an applicant with the MOS they are best suited. Both show tremendous promise for significant cost savings by reducing attrition, reducing

Marines awaiting training, increasing performance, and improving retention.

Finally, we also believe MCRC can assist the Marine Corps' total force retention efforts. MCRC is adapting the mindset from one of "recruit to access" to "recruit to retain" for both the active and reserve components. We are working with Career Planner's Course to develop a systematic retention approach, creating sales tools for commanders and providing training on the Direct Affiliation Program so Marines can immediately transfer from active to reserves while maintaining certain personal and professional benefits.

It is difficult, yet exciting times in MCRC. We are now and will always remain challenged to recruit the most talented men and women our country can provide. While it is incumbent upon the Marine Corps to remain relevant in the ever-changing operational world landscape, it is equally critical on the streets, in the schools, and the hearts of America. The recent institutional commitment to recruiting is appreciated but being challenged in the current environment. *Force Design 2030*, as well as these exciting modernization efforts, cannot be realized without stable and adequate resources. The price of recruiting high-quality applicants is expensive but necessary to the long-term institutional health of the Corps.

### Notes

1. Gen Walter E. Boomer, "Smaller and Better in the 1990s," *Marine Corps Gazette*, (Quantico, VA: October 1992).

2. Joseph A. Bushner, *Winning the Recruiting War*, (Quantico, VA: Marine Corps Recruiting Command).

3. Gen David H. Berger, *38th Commandant's Planning Guidance*, (Washington, DC: July 2019).

US♦MC

# Brand Maneuver

## Connecting the Corps to Generation Z and beyond

### by LtCol Christian Devine

>LtCol Devine currently serves as the National Director & Assistant Chief of Staff, Marketing, and Communication Strategy for Marine Corps Recruiting Command. He has 25-years experience as a Public Affairs Officer and Communication Strategist.

Walk through the halls of any Marine Corps building, and you will undoubtedly come across at least one iconic poster that inspires a deeply-seeded pride in the Marines: *Be a U.S. Marine. First to Fight. Ready. Let's Go!* These are, perhaps, the original advertisements that helped explain to Americans who Marines are, and motivated young people to envision themselves as a member of our tribe. These are timeless examples of the power of branding, and serve as a reminder for the members of Marine Corps Recruiting Command (MCRC) of the responsibility we have to carry this legacy forward to meet the messaging needs of the Corps today.

MCRC is a high-tempo, systematic, and adaptable sales (and communication) organization. Like many prominent Fortune 500 companies, it has marketing, advertising, and communication (MAC) capabilities responsible for market-research, engagement strategies, creative-development, tech-infrastructure, customer-relationship management, multi-media content delivery, and analytics. Collectively, these MAC capabilities expand the reach, impact, and prestige of the Marine Corps to youth, influencers, and key stakeholders. The fundamental objective of these activities is to distinctively elevate (and differentiate) the pride and purpose of serving our Nation as a Marine. The Marine Corps' investment in its effective and efficient marketing and advertising program is critical to MCRC's mission success. The program positively shapes the teeming information battlespace to recruit tomorrow's youth while concurrently serving as an important strategic communication arm for the Commandant and the Marine Corps writ-large. While MCRC has long been recognized for developing iconic television commercials for the Marine Corps, the MAC program has evolved in capability and scope by adopting sophisticated modern marketing practices that increase its agility to maneuver the Corps' brand and value proposition to today's youth. This article's purpose is more than a quintessential, "Marine Corps Marketing 101." It will provide insight into how MCRC develops and positions the Marine Corps' brand to youth as well as present some of the social challenges ushered by 21st-century America that shape our current recruiting landscape. Finally, the article will unpack (researched) attributes of "Generation Z" (Gen Z) and their propensity to serve, and explain how our current "Battles Won" marketing strategy is designed to be elastic enough to connect with Gen Z (and beyond) to meet the talent needs of the Marine Corps now and in the future.

Before we discuss the maneuver and stewardship of the Corps' as a marketed "brand," I must formally recognize the trusted and well-established partnership MCRC has with its contracted advertising agency, Wunderman Thompson (WT), formerly J. Walter Thompson—a world-class industry leader—who, since 1947, have skillfully steered, delivered, and elevated the image and message of the Marine Corps to countless thousands who have gone on to earn the title "Marine." The women and men comprising our WT team are proven, dedicated partners committed to expertly positioning the Marine Corps for success. Generations of Marines, spanning from "Boomers" to Gen Z, can recall an indelible, fantastical television ad or a rousing digital media piece created by WT to invigorate a purposeful connection to serving as a Marine. However, there is much more below the waterline of this marketing glacier than the finished products. The content (ads) you see on television and billboards are merely the tip of this marketing iceberg. Equal to the output is the vast and layered input WT obtains through dedicated research, traversing



*MCRC bears great responsibility for the Marine Corps' "Brand Recognition."* (Photo provided by author.)

**THERE'S *MORE* TO MCRCs PROGRAM THAN COMMERCIALS**

*MCRC's marketing iceberg. (Image provided by author.)*

not only youth-generational trends, but also psychographic, cultural-political, technological, and economic factors that can affect propensity and consideration to serve. This organic "market-intel" enables MCRC (and the Marine Corps) to adapt wisely to diverse external (and internal) variables over time and maintain meaningful connection between recruitable-age youth and what the Marine Corps can distinctly offer them. What I will describe in the following paragraphs is an amalgamation of ideas, strategies, and methodologies MCRC employs in its marketing and advertising based on the industry-expertise, research, and creative tradecraft of the talented and dedicated Marine Corps Account professionals at Wunderman Thompson I have been privileged to work with during three tours in support of recruiting duty—a decade in total.

## Marketing for the Mission

Up front, MCRC's marketing team has never written a contract; we understand only recruiters and officer selection officers can do that. However, MCRC's marketing efforts directly help our sales force by moving qualified youth one step closer to them through a variety of strategies and tactics. Through our program, we elicit hand-raisers and distribute their lead information daily. This is the close fight—helping recruiters make mission through lead generation. since the market is in a fluid state of consideration and propensity, we work to make

the market of interested prospects grow so we do not run out of hand-raisers for tomorrow. This is achieved through multiple touchpoints to both youth and their influencers. Likewise, generating and building awareness (through paid media strategies and tactics) is the deep fight, and for some people in increasingly diverse markets the Marine Corps desires, this takes more time and investment. Finally, we produce effective

resources and tools to help recruiters conduct systematic recruiting processes. From printed materials to promotional items to digital systems, our goal is to ensure our contributions impact the close and deep fights. Combined, and when fully resourced, MCRC's marketing program has historically contributed to approximately 27 percent of all net new contracts to its annual recruiting mission—a critical component of systematic recruiting.

Additionally, MCRC supports the institution's messaging priorities. Both authorized and directed by law, MCRC's combined MAC/WT team

is the Service's only on-call communication capability that enables us to say exactly what we want to the people we need to reach at the time and place of our choosing. We have full editorial control of our recruitment advertising messages, and we can leverage them to help explain who Marines are, what the Marine Corps does, and why both are of value to our country and prospects. Additionally, our recruiters are the primary ambassadors of the Corps—physically representing our brand—within communities where they serve and live.

## Our "Brand" Story

If someone saw a Marine Corps ad over the last 47 years of the All-Volunteer Force, the immediate and resonant characterization of our messaging would likely be: Smart, Tough, Elite Warrior. That is the most basic breakdown of the Marine Corps' "brand."

MCRC is entrusted with the development of brand messaging aimed at reaching the broadest possible cross-section of American youth. Unlike commercial advertisers, we do not have the luxury of changing our message (or the Corps' purpose) to meet youth wants,

> *Combined, and when fully resourced, MCRC's marketing program has historically contributed to approximately 27 percent of all net new contracts to its annual recruiting mission …*

demands, or trends. We simply have to make what we do more compelling and more aspirational to youth in order to break through the clutter of information they currently digest. While easier said than done, what we sell and must evoke in our advertising is prestige and purpose in a patriotic, military context. Therefore, our marketing approach must remain distinctive from the commercial sector's "customer" or "consumer" models. The Marine Corps is different: we do not have customers. Instead, we are trying to appeal to "citizens" because customers/consumers do not go to war, citizens do. MCRC is re-

# The Next Phase for the MV-22:
## Enabling U.S. Marine Corps-U.S. Navy Integration in the Atlantic

By Robbin Laird

The Osprey has gone through several phases of development since its fleet introduction.   It has delivered disruptive change and combat innovation. With the USN and USMC focused on working new approaches to integration for the 4th Battle of the Atlantic, the Osprey is a key component for such integration.

During visits to Norfolk with the dual-hatted 2nd Fleet and Allied Joint Force Command under Vice Admiral Lewis, and to 2nd Marine Wing and to II MEF, it is clear how important the Osprey is to shape a distributed and integrated force capable of leveraging land and sea bases.

The USN is launching its next generation carrier, the USS Gerald R. Ford, into this evolving strategic context and the Norfolk commands are reworking how to fight as a fleet with allies working in close cooperation. With both the Russians and Chinese as players, defense and security operations in the High North are a key part of the strategic reset.

New defense approaches and concepts of operations are being shaped by the fleet, working to shape capabilities to operate as a distributed integrated force. This obviously is a work in progress where the blueprint is being forged and shaped. It is also about force redesign, but done in the context of being able to fight today's battles. It is also about reshaping blue water operations, or better expressed as blue water expeditionary operations after two-decades of supporting the land war.

It is into this strategic context and USN fleet concept of operations redesign where 2nd MAW and II MEF are conducting their own force redesign. The Commandant has emphasized the importance of increased USMC-USN integration, but this is especially challenging as the Navy is on its own adventure for fleet warfighting redesign.

How do the North Carolina-based Marines best work the evolving chessboard of North Atlantic defense? The capability of the Osprey to operate from sea and land across the operating area of the North Atlantic with both range and speed is a key enabler. The

Navy and Marines are working new ways to use mobile land bases in the North Atlantic arc of operations – Canada, Iceland, Greenland and the Nordics – with sea basing on carriers, Military Sealift Command and amphibious ships. The Osprey allows for cross decking as well as integrating both mobile land and sea bases into a single integrated battlespace.

This means that ensuring that the numbers of Ospreys able to operate in the region must be sufficient to meet the combat demand for both mobility and integratability with both the range and speed. Ensuring that production continues to be able to augment the fleet going forward both for the current USMC and USN customers and potential customers in the North Atlantic is as important in enabling effective distributed and integrated maritime operations.

Ensuring effective modernization strategies for the aircraft in conjunction with fleet and force innovation is crucial as well. While the promise of mission system flexibility associated with the Littoral Combat Ship has not been met as the ship needs to go back to port to swap out, the speed and range of the Osprey can allow for significant mission interoperability. With the proper roll-on roll-off systems onboard, C2, ISR or ASW missions can be prioritized. Having different
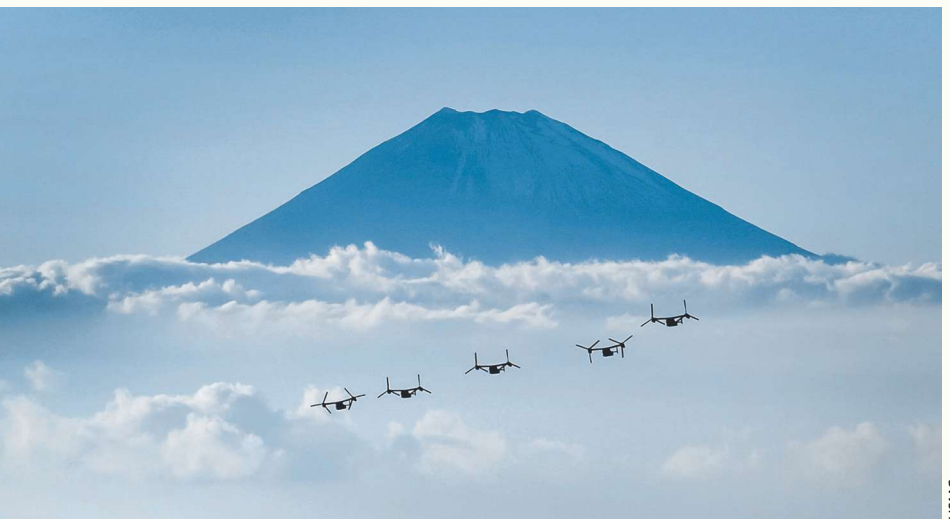


USMC

MV-22B Osprey tiltrotor aircraft return after a long-range raid from Combined Arms Training Center, Camp Fuji, Japan to Marine Corps Air Station Futenma, Okinawa as part of Blue Chromite 2017, Nov. 4, 2016.

roll-on roll-off systems ashore or afloat can allow for the Osprey to land, swap out and go back to the combat space and deliver the prioritized mission.

Such a capability is a key one as Marine Corps-Naval integration with the relevant nations in the region is reshaped, re-worked and executed. While the strategic shift from the land wars to contested operations in the North Atlantic makes many systems used in those wars obsolete, or of low priority, it is quite the reverse for the Osprey. It is becoming a key element to deliver real Marine Corps-Naval lethality and integration across a distributed combat space.



USMC

Marine Corps MV-22 Ospreys fly over the Arabian Sea Sept. 6, 2012.



USMC

Marines conduct helicopter rope suspension training June 13, 2013.

USMC

V22 TEAM OSPREY

cruiting volunteers—hand-raisers, so for someone to want to join our ranks, we cannot appeal to their sense of self but their sense of selflessness. We shift our approach from the customer mindset of "me" to the citizen mindset of "we," in turn, selling the idea that becoming a Marine is in itself a prestigious civic endeavor.

Throughout the All-Volunteer-Force period, our Service competitors have sold mostly tangible benefits in their marketing and sales tactics—money for college, portable job and technical skills, health benefits, travel, and economic security. The Marine Corps sells "intangibles" that make the cost of our sacrifices correctly priced: we promise challenging combat training, transformation for a purpose, applied leadership, bonds forged through adversity and, of course, service to our Nation. Because of this approach, we believe there are intrinsic quality linkages here that separate our recruits and candidates from the other Services. Very importantly, we purport the Marine Corps as a "cause." People join causes, causes do not join people. Otherwise stated, causes, such as the Marine Corps, do not redefine themselves to meet market trends. However, causes must be appealing on some level(s) to inspire interest. Selling our cause is critical to our communication because ultimately we need to recruit those who will meet the challenges the Corps may ask them to face and overcome. If they are brought in (or sold) on other promises (i.e.-tangible benefits), our message would be inconsistent and they would be left unfulfilled with their service as a result. By staying true to communicating our purpose and cause, we establish foundational expectations of our Marines.

So, from here, we start crafting our institution's "Longer Marine Corps Story" (LMCS) through three promises the Marine Corps makes to the American people: "We Make Marines, We Win Our Nation's Battles, and We Develop Quality Citizens." No other military Service makes such a formal compact with its citizens, and telling stories centering around one of these three promises (or "chapters") is the foundation we build all our brand

messaging upon. Finally, we speak to everyone with common purpose—regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, creed, or socio-economic background. Our "Total Market Approach" to showcasing the Corps' diversity in our advertising is deliberately inclusive and a truly organic depiction complementing our total force.

### Bridging the Brand via "Battles Won"

Choose your issue or news media of choice, there is striking polarization across our Nation. There are two Americas today that live side-by-side in various degrees of tension with one another. The first is the 20th century America, one connecting to a Norman Rockwell-era, a century which gave the rise to American exceptionalism as the United States took its place as a global power and world leader. It is mono-cultural, older, traditional, and is fairly conservative politically. The America of the 21st century is younger, tech-driven, urban-hipster, more multi-cultural, and more liberal politically. As you can anticipate, the Marine Corps is, more often than not, characterized and perceived as being more attributed to the former era than the current one.

Aside from the data and research that point to this, then Gen Mattis, noted this dichotomy when he stated: "We are a Corps whose old-fashioned values protect a progressive country."[1] To be clear, the America of the 20th century is not becoming the America of the 21st century. There are people living on both sides right now. The challenge for the Marine Corps is to appeal to both sides—to all of America. We must attract volunteers from every corner of the Nation in order to meet the Corps' need for a diverse and capable force. Socially, the Corps is—as nearly all institutions and American brands are today—an unwilling participant in the political-cultural tension cleaving the country, creating challenges to engage more prospects and influencers.

So, with this backdrop, this is the marketing problem we are trying to tackle: *In an era when American culture is increasingly ambivalent to military service, the Marine Corps struggles to present itself to a broad cross-section of prospects*

*and their influencers as an aspirational, prestigious path.*[2] To maneuver here, MCRC needed a strategy to cope with this ambivalence, to bridge these relative divides and reach more people, and, it should go without saying, all while not changing our commitment to our cause and purpose, or our "Smart, Tough, Elite" differentiation.

To address these challenges and exploit the opportunities inherent within, MCRC, in collaboration with WT, developed and implemented the "*Battles Won*" brand strategy in 2017. It communicates that our point of differentiation is simply our fighting spirit. *Battles Won* states the essence of Marines, both individually and as a Corps, is our willingness to engage and determination to defeat any opposing force, whether personal or on behalf of our Nation and its communities. *Battles Won* was built with recruiters in mind, so they could personalize this simple and inherent idea that is familiar to all who wear the Eagle, Globe, and Anchor: Marines have a bias for action, we seize the initiative, we are resilient, and a fight with Marines has but one inevitable outcome—we win. *Battles Won* is not a campaign or tagline. It is a deliberate strategy born from our identity that bridges both Americas. The strategy ensures whomever or however we engage communicates "who we are, what we do and why it's of value to the country" in a personally aspirational manner for recruitable youth and their influencers. The strategy is agile enough to integrate different battles for each chapter of our LMCS, which allows us to tell many different stories to many different people:

• Chapter 1: WE MAKE MARINES: Captures stories about how individuals overcome their own personal fears, doubts, physical challenges, and even adolescence while facing our demanding recruit training and officer candidate regimens. These highlight battles with self for self-mastery and selflessness, and transformation for purpose.

• Chapter 2: WE WIN OUR NATION'S BATTLES: Many are motivated by the capabilities we bring above and below the threshold of armed conflict on behalf of our nation

and allies. We are increasingly ready to fight across dynamic threat spectrums, from near peer to asymmetrical, cyber while also remaining poised to fight despair and hopelessness caused by natural disasters and climate change (i.e., humanitarian assistance/disaster relief missions).

• Chapter 3: WE DEVELOP QUALITY CITIZENS: Finally, whether a Marine serves for 4 or 30 years, they continue to exhibit our Corps Values by making positive impacts in their communities by facing down civic problems out of uniform.

MCRC has released three ad campaigns under the first wave of the *Battles Won* strategy:

• *"Anthem"* (2017) debuted as a public service announcement (PSA) which focuses on the many battles Marines have fought throughout our history by traveling the landscape of a living statue that, when fully revealed, represents the fighting spirit of the individual Marine.

• *"Battle Up"* (2017) was the first recruiting ad campaign to introduce the *Battles Won* strategy. It features all three chapters of the LMCS and is the first to feature a woman as the lead protagonist. The ad presents an uncompromising depiction of battles Marines fight and must win to earn the title, serve and return to their communities with purpose.

• *"A Nation's Call"* (2018) followed, focusing on the second chapter. It conveys how Marines fight and win our Nation's battles today as a naval expeditionary force, conducting ship-to-objective missions with the support of technology. Most importantly, it emphasizes that the most critical element of winning battles is the fighting spirit of a Marine.

### The Battle to Belong

In September of 2018, MCRC hosted a WT-led discovery forum, "Centennial Strategy Summit," gathering some of the preeminent socio-political thought leaders, military planners, and academics to discuss post-Millennial generational issues so we could better understand how 21st century challenges collectively affect our problem framing

and, in turn, our marketing approaches so we could effectively maneuver our communication for the next generation of youth—Gen Z. We discovered many generation headwinds that we are currently facing are a reaction from previous eras. However, there is a shift happening that portends a new era. If the Marine Corps can stay ahead of this shift, we will be well positioned for continued success.

Generational insights based on the Centennial Summit and WT's subsequent research were codified in a 2019 report titled, *"Taking the Pulse of Gen Z & Implications for Recruitment."* The report posits "Gen Z may be a fork in the road for the All-Volunteer Force, and seems prepared to fight but for things that are currently different from the battles planned for it by military and national security planners. In addition, the rising generation's culture is, with few exceptions, severely at odds with aspects of traditional military culture."[3] This report provided MCRC valuable insight to the layered nuances of our problem framing, which was later reaffirmed in similar youth-market research conducted by the Joint Advertising Market Research & Studies (JAMRS) and the Center for Naval Analyses (CNA). These Gen Z attributes can be summarized as follows:[4]

• Challenge "American exceptionalism;" significant declining interest in the military as a life consideration.

• Do not align with military challenges posed in *National Defense Strategy* or "Great Power Competition."

• Strong belief robotics/drones/artificial intelligence will perform future warfighting functions.

• "Connected Loneliness" experienced by coupling tech/social media with culture of radical individualism, "fear of missing out," and digital narcissism, resulting in social alienation and elevated depression levels.

• Risk averse; expanded adolescence and are willing to defer adulthood into mid-late 20s.

• Place a premium on relationships with peers, parents, and influencers in decision-making.

According to the late WT senior account strategist, Randy Shepard,

> Gen Z is beginning to enter the recruiting pipeline at a time when there is broad disillusionment among both the general public and veterans with the military missions of the past two decades potentially casting a pall over the desire to serve. With the exception of a fraction of white males, these first wave Gen Z'ers are perhaps even further removed from traditional military culture and the older national culture than the famously progressive millennial generation.[5]

While these generational trends are concerning, and even exacerbated by rising political polarization, with this market-intel we can (and must) find

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*Gen Z may be a fork in the road for the All-Volunteer Force, and seems prepared to fight but for things that are currently different from the battles planned for it by military and national security planners.*

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• Exhibit strong views of diversity and inclusiveness; women are ascending to lead across all public and private sectors.

• Seek participation in causes they deem worthy (climate change, social equality, etc.) but spurn traditional hierarchies. Aspire to be global "do-gooders."

tailwinds to connect our purpose to Gen Z and beyond. For example, based on our learnings, we know today's youth are proverbially "drowning in freedom" and technology, becoming personally exhausted by their individualism, and therefore seek *belonging* with others in pursuit of a common, moral cause (or purpose).[6]

These insights enabled MCRC to maneuver *Battles Won* storytelling directly toward Gen Z. We doubled-down our approach to emphasize communicating our "why" (cause, purpose) first and layering our "how" (training, operations, capabilities) around it to best connect with contemporary youth. "*Battle To Belong*" (launched in 2019) was this next wave in our strategy and is a campaign deliberately fashioned on our first chapter story, "Making Marines," in an attempt to showcase the path of becoming a Marine as self-transcendent and aspirational. It is a reintroduction of our brand's "why" to Gen Z. It is designed to provoke reaction from a generation of youth who are often trapped and disillusioned by the very technology and types of social connectivity that were supposed to bring us closer together—which fosters this "connected loneliness" previously described. The concept paints a metaphorical picture of a dystopic, information-laden society, how youth can be trapped outside the belonging and purpose they truly seek, and how they can ultimately earn authentic belonging and collective purpose by becoming a Marine.

Undoubtedly, the iconic tagline (slogan) "The Few, The Proud, The Marines" remains an essential element of MCRC advertising efforts, and is reintroduced in "*Battle To Belong.*" "The Few, The Proud" slogan strength establishes a baseline in communicating "*who we are,*" while the *Battles Won* brand strategy communicates "*what we do and why it's of value*" to the American people, thus wholly connecting our service purpose to the public.

"*Battle To Belong*" remains a strong, multi-faceted campaign which showcases our diversity and fight well beyond a mere television commercial. Its ecosystem of content and messaging is tailor-made to drive interested youth to seek more information and eventually to individual recruiters who can capitalize on "belonging" and "fighting spirit" within their sales presentations. Equally, this latest campaign more fully completes MCRC's previous *Battles Won* campaigns by having content rotated in paid-media channels that speaks to each chapter of our LMCS.
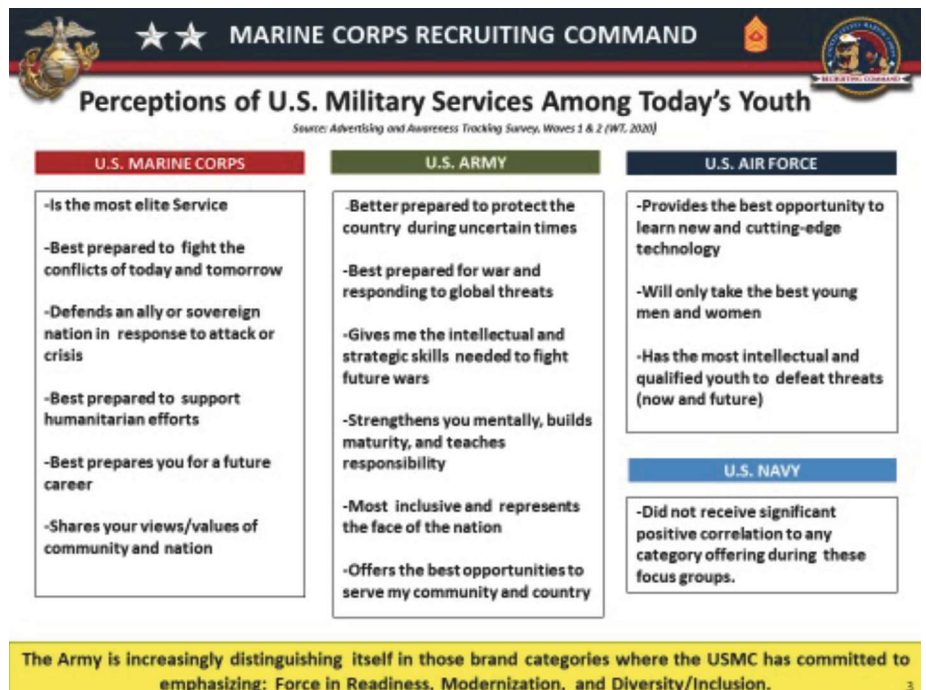


*Perceptions of U.S. military among today's youth.* (Image provided by author.)

## Competition and Brand Elasticity with Gen Z+

We have received positive response to our brand positioning with "*Battle To Belong*" through periodic youth-focus groups, quantitative surveys and formal Advertising and Awareness Tracking Surveys. Concurrently, we are winning small battles in a larger war for talent. As we measure our marketing resonance with youth, we also keep a close eye on the competition. This maneuver is constant and directly influenced by the political-cultural environment impacting youth perception regarding the military. As you can see from Figure 1, we measure how Gen Z correlates important service attributes and sentiments in order to better understand how the Marine Corps is perceived by youth in juxtaposition to the other Services. This gives MCRC market-indicators on our relative brand strength and service differentiation. From a brand-positioning perspective, our pacing competition is the Army. Recently, we have noticed the Army is increasingly distinguishing itself in those brand categories where the Marine Corps has committed to emphasizing force in readiness, modernization, and diversity/inclusion.[7] While these survey results (tested via two waves in

2020) indicate noteworthy positional gains by the Army, they can be attributed not only to their significant advertising budget, but also the prominence both the Army and the Army National Guard played during the COVID-19 and social unrest responses during 2020. Inversely, these surveys also show an inert and statistically insignificant connection of these same attributes to the Navy. Again, commensurate advertising resourcing can be a correlation to a lack of resonance here, but should also be concerning for the Marine Corps as we tie our larger strategic operational employment to our naval fleets—we need a strong and capable Navy.

As we engage Gen Z now and approach "Gen Next," being ever-mindful of the momentum being made by our competition, MCRC and WT will develop our next campaign to test the elasticity of the *Battles Won* strategy in an increasingly complex world with multiple security considerations. As the Marine Corps evolves to meet the operational imperatives outlined by Gen Berger in *Force Design 2030*, so too will MCRC need to connect these future concepts in a meaningful way to those who will desire to join it. Therein, MCRC faces the challenge of "cam-

paign next," and has set on a path to develop its next ad campaign focused on our Chapter 2 story ("Winning Our Nation's Battles"). For all we now know and continue to learn about Gen Z, the task of connecting the Corps' *Force Design 2030* operational imperatives (via our Chapter 2 storyline) to a generation who may not have the attention, care-factor, or aspiration to understand its necessity, will be a challenging under-taking. MCRC and WT must shape this next campaign's communication by building from our "why"—belonging for a common, moral cause—and then incorporate our "how" via powerful Marine Corps imagery showcasing Marines employing modern and advanced capabilities that can be brought to bear in response to complex threats Gen Z (and Gen Next) may face while serving as Marines. As the late Randy Shepard taught many on MCRC's account team, "You get what you sell, and you sell what you need … at the time." If we

stay true to our cause and promote its purpose, we will get the quality, diverse men and women needed to compete and win, anywhere: spanning Pacific atolls to American hometowns. Time will tell what the Corps will ask future Marines to do for our nation and each other. *Battles Won,* and the "fight" therein, will continually maneuver our message (and brand) toward a meaningful calling the Corps needs to fulfil that ask.

<hr>

### Notes

1. James Mattis and Kori N. Schake, "Warriors and Citizens: American Views of Our Military," *Hoover Institution Press*, (August 2016), available https://www.hoover.org.

2. Randy Shepard and Sean McNeeley, "Presentation for Centennial Strategy Summit," (presentation, Centennial Strategy Summit, Washington, DC: 2018).

3. Wunderman Thompson, 'Taking the Pulse of Gen Z & Implications for Recruitment," (New York, NY: Wunderman Thompson 2019). Report developed for the Marine Corps Recruiting Command.

4. Ibid.

5. Ibid.

6. Ibid.

7. Staff, "Advertising & Awareness Tracking Surveys (Waves 1 and 2)," (New York, NY: Wunderman Thompson and Social Sphere, Inc., 2020). Report developed for the Marine Corps Recruiting Command.

# Recruiting Diversity

## Sustaining and improving the transformation of the Corps
### by LtCol Ian Duncan & Capt Andrew Herbert

Not since the 1960s has America, as a whole, focused so greatly on diversity, equity, and inclusion. Tragic and divisive events across the country over the past few years have made visible to all the wide opportunity disparities that continue to exist across racial, ethnic, gender, and socio-economic lines. Diversity within the DOD constantly receives scrutiny from a broad range of interested parties, for example via the National Defense Authorization Act markup, House and Senate Armed Service Committee Hearings, media inquiries, and many others. In 1957, Gen Victor "Brute" Krulak accurately stated in his seminal volume *First to Fight*, "The United States does not need a Marine Corps. However, for good reasons which completely transcend cold logic, the United States wants a Marine Corps."[1] This national desire to maintain a force whose mission could logically be completed through joint efforts from the other Services must be honored with a reciprocal commitment to the people the Corps serves. Krulak also stated, "The Marines are masters of a form of unfailing alchemy which converts unoriented youths into proud, self-reliant, stable citizens—citizens into whose hands the nation's affairs may safely be entrusted."[2] This alchemy, or transformation, is the true opportunity President Truman referenced in his 1948 Executive Order on full integration:[3] "there shall be equality of treatment and opportunity for all persons in the armed services without regard to race, color, religion, or national origin."[4] Marine Corps Recruiting Command (MCRC)'s mandate is to ensure it presents opportunity to all qualified people equally. It must adhere to this mandate in identifying, attracting, and accessing talented personnel. MCRC routinely

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As LtGen Victor "Brute" Krulak stated, "The Marines are masters of a form of unfailing alchemy which converts unoriented youths into proud, self-reliant, stable citizens." (Photo by Cpl Aneshea Yee.)

analyzes and assesses its progress in recruiting diverse cohorts of officer and enlisted applicants to ensure the Corps reflects the face of the Nation it serves.

Marine Corps recruiting produces increasingly diverse cohorts each year, in both officer and enlisted accessions. The combination of market analysis, a proven recruiting method, accountability to quality and standards, and institutional commitment allows MCRC to lead the DOD in recruiting excellence. From the nascent stages of integration with the establishment of the famed Montford Point Marines in 1942 to the subsequent closure of Montford Point in 1949 signaling desegregation to the current cultural environment with the first female African American Marine general officer appointed in 2018 (BGen Mahlock), a female Deputy Commandant (LtGen Reynolds, DC Information), and gender integration at both Marine Corps Recruit Depots, the Marine Corps embraces its own philosophy of sustaining the transformation. These success stories all have a common thread—the transformation of the Marine Corps, with an emphasis on its recruitment. This continued suc-

cess is vital to shaping the future force, operationalizing *Force Design 2030*, and safeguarding the Marine Corps' commitment to the American people as the force they want.

## Face of the Qualified Nation

In an ideal world, the Marine Corps would reflect the face of the Nation at a one-to-one ratio, providing the opportunity to serve to all who so desire. In reality, there are specific qualifying standards and minimum requirements to earn the title Marine that serve as barriers to entry and reduce the available market of human capital. These qualifying standards include physical, mental, moral, and medical requirements that relate to body composition and strength, high school graduation and Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery scores, criminal records and tattoos, and history of illness and injury.[5] Failure to meet any one of these features may bar an individual from service, irrespective of desire or perceived potential. Consequently, the application of these filters throughout the recruiting process makes a direct comparison between the Marine Corps and the face of the Nation misleading. Instead, a more accurate comparison would be against the face of the *qualified* Nation. MCRC defines this subset of the population utilizing several data sources and applies several methodologies to inform the market analysis process and to develop appropriate metrics.[6]

Enlisted market analysis uses statistics provided by Woods & Poole Economics to define the MCRC Civilian Non-Institutionalized Population (CNIP). MCRC CNIP comprises 17- to 24-year-old men, not currently in jail or the military, who are on track to, or already did, graduate high school.[7] The officer market analysis is based on the Qualified Candidate Population (QCP). Produced by the Center for Naval Analyses, QCP represents test-score qualified (SAT 1000 or ACT 22) graduates at a given institution and the number of age-appropriate college graduates for Platoon Leaders Course and Officer Candidate Course, respectively. This population is further refined by propensity to serve and mental group

| Enlisted Accessions Diversity | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Race/Ethnicity** | **CNIP** | **FY10** | **FY20** |
| Black or AA[1] | 14.0% | 9.75% | 11.05% |
| White | 57.1% | 66.34% | 56.54% |
| Hispanic or Latino | 21.4% | 18.63% | 27.54% |
| Other[2] | 8.2% | 5.28% | 4.87% |
| **Total Diversity** | **43.6%** | **33.6%** | **43.46%** |

| Other Accessions Diversity | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Race/Ethnicity** | **QCP** | **FY10** | **FY20** |
| Black or AA[1] | 6.5% | 3.52% | 8.17% |
| White | 68.3% | 84.15% | 65.43% |
| Hispanic or Latino | 11.2% | 6.58% | 14.18% |
| Other[2] | 14.0% | 5.75% | 12.22% |
| **Total Diversity** | **31.7%** | **15.85%** | **34.57%** |

[1] African American

[2] Includes: American Indian/Alaskan Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander, and Decline to Respond

*Figure 1. Marine Corps recruiting command diversity accessions vs. qualified market.*

predictors, using research from Joint Advertising and Marketing Research & Studies, historical accessions data, and MCRC's Target Market Predictor (TMP).[8] For both markets, application of these filters paints a more accurate picture of the human landscape in which MCRC operates.

> *Although areas for improvement exist—specifically in the Black community's enlisted representation—MCRC remains committed to engaging the market as a whole to ensure equitable opportunity for all those who qualify.*

Comparing CNIP and QCP against MCRC accessions by race/ethnicity over the last ten years shows steady improvement in the extent to which accessions are representative of their benchmarks: white people have become less overrepresented, and people of color have become less underrepresented. (See Figure 1.)

This analysis illustrates that both enlisted and officer accessions closely represent the populations qualified to serve

(43 percent diversity accessions in FY20 versus 43.6 percent CNIP). Although areas for improvement exist—specifically in the Black community's enlisted representation—MCRC remains committed to engaging the market as a whole to ensure equitable opportunity for all those who qualify. Black officer accessions currently exceed market representation (8.17 percent Black or African American in FY20 versus 6.5 percent QCP), and while that statistic may indicate a need for refinement of metrics (or may indicate the overwhelming success of MCRC's process), it will lead to greater senior leadership representation, retention and promotion considerations aside. This transformation may, in turn, affect enlisted accessions in the future, as the next generation of

future Marines see more of themselves in the leaders of the Corps.

It is important to note that MCRC refines its accessions data in a different manner relative to the rest of the DOD in regard to race and ethnicity. DD Form 1966 *Record of Military Processing—Armed Forces of the United States* asks applicants to select an "Ethnic Category" (Block 7.a) of either 1) Hispanic or Latino or 2) Not Hispanic or Latino. It then asks applicants to select their "Racial Category" (Block 7.b) from one or more of the following: 1) American Indian/Alaskan Native, 2) Asian, 3) Black or African American, 4) Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, or 5) White.[9] This information then feeds into the applicants' Official Military Personnel File. The Marine Corps Recruiting Information Support System is MCRC's program of record for prospecting, processing, and contracting applicants and gathers information (including DD FORM 1966) throughout the accessions process and maintains a central database. The Marine Corps Recruiting Information Support System allows applicants to refine their race and ethnicity further, including 24 other categories.[10]

## Recipe for Success

Over the decades, MCRC's strategy and process have remained largely unchanged.[11] Additionally, the Marine Corps' brand and quality standards remain unaltered in any significant fashion. The Marine Corps' brand continues to advertise smart, tough, elite warriors and speaks to everyone with common purpose, regardless of gender, race, creed, or socio-economic background. This approach focuses on the intangibles of service, instead of specific jobs or monetary benefits, and remains incredibly successful since the implementation of systematic recruiting following the advent of the All-Volunteer Force. The overall quality of Marine recruits consistently exceeds DOD standards.

MCRC's success combines a high-quality recruiting force, the systematic recruiting process, and the institutional commitment of funding for advertising and operations. This formula yields mission success in the form of high-quality recruits and plays an important part in beginning and sustaining the transformation by preparing applicants for recruit training and future retention.[12] The first ingredient, the high-quality recruiting force, is an exacting price the institution pays up front. Marine Corps leaders recognize they must assign the best-qualified Marines to recruiting duty. Gen Walter Boomer notably summarized this mindset in a May 1990 edition of *Proceedings*:

> Recruiting high-quality applicants for the Corps is terribly expensive, but the price of not doing it is disaster. Fine young men and women can be recruited only by good Marines. We must be able to bear the pain of having to do

without our best and brightest while they serve a tour on recruiting duty.[13]

This mentality—sending the best and brightest to serve on recruiting duty—still factors into the process for selecting Marines for those assignments. While the Service does not select recruiters based on their race, gender, or socio-economic background, the high standards applied to selection yield a diverse cohort of Marines on recruiting duty. This is a testament to the quality and diversity of the total force.

Comparing the Marine Corps recruiting force to the total force, CNIP, and Census data shows that the recruiting force is roughly representative of the CNIP benchmarks for the Black and Hispanic populations. White and Asian recruiters are underrepresented relative to their CNIP benchmarks. (See Figure 2.) This is a significant indicator of the importance the Marine Corps places on recruiting diversity—in line with the words of Gen Boomer over thirty years ago—to ensure that the Marine Corps' finest Marines are recruiting the next version of themselves. Young people of all backgrounds, as they make the life-changing decision to join the Corps, can look to Marines in their communities and see someone who looks like them. The success over the last decade emphatically demonstrates the Corps' commitment to this ideal, but that success must be sustained and improved

| Recruiting Force Demographics | White (Euro/Anglo) | White (Other) | Hispanic/Latino | Black/African American | Asian | Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander | American Indian/ Native Alaskan | Declined to respond |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Recruiting Force Total** | 45.5% | 8.0% | 21.4% | 14.4% | 2.9% | 1.6% | 0.9% | 5.4% |
| **Marine Corps Total** | 60.34% | 2.5%[1] | 21.1% | 9.7% | 3.1% | 0.8% | 1.0% | 1.45% |
| **CNIP[2] (age 17–24)** | 57.1% | — | 21.4% | 14.0% | 6.8% | 0.7%[3] | 0.7%[3] | — |
| **National Census[4]** | 60.1% | — | 18.5% | 13.4% | 5.9% | 0.2% | 1.3% | 2.8%[5] |

[1]Marine Corps total includes all "Other/Unknown," not just White (Other).

[2]Civilian Non-Institutionalized People according to Woods & Poole Population Data (gold standard for Office of People and Analytics).

[3]American Indian, Alaskan Native, Hawaiian and Pacific Islander are combined.

[4]Includes all people and not only military age 17–29 eligible.

[5]Substituted with two or more races from census.gov

*Figure 2. Marine Corps Recruiting Command demographic comparison.*

**Gender-integrated training at boot camp is simply one part of ensuring the future force reflects the values of the American people.** (Photo by Cpl Aneshea Yee.)

upon as the institution and the Nation it serves continue to evolve.

The "no fail" mission of accessing high-quality officer and enlisted applicants is a Title 10 responsibility assigned to MCRC by the Commandant, yet it belongs to all Marines.[14] All Marines make an impact on their communities, for good or ill, based on their behavior in and out of uniform. Likewise, every command serves as a de facto recruiting agent by establishing a command climate that either encourages or dissuades its Marines' retention. In April 2021, the Commandant assigned a retention mission for FY22 to every Major Subordinate Command, based on each unit's eligible population.[15] This type of institutional commitment to human capital and revolutionizing manpower management is vital to realizing the Commandant's vision and sustaining broad demographic representation in our Corps.

## Future Force

To fully realize *Force Design 2030* and create a more mature force, we must shift the personnel model's focus to Subsequent Term Alignment Plan (STAP) over First Term Alignment Plan (FTAP). This will require a team effort across the force. MCRC's mandate is to identify, attract, recruit, prepare, and access the most talented individuals from the qualified population. These individuals possess the physical tenacity, competitive spirit, memory and processing speed, pattern recognition ability, flexibility, and adaptability the Marine Corps needs in its 21st century warriors.[16] These men and women are smart, life-long learners who understand that while equipment and tactical modernization is vital, the Marine Corps' bid for success is its people and their ability to adapt to emergent threats in a variety of environments. Individuals with these attributes are sought by competitors—other Services, universities, Fortune 500 companies—and come from every corner of the Nation, increasing the demand for diversity. The hard work and dedication of the recruiting force provides momentum for achieving the competitive edge necessary to compete and to succeed in evolving the Marine Corps into a melting pot of the personal, educational, cultural, and ethnic backgrounds that are important to building a more capable, lethal, future force.

While the final transformation from an FTAP to STAP force may yield smaller enlisted and officer accession requirements, the process will require years of effort across the institution. A more talented recruit does not automatically make a more mature and capable Marine. He must still be trained, mentored, led, retained, and promoted to get to this point. Institutional commitment, in the form of manpower, resources, and guidance, is essential throughout this transition. MCRC's proven methodology and future innovation and modernization efforts will require ownership and action at every level. If accessions requirements decrease, MCRC cannot allow a vocal minority to affect accession diversity. To this end, the Service must take a whole of Marine Corps approach to provide potential applicants within the qualified population to see value and inclusivity in the decision to join the Corps. Marine recruiters and leaders must continue to effectively represent the target market, and to the degree possible the Nation, to facilitate attraction to a career of service in America's Corps. (See Figure 3 on next page.)

To exploit MCRC's continued success in attracting high-quality accessions from all backgrounds, the Marine Corps must exert ownership of the talent management process at every level. Institutional accountability for command climate, FTAP and STAP retention, and removing historical barriers to retention are issues the leadership of the Corps must address. As the face of the Nation evolves, so must the culture of its future "recruit to retain" Marine Corps.

### Notes

1. Victor H. Krulak, *First to Fight: An Inside Look at the Marine Corps*, (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1984).

2. Ibid.

3. Although the executive order specified full integration, many have made the case that this was not fully implemented as the order was written. For further discussion, see: Steven Morris, "How Blacks Upset the Marine Corps," *Ebony*, (Los Angeles, CA: Johnson Publishing Company, December 1969).

4. Office of the U.S. President, Executive Order 9981, *Establishing the President's Committee on Equality of Treatment and Opportunity in the Armed Forces*, (Washington, DC: July 1948).

## Demographics



Legend: ■ White □ Black ■ Hispanic ■ Asian ■ HI / PI ■ Native ■ Declined
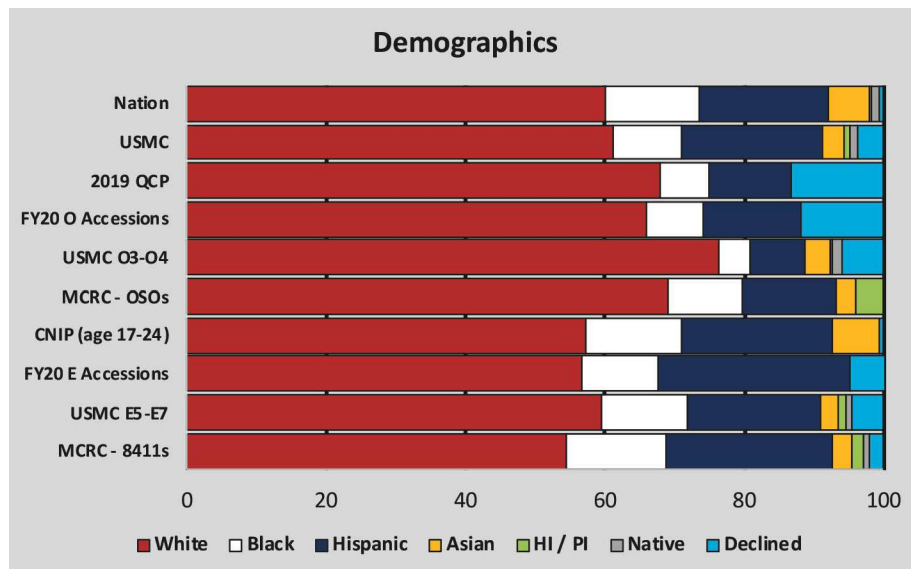
1. **Woods & Poole Population Data from Census – includes all people, not just military age (17–29) eligible.**
2. **182,961 Marines as of 30 June 2020.**
3. **Qualified Candidate Population—Center for Naval Analysis data based on multiple sources—data used to apportion officer recruiting mission across the Nation.**
4. **Combines American Indian, Alaskan Native, Asian, Hawaiian, Pacific Islander and Declined.**
5. **USMC O3-O4 population feeds MCRC officer population (RSCO, XO, OpsO, OSO)—OSO recruits the future officers.**
6. **Civilian Non-Institutionalized People—Woods & Poole Population Data (gold standard for Office of People and Analytics) used to apportion enlisted recruiting mission across the nation.**
7. **Marine Corps E5-E7 population feeds MCRC 8411 (recruiter, non-career type) population.**
8. **American Indian, Alaskan Native, Hawaiian, Pacific Islander and Declined are combined.**

*Figure 3. Detailed demographic comparison.*

5. Headquarters Marine Corps, *Marine Corps Recruiting Order 1100.1 Enlistment Processing Manual*, (Washington, DC: 2011).

6. The DOD uses the following U.S. Census data for comparisons: Enlisted personnel are compared with U.S. civilians ages 17 to 44 with at least a high school diploma, General Educational Development certificate, or equivalent. Officers are compared with U.S. civilians ages 19 to 44 with at least a bachelor's degree. (Source: Department of Defense Board on Diversity and Inclusion Report: Recommendations to Improve Racial and Ethnic Diversity and Inclusion in the U.S. Military.) MCRC uses a combination of metrics, including the same data, to be more accurate and represent the Marine Corps' standards for enlistment age and quality. This is in line with the Military Leadership Diversity Commission's 2011 recommendation in Decision Paper #8: Metric that says, "The eligible population may be considered a more practical demographic benchmark for DOD and the Services."

7. MCRC is currently reevaluating this metric to better define the available market—to include women and other categories that could provide a more complete data set to analyze.

MCRC further refines CNIP from Woods & Poole to more closely reflect the market: 17 to 24 year olds enrolled in high school, high school seniors, high school graduates, enrolled in college, associate's degree complete (no longer enrolled), and college graduates. MCRC then aligns quality standards by removing General Educational Development recipients and dropouts. MCRC takes Mental Category predictions by multiplying MCRC CNIP data by the Target Market Predictor Model, which provides a greater picture on historical ASVAB results to show Mental Group Alpha and Bravo numbers at the zip code level. Finally, MCRC makes propensity calculations based on ten-year DOD contracting history at the zip code level.

8. Joint Advertising and Marketing Research & Studies provides all Services with market research and studies on the perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes of American youth as they relate to joining the Military. The TMP forecasts a prospect's chances to pass the ASVAB at specific levels.

9. The U.S. Office of Management and Budget reports race using a minimum of six categories (American Indian or Alaskan Native, Asian,

Black or African American, multiracial, Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, and White) and uses two categories for ethnicity (Hispanic and non-Hispanic). The U.S. Office of Management and Budget is responsible for the DD Form 1966.

10. These categories are: OTHHSP, US-CANINDIAN, OTHASIAN, PR, FILIPINO, MEXICAN, ALASKA NATIVE, CUBAN, AFRICAN, CARIBBEAN, INDIAN, MELANES, AUSTRALASIAN/ABORIGINE, CHINESE, GUAMANIAN, JAPANESE, KOREAN, POLYNES, EUROPEAN/ANGLO, OTHPACIS, LATINAMER, ARAB, VIET, MICRONES, DECLINED TO RESPOND.

11. Staff, "The All-Volunteer Force and the Need for Sustained Investment in Recruiting," (Alexandria, VA: Center for Naval Analyses, April 2020).

12. Headquarters Marine Corps, *Marine Corps Training Program (MCTP) 6-10A Sustaining the Transformation*, (Washington, DC: April 2018).

13. Col William J. Bowers, "Making Marines in the All-Volunteer Era: Recruiting, Core Values, and the Perpetuation of Our Ethos," *Marine Corps Gazette*, (Quantico, VA: November 2014).

14. See MCRC Table of Organization.

15. Headquarters Marine Corps, *MARADMIN 200/21 Fiscal Year 2022 Enlisted Retention Campaign*, (Washington, DC: April 2021).

16. 21st Century Warrior based off the Commandant's vision for future force development that states, "Our desired endstate also requires elite warriors with physical and mental toughness, tenacity, initiative, and aggressiveness to innovate, adapt, and win in a rapidly changing operating environment." (Source: Gen David H. Berger, *38th Commandant's Planning Guidance,* [Washington, DC: July 2019].)

# Recruit the Recruiter

## Building a capable force

### by MGySgt Jared Cobb & Capt Brian Kiraly

**M**arine Corps Recruiting Command (MCRC) is deploying a Recruit the Recruiter (RtR) campaign that will increase awareness and entice volunteers for the recruiting Special Duty Assignment (SDA). This is a collaborative effort between MCRC and Manpower & Reserve Affairs (M&RA) Manpower Management and is designed to attract talented individuals to recruiting and reduce the need for non-volunteers. A successful campaign will benefit commanders and FMF units. It will also depressurize the entire manpower system. For Commanders, it will significantly reduce the time necessary for SDA administrative requirements. Additionally, the FMF will experience improved unit readiness and force stabilization. The byproduct for MCRC is improved quality of life for its Marines assigned to recruiting duty and a capable force that supports the needs of *Force Design 2030*.[1]

### Background

MCRC maintains 3,198 enlisted canvassing recruiters (MOS 8411) across the Nation to find, attract, and recruit high quality enlisted and officer accessions. That force provides MCRC a capacity to produce 36,000 to 38,000 new non-prior service accessions each year in support of end strength. MCRC turns over approximately one-third of its recruiting force each year, requiring Manpower Management Enlisted Assignments (MMEA) to produce around 1,200 Basic Recruiters Course (BRC) graduates annually. In Fiscal Year (FY) 21, nearly 7,000 career Marines between the ranks of corporal and gunnery sergeant had to be "frozen" for evaluation by the Headquarters Marine Corps Special Duty Assignment Screening Team (HSST). This means that 7,000

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Marines are unavailable for Permanent Change of Station orders during the HSST process that can last up to 21 months.

Marine recruiter volunteers and HSST-selectees come from the available population of career corporals through staff sergeants. MMEA Branch assigns selectees a report date for one of the six BRC, whereupon graduation they are stationed throughout America.

SDA attrition rates between Marines that volunteer and Marines identified on the HSST differ significantly. Data shows it requires ten HSST Marines to produce two SDA graduates. Comparatively, it takes three volunteers to produce the same two SDA graduates. This HSST process is inefficient and produces insufficient results. It creates a significant burden on individual units and the MMEA as a whole.

Two types of SDA attrition are tracked and used as planning factors by Headquarters Marine Corps: pre-class and in-class attrition. Data shows that over the past three years volunteers experience 29 percent pre-class and 6 percent in-class attrition, while HSST directed Marines experience 45 percent pre-class and 16 percent in-class attrition. This data makes a compelling case for increased volunteerism.

For example, for FY21, V25 had 42 Marines who required HSST screening. Each of those Marines were required to complete the screening checklist for each of the three SDAs (recruiter, drill instructor, and det. commander). The amount of time it takes each Marine and their unit to complete this task is twenty hours. It takes numerous Marines in the unit, not to mention medical and dental screening, to support the
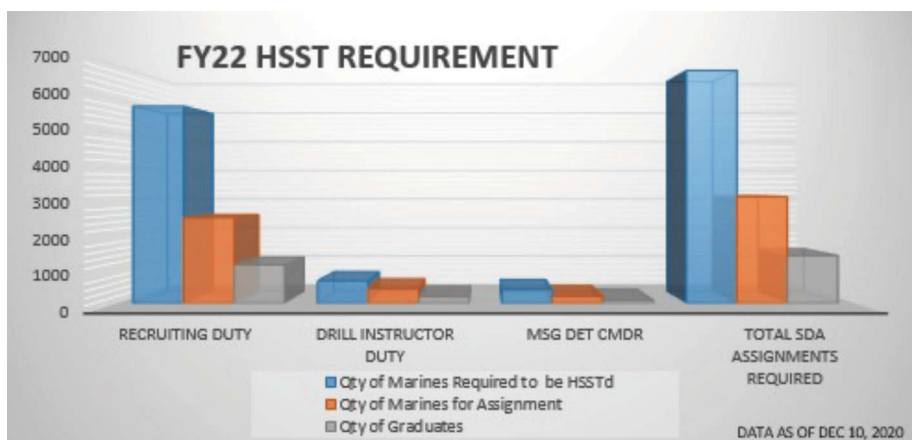


**Figure 1.**

screening process. For V25, that equated to 840 man-hours to produce eight qualified SDA Marines. To produce the same eight would have only required 13 volunteers, a savings of 580 man-hours.

### Method

MCRC coordinated with MMEA to reduce reliance on HSST and develop the RtR program. The campaign's goal is to increase awareness that in turn increases volunteerism and reduces the HSST requirement for over 7,000 Marines each year. The campaign's purpose is to increase knowledge through in-person (virtual, when necessary) "awareness" briefs to eligible Marines outlining the benefits of volunteering, dispelling rumors and answering questions about recruiting duty opportunities.

The goal is to utilize the professional sales force of 8412 Career Recruiters, to create an awareness, and increase the desirability of SDA to fleet and support establishment Marines and their leaders. Marine Corps Special Operations Command (MARSOC) is an example of how effective this program can be. Marine Corps Special Operations Command utilizes the 8412 Career Recruiters and 4810 Career Recruiting Warrant Officers to successfully recruit its annual requirement by employing MCRC's systematic recruiting process of face-to-face, kneecap-to-kneecap discussions used to identify, increase propensity, and recruit Marines interested in their program.

Charged with coordinating and managing the program for their regions, including OCONUS efforts, MCRC's RtR Coordinators are in Camp LeJeune and Camp Pendleton at the Schools of Infantry. According to the densest eligible populations, units are prioritized, much like a canvassing recruiter's high schools and community colleges. The RtR Coordinators will conduct information briefs with commands to ensure the leadership understands the RtR program and the benefits offered to their Marines. Following leadership briefs, they will then coordinate awareness briefs for



**FY21 V25 SDA Process Hours Expended**

260

840

■ Volunteers: time spent to produce 8 grads
■ HSST: time spent to produce 8 grads

*Figure 2.*

eligible populations—at any location and time the unit desires.

The purpose of the awareness brief is to increase the Marine's understanding of recruiting duty, the benefits of volunteering, the chances of a successful tour, and the process of when and how to volunteer. Benefits include:
- Bonuses (volunteer only).
- SDA pay tailored to the individual.
- Increased opportunity for meritorious promotion.
- A marketable skill set and college credits.
- Geographical preference after completion of the duty.[2]
- Family stability.

The geographical preference is a significant benefit that most Marines do not understand. For example, a Marine that volunteers for recruiting can pick one of the six annual BRC classes. The class will not convene for 12 to 24 months in the future, ensuring the Marine and family members that they will not move until then. The volunteer will also have an opportunity to choose their preferred recruiting station, forecasting the general location of where they will be stationed during their three years on recruiting duty. Finally, having the geographical preference for completing an SDA tour provides an additional two to three years of stability. A volunteering Marine can theoretically plan their geographical location for the next eight years of their career.

### End state

The savings of time and money the RtR program will provide is significant. The goal is to reach 70 percent volunteer

recruiters by FY27. That is a six percent incremental increase year over year. In FY21, 7,000 Marines were not assignable by monitors or commanders (unable to Permanent Change of Station/A) as they awaited HSST screening because SDAs had to be properly manned. Achieving the 70 percent objective in FY27 will reduce the amount of Marines required to be HSST screened and assigned dramatically. It will also reduce the number of unassignable Marines to 1,500.

The positive benefits of volunteerism are infectious; they have the potential to optimize every facet of the unit, including the family unit.[3] All of this leads to a better output back to the fleet. Marines leaving recruiting duty will have a positive outlook on their SDA experience and pass that positivity to younger Marines to encourage them to volunteer for the duty. Volunteerism has the promise of changing the cultural perception about recruiting duty.

The changes outlined in this article are an innovative and systematic approach that addresses a long-standing challenge: how to encourage and attract Marines to recruiting duty. Successful execution of the RtR campaign will benefit all levels of the institution. Furthermore, the fruits of those benefits enhance readiness, capabilities, and continued mission success in the future.

### Notes

1. Gen David H Berger, *38th Commandant's Planning Guidance*, (Washington, DC: July 2019).

2. Headquarters Marine Corps, *MCO 1326.6, Selecting, Screening, and Preparing Enlisted Marines for Screenable Billets and Independent Duty Assignments (SCREENMAN)*, (Washington, DC: February 2019).

3. Staff, "2020 Recruiter Quality Of Life Survey," (Alexandria, VA: Joint Advertising and Research Studies Program, 2020).

USMC

# The Direct Affiliation Program

## Supporting the total force recruiting effort

### by Capt Juan Torres

The *2018 National Defense Strategy* inaugurated a profound shift of focus in the Marine Corps from inland operations and non-state actors to the littorals and peer competitors. This fundamental shift was the catalyst for the Commandant of the Marine Corps' (CMC) *Force Design 2030* and refocus on the Marines Corps' amphibious roots. In *Force Design 2030*, the CMC calls for an integrated force with no distinct semi-independent active and reserve components.[1] To achieve the CMC's vision of developing a highly integrated force, the Marine Corps must optimize current reserve programs. The Direct Affiliation Program (DAP) is one such program that provides a sensible solution to creating a ready, integrated reserve force.

The DAP is an established conduit for retaining highly qualified Marines as they transition between the active and reserve components. Each year, approximately 75 percent of first-term, active component Marines end active service (EAS). The reasons for departure vary; however, many of these Marines possess valuable experience, leadership, and skillsets required to maintain a viable Marine Corps Reserve. Upon separation, the vast majority of the Marines have obligated time remaining and transfer into the Individual Ready Reserve (IRR)—the most populous category of the Ready Reserve.

Upon entry into the Marine Corps, every Marine signs an enlistment contract or service agreement (officers) for eight years of obligated service. The traditional active component contract/agreement is a combination of four years of active service and four years of reserve

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service, typically in the IRR. Reserve Marines have a similar contract with six years as a drilling reservist and two years in the IRR. Although exceptions to these contract structures exist, most Marines transfer into the IRR upon EAS after four years of active component service.

Once in the IRR, MCRC employs its prior service recruiting force to find Marines willing to affiliate with the Selected Marine Corps Reserve (SMCR) or Individual Mobilization Augmentee (IMA) program, educate them on the various aspects of the reserve, and af-

filiate them to a SMCR or IMA unit. Historically, this method has proven to be effective; however, this approach does not facilitate 100 percent contact with the separating active component population. Many qualified Marines depart the active component and disperse throughout the United States remaining uninformed of the many Marine Corps reserve opportunities. Only through a holistic, congruent, and united effort between MCRC, active component career planners, and unit commanders can reserve opportunities be explored, providing different avenues for Marines to continue service.

The DAP can synergize total force efforts by integrating active and reserve component efforts. Unit transition coordinators, unit commanders, and active component career planners



**To generate and sustain the force envisioned in FD2030, the Corps must optimize current reserve recruiting and training programs.** (Photo by LCpl Ernesto Rojascorrea.)

are required to speak to each and every Marine (enlisted and officer) throughout their first enlistment during initial, EAS, and first-term alignment (FTAP) interviews.[2] These interviews provide an opportunity to explore the needs, plans, and desires of Marines who are approaching their separation date. For those who ultimately elect to separate, understanding how to affiliate with the reserve component is time-sensitive. Combining the collective efforts of the active and reserve components facilitates and synergizes total-force recruiting, enhances the capabilities of the Marine Corps, and helps to achieve a better trained, educated, and motivated force. With a total-force mindset, active component career planners will fully service Marines and the institution by providing all available options (active and reserve) for each transitioning Marine.

One cannot overstate the benefits of DAP. The program provides transitioning Marines a guaranteed billet and, once affiliated in a drilling status, the Marine will receive reserve pay for each drill attended. Also, complete active component TRICARE benefits are extended for an additional 180 days after EAS easing the pressure Marines, many with families, may experience as they attempt to establish themselves in the civilian sector. Additionally, drilling reserve Marines qualify for TRICARE reserve select plans that have lower premium costs than private civilian sector health insurance. Education benefits can also be transferred to family members at any time as long as the Marine serves four years in the SMCR. Many Marines are afforded the opportunity to lateral move to a different MOS or request an affiliation bonus. Finally, the intangible, yet real, sense of belonging, purpose, and service can still be obtained within the reserve component.[3]

The Marine Corps as an institution also benefits from immediate affiliation of active component Marines to the reserve component via the DAP. Reserve units gain experienced, disciplined, and skilled Marines to train and contribute to the reserve mission once affiliated. The experience, knowledge, and leadership of transitioning non-



*The total force needs a sustainable option to recruit a ready, integrated reserve force fully capable of augmenting the active component. (Photo by LCpl Ernesto Rojascorrea.)*

commissioned officers and company-grade officers to the reserve ranks greatly benefits the reserve units and helps to bolster reserve retention. Currently, 55 percent of non-DAP Marines joined to reserve units today will not be in the unit a year from now. The expectation of the reserve component to maintain readiness cannot be sustained if this attrition percentage persists. Over the same 12-month period, Marines joined via DAP attrite at a much lower rate (33 percent) than those recruited from the IRR. The FY21 reserve accession mission is 10,162 (6,011 non-prior service, 4,041 prior service, 110 ROCP) established to meet the desired reserve FY end-strength of 37,253.[4] To state another way, MCRC's reserve mission is between a quarter to a third of the entire Marine Corps selected reserve, a cycle that is repeated almost every FY. The DAP can help positively change that amount of turnover by increasing retention rates and assist in reserve component talent management.

The DAP is a sustainable option that the total force should utilize to provide a ready, integrated reserve body fully capable of augmenting the active component. It must remain at the forefront of total-force recruiting efforts. Through the continued utilization and promotion of the DAP, the Marine Corps reserve

would become a force more experienced and capable of integrating with the active component for global force requirements and contingencies. The increased experience and capability would result in Marines remaining with reserve units for significant periods of time creating a more cohesive, ready, and integrated force. This would accomplish the vision outlined by the CMC in *Force Design 2030* by creating a fully integrated force with no distinct semi-independent active and reserve components.

### Notes

1. Gen David H. Berger, *Force Design 2030*, (Washington, DC: March 2020).

2. Headquarters Marine Corps, *MCO 1040.31, Enlisted Retention and Career Development Program*, (Washington, DC: September 2010).

3. Headquarters Marine Corps, *MARADMIN 279/20, The Active Component to Selected Marine Corps Reserve (SMCR) or Individual Mobilization Augmentee Direct Affiliation Program*, (Washington, DC: May 2020).

4. Headquarters Marine Corps, *FY21 Manpower Accession and Retention Plan (MEMO-1)*, (Washington, DC: October 2020).

USMC

# Uniforms or Degrees

## Meritocracy, competition, and high school recruiting at RS San Diego
### by Capt Katie D. Sliwoski

The Marine Corps is a merit-based organization, where rank, promotion, and placement in key leadership positions are not predicated solely on length of service and time in grade but also on abilities, achievements, and leadership potential. While time in grade establishes a timeline and guidelines for changes in rank, meritorious promotions for enlisted and now merit re-ordering for officers are always possible. Although the Marine Corps enjoys a long history of success through meritocratic re-shuffling based on current performance, some influencers of high school students (e.g., some parents and educators) see educational credentials as the primary paths for young people's success.

Marine Corps Recruiting focuses its efforts on entry-level candidates like high school seniors. The main competitor for high school graduates, besides the other Services, is the alternative of college. The high school environment poses a unique set of obstacles to Marine Corps Recruiting Command (MCRC) because Marine recruiters often meet societal and cultural resistance when reaching out to students. This is primarily because of the perceptions that college is the primary path for success, and that a college education and the Marine Corps are incompatible. The perspective represented in this article is based on the experiences faced in Recruiting Station San Diego, whose area of operations extend to all of San Diego County, parts of Riverside County (south of Moreno Valley), east as far as El Centro in Imperial Valley, and all U.S. territories and bases in the Pacific.

### False Polarities

The underlying issue of high school recruiting in San Diego and the Pacific

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in many schools is a "Catch-22": educators and parents who do not always understand the Marine Corps but resist welcoming Marine recruiters at their schools. As a result, there is a perpetual lack of understanding of the Marine Corps. Hawai'i County, for example, has a strict "opt-out" program that allows parents to choose whether students can have their information sent to military recruiters or only "higher

education institutions."[1] This policy undermines the Every Student Succeeds Act, which automatically provides the opportunity for every student to be contacted by both military and colleges. A parent (or student eighteen years or older) may submit a written request to opt out of having the student's name, address, and telephone number shared with either the military or institutions of higher learning. The Federal government requires schools to let parents (and students eighteen and over) know of this opportunity. However, if schools provide less access to military recruiters than institutions of higher education or other prospective employers, then this violates the Every Student Succeeds Act contact.[2]

Schools occasionally take "notify" too far and actually promote the "opt-out" program through strong encouragement to decline when parents register their students for the school year. When schools strongly encourage instead of merely informing parents of the "opt-out" program, student directories often contain less than 25 percent of the student population.[3] Some schools make it difficult to obtain a list at all. For ex-

ample, at four of our schools for school year 2020–2021, a list may only be available to recruiters during a specific week in a specific month, even after multiple levels of leadership contact the school district multiple times. It is uncertain if the same restrictions are applied to institutions of higher education and other private-sector employers. San Diego Unified School District allows for only two official visits a year for military recruiters and institutions of higher education alike.[4] However, a full program of class talks meant to reach the entire junior and senior student body must occur within those two visits. When schools enact these barriers, it limits the opportunities for all students to learn about post-graduation military service

> *Marine Corps Recruiting focuses its efforts on entry-level candidates like high school seniors. The main competitor for high school graduates, besides the other Services, is the alternative of college.*

opportunities. Understandably, schools have to balance requirements from the state for compulsory state testing and instructional hours with any external educational enrichment opportunities. The argument is not to overwhelm those requirements but to have a future in the Marine Corps be included as an option when offering post graduate opportunities to the student body. In an age of virtual classes and teleworking, it is easy for educators to ignore an email or phone call. While there is Recruiter Access to High School directory maintained by the Department of Defense Accessions Policy after an O-6 visits a school, the steps to break ground and make this happen at the recruiter and recruiting station level can be daunting. It takes more than citing the Soloman Act or Every Student Succeeds Act to win over school administrators.[5] Severely restricting student directories and recruiter access happens in 10 to 15 schools out of the 151 schools accounted for in Recruiting San Diego every school year, with moderate restrictions account for 50 to 60 of our schools. Restricting recruiter activities on campus is most concentrated in urban areas of San Diego County and Honolulu county. Oftentimes, these restrictions can be overcome if Marines have the opportunity to build rapport and demonstrate to the school administrators, staff, and educators when they can demonstrate that their activities are informational and beneficial to the student body at large—especially when they volunteer to proctor tests, pass out lunches, coach teams, and provide mentorship to the student body.

Further complicating this issue is the false narrative among some Americans that military recruiters target low-income students exclusively and manipulate them to join the military. This narrative is false, and many do not know it. A November 2006 publication from Cathleen M. McHugh and Anita U. Hattiangadi, titled "Emerging Issues in USMC Recruiting: Comparing the Socioeconomic Characteristics of Military Prospects and Non-Prospects," used Educational Longitudinal Survey Data and National Education Longitudinal Study data to analyze whether this narrative is true. They stated:

In conclusion, we find no compelling evidence that 2004 male high school seniors who planned to enlist (prospects) were disadvantaged compared with those who planned to work full time (non-prospects) ... those who actually enlist are more likely than those who do not enlist ... to attend post secondary education ... Taken together, these results suggest that military prospects are not disproportionately disadvantaged.[6]

Yet, the false narrative that military recruiters "take advantage" or low-income students persists. A recent example is from July 2020, when New York 14th district representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez stated:

Whether through recruitment stations in their lunchrooms, or now through e-sports teams, children in low-income communities are persistently targeted for enlistment ... the military stops feeling like a "choice" and starts feeling like the only option for many young, low-income Americans.[7]

While Ocasio-Cortez is not representative of all Americans, this quote illustrates the extent to which some of the general public misunderstand military recruiting efforts in high schools. Marine recruiters are missioned to visit every accredited high school in their sector. The Marine Corps does not discriminate between those of higher or lower income. It is in this spirit that Marine recruiters sell the intangible benefits of being a Marine first.

Yet, if parents, students, schools, and school districts wall off their students from learning about the opportunities of military service, they prevent students from all backgrounds to hear and respond to the call of service. Marines report being told to stay away from students because they are "brainwashing them" and encourage them to become "bullet sponges."[8] In Recruiting Station San Diego's area of operations, the schools enforcing strict recruiting restrictions are schools whose demographics are overwhelmingly in a higher-income bracket. This is best demonstrated through public data on free and reduced school lunch program; students eligible for free and reduced lunch is less than 20 percent of the

student population at schools most restrictive towards Marine recruiters.[9] Navigating through high schools in San Diego is further perplexing considering the high percentage of retired and veteran service members in San Diego's area of operations. While one would think that a region with wide access to military culture and infrastructure would contain school districts amenable to military service, the opposite is often the reality for recruiters.

## Next Steps and Solutions

One of the ways the Marine Corps can continue to attract talented enlisted and officer corps is to reclaim and reemphasize what it means to be a Marine to the civilian population. The most recent wars in the Middle East collapsed some of the boundaries between the Army and the Marine Corps, making their functions too similar. The counterinsurgent roles expected of Marines in the middle of the mountains and the desert displaced the Corps' traditional role as an elite, first-to-fight, amphibious force. Commandant Berger's recent orders to reorient the Corps back to mobile and amphibious warfighting has the potential to amplify Marine Corps recruiting efforts, as Headquarters and MCRC work to implement the Commandant's vision for the Corps.

While there are national-level campaigns that MCRC directs, investing in marketing and communication (MAC) Marines can leverage specific values that appeal to the local market. At present, marketing and communication Marines are sergeants and below. While these young MAC Marines are motivated, their enthusiasm for their craft does not often translate to competence or ability to take information at the ground level, translate it to what would be helpful to a recruiter, and duplicate those efforts throughout the recruiting station. Too often, efforts led by the national team generate more leads than those locally, when it should be the opposite. Placing a MAC Marine with proven leadership and developed skill sets—like a staff non-commissioned officer—would aid in identifying markets requiring more awareness and creating opportunities to generate leads from those underrep-

resented communities in the Marine Corps. This strategy would work well with the high school recruiting market given the long-term initiatives needed to develop relationships and turn public opinion positively toward Marine recruitment efforts. Another solution involves the Basic Recruiter Course arming recruiters with skills and knowledge to best communicate within a community and with educators pre-disposed to thinking the military is a poor choice for smart students. This can be done through role-play, digital engagement, and developing relationships to get on school websites for post-graduation options.

As a final solution, the Marine Corps might better integrate and promote the importance of education and lifelong learning as foundational to being a Marine. A few existing programs like Educators Workshop and the High School Awards program provide entry points into challenging school environments to inform schools and students about the Marine Corps' emphasis on education and meritocratic system. Despite these programs and tools and based on my experiences in San Diego, there remains a clear misunderstanding amongst educators about the role of education in developing a talented Marine Corps. Advertising tuition assistance, Naval Post Graduate School, the Marine Corps Post-Doctoral program, and the GI Bill with educators could improve this perception.

This final option has promising prospects for success. Cathleen McHugh and Anita Hattiangadi found that military prospects are more likely than non-prospects to have future educational plans.[10] Furthermore, *enlistees were more likely than those in the non-enlistee comparison group to attend post-secondary education*. If more parents, educators, and students eighteen and over knew these facts, the resistance to Marine Corps recruiters might be reduced.

Marine Corps recruiting efforts are nothing without the high schools. MCRC operations guidelines states, "All of the major recruiting programs are important, but the HS/CC is the cornerstone of recruiting efforts."[11] It is in the high schools that the American

population has the best chance of being educated about the Marine Corps. All high school diploma graduates come from the high school population, which to maintain MCRC standards must make up at least 95 percent of the recruits of a recruiting station. Long-term success of recruiting depends on the health of high school recruiting efforts. COVID-19 highlighted how essential it is to maintain and build rapport with

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*Long-term success of recruiting depends on the health of high school recruiting efforts.*

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schools as schools will often not make space and time available unless that the Marine recruiter works aggressively requests it. Ideally, school districts should seek the Marine recruiter to speak to students and introduce them to the many education and career opportunities in the Marine Corps as a "First Choice" in their students' lives. Placing the challenges of the recruiter in the larger scheme of competing meritocracies provides a lens through which national-level recruiting campaigns can more effectively generate awareness and assist in breaking through barriers at the local level.

### Notes

1. State of Hawai'i, Department of Education, "OPT OUT," available at https://www.hawaiipublicschools.org.

2. United States Department of Education, Office of Management, *Every Student Succeeds Act Letter*, (Washington, DC: November 2016).

3. One of our more restrictive schools in Hawaii county only had 24 out of 115, 20.9 percent, of the seniors provide information to military recruiters. The most restrictive school in Imperial county had only 24 out of 270 students, 8.9 percent of their senior class on the student directory. The goal is to achieve 75 percent of the student body with lists obtained from the schools. Recruiting Station San Diego's list at-

tainment average for list to students registered is approximately a 56 percent gross average. (Data based on list attainment as recorded in MCRISS RS San Diego, pulled 1 May 2021).

4. San Diego Unified School District, "Campus Recruiter Activities, AR1605(a)," (San Diego, CA: December 2017).

5. The Solomon Amendment is a federal law that allows military recruiters to access some address, biographical, and academic program information on students age seventeen and older.

6. Cathleen M. McHugh and Anita U. Hattiangadi, *Emerging Issues in USMC Recruiting: Comparing the Socioeconomic Characteristics of Military Prospects and Non-Prospects,* (Alexandria, VA: CAN, 2006). Approved for public release.

7. John Bowden, "Ocasio-Cortez Calls for End to Federal Funding for Military Recruitment in Schools," *The Hill*, (July 2020), available at https://thehill.com. Ocasio-Cortez calls for end to federal funding for military recruitment in schools.

8. These are direct quotes from Marine recruiters when conducting pull up bar challenges at their assigned schools in February of 2020.

9. National Center for Education Statistics, "Sage Creek High School," and "Vista High School," Search for Public Schools (ed.gov). Sage Creek High School does not allow any class talks by recruiters on campus, with 19 percent of their student body receiving free and reduced lunch. Vista High School, a school in the same sector, has a free and reduced lunch program for 57 percent of its student population, allows military recruiters full access to set up and provide information to students.

10. *Emerging Issues in USMC Recruiting: Comparing the Socioeconomic Characteristics of Military Prospects and Non-Prospects.*

11. Marine Corps Recruiting Command, *Marine Corps Recruiting Station Operations, 2020 Edition, Volume III,* (Quantico, VA: 2020).

USMC

# Prior Service Recruiting

## Optimized seeding of the inactive ready reserve

### by Capt Robert Fusco

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Since its release in 2019, the *38th Commandant's Planning Guidance* (*CPG*) has been a keystone document for transformational shifts in the Marine Corps to address the organization's dynamic needs in the age of near-peer, great-power competition. In this document, Gen Berger makes clear that talent management is one of the Corps top priorities stating,

> The essence of all manpower systems is to encourage those you need and want to stay and separate who are not performing to standards. Our current system lacks the authorities and tools to accomplish that simple outcome in anything but a blunt way.[1]

In the context of recruiting, this problem is manifest in the disconnect between the Marine Corps Recruiting Command's (MCRC) non-prior service (NPS) and prior service recruiting (PSR) missions and the resulting loss of talent after first-term enlistment that MCRC is not currently efficiently planning for or exploiting. To address this problem and to enact modern talent management, the Marine Corps must curtail the outflow of trained professionals following first term enlistments into the individual ready reserve (IRR) in unviable locations by seeding the IRR population via an optimal active component (AC) Program Enlisted-For (PEF) code distribution future potential billet identification code (BIC)-match scheme.

The Manpower Model is an incredibly complex and interconnected system with human-choice decision points spread across time. That system bleeds talent through inefficiencies at discrete and predictable events in terms of the career of any individual Marine—some avoidable, some a part of human nature. The Marine Corps statistically has both the youngest population and the highest rate of annual turnover of any DOD branch.[2] Sixty-four percent of the total force, roughly 180,000 Marines, have less than four years of active service and are between the ages of 17 to 25.[3] Additionally, this population is almost exclusively constrained to the E1–E5 ranks.[4] The basic math associated with this suggests that between 60 to 70 percent of every annual cohort of Marines assessed will depart the Marine Corps after their first enlistment. This creates enduring friction between recruiting and retention stakeholders on the AC side with the reserve component, in many cases, being an afterthought Corps wide. In the simplest of terms, there must exist a way to better align the systematic input, output, and recycle nodes of the Marine Corps. This translates to a process to more effectively align MCRC, retention, and reserve missions to exploit the unique demographics described above.

As it stands currently, the following chain of events summarize the lifecycle of the vast majority of enlisted Marines. A recruiter engages the eligible population within an area of operations and an applicant from that eligible population signs a contract committing to a set period of years of active and inactive service.[5] That applicant decides on a PEF code through discussions with their recruiter based upon their mental and



*The Marine Corps has the youngest first-term enlisted population of all the Armed Services.* (Photo by PFC Stephen Beard.)

physical qualifications at the Military Entrance Processing Station and the needs of the Marine Corps. Each PEF code comprises a series of possible MOS or jobs they may be assigned to while at recruit training.[6] Upon completion of recruit training, the Marine completes follow-on training aboard a formal learning center and is assigned to a unit to work in that specific MOS during their initial enlistment. Approximately one year removed from the end of their contracted active service, the Marine chooses either to seek re-enlistment or to leave the active component. At this point, if the Marine leaves the active component under honorable conditions without directly affiliating with the Selected Marine Corps Reserve (SMCR) or the Individual Mobilization Augmentee Programs, the Marine will automatically be enrolled in the IRR at their declared home of record (HOR). Marines in the IRR become a part of the recruitable population for PSR recruiters seeking to fill reserve unit BICs with IRR Marines of the requisite MOS and rank living within 150 miles. This conditioned path to re-entry is a historic contributor to reserve manpower deficiencies because of incomplete population matches between the IRR and available billets within the geographical area.[7] Simply put, because initial AC PEF code assignments do not mirror billet requirements for reserve stations within the individual's geographic HOR, PSR recruiters are often recruiting in populations of Marines who lack the MOS requirements for the billets that they are responsible for filling.

The critical components of the above lifecycle are that a Marine enters the AC from a certain location, the Marine Corps pays for training in a specific specialty, then the Marine may depart the active component for the IRR. This is the key point and most exploitable node where the talent bleed is mitigatable; the institution cannot afford to continue to leave MOS, rank, 150-mile drill site radius up to random chance. Per the Marine Forces Reserve website, "Individual Ready Reserve is a category of the Ready Reserve of the Reserve Component of the Armed Forces of the United States composed of former active duty or reserve military personnel

and is authorized under *10 U.S. Code Section 1005*."[8] Additionally,

> the majority of Marines in the IRR are former active component Marines who have not completed their Military Service Obligation (MSO), yet have completed their initial contractual period of active duty ... The remainder of the IRR consists of Marines who have completed their MSO, yet voluntarily agreed to remain associated with the Marine Corps, participating through various means as an IRR Marine or as a "temporary layover" until they can rejoin a SMCR unit or acquire an IMA [Individual Mobilization Augmentee] billet.[9]

Members of the IRR are obligated to provide Dir MCIRSA with their primary residence address; that is to say the Marine Corps knows where its "paid for" talent goes upon departing from the active component, down to the zip code level.[10]

Prior Service Recruiting, a niche subset of recruiting, seeks to harvest this trained talent from the IRR and return it to units, mostly in the form of SMCR BICs. While PSR has a small annual mission, approximately 3,000 to 3,500 Marines, it has a unique set of associated challenges.[11] These challenges include a 150-mile, non-obligor distance constraint when joining a Marine to a SMCR unit, historically turbulent reserve unit planning factors, a discrete recruitable population residing in the IRR, and competing stakeholder priorities.[12] Ironically, these challenges and the inherent links between the active and reserve components also make PSR an excellent candidate for initial implementation of modern talent management practices.

The descriptions of input, output, and return nodes coupled with the differing mission sets of MCRC and M&RA fit a classical model of a supply chain with multiple objectives. Such a system, even under uncertainty, can be optimized via the mathematical disciplines of operations research specifically linear or non-linear programming.[13] An analogous example to the Marine Corps' system is that of a multi-crop farm. The farmer does not haphazardly plant in hopes for best annual yield.

Rather, the farmer plans crop locations and rotations based on a variety of dynamic goals, constraints, and resources such as environmental factors, sustainability, profitability, distances, and various other quantifiable factors. Likewise, the *Force Design 2030* Reserve Initial Planning Team recently imparted a stabilizing effect on reserve unit location and structure through fiscal year 2030 and beyond, mitigating the uncertainty of SMCR unit relocation and composition.[14] Additionally, an initial data pull in September 2020 indicates that over 90 percent of individuals had matching HOR zip codes at time of accession and at their first appearance in the IRR, indicating that the Marine Corps has a viable data set to forecast future IRR MOS location density, further alleviating additional uncertainty.[15] This data is further supported by a 2015 Naval Postgraduate School thesis paper which noted that during a fiscal year 2015 IRR "mega-muster" in Atlanta, a show rate of 60 percent was achieved with a screening effect—the addition of a telephone muster—of 79 percent. This indicates that there is adequate accuracy of physical address information, HOR, as orders were sent via mail.[16]

As such, the Marine Corps should shift from a uniform distribution of PEF codes nationwide to an optimized balance of PEF codes by location. This shift fulfills the needs of PSR mission and their SMCR units in the location while still allotting the necessary flexibility to NPS recruiters to contract individuals across a wide variety of potential jobs. Tangibly, seeding the IRR population with a geographically-optimized AC PEF code distribution scheme MCRC could reasonably expect to see minimal disruption to the NPS mission while simultaneously reducing stress on the volatile PSR mission by increasing the percentage of the IRR population with the required MOS qualifications to fill SMCR billets in given areas. M&RA and Marine Forces Reserve would additionally reap secondhand benefits including larger talent pools of NCOs and above Marines, reduced retraining costs, and reduced inactive duty training travel costs. Additionally, through this implementation, the Marine Corps

would more seamlessly integrate the active and reserve component, creating a more unified force.

The obvious counterarguments to the implementation of such a strategy are two-fold. The first is that executing missioning based off an optimization-based distribution of PEFs is paradoxical to the bottom-up approach to missioning that MCRC has applied since 1994 when MCRC broke away from M&RA.[17] The second is that, anecdotally, neither MCRC nor Reserve Affairs currently have an MOS 8850 Operations Analyst or MOS 8852 Defense System Analyst on their respective staffs, therefore lacking the technical expertise in linear and non-linear programming required to accurately formulate this new annual mission. The first argument is not exclusive to MCRC; it is common across organizations during periods of fundamental change, such as the paradigm shift the Marine Corps is undertaking in the era of great power competition. This resistive attitude favors small unit comfort in known processes while neglecting to realize the degrading and damaging effects to the larger "talent management" system is contradictory to the organization's core values. This counterargument will become less relevant as the Marine Corps overcomes growing pains and learns to cope with the inherent resistance to systemic change.

The second argument is more tangible yet, like many military problems, can be solved by appropriate resourcing and creativity. The potential solutions range from a short-term redistribution of 8850 and 8852 personnel aboard MCB Quantico, augmentation of MOS 8840 Manpower Management Officers at MCRC and Reserve Affairs with MOS 8850 or 8852s, contracting the program out to a federally funded research or and development center, to leveraging the Marine Corps Studies System. Additionally, while not a prohibitive counterargument, decision makers should be aware that results of this program would not manifest for four to six years due to cycle time required for a cohort of Marines to complete their initial term of enlistment. This period spans two full primary change of station cycles

for decision makers and would require an enduring strategic vision spanning multiple billet holders to successfully implement.

To maintain its position as the premier expeditionary maritime fighting force, the Marine Corps must not only recruit the correct people but also retain the correct people. The implementation of a geographically optimized model to seed the IRR population with the requisite talent and stymie the loss of trained talent when traditional retention efforts fail is one such solution. Affiliation in the reserves is a choice, but the key factor of "no"—resulting from living too far of a distance from a reserve unit—is ripe for optimization. This solution offers a low-risk, modern, data-supported, and industry-proven approach to incremental improvement of talent management. At a minimum, the solution above would prompt conversation between active and reserve component stakeholders regarding more cohesive, comprehensive, complimentary, and mathematically sound approaches to missioning across the manpower enterprise. If executed correctly, PSR would shift from an excessively difficult and under-analyzed subset of Marine Corps recruiting to a prime example of a one team, one fight, problem-solving approach. The solution addresses key challenges laid out in the *CPG* such as helping to ensure reserve units are "ready for mobilization"[18] and use all tools available to enact modern talent management, which at the end of the day is what the Corps has been tasked to do to remain the world's preeminent fighting force.[19]

**Notes**

1. Gen David H. Berger, *38th Commandant's Planning Guidance*, (Washington, DC: July 2019).

2. Gen Robert B. Neller, "White Letter 3-18: Sustaining The Corps," (Washington, DC: October 2018).

3. Manpower & Reserve Affairs, "Manpower Performance Indicators: Age Groups," (Quantico, VA: October 2020); and Manpower & Reserve Affairs, "Manpower Performance Indicators: Average Age," (Quantico, VA: October 2020).

4. Manpower & Reserve Affairs, "Manpower Performance Indicators: Years of Service," (Quantico, VA: October 2020).

5. Marine Corps Recruiting Command, *Marine Corps Recruiting Command Order 1100.1A Marine Corps Recruiting Command Enlistment Processing Manual,* (Quantico, VA: May 2020).

6. Ibid.

7. Jennifer Schulte, Elizabeth Bradley, Laura Kelley, and Theresa Kimble, *An Evaluation of the Marine Corps IDT Travel Reimbursement Program*, (Alexandria, VA: Center for Naval Analysis, June 2014).

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# The Reserve Officer Commissioning Program

## Recognizing and solving three challenges

### by Col Alexander Snowden, USMCR

> *"The rapid deployment of the Marines to Korea could not have succeeded without the infusion of Marine Reserves, mobilized by presidential decree shortly after the North Korean invasion. Many of the 33,500 officers and men mustered into the Corps brought to their duties invaluable experience earned from WWII. Within eight months, the Reserves comprised 45 percent of all active-duty Marines."*
>
> *—National Museum of the Marine Corps, Quantico, VA, on Korea*

The term "operational reserve" is not a new one, but it was revived during the mid-2000's as a way for Marine reserve units returning from Operation IRAQI FREEDOM or Operation ENDURING FREEDOM to maintain their skill proficiency gained from years at war. In 2011, a hearing of the Committee on Armed Services at the House of Representatives convened to discuss the way forward with recommendations on maintaining a strong operational reserve in all branches of Service. One of the speakers, Marine MajGen Darrell Moore, Director, Reserve Affairs Division, stated before the committee, "One thing I can tell you is that the Marine reserves and their families, and the employers of our Marine reserves expect our Marine reserves to continue to deploy."[1] With those words, the Marine reserves was transformed from a strategic reserve to an operational one. In the years following, with the decline of combat roles and the dwindling wars on terror, the operational mission of the reserves expanded to utilization as a Special Purpose MAGTF. This task force is used to replace active duty rotations for international training commitments to locations such as Okinawa, Romania, Republic of Georgia, and the Ukraine, as well as Central and South America, thus helping to further liberate active duty Marines from their increasingly-dense long-range training plans.[2] Former MARFORRES Commander LtGen Richard Mills stated in an interview several years ago to the *Marine Corps Times*, "We fill a unique roll among all reserve components in the U.S. military. We are an operational force, not a strategic capability. During 14 years of conflict we were very active in Iraq and Afghanistan. We want to continue that same momentum."[3] Although Marines are trained to fight and win battles in any clime and place, there was one battle that continued to plague leadership. Since enacting a new operational reserve force, there has been a large gap where experienced junior officers should be filling the ranks, particularly within the rapidly deploying reserve battalions. This gap led to a change in reserve officer recruiting strategy in order to find more junior officers to fill its empty billets.

The Selected Marine Corps Reserve (SMCR) wants to attract junior officers immediately after their active duty service because they are the best recruiting targets to keep experience "close to the family." They consist of highly skilled first lieutenants or captains who often have multiple deployments under their belt, making for ideal candidates to lead a reserve platoon or company. However, during the late 2000s, after years of stressful deployments in combat conditions, officers who exited active duty were primarily focused on starting a family and a civilian career in a new city,

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far from the rapid-cycle deployments of the active duty lifestyle. Therefore, recruitment for the reserves was often based on who you knew; friends encouraged each other to stay involved with the Marine Corps through the reserves, something they fleetingly recalled from their exit briefs while departing active duty. Also, the numerous regional Individual Ready Reserve musters run by the Peacetime/Wartime Support Teams acted as a first filter to find potential candidates to get more involved with the reserves for both enlisted and officers.[4] The program provided a carrot to attend, offering a couple hundred bucks for those who showed up to listen to the lectures, but the numerous reserve billets for infantry company grade officers remained largely unfilled.[5]

Many reserve units that were slated to deploy relied heavily on volunteer officers from other SMCR units or Individual Ready Reserve Marines seeking to cross-deck and activate for a shot to deploy. Other times, a unit would not receive the vast majority of their officers until they were at their intermediate location for training several months prior to deployment. This forced a whirlwind of relationship-building in order to understand how the officers and staff non-commissioned officers worked with each other while establishing unit standard operating procedures. As Marines always do, they made it work deploying in support of Operation IRAQI FREEDOM and Operation ENDURING FREEDOM, including combat operations in areas such as Fallujah, Marjah, and the heavily contested region of Sangin in Helmand Provence. Once the reserve unit returned to CONUS though, it quickly resembled the skeleton it once was as officers and staff non-commissioned officers returned to their parent commands or went back to their civilian jobs. The survival of the reserve units to fill their table of organization resembled much of a "steal from Peter to pay Paul" method of filling its officer ranks. There were never enough company grade or junior officers to fill the vast numbers of billets that were gapped as more battalions began to deploy. The answer to the junior officer challenge came in the form of a Marine Corps Order, which included



*OCC-R candidates will still be screened and evaluated at Officer Candidates School. (Photo by LCpl Tyler Pender.)*

the Officer's Candidate Course-Reserve (OCC-R) program.

*Marine Corps Order* (MCO) *1001R.65, Reserve Officer Commissioning Programs*, was introduced to tackle the challenge of the lack of company grade officers in the SMCR community. It states,

> Historically, the Selected Marine Corps Reserve (SMCR) has struggled to sufficiently staff company grade billets; specifically lieutenant billets. Previously, the SMCR has relied almost exclusively on prior Active Component (AC) officers leaving the AC after their initial commitment. When AC career designation opportunities increased to nearly 100 percent, the pool of AC company grade officers seeking Reserve Component (RC) opportunities fell drastically.[6]

According to the MCO, the OCC-R program allows college graduates to attend Officer Candidate School with the intent of joining a reserve unit after their successful completion of The Basic School and their MOS school. Using infantry as an example, after the officer who is under a reserve contract completes Infantry Officer Course (IOC), they will immediately be sent back to their home of record and local SMCR unit to report to duty. Since the inception of this program, it has been observed that second lieutenants coming

from the OCC-R program who report to their SMCR units have a vast array of personal priorities that compete with the receiving battalion's mission, thus providing obstacles to the lieutenant's maturation, proficiency, and leadership growth.

For example, while serving as a battalion commander, I observed that what should have been a highlight of a second lieutenant's career, reporting to their first battalion, actually interfered with what they *needed* to do—find a civilian job. Finding meaningful civilian employment is a second lieutenant's greatest challenge after departing MOS school. If employment and a place to live are not secure, then leading Marines will be low on the lieutenant's priority list. In my example, the lieutenant nervously stressed to my XO that he needed to find a career and a place to live, fast. Considering the grueling training schedule of IOC, he did not have the opportunity to interview for jobs in his hometown. He then requested any available active duty for operational support (ADOS) billets to assist him and his depleting finances until he found employment. When queried about his options, he reflected how the traditional military recruiters were initially willing to work with him until they found out he was an OCC-R Marine. In other words, the recruiters quickly realized he had no

actual military experience in the fleet, so they dropped him like a lead weight. Therefore, I had a practically homeless and unemployed second lieutenant standing before me who was certainly not as focused on leading and training Marines as his active duty peers. As a minor solution, he was given a few weeks of ADOS orders, but it was only a temporary fix. From my personal observation, often the lieutenants of the OCC-R program move back in with their parents and find nominal work until they can find something better. Again, their first priority is not leading and training Marines.

The second challenge is motivation. Second lieutenants who complete IOC are at the peak of their health and academic knowledge of all things infantry. They are accustomed to staying in the field for long periods of time and have adapted to the challenges of small unit leadership. They enjoy the difficult tests that are commanded of their minds and bodies. Upon graduation, active duty graduates of IOC receive their orders and are ready to hit the ground running, usually with a high level of motivation. For a reserve Marine graduating from IOC, it is a different experience. Along with their active duty brethren, they fall in love with the fraternity of the Marine Corps. However, within days of graduating, they will come off orders and go home as a civilian and wait for the next drill to occur over the next few weeks. Several OCC-R lieutenants I have spoken with tried, without success, to transfer their contract to the active component mid-way through TBS or IOC. They loved the challenge of being on active duty, and they were not ready to leave, particularly as they watched their peers receive orders to their new units on the east or west coast.

The third challenge is experience. Typically, active duty second lieutenants will arrive at their new units and live with their Marines in the field. They will make mistakes. They will build a unique bond with their platoon sergeant, who will work on issues of mutual weakness. The lieutenant will deploy once or twice with their platoon and over the years their experience will turn their rough edges into sharpened

steel. However, in an SMCR infantry company, two to three days of active duty a month is very little time to build a relationship with your Marines. As a new lieutenant with no fleet experience, the foundational leadership is a greater challenge to achieve and often the telephone is their greatest resource, before and after their civilian workday, during the week, away from the drill center. The mentoring required of OCC-R second lieutenants is much higher than that of their active duty peers. In the reserve community, officers and senior enlisted leadership may spend up to twenty hours a week or more working on company and battalion tasks during their free time at night and on weekends while not on a drill status. This is considered unpaid additional work as part of being a reservist. Every minute counts with your civilian job and family; therefore, being prepared to integrate new second lieutenants efficiently is absolutely paramount to their and their unit's success.

> ### ... the Marine will be enabled to hit the ground running ...

The recommendation is a simple but challenging one that will prove to be rewarding for both the candidate and the Marine Corps. Marine officer candidates who desire to join the Reserve Officer Commissioning Program must agree to a hybrid reserve/active duty contract that requires every OCC-R officer, upon completion of his MOS school, to join their active duty peers in the FMF for no less than two years in order to gain valuable experience and leadership mentoring. In a perfect case scenario, the officer will have the opportunity to deploy with their unit at least once. At the end of two years, the officer will transfer to the SMCR and begin a three-year contract as a Marine first lieutenant and reservist for a total of six years of active/reserve experience upon end of contract (six years include the initial year of Officer Candidate

School, The Basic School, and MOS school, followed by two years of fleet time and three years of reserve time). Because of the unique challenges of the SMCR community, this will ensure that both the officer and the receiving reserve unit receive a strong foundation of experience from the first lieutenant prior to joining their SMCR billet. Because the OCC-R Marines have gained valuable billet proficiency in their primary MOS in the FMF prior to reporting to their SMCR unit, a follow-on ADOS tour would not be necessary—thus allowing the officer to immediately fill the appropriate billet identification code (BIC), a numerical "tag" for a position in the unit.

Additionally, as officers who have at least two years of experience in the FMF, they will be considered "hirable" by civilian companies in their home of record and headhunters will have a desire to work with them because of their fleet experience. Also, the officer will have the opportunity to participate in transition assistance seminars that will assist with his job hunt prior to entering the SMCR. By utilizing saved leave from their active duty time, the officer will have a better opportunity to secure a position of employment prior to end of active service. House hunting could also be complete, fully integrating the officer into their new community prior to reporting to duty at their SMCR unit. This is another way the Marine will be enabled to hit the ground running if they have a secure job and a home to live in prior to checking in to their reserve unit.

Finally, with these changes, the SMCR will be gaining a junior officer who has the confidence to tackle the unique challenges of a reserve platoon or company, which often requires a higher degree of maturity and willingness to succeed outside of an active unit, away from their peers on a day-to-day basis. The receiving company commander will gain a first lieutenant who can take the experience from leading a platoon of Marines on active duty into their reserve career and who also has the maturity to merge and balance what he has learned into their civilian career as well as their family life.

*Marine reservists may possess uniquely valuable skills gained in their civilian careers. (Photo by Tech Sgt Matt Hecht.)*

The counterargument comes from *MARADMIN 021/17, Reserve Officer Commissioning Program (ROCP) One Year Experience Tour-2017 Guidance*, which gives unique opportunities for reserve Marines to serve in an active duty billet under ADOS orders for a period of one year. In short, the intent is to "provide newly accessed reserve officers the opportunity for an operational tour to gain leadership and technical experience, appropriate to their grade and primary MOS, by providing ADOS opportunities within 30 days after graduating from MOS school." This MARADMIN is an excellent start, but it is dependent upon approval of funding and other unique challenges. In particular, again using infantry as an example, the Marine may or may not actually be in a platoon commander billet while on ADOS orders. Some of the billets may include staff billets where the second lieutenant is not utilized in a traditional infantry role. While the young officer is gaining experience on what it is like on active duty, he is not gaining the right type of experience as a platoon commander in a victor unit/infantry battalion. Also, the lieutenant is required to fill a BIC or position at their home reserve battalion before they depart on their ADOS tour. The problem is that the reserve battalion

cannot backfill the gapped billet while the lieutenant is on orders, ensuring the unit remains without an officer for another year. For example, if a company has several new lieutenants who check in and then receive ADOS orders, the reserve company commander will continue to be without officers for the entirety of the lieutenant's orders. This can also adversely affect battalion staff if several 0402 logistics officers and a 0602 communications officer depart on orders, leaving the BIC unfillable for the duration of the orders. This could encourage mis-matched BIC numbers and overstaffed battalions "in excess" on paper in order to meet minimal staffing requirements.

In conclusion, the Marine Corps Reserves should take a "whole Marine" mentality into their OCC-R program that balances a measured approach consisting of both active and reserve experience while developing junior officers. While opportunities do exist to activate junior officers today for experience, it has been shown to increase other challenges such as the unfillable BICs, which leaves extended officer shortfalls at the home unit and the lack of true infantry platoon commander experience. Additionally, the hunt for employment and a home would only be temporarily delayed until the lieutenant

comes off orders from ADOS, simply kicking problems down the road for another day. Two years of experience with an FMF unit will pay dividends to a young officer's development, setting them up for success not only for their military career, but their civilian one as well. By leveraging the officer's fleet experience, we will be giving him the added opportunity to have an advantage of seeking a career in the civilian job market as well as establishing a solid credit history with a bank. While it is not a requirement for commanding officers to ensure their reserve officers have civilian employment, it is in our best interest to make sure they have every *opportunity* to *seek* employment prior to arriving at the SMCR unit. Having a first lieutenant who has two years of fleet experience, a solid civilian career, and a place to call home not only sets the Marine up for success but ensures the health and welfare of the platoon, company, battalion, and the Marine Corps as well.

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### Notes

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# Diversity, Equity & Inclusion

## Why this is important to the Corps as a warfighting organization
### by LtGen David Ottignon & BGen Jason Woodworth

>LtGen Ottignon is the Deputy Commandant for Manpower and Reserve Affairs.

>>BGen Woodworth is the Director, Manpower Plans and Policy, M&RA.

The United States reveres its Marines for our traditions and excellence in fighting our Nation's foes. Our enemies fear us because they know the tenacity and lethality we bring to any fight. Our strength is the individual Marine, but our power is derived from a Corps of Marines. In other words, the success of our Corps comes from the team, which places a greater value on the collective than the individual. This past year's conversation about race revealed our Nation's scars and offered an opportunity to genuinely reflect on diversity, equity, and inclusion. It is a critical part of the conversation—to know that real examples of racial and gender bias exist in our Corps—75 plus years after the Service was integrated. We have not always gotten it right, but there is evidence in our personnel data—and lived experience of many minority Marines—that shows we are improving, but that we still have more to do. In this article, we will describe why diversity matters to the Corps as a warfighting organization. We will discuss where the Corps is today to baseline our efforts and highlight where we are headed in terms of delivering a diverse Corps to meet the Commandant's 2030 force requirements.

## Why Diversity Matters

Reaching a number goal across ethnic and gender groups is not the end state—it is an indicator. We are not striving to achieve representational parity with the demographics of the Nation but rather to harness the total capabilities of a diverse team that will face a complex peer fight that requires our collective abilities to defeat the enemy. What follows is a story from a former Task Force Southwest Commanding General and now the Commanding General of 1st MarDiv:

A young corporal joined our HUMINT team in Afghanistan; she's working on a problem that has existed for ten years. There was a Taliban commander, who had killed a lot of Marines between 2008–2014, and this young female corporal turns to on this problem set, and dives deep, and dedicates herself to hunting this guy. I won't get into trade craft or anything, but she figures it out, and we dropped a bomb on him after hunting him for ten years. The credit for this strike was to this female CI/HUMINT Marine, so when I hear about biased behaviors going on, I want to ask, you think you're a better Marine? Are you more lethal? Are you stronger, faster? Maybe. But she's an outstanding Marine with respect to lethality and capability. So how come you think you're a better Marine? Marines had been working on this for ten years, she figured it out in three months. If we don't value that, what business are we in? That's what vexes me.[1]

Diversity of perspective comes directly from variety of experience. Without having individuals with different backgrounds, we have the tendency to engage in "group think." In a speech to NNOA in August of 2020, the CMC said that if senior leaders have people who "look like them, sound like them, tell them yes all the time ... we should get really worried ... because we are headed down a bad path." We all know that when faced with the challenge of combat—the same way of framing a problem, the same opinion or perspective—just will not do. However, simply having a diverse organization does not guarantee success, we must pair it with inclusion to get the most out of every single individual Marine. Inclusion breeds boldness of thought and action; it allows each Marine to live up to their full potential, thrive, and step up and take a swing at the problem. Members of any organization who are marginalized or forced to operate on the periphery do not improve outcomes. When our incredible recruiters sell our Corps in high schools and on social media, they sell inclusion—being part of a team, our esprit de Corps—belonging to something greater than self. The Marine Corps prides itself on traditions and unwavering standards. We set our standards that drive performance, and we build trust up and down the chain of command by each member of the team meeting the standard. The net result is cohesion and unity of effort. In other words, inclusion is predicated by meeting the standard and the outcome is a cohesive team where everyone on the team is included. In practice, some have experienced imbalance here when after meeting the standard they have been subjected to continued inappropriate treatment. The bar is the same for all, and once met, should result in full acceptance.

## Where Are We?

The Marine Corps has come a long way since the seminal Military Leadership and Diversity Commission report of 2011—but we still have more work to do. The diversity of our force at entry continues to grow; U.S. Census (2019) data shows that 60 percent of the country is white (race plus ethnicity), and 40 percent is diverse.

Figure 1 offers a glimpse of the eligible population of U.S. citizens compared to the DOD force broken out by race/ethnicity. (This chart describes "eligible" as measured by DOD statistics; the Marine Corps sets a higher goal than simply a bachelor's degree for officers.) Across the DOD, White officers represent 73 percent of all active component officers compared with 66 percent of the eligible civilian population; African American officers represent 8 percent of all active component officers, Hispanic officers 8 percent, and Asian officers percent compared with civilian counter-parts 9 percent, 10

> *The diversity of our force at entry continues to grow; U.S. census (2019) data shows that 60 percent of the country is white (race plus ethnicity), and 40 percent is diverse.*

percent, and 12 percent, respectively.[2] Today's Marine Corps is 58 percent white and 42 percent minority; from 2010 to 2020 enlisted diversity grew from 33 percent to over 45 percent and our officer diversity grew from 16 percent to 34 percent. Female diversity continues to climb each year also and is currently over 9 percent. These are signs that we are making positive progress, but much work remains to be done to retain and promote a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive force across all ranks.
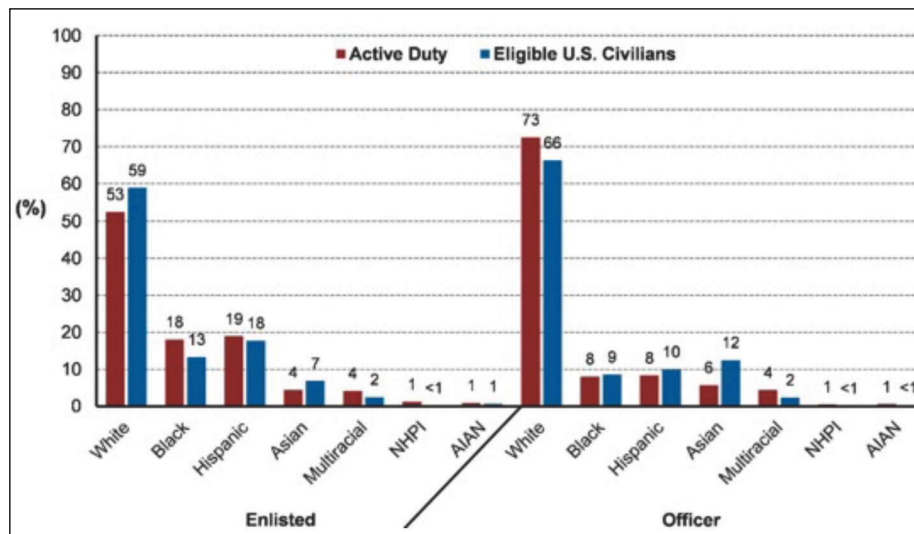


Note: The eligible enlisted U.S. population includes civilians ages 17–44 with at least a high school diploma, GED, or equivalent. The eligible officer U.S. population includes civilians ages 19–44 with at least a bachelor's degree.

*Figure 1. (Source: Defense Manpower Data Center, 2020; U.S. Census Bureau 5-year estimates, 2018.)*

### Racial/Ethnic Representation of Active Duty Enlisted and Officer Personnel Compared to Eligible U.S. Civilians, 2020

Our enlisted statistics in Figure 2 show that the force we recruit very much mirrors the force that we retain to the highest levels. Approximately 45 percent of E-9's in the Marine Corps are diverse, a percentage very similar to when they step on the yellow footprints. Enlisted

female Marines fare equitably at promotion on the whole, and the Service is working to understand propensity in the eligible population to increase the percentage of females. Here are the promotion rates for minority enlisted and enlisted by gender.

Figure 3 (on next page) lists our numbers for promotion rates for officers, first by race and then by gender.

### 5-Year Average In-Zone Promotion Rates by Race/Ethnicity

|         | White | Black | Hispanic | Asian Pac | Amer Ind | Other |
|---------|-------|-------|----------|-----------|----------|-------|
| GySgt   | 45.0% | 35.2% | 42.9%    | 43.2%     | 32.4%    | 45.9% |
| MSgt    | 50.4% | 46.6% | 49.8%    | 44.4%     | 44.7%    | 46.0% |
| 1stSgt  | 32.1% | 23.6% | 28.9%    | 19.4%     | 38.8%    | 17.3% |
| MGySgt  | 44.6% | 42.2% | 41.2%    | 38.1%     | 45.5%    | 48.4% |
| SgtMaj  | 54.8% | 47.2% | 53.3%    | 34.7%     | 53.3%    | 41.7% |

### 5-Year Average In-Zone Promotion Rates by Gender

|         | Male  | Female | Overall |
|---------|-------|--------|---------|
| GySgt   | 42.8% | 44.8%  | 42.9%   |
| MSgt    | 49.4% | 46.7%  | 49.2%   |
| 1stSgt  | 28.8% | 30.4%  | 28.9%   |
| MGySgt  | 43.3% | 44.6%  | 43.4%   |
| SgtMaj  | 52.0% | 47.1%  | 51.9%   |

*Figure 2.*

## 5-Year Average In-Zone Promotion Rates by Race/Ethnicity

|  | White | Black | Hispanic | Asian Pac | Amer Ind | Other |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Major** | 77.0% | 63.7% | 75.7% | 71.6% | 70.2% | 69.1% |
| **LtCol** | 65.8% | 60.6% | 54.6% | 55.5% | 51.4% | 59.8% |
| **Col** | 44.0% | 35.8% | 37.1% | 28.6% | 26.7% | 28.0% |

## 5-Year Average Male/Female In-Zone Promotion Rates

|  | Male | Female | Overall |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Major** | 75.6% | 78.1% | 75.8% |
| **LtCol** | 63.4% | 71.9% | 63.9% |
| **Colonel** | 41.5% | 58.7% | 42.0% |

*Figure 3.*

The Corps is taking a hard look at why the minority promotion rates are lower for officers, which we will describe in later sections. As you can see, our promotion rates for female officers are equitable in comparison to males, but our promotion rates for minority officers should cause us to ask, "why the disparity?" In order to deepen the pool of minority Marines available at colonel for promotion to the most senior levels, we need to deepen the pool at all field grade ranks via retention and promotion.

Recently, there has been broad discussion of diversity at the senior officer levels in all of the Services; at general officer is where we see the most disparity from the total force, only fourteen percent of the Marine Corps general officer population is diverse. It takes approximately 27 years to be promoted to brigadier general. If we are doing it right, and we promote and retain equitably across the force, the brigadier general officer population in 2048 should mirror the second lieutenant population of today. Of the current and selected active and reserve general officers, there are six African American, four Hispanic, three Asian, and five female generals; as we get to the highest levels, three and four star, those numbers decrease. Today, 17 percent of the brigadier general population (9 of 52) are minorities, 3 are female (6 percent), but many of those individuals come from MOSs other than combat arms, which is where most of our senior generals come from.

Increasing diversity among officer accessions is critical to diversifying the senior ranks down the road, but more critical to growing three and four stars is MOS selection (seventeen of nineteen currently serving three and four stars are from combat arms). Minorities are overrepresented in support occupational specialties and are thereby less likely to be promoted to the highest levels. We have a number of studies underway to determine why this is occurring, which we will cover in the next section.

### What We Are Doing Now

The Marine Corps recently released its strategic plan for diversity, equity, and inclusion and created the billet of Chief Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Officer (CDO) for the Service. (The CDO is responsible to DC M&RA for managing the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion [DE&I] program for the Service and exercising oversight of the institutional programs to improve DE&I.) The Strategic Plan provides a framework to align disparate efforts and find new opportunities across the Corps by identifying lines of effort and objectives that can be implemented by commanders at every level. The identified LOEs set the conditions for follow on actions across the Service over the next five years. The strategic plan operationalizes Marine Corps' efforts to improve combat effectiveness of Marine formations. The LOEs synchronize efforts to realize the benefits of an increasingly diverse force:

- Line of Effort #1: Recruitment and Accessions: Each aspect of Marine Corps recruiting strives to meet accession needs of the Marine Corps and consistently seeks diversity of the force, equity in recruiting processes, and inclusion of the full range of talents and abilities available in American society relevant to our missions and standards.
- Line of Effort #2: Talent Management and Development: Performing talent management successfully involves identifying the professional abilities and personal desires of the individual Marine, balancing those needs against those of the Marine Corps, to achieve the best outcome.
- Line of Effort #3: Education, Training, and Culture of Inclusion: Marine Corps education and training curricula enhance DE&I by reinforcing unit cohesion and leadership development through the teaching of the rich cultural history of our Service, our core values, and the strength gained by equitable treatment of all.
- Line of Effort #4: Commandership: Commanders are the center of gravity of Marine Corps leadership and are best positioned to leverage the Corps'

> *If we are doing it right, and we promote and retain equitably across the force, the brigadier general officer population in 2048 should mirror the second lieutenant population of today.*

diversity and implement inclusion by providing each Marine targeted opportunity to reach their full potential as professional warfighters.

Figure 4 depicts the DE&I Strategic Plan as overseen by the Diversity Review Board (DRB) using the four LOEs and their associated subcommittees. Listed under each LOE are a sampling of objectives that are

## Diversity Review Board

| LOE 1<br>Recruitment and accessions | LOE 2<br>Training and Education | LOE 3<br>Talent Management and Development | LOE 4<br>Commandership |
|---|---|---|---|
| • **Develop a systematic recruiting strategy to invest in a diverse force**<br><br>* **Study methods to align recruiter assignments with U.S. demographics**<br><br>* **Validate accession criteria and application processes for disparate impact**<br><br>• **Study increases to the pool of qualified officer program applicants** | • **Standardize D&I instruction at all levels of PME along the career continuum**<br><br>• **Develop unit-level SMEs to advise commanders on D&I**<br><br>• **Integrate historical diversity into PME**<br><br>• **Fund D&I structure and courseware**<br><br>• **D&I Tool Kit** | • **Talent Management Marketplace**<br><br>• **Transparent board and selection processes**<br><br>• **Monitor demographic trends in performance evaluation**<br><br>• **Track diverse pool of candidates for nominative positions**<br><br>• **Evaluate Outreach Programs and Initiatives** | • **Commanders issue policy statements for D&I**<br><br>• **Unconscious Bias and Diversity and Inclusion Education at Cornerstone**<br><br>• **Establish command-level D&I programs**<br><br>• **Provide training to all Marines on D&I**<br><br>• **Provide feedback to HQMC to increase proactive support** |

| **Manpower IT Modernization** |
|---|
| **Talent Management Executive Council** |

*Figure 4.*

identified in the plan; though not a complete list, they are examples of our aim-points to be addressed by the DRB. By creating this structure, the Marine Corps intends to get after the goal of having all ranks be reflective of the diversity of the total force and to prevent incidents of real or perceived bias for all Marines.

The Marine Corps appointed the Director, Manpower Plans and Policy as the Marine Corps' CDO to develop program goals, develop policy, and resource a component strategic plan for DE&I. The CDO chairs the DRB, which oversees implementation of the DE&I Strategic Plan. The chair is responsible for all actions that the DRB takes, management of the sub-committees and leads the board through deliberations with stakeholders across the Corps. As the action arm of the strategic plan the DRB reviews and recommends—to higher for approval—issues that it deems appropriate for change in the Service. Additionally, as the Service's liaison to the DOD Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, the CDO provides representation to the DOD in all areas regarding DE&I.

Statutory requirements mandate that our board membership be diverse and that no member is disadvantaged because of their race, creed, color, gender, sexual orientation, or national origin. These actions are designed to ensure that equity in the process is protected and help us to better understand our boardrooms. It is our goal that we extend the statutory requirements associated with promotion boards to the >100 non-statutory boards we conduct each year; we are in the process of implementing these statutory requirements to all boards.

The Marine Corps has also worked hard at studying its current promotion board and selection processes to determine if, and to what extent, barriers exist for minorities and females. We rely on data to examine trends in multiple categories, and we will continue to do so. We continue to examine the processes and procedures used to conduct all boards—from board membership and precepts, to the use of photographs and communications with the board, the indications are that the *process* of our boards are sound, but the *results* are varied: in some instances results show

positive trends, while in other results, there are disparities. In this process, we identified the need to dig deeper into our primary system for measuring performance, fitness reports.

Our statistical study of all Marine Corps Fitness Reports written on active duty Marines from 1999 through 2020 is nearing completion, we are reviewing over two million reports to ascertain any differences in recorded performance on Fitness Reports with respect to demographic differences in race, ethnicity, and gender. The study seeks to identify areas where groups may be adversely impacted by examining the relative value of high and low scoring reports and the proportion of adverse reports. The results of the study will be used to identify if any bias exists, which can answer questions on demographic trends in performance evaluations and to inform potential improvements in the performance evaluation system.

We have also undertaken a study in partnership with the Operational Analysis Division (OAD) of CD&I to identify barriers to advancement and retention for people of color and female Marine officers and enlisted. This study is designed to identify a replicable and systematic approach for using existing Marine Corps data to analyze the career trajectories of Marines from different demographic groups with particular emphasis on identifying any barriers to retention and advancement for females and minorities. The Marine Corps collects a vast array of career-related data on each Marine but has not fully leveraged this data to investigate career factors that contribute to gender and racial/ethnic differences in promotion and retention rates. The study will also determine if we need to collect or analyze different data. While many diversity, equity and inclusion studies have been done to evaluate individual aspects of military career trajectories among different demographic groups, few studies have examined potential barriers to career advancement holistically.

Also, in partnership with OAD, CD&I and TECOM, we have begun an initial review of military occupational specialty assignment policy at The Basic School (TBS) to determine the impact

of race and gender as second lieutenants make their way through the basic officer course. Since TBS performance is a predictor of future performance and longevity, we want to study both objective and subjective values to see if there are inherent biases connected to any racial group, ethnicity, or gender. The study will also look at how MOSs are assigned (which, as discussed in the previous section has large influence on career progression) to ensure that there is equity in the process that impacts—very early—whether a Marine officer will be in the most competitive fields for promotion down the road.

Listening to Marines as they pass various milestones allows us deeper understanding of their career satisfaction over time. The Exit Milestone Longitudinal Study (EMLS) program is an enduring set of surveys used to monitor attitudinal changes over time of our Marines. The EMLS began collecting data in fall 2017 and currently has over 30,000 responses regarding satisfaction with career opportunities, leadership, performance management, diversity, and work-life programs. The survey responses are merged and analyzed with existing data, including race, ethnic group, and sex allowing for the identification of trends and sentiments which may be more prevalent in certain demographic groups than others. Using this data to identify response differences has potential to support current and future DE&I initiatives. Specific questions within EMLS, such as perceptions about discrimination and race relations, provide Marines another avenue to register their opinions and be heard by HQMC leadership. Leaders across the Marine Corps will be able to use the results of the EMLS to make data informed decisions on policy to promote desired diversity and inclusion.

Monitors play a significant role in the talent management and mentoring of individual Marines across the force. Deliberately, we have made great strides to improve the diversity of the career MOS monitors. In MMOA today, 43 percent of the staff are minorities and 29 percent are female; in MMEA, those numbers are 39 percent and 14 percent respectively. Monitors blend art and sci-

ence in slating assignments and managing careers, which ultimately lead to a balanced Corps both in the FMF and the Supporting Establishment. A more diverse bullpen of monitors offers the Director of Manpower a balanced view across all assignments and helps links the tactical to operational in managing talent for the long term.

M&RA together with HQMC, TECOM, and MCRC are reviewing policy regarding diversity, race and gender, to include accessions policy and procedure, Equal Opportunity, integration of formerly restricted MOS, uniforms, pregnancy, etc. We recently completed our analysis of the recent Fort Hood Investigation Report and have included the results in the updated version of the Prohibited Activities and Conduct order. These reviews ensure

mary forum for enterprise-level Marine Corps talent management, leadership, and DE&I decisions to the Commandant.

There are other initiatives that the Marine Corps is participating in that include the Secretary of Defense Diversity and Inclusion Board which outlined several immediate actions and subsequent recommendations released in December 2020. Also, the Secretary of the Navy recently directed additional actions through the Assistant Secretary for Manpower and Reserve Affairs to oversee diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts across the Department. The Marine Corps has an active voice in the Department's strategic planning to develop strategies and actionable measures to advance diversity, equity, and inclusion.

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*Civilian businesses have the luxury of bringing in diverse talent at any level in their hiring processes. ... the Marine Corps cannot create diversity at senior officer levels; we have to grow our own ...*

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that all Marines are treated equally across the force, and that we learn from both our mistakes and those of other Services. By connecting many sources of data, we can identify gaps, thereby improving outcomes across a range of policies and processes affecting individual Marines and the service as a whole.

CMC directed change to our Corps with his seminal *Commandant's Planning Guidance* and *Force Design 2030*; one of the outcomes is the integration of the Talent Management Oversight Directorate (TMOD) into M&RA under Manpower Policy. This integration allows the TMOD to remain an essentially independent body that identifies and coordinates for direct liaison with the Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps on a range of cross-cutting subjects that effect Marines and their career opportunities. The Talent Management Executive Council, chaired by the Assistant Commandant, complements both the TMOD and DRB, and is the pri-

### Where We Want to Go

Civilian businesses have the luxury of bringing in diverse talent at any level in their hiring processes. Unlike outside the fence-line, the Marine Corps cannot create diversity at senior officer levels; we have to grow our own, and it takes nearly 30 years to reach the rank of general. Through the combined efforts described above, we will illuminate a path that provides opportunity to each and every Marine based simply on their character and performance. By looking into initial officer training, promotion boards and fitness reports, we are diving deep to find the root causes for disparity. The results of the TBS study and from the EMLS report should help us identify specific causes that adversely impact Marines. The goal then is to get to a point where when we compare the diversity of a cohort at entry with the same group at various points along their career path; we would ideally see the same diversity percentage throughout.

For example, the 2020 officer accession cohort is 35 percent diverse, at major they should be 35 percent, at colonel they should be 35 percent, etc. But that does not mean that we can go back to 1994 and change the diversity of the population to increase diversity at the O6 and above now. To increase diversity at the most senior levels of our Corps, we need a deep pool of O-5s and O-6s ready to step up that have been promoted and retained at similar rates as the majority.

In order to deepen that pool, and as part of the plan to outline where we want to go, we need to modernize manpower as part of the larger strategy to renew how we manage, promote, and retain our most precious resource: Marines. By capitalizing on data analytics, we must become more command centric at M&RA in order to allow commanders to participate directly in the Human Resource Development Process. Doing so provides transparency to both commanders and to Marines as they move through their career, giving the FMF latitude to make career choices and understand the consequences. Many of these changes are already underway and initial results are promising.

By improving testing, we can better identify potential Marines during the recruiting process to expand diversity of accessions in both race and gender. Tests such as the General Classification Test have been found to have racial and gender bias. In partnership with TECOM at TBS we are implementing new tests that measure more appropriately the skills that are needed to serve in the Corps today. Instead of the General Classification Test, which was developed in 1946, we are administering the Criteria Cognitive Aptitude Test which provides accurate cognitive data for matching aptitude to desires in MOS selection. This data informed concept will ensure that the pool of lieutenants are given better opportunity for placement in the MOS that best matches their skills. We are also implementing changes to testing for enlisted accessions and are considering expanding the use of the Criteria Cognitive Aptitude Test.

The Tailored Adaptive Personality Test (TAPAS) is a non-cognitive test to measure an individual's personality facets. This test looks at aspects that make an individual unique that are a combination of their upbringing, life, social experiences, and values. Currently, TAPAS is administered in a computer-based form for all enlisted applicants at Military Entrance Processing Sites along with the ASVAB (which measures cognitive abilities or school-learned knowledge) to give a more rounded picture of individuals seeking to earn the title of Marine. Aspiring officer candidates have the choice to take a TAPAS at Officer Candidate School. The end goal for TAPAS is to be able to utilize the personality facets in combination with the ASVAB and other factors to predict an applicant's probability of success at various career milestones. TAPAS supports DE&I initiatives because personality traits are not biased by race or gender. By using data available in TAPAS, not currently captured in cognitive assessments, we can identify applicants who do not meet the requirements based on standardized, and known demographically biased cognitive tests, but who have the non-cognitive facets linked to success as a Marine. Tests remain a necessary method and metric for recruiters, but by developing improved versions, we can also identify traits outside traditional means and use tests to connect individual's skills and traits to propensity and even their ideal MOS.

The Marine Corps recognizes that personnel are most productive when closely matched to an occupation based on a variety of dimensions, including aptitude, personality, and interest. The Marine Corps Occupational Specialty Match (MCOSM) tool, which is currently under development, optimally matches applicants with a MOS using a combination of interest and job skill requirements. MCOSM provides applicants with a transparent view of Marine Corps work environments and activities through the use of representative pictures and statements of each MOS. Each activity representative picture is chosen to allow applicants to see themselves engaged in a particular activity. By showing every applicant the full gamut of opportunities available, we can positively affect the diversity within Marine Corps MOSs. MCOSM does not wholly replace the traditional human role of the Marine Corps recruiter but rather is a man-machine pairing in which the recruiter is presented with a data informed solution from which they can better communicate with the prospective applicant. By better matching Marines to their optimum MOS, we can also improve retention.

One of our first advanced analytic models to use artificial intelligence/machine learning is the Retention Prediction Network (RPN). This nascent algorithm is a joint research venture between M&RA and John Hopkins University Applied Physics Laboratory. It is designed to predict success of applicants, recruits, and Marines at different milestones in the Human Resource Development Process. These milestones include the Delayed Entry Program, graduation of Marine Corps Recruit Depot, completion of a formal learning school, and completion of first term of enlistment. RPN uses a wide variety of data sources to include TAPAS, the ASVAB, and other appropriate data elements collected by the Marine Corps. By using such a wide span of data elements, the model will connect previously unrelated aspects of Marines in a holistic manner reducing the potential for single data points from dominating solution. The RPN is the tool which will be able to identify the combinations of factors across cognitive, non-cognitive, and physical characteristics that signal a high likelihood for success as a Marine. This combination of characteristics can open the aperture for accessions and have a positive effect on DE&I initiatives. By better managing our talent through improving technical solutions, the Service is focused on providing all Marines equitable opportunity to succeed. Each Marine matters, and their individual attributes contribute directly to our success.

## Conclusion

MajGen Turner's observation in the midst of kinetic warfighting demonstrates how we have to think and approach both racial and gender diversity across the Marine Corps. Everything to

do with diversity, equity, and inclusion must answer the same two questions: does it make the Corps more lethal and effective and are we creating an atmosphere for our Marines to excel? We have been at this for some time and the statistics demonstrate the needle is moving, but admittedly not quickly enough to meet the strategic objective of building a diverse force to meet a peer threat. Senior leaders in our Corps have influence over the course and direction of the Service; it is therefore critical to have as many different skillsets as possible in order to arrive at the best outcomes for the service and keep faith with each individual Marine while improving combat effectiveness.

Our recently published strategy will provide a framework to align efforts across the Corps by identifying lines of effort and objectives that can be implemented by commanders at all levels. These efforts nest within the Department of Navy's overall objectives for diversity, equity, and inclusion. We have been deliberate in our approach to ensure our policies and methods are truly meaningful in eliminating barriers and bias. We have been methodical in studying promotion boards, analyzing the performance evaluation

> *... let us harness the cohesive nature of what we do ... so that the Marine Corps remains always ready for the fight.*

system, and increasing diversity in the assignment branches. While we have much to do, there is promise in many of the studies already underway and 21st century manpower tools that are coming.

Finally, inclusion should be viewed as a core competency for the Marine Corps. Marines, like the young Marine described by MajGen Turner—who performed to standard, added lethality, and demonstrated competency—ultimately become the high achieving Marines who move on to greater roles and responsibilities, not because of gender or ethnicity but because of what they bring to the fight. We have that advantage in our Corps; let us harness the cohesive nature of what we do as a team so that the Marine Corps remains always ready for the fight.

### Notes

1. Quote attributed to MajGen Robert Turner, 1st MarDiv.

2. Staff, *DOD D&I Final Board Report*, (Washington, DC: December 2020).

# Building a Culture of Loyalty

## The foundation of talent management and preserving institutional longevity

### by Col Keith Couch

>Col Couch, USMC(Ret), is the Chief Government Operations Officer at Experfy, a Harvard Innovation Lab-Incubated Company; he retired on 30 September 2020 having served over 26 years on active duty. His last duty assignment was as the Senior Marine Corps Fellow to the Atlantic Council of the United States, having just completed two years as Commanding Officer of Henderson Hall and Headquarters Battalion HQMC.

I recently read a piece titled "Challenge yourself to build a culture that inspires loyalty."[1] Although brief, that blog told the story of a well-known New England supermarket chain and how its highly respected and revered CEO was dismissed by the company's board of directors. On the surface, that tidbit of information does not seem all that uncommon. In fact, company boards make those types of decisions everyday with little to no fanfare. However, this situation was to be quite different and what happened next was profound. The blog conveys the story of how many of the loyal customers of this supermarket chain suddenly began to shop elsewhere. In fact, they took this one step further and even began to protest the loss of the CEO. Customers began posting their receipts on the store windows, overtly showing where they were now shopping. It did not stop there either as even the vendors now stopped deliveries to the chain. Now, by any measure of a leader's impact on an organization, this type of loyalty seems almost unattainable or based on some sort of fictional story. However, I can tell you this story is true, and it conveys the notion of an organizational climate that many not only hope to part of but also, as leaders, it conveys an environment we want to imbue and do so in such a way that those we lead would react similarly.

Unfortunately, this type of environment is rare, and sadly, very few leaders attain such a culture within their organizations, especially one that would inspire this type of intense loyalty. In fact, it is likely many have not nor ever will see this most powerful display of loyalty to leadership. However, as this story demonstrates, there is a glimmer of hope—thus re-enforcing the notion that striving for and creating this type of culture in the workplace, no matter the organization, should be a priority of any leader, regardless of their level

> *... the quality that really matters most is their ability to build and engage teams ...*

of management. Failure to do so could garner a similar reaction to that of the supermarket chain, potentially proving detrimental to your organization. As proof, one need only do a quick *Google* search to find additional citing of this notion. In fact, there has been research and studies performed that show how failed leadership or an environment that breeds disloyalty has hugely negative impact across, up, and down an organization.

For instance, an article published in the *Harvard Business Review* notes that "the top causes of disengagement and most widely-cited reasons underlying turnover intentions all have to do with people's direct manager."[2] Compounding this problem is the fact that most leaders "are selected for either technical expertise or personal charisma, when the quality that really matters most is their ability to build and engage teams."[3] These types of leaders are most often more concerned about themselves than their team, putting their personal needs above the group-narcissism at its finest and a poisonous mixture for any environment—especially one striving to keep talent. Although written a few years ago, the articles premise remains valid. This type of leadership will not only have a negative effect on the bottom line but will also tear away at the very fabric of the organization-impeding the ability to recruit, hire, and retain talent. Ultimately, it will chip away at the very foundation that determines an organization's success or failure. Like the gravitational pull of a large planet or star, leaders and organizations that maintain a culture of loyalty create a force that acts from both far away to attract and up close to retain the best and brightest talent.

Conversely, and in my experience, organizations that have fundamentally

failed to create this type of culture—this gravitational pull for talent—almost always repel talent, creating an atmosphere where those in the organization want to leave, and those outside it fight to stay away. Given these realities and the consequences of failure, how can leaders, managers, and organizations create a culture of loyalty-becoming talent magnets that attract and keep the organizations best and brightest? This article explores the notion of organizational loyalty and how to build, cultivate, and sustain it—all while recognizing its importance and the consequences of not having it within your organization. Where and how should one begin this endeavor? Well, as they say, first impressions are everything!

## Organizational Transparency, From Beginning to End, Must be Consistent!

There is a saying, "you never get a second chance to make a first impression," and its earliest use was noted in a 1966 ad for "Botany Suits." This somewhat simple message not only transcends time but has wide-ranging applicability; particularly when one considers the depths of the human psyche and the finality implied in its premise. Consequently, even at its most basic level, the impact a first encounter or a first experience has in developing a lasting and meaningful impression cannot be overstated. In fact, research substantiates and reinforces this notion whether in the context of human interactions with each other or, perhaps, an organization that over-promises during the recruitment process only to ultimately underdeliver during the hiring/onboarding process. The beguiling promise of benefits, possible promotions, and the many overblown expectations generated during recruitment can lead to a perceived smack in the face. This "setting of expectation" during the early stages of the hiring process is the reality that ultimately leads to disappointment down the road.

Unfortunately, this type of disappointment, or buyer's remorse, builds a wall of resentment that even the most dedicated and talented leader or manager potentially fails to overcome. In fact, "a 2016 *Glassdoor* survey stated that 90 percent of job seekers say that it's important to work for a company that embraces transparency."[4] However, the report also suggest that "only half of U.S. workers feel their employer is open and upfront with them," and that "becoming more transparent ... will lead to a healthier and more honest workplace ... as well as motivate employees to stay for the long-haul."[5]

> ### ... a tribe represents a connection and a bond that is familial in nature ...

Consequently, it is more important now than ever before to ensure, in an environment in which the fight over talent is escalating, your organization and its leadership create an atmosphere, from beginning to end, that is "as advertised," consistent, and positive. Foundationally, this type of environment is critical and ultimately creates a first impression that carries over to form a lasting sentiment for that employee throughout their tenure. After this groundwork is established, what can leaders and managers now do that will help transform employees into loyal advocates and dedicated teammates within the organization, all while becoming devoted to their team members in such a way as to resemble a "tight-knit" family?

## Build a Tribe-Establish Trust By Knowing and Valuing Your People

More than just a group bound by specifics, a tribe represents a connection and a bond that is familial in nature with a strength not easily broken or penetrated by outsiders. In the context of the larger organization, I consider tribes as groupings of small towns intertwined within a larger city. The connection, or bond, is multi-dimensional with regard to whom and what it includes and the ties that bind them. At a basic level, and in the words of Seth Godin, "a tribe is a group of people connected to one another, connected to a leader, and connected to an idea."[6] Consequently,

as a leader, it is up to you to cultivate the connective tissue, influence the culture, and set the course. That journey, as alluded to earlier, will begin with the establishment of trust. Trust is the hardest to gain and the easiest to lose, which is why it must remain at the core of your interactions. Its fundamental development and sustainment must be the priority.

To begin the process of building trust, members of your tribe must know who you are, what you stand for, and where you aspire to go. Consequently, you must invest an equal amount of time getting to know each tribe member personally. You must be genuine, open, honest, and consistent with your message, personality, and your treatment of others—there is no room for favoritism as a leader as it will undermine everything you have built. Ultimately, each member must know that you value their personal success, development, input, work, and most importantly them as a person. The bond created by this type of connection will transcend the workplace, as it does within most family environments, whilst creating a solid foundation for a close-knit tribe. The next step is building upon that trust by developing a workspace that invests in its people and seeks to create a culture that supports long term positive relationships!

## Develop the Environment-Invest in People and Culture

There is no single theorem or magic formula that provides an all-inclusive roadmap showing leaders and managers a path to follow that ensures their team members, or tribe, relate to each other as members of a family. In fact, most organizations/institutions are put together in such a way as to develop along with the ever-changing environments in which they exist. In other words, a one size fits all approach will likely not work. For this reason, establishing an environment that instills a system to normalize and mandate positive relationships between leaders and team brings about an atmosphere that is not only harmonious and balanced but also enduring and widely applicable. Ultimately, creating an environment that is rewarding, both

personally and professionally, facilitates a sense of belonging; improves work output; improves overall morale; and is critical to developing a culture of loyalty. For instance, leaders that take an interest in helping their team members with things such as career planning and development, identifying long-term career goals, continuing education while ensuring a healthy work-life balance, or, perhaps, cultivating a "promote from within the organization first" organizational mindset are all on the right path. In fact, it is exactly this type of personal interest into each employee and the tribe that reinforces to each member of the organization their worth and their future in the organization—portraying in no uncertain terms that there is a path to success here and that the organization does care.

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*Affording both individuals and teams the ability to share in overall successes is another key element to instilling loyalty.*

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Equally as important as reinforcing those strong team connections forged in the workplace are those connections honed outside company walls. The balance of work and play interaction is critical and pays huge dividends as each team member is embedded and personally connected within the tribe, creating a familial environment—thus, strengthening the bond both individually and collectively. Combined with a culture of transparency and trust, the combination of personal and professional compatibility and comfortability at work is a large part of what ultimately, firmly bonds someone to an organization. In fact, "the closer the fit between the employee,"[7] their organization; and the tribe, "the stronger the links ... and the greater the potential sacrifice of leaving both, the more 'embedded' the person is"[8] and the less likely it is they will leave. In essence, leaving this job would now not just be leaving an office, building, or a company; it would entail leaving many of the things one values or even loves—personal and professional ties, friendships, social life,

and a positive work environment to name a few. The more "tight-knit" the culture of the group the more challenging it will be for team members to leave. In theory and practice, creating this type of loyalty will help solidify an organization's future survival in the face of a highly competitive global business landscape where people make the difference. Once created, however, the job does not stop here; it takes work to develop this type of environment and maintaining it can be even harder!

### Preserve What You've Built: Inspire, Recognize, Empower

Once you develop an environment that is transparent, bound by trust, values its people, proactively takes interest in their lives both personally and professionally, and provides clarity of purpose and vision, the next step is to preserve that which was not easily gained. As leaders and managers, we must always strive to be worthy of the loyalty we seek; we must present the model of that which we expect and "lead by example." There must be no doubt of your commitment to the welfare of each member of the tribe; this fact should be on full display, whether it is said in a conference room, symposium, one-on-one mentoring session, or in the organizational vision statement. This type of proclamation, coupled with a positive leadership example, will inspire the team. They know that not only will you be the champion of their welfare or biggest advocate, but you will also be there beside them in the trenches when times are toughest.

Hand-in-hand with this sentiment is the recognition of both team and individual performance. Affording both individuals and teams the ability to share in overall successes is another key element to instilling loyalty. As a leader, you should seek out any oppor-

tunity that allows you to reward the type of actions and performance you desire instilled throughout the tribe. This should be on a recurring basis, expected, and celebrated as teammates understand they are valued in both word and deed. This type of recognition costs very little but is pure gold with regard to the morale, esprit, and loyalty it garners.

The final opinion I offer with regard to preserving the environment is the notion of empowerment. Without fail, most of the great leaders you read about, work with, or work for have placed their people in positions that further their development. These humble, servant leaders share their status with the team, delegate authority, and develop a sense of shared responsibility all whist creating a wonderful workspace. A recent *Wall Street Journal* article says it best by stating "humility is a core quality of leaders who inspire close teamwork, rapid learning and high performance in their teams."[9] Humility in a leader, combined with the other tenants mentioned above, will form the thread that naturally binds together a tribe-filling in any gaps that remain in the tribal fabric, and keeping the entire garment connected. If done correctly, this tribal fabric is woven tightly and densely with more than just a loosely sewn motto, a sterile slogan, or an unenergetic leader; it will be sewn with a familial thread not easily cut, torn, or pulled apart. With the tribe in-tact, what is next?

### Recognize and Cultivate or Perish-A Strategic Imperative for Organizational Longevity

With the tribal garment now woven tightly together and the conditions set for a culture of loyalty to thrive, it is now up to the broader organizational leadership to recognize the imperative of this type of environment and to cultivate its values enterprise-wide. Silos of loyalty, although better than nothing, should not be the goal. In a perfect world, the organization recruits and retains the type of leaders and managers that build this type of environment and understand its importance. Moreover, they set the "organizational tone" from the beginning in strategy and vision while re-enforcing this culture throughout the

enterprise at every opportunity. Gone are the days where organizational talent management can rely on a well-known brand, a fancy slogan, or recruitment and retention strategies based on what amounts to little more than an afterthought on how best to attract and keep talent. Talent management cannot be just a numbers game any longer; it must be part of the overall organizational strategy—a commitment to recruit, hire, develop, and retain the best and brightest while avoiding the idea of one isolated tribe within the larger collective. The entire organization must become one large tribe. Organizations can no longer afford to let talent seep away—the cost of developing is high, and the experience they possess in most cases cannot be replaced. Furthermore, the intrinsic value they bring is not easily measured, and the potential to fall behind the competition because of the loss is greater now than ever before. Fully integrating talent management

throughout, from top to bottom at every level, while empowering and encouraging everyone is the only way to truly be effective—every voice within an organization could and should be a "cheerleader." In the end, it will be those "many" voices that are willingly part of the fabric of the tribe, make up the foundation of the organization, and ultimately form the "loyalty glue" that binds it together and ensures longevity.

### Notes

1. Walt Trakowich, "Challenge Yourself to Build a Culture that Inspires Loyalty," *Walts Blog,* (December 2016), available at https://waltrakowich.com.

2. Tomas Chamorro-Premuzic, "Toxic Talent Management Habits," *Harvard Business Review,* (July 2014), available at https://hbr.org.

3. Ibid.

4. James Clark, "5 Reasons to Make Your Talent Management Strategy More Transparent," *Datis,* (July 2018), available at https://www.datis.com.

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6. Seth Godin, *Tribes: We Need You to Lead Us,* (New York, NY: Penguin Group, 2008).

7. Lauren Keller Johnson, "A New Approach to Keeping Your Best on Board," *Harvard Business Review,* (February 2008), available at https://hbr.org.

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USMC

# Civilian-Marine Talent Management

## Applying equal rigor to the civil service workforce

### by Capt Abe Male

The Commandant's vision for *Force Design 2030* discusses the sweeping changes the Marine Corps must make to combat our pacing threats. Our senior leaders have released dozens of strategic documents detailing and justifying the vision for the Marine Corps in 2030 and the hard decisions required to get us there. However, there is one crucial problem that is being overlooked that will continue to prevent us from accomplishing our goals: our byzantine talent management system for civilian Marines. It is no secret that it is not only possible but probable that America could lose the next war against a peer threat. Just as the Service tirelessly drives to reform military talent management to compete, we need the same rigor applied on the civilian side.

>Capt Male is a Vice President, Corporate Strategy for City National Bank and in the SMCR at Marine Air Support Squadron 6. Most recently, he was activated by HQMC, Deputy Commandant for Information at the Pentagon where he spent the last two years on active duty.

cial, so broke, and so antiquated as our civilian talent management system. The scariest part is this third rail of public conversation never gets talked about in an official capacity. It is a vital issue that our leaders will only talk about behind closed doors and yet so many know to be a tremendous problem.

There are many ways to begin reformation, such as term limitations (similar to Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency or Defense Digital Service), a better evaluation system, and a simpler and quicker hiring and termination system. This article will not explore in

civilian workforce. Each organization in HQMC varies, but a typical table of organization (T/O) for a HQMC organization might have roughly 2/3 of the organization made up of civilian general schedule (GS) employees with the remainder military. Often there are contractors thrown in the mix depending on the need. This model keeps more Marines in the fleet where they are needed most and provides vital continuity and specialization. But what it also means is that we must, as a Service, pay an equal amount of attention to our civilian talent management as we do to our military talent management. These are the organizations that provide the manning, training, strategy, policy, equipment, and ultimately enable the fleet to accomplish warfighting. The *38th Commandant's Planning Guidance* (2019) spent pages talking about the manpower reforms the Service must make to military talent management, but not one word was uttered about the talent management of the 35,000 civilian Marines enabling the entire force.

The work of civilian Marines is vital to mission accomplishment, and this article by no means should be construed to attack the important role they play for our Corps and country. The fact of the matter, however, is there exists numerous issues with the human resources (HR) system. First, it makes hiring and recruitment exceedingly difficult by taking so long to recruit and select talent that highly desirable applicants often

> **The Marine Corps employs over 35,000 civilians, which is more than many Fortune 500 companies. The dozen or so HQMC organizations ... that lead our Service are a majority civilian workforce.**

I am a reserve Marine who has spent the last decade in private industry doing management consulting, investment banking, corporate strategy, and running the finance and operations of a startup. I was given the opportunity to activate for two years at HQMC in the Pentagon working on modernizing our network and information technology. I was fortunate enough to get to work on many fascinating problems with great leaders, but none struck me as so cru-

depth the numerous possible solutions. Rather, it will focus on the imperative of reforming civilian talent management if we are to climb our way back up the technology curve and assure military dominance over a peer threat.

The Marine Corps employs over 35,000 civilians, which is more than many Fortune 500 companies. The dozen or so HQMC organizations (the Deputy Commandants and others) that lead our Service are a majority

move on by the time an offer is extended. Second, the HR system does an ineffective job at promoting the most effective employees. Third, and most importantly, the current system does a poor job of weeding out sub-par talent. On the military side, we identify and process out low performers roughly every four years. Marine officers who consistently fall in the bottom third for performance will be thanked for their dedicated service and separated. Conversely, on the civilian side, job security is legendary. There is no mechanism to identify the strongest and weakest performers, and even if there were such a mechanism, there would be nothing the Corps could do about it. Civilian GS employees are not ranked against their peers, and the typical performance evaluation does not allow the Service to identify top and bottom talent enterprise wide.

Civilian GS performance evaluations only allow three grades: one, three, and five. It is essentially pass or fail. A one means fail and will likely lead to the employee being put on a performance improvement plan. It also means employee relations will get involved. A manager cannot assign a one without significant warning and documentation. For this reason, managers almost never give a one. It is much easier to just give the employee a three (meets expectations) and find someone else to do the work. Fives mean the employee exceeded expectation, but there is no limit to the amount of fives or threes you can give out. Unlike many private companies, there is no quota that requires a percent of employees must get a one or only a certain amount of fives can be given. The result is virtually everyone receives a three or a five, and top and bottom performers remain unknown.

Without any mechanism to effectively identify top and bottom talent, there is no way to process out low performing or even counterproductive employees. Sub-par performers may only meet the bare minimum expectations and, barring gross misconduct, remain in their position for decades. The ramifications of this is almost incalculable because as time goes on the competence curve bends further and further away from where it needs to be. The system has

nurtured and continues to compensate a workforce that no longer has incentive to perform. Why do we accept for our civilian Marines what we would never tolerate for our uniformed Marines? In the private sector, no successful company would maintain a system like this. There must be a mechanism to identify top and bottom talent for our civilians so that we can weed out the bottom and promote and retain only the best.

In response to this critique, an HQMC HR professional would likely defend the system by correctly pointing out that all GS employees receive annual performance evaluations. If managers identify an employee who is not meeting expectations, it should be documented, and the employee can be put on a performance improvement plan. If performance does not improve, then the employee can eventually be separated. However, in reality this is a Herculean task, and to actually accomplish it, managers would need to

> *Without any mechanism to effectively identify top and bottom talent, there is no way to process out low performing or even counterproductive employees.*

suspend large swaths of productive work time in order to manage the work improvement action plan.[1] Thus, the subpar employee now costs the manager even more work. In addition, the time horizon to process out non-performers, is years when it should be months.

During my two years in HQMC, I became keenly sensitive to civilian talent management inefficiencies, especially after my assignments to multiple reorganization efforts for the Deputy Commandant for Information. When I asked senior military leaders (whom I considered mentors) why certain employees who were known to be subpar continued to remain in the organization, lead crucial teams, and remain in their same role, I always received the same discouraging answer: that as a manager or division head our senior officers would have to spend 20–30 percent of their time on HR and disciplin-

ary actions to terminate said employee. It took less effort to work around them than to remove them. I similarly spoke with a HR professional with over a decade of experience in HQMC HR and was told that in all their time they had only ever seen one employee let go for poor performance.

HQMC is a kinetic environment full of short fuse taskers from general officers, the Fleet, and of course one's daily job requirements. While not always the case, military members lead HQMC organizations while the bulk of the workforce is GS civilians. Under this system, leaders simply do not have the bandwidth to dedicate a quarter of their time to HR issues for a single low-performing employee. Making it more challenging is that the civilian GS HR system is not intuitive, and on the military side, leaders have trouble understanding how to best navigate it. Perhaps most disheartening of all, leaders live with the threat of a grievance or

employee relations getting involved if they give a poor performance evaluation to an employee. If that same leader wants to move an employee to a role they think would suit the employee and the organization better, they are warned that the new responsibilities might not fall within the employee's existing position description (PD). While a military member can be assigned at will within the organization, a civilian may only be assigned jobs that are specified in their PD. If a PD says the employee must supervise a team and be a branch head, then that is where they stay—even if they fall short of every competence metric. Try to move that employee, and a senior officer will face a grievance (that they will probably lose), and be bogged down in a bureaucratic labyrinth.

Yet another factor preventing top level civilian performance is that military leaders frequently rotate in and out

| Military vs. GS Comparison | Military (Officer) | Civilian GS Marines |
|---|---|---|
| Time to transfer to new role | Instantaneous | Situational dependent, must fall within existing PD |
| Automatic Retention/Promotion Board | ~Every four years | None |
| Can be moved to the point of need | Yes | No, must fall within existing PD |
| Ranked against their peers | Yes | No |
| Top and bottom performers are known | Yes | No |
| System in place to separate if performance is subpar | Yes | Yes, but extremely complex and time consuming |
| Provides job continuity in the organization | No | Yes |

of their HQMC roles. The longest one might expect a military member to be in their role is three years, but it is often much less. Since it can easily take years to separate a non-performing employee given the appeals and grievances processes, any civilian just needs to wait it out, and within a year or two, the colonel or general will be off to a new role.

In the few years, they are at HQMC, our senior military leaders are simply not equipped to manage civilian talent given the current talent management system. They have neither the time nor the comprehension of its intricacies and nuances.

It is clear that various issues exist which must be addressed by Service leadership. Just as the Marine Corps depends on a system to identify and retain/separate talent at every level for our military personnel, the Service needs something similar on the civilian GS side. If we are to compete in a modern world against modern threats, we need to modernize talent management to ensure we are only retaining and promoting the most qualified civilians.

**Note**

1. Separation during the initial probationary period is less daunting of a task. However, it is rarely done and the primary issue centers on employees who are mid/late career.

USMC

# Improving Selection Boards

## Developing a weighted relative value score

### by LtCol Roy L. Miner

>LtCol Roy Miner is a Logistics Officer and an Operations Research Analyst currently billeted at Marine Corps Warfighting Lab, Wargaming Division. He has served on three selection boards while stationed in the National Capital Region.

In July 2019, Gen Berger, the 38th Commandant of the Marine Corps, published his *Commandant's Planning Guidance.* Within the priority focus area of force design, he addresses an array of personnel topics. One of those topics is fitness reports and the current Performance Evaluation System. There are eight elements related to the Performance Evaluation System that he states, at a minimum, need evaluation to assess whether they merit a change. Of those eight elements, at least six would assist board members in the conduct of their analysis when determining the best qualified Marines for promotion, command, education, or other assignment during a selection board. Additionally, if done correctly, those six elements can be developed into a metric that would reduce the variation of interpretation by individual board members when considering a Marine for selection. Board members use the Master Brief Sheet (MBS), individual fitness reports, and other documents within a Marine's Official Military Personnel File (OMPF) to determine eligibility for selection. It is a large array of data to review and consolidate during a three to five minute brief for other board members to determine if a Marine meets selection criteria when compared to other Marines. Yet, each member of that board will have a different interpretation of elements within each individual OMPF, and when analyzing a MBS, each board member most likely gives different credence and weight to certain data elements than other board members. There is no explicit congruency between board members. One of the byproducts at the root of the Commandant's guidance with respect to evaluating changes in the personnel evaluation system is the investigation into changes within the fitness reports that will make it easier for board members to review and evaluate quantitative data with minimal variation in interpretation. Additionally, with a majority of the analysis of the quantitative data being completed for them, board members could have more time to analyze other elements within the Marine's OMPF such as billet accomplishments detailed in a fitness report. This article will provide an example of how fitness report metrics can be developed and weighted using data resident within the Master Brief Sheet to meet the *Commandant's Planning Guidance.*
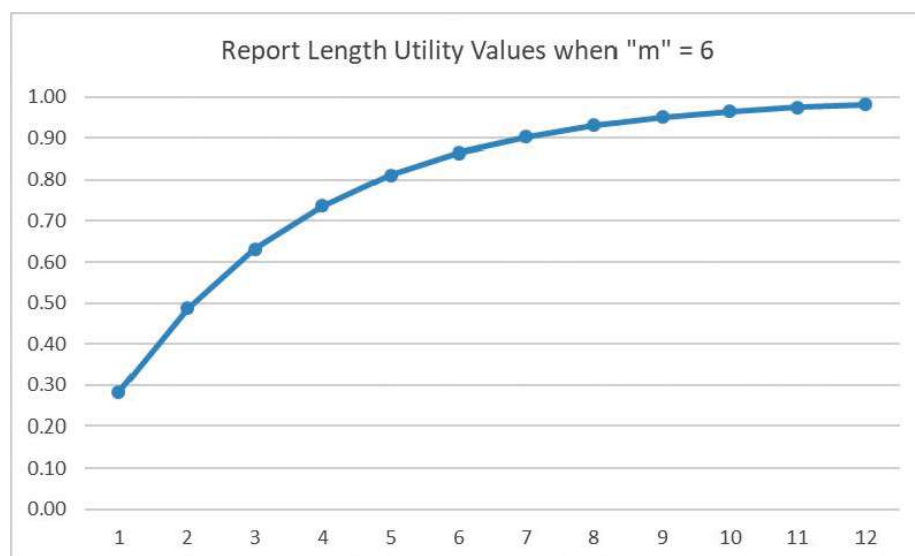
## Board Member Evaluation General Process

There are a number of elements in the MBS that a board member will use to evaluate a Marine's performance in grade or over the course of their career. These elements can range from physical fitness scores to awards to education to weapons qualification. The main factors that determine a board member's evaluation are the reporting senior (RS) relative value (RV) scores, the reviewing officer (RO) comparative markings, and the RS and RO comments. The focus of this article will be the RV scores based on the RS markings. There are a number of factors a board member will take into account when evaluating the RV. One of the factors is the hourglass profile metric that breaks down the percentage of fitness reports a Marine Reported On (MRO) has in the upper, middle, and lower third and the ratio of the percentage of reports in those third when compared to each other. Also, a board member may look at the RV score at processing and the cumulative RV score, taking note of whether there was an increase or a decrease between the two scores. A board member may also take note of the number of fitness reports written by the RS and the length of the reporting period. All in all, there are a number of factors that a board member may review, note, and record from their research into the MRO's record and MBS in order to brief other members of the board concerning the MRO's consideration for selection. Yet, given the number of factors a briefer will review, it is probably unlikely that any one board member would brief the same conclusions as another member would if they were responsible for reviewing the same individual MRO's package. Where one member may note an 82 RV score from a two month long observed fitness report, another briefer may not, thinking it is self-explanatory to other board members. Additionally, when incorporating the short-observed time, low RV score into the hourglass profile metric, it will have the same weight in the overall hourglass metric as a twelve-month upper third report and a ten-month middle third report. Meaning, if there were only these three reports, the

board members would see an hourglass profile metric reflecting 33 percent of reports in the upper third, 33 percent of reports in the middle third, and 33 percent of reports in the lower third. This despite in our hypothetical situation only 8.3 percent of the observed time in the MRO's career accounts for a lower third report. This hypothetical would most likely be caught by board members, but it may be more problematic to account for the contributions of reports to the hourglass metric as the MRO receives more and more fitness reports throughout their career. Hopefully, if not addressed by the briefing board member, the other board members would note it as they all have an opportunity to review the MRO's MBS during the three to five minute given brief. However, there is no guarantee, and there is most likely variance in how one board member analyzes and evaluates a MRO's package over another. The onus of the analysis and presentation of the MRO's MBS belongs to only one individual board member. The quality of the analysis and presentation is dependent on the experience and ability of the board member to succinctly articulate a Marine's career for all board members to evaluate, and every board member is a rookie at this process at least once. So, the current evaluation process in selection board proceedings requires the sharp analysis and insight on the part of the board to present the best possible brief on behalf of the MRO. However, much of this analysis can be taken into account (length of observed fitness reports, number of reports, RV) and combined into a single metric for the board to evaluate, effectively reducing the degree of variability in interpretation of the RV scores between board members.

### Developing an Evaluation Metric Using Utility Factors

The following section describes a method that addresses the *Commandant's Planning Guidance* in weighting reports and provides board members a single evaluation metric to reduce variability in interpretation and captures the MRO's RV scores over their career. This can be done using data currently

resident within the MBS of the MRO. No new data would need to be added. The fundamental idea behind what the metric is evaluating is an average weighted percentage when compared to a perfect career 100 RV for the MRO where the weights are determined by the

> *... there is no guarantee, and there is most likely variance in how one board member analyzes and evaluates a MRO's package over another.*

length of the report and the number of reports a RS has written for Marines of a similar rank, and it will be shown there is no disadvantage between one Marine having a number of reports short in duration by reporting seniors with shallow profiles to another Marine with lengthy reports written by reporting seniors with large profiles.

A weighting method for fitness reports can be employed by introducing

utility functions for the length of a report and the number of reports written by a reporting senior. We can also assume that these two functions will have equal weighting in determining the final evaluation metric (i.e., each value

length of the fitness report in months and "m" is a utility factor that remains constant for the population of MROs in determining the weight contribution for length of reports. Additionally, the utility function for reporting seniors' total number of reports is similarly f(y)

= 1-e^(-y/r) where "y" is the observed number of reports a reporting senior has written for Marines of similar rank and "r" is a utility factor that remains constant for the population of MROs in determining the weight contribution for a RS profile size. The choice of "m" and "r" and the reasons behind it can vary, but for the purposes of this article, we will assume that the constant "m" will be six months and the constant "r" will

| Report Length Utility Constant | 6 | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Report Length Utility Values | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 |
| | 0.2835 | 0.4866 | 0.6321 | 0.7364 | 0.8111 | 0.8647 | 0.9030 | 0.9305 | 0.9502 | 0.9643 | 0.9744 | 0.9817 |

**Table 1.**

derived from the individual functions contribute half of the final weight). The utility function for report length the author proposes in this article is f(x) = 1-e^(-2x/m) where "x" is the observed

be eight reports. Table 1 depicts the utility function values for the various length of reports from one to twelve months if "m" had a value of six months. Thus, a fitness report with a reporting period of four months would have a weight of

| RS Reports Utility Constant | 8 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| RS Reports Utility Values | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | ... | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | ... | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | ... | 36 | 37 | 38 | 39 | 40 |
| | 0.3127 | 0.3935 | 0.4647 | 0.5276 | ... | 0.8031 | 0.8262 | 0.8466 | 0.8647 | ... | 0.9436 | 0.9502 | 0.9561 | 0.9612 | ... | 0.9889 | 0.9902 | 0.9913 | 0.9924 | 0.9933 |

**Table 2.**

0.7364. Table 2 depicts the utility function values for the various RS quantity of reports written from 3 to 40 if "r" had a value of 8 reports. A fitness report where the reporting senior profile size is
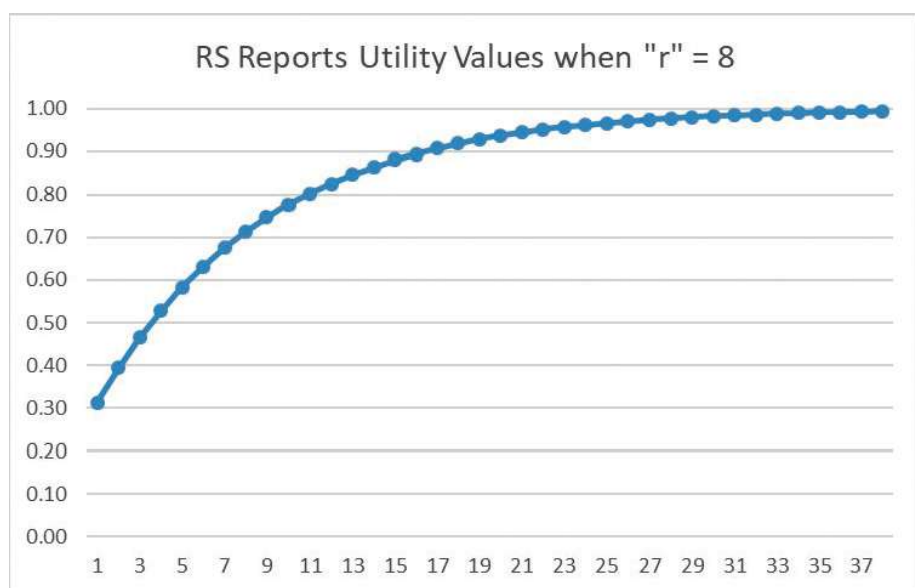
**Figure 1.** *(Figure provided by author.)*

twelve reports would have a weight of 0.7769. Figure 1 demonstrates the rate at which the utility function value increases as the length of the fitness report "x" increases. Similarly, Figure 2 demonstrates the rate at which the utility function value increases as the number of reports "y" increases for an RS profile size. Note that the incremental change in utility function values decrease as the length of the report or the number of RS reports written increases. This indicates the eventual calculated weights between reports will be more similar to each other the longer the observed reporting period is or the more reports written in the RS profile. In other words, the eventual calculated difference in weight between a one-month observed report and a two-month observed report will be greater than the difference between an eight-month observed report and a nine-month observed report—similarly for the number of written reports.

Next, we would multiply the RV for each individual report against the utility factors derived from the above equations and compare it to the "what if" of a 100 RV report. In our example numbers above, if a MRO had a 92.75 for an individual fitness report that was 4 months in length and was one of 12 reports, then we would calculate the metric for that individual report as 92.75(0.7364) + 92.75(0.7769) = 68.3011 + 72.0575 = 140.3586. We then compare that summation to the possibility of the fitness report having a 100 RV, which would yield 100(0.7364) + 100(0.7769) = 73.64 + 77.69 = 151.3300. And to compare how close it is to the 100 RV, we would divide the observed RV by the 100 RV calculations which yields 140.3586/151.3300 = 92.7500. So, there is no drop or increase to the RV of an individual fitness report when applying a weight to it based on the length of the report or the number of reports written by the reporting senior. An individual with a 92 RV for a report that is 2 months in length from a RS with 5 reports written in their profile will be the same as a 92 RV for a report that is 8 months in length from a RS with 15 reports written in their profile. The influence of the weight will come into effect when we aggregate all the fitness reports of a Marine's career using the above calculated methods.

Table 3 (on following page) shows an example where we include two additional fitness reports with the example fitness report above and the resulting calculations. Let us assume in addition to the one we outlined above with the RV of 92.75, we have a fitness report with a RV of 80 that is three months in length and written by a RS with a profile size of 4. The other has a RV of 98.5 that is 10 months in length and is written by a RS with a profile size of 25. The MBS would show this as the MRO having one report in the lower third, one in the middle third, and one in the upper third. Hopefully a board member would see these three fitness reports as above average overall with some analysis and reasoning, and if you do take the average of the three RVs (each report contributing the same weight), you would have a value of 90.42. But using the utility equations and method described above would yield the metric 92.29, a high middle third value. While the difference between 90.42 and 92.29



**Figure 2.** *(Figure provided by author.)*

|  | Report Length | # Reports Written | Rpt Avg | Report Length Utility Value | Reports Written Utility Value | Rpt Total Pts | Max Poss | Weight |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| FitRep1 | 4 | 12 | 92.75 | 0.7364 | 0.7769 | 140.3560 | 151.3273 | 33.9% |
| FitRep2 | 3 | 4 | 80 | 0.6321 | 0.3935 | 82.0472 | 102.5590 | 23.0% |
| FitRep3 | 10 | 25 | 98.5 | 0.9643 | 0.9561 | 189.1583 | 192.0389 | 43.1% |
|  |  |  |  |  |  | Total All Reports | Total Max Poss | Weighted Utility Metric |
|  | Total Avg 90.42 |  |  |  |  | 411.5616 | 445.9252 | 92.29 |

*Table 3.*

does not seem significant, on the 20 increment RV scale of 80–100 it is a 9.35 percent increase. Board members have no prescribed method of how to gauge the values in aggregate. Maybe their estimate would yield above 90, maybe below 90. In this instance the 80 RV report accounts for 23.0 percent of the weight of the metric, the 92.75 RV report accounts for 33.9 percent of the weight of the metric, and the 98.5 RV report accounts for 43.1 percent of the weight of the metric. The weight here is calculated as the percentage of the maximum possible points for an individual fitness report with the total maximum possible points. As more and more fitness reports are included, the weight each fitness report contributes to the overall metric becomes more and more distributed. If we change the first fitness report to a RV of 85, there is no change to the breakout of thirds one would see in the MBS. The average RV of the three fitness reports would now be 92.08, high middle third. The metric calculated using the utility equations would be 93.44, just cresting into the area that is considered the upper third. There would be no change to the weights. Table 4 provides an example of a metric derived from ten fitness reports and each fitness report's associated weight. As you can see, the distribution of the weights spreads out a little more evenly as more observed fitness reports are introduced into the calculation of the metric and the reports with longer report lengths and higher amounts of reports written are comparable to each other in weight. The short reports with small profiles accounts for a smaller degree of the overall weight

when compared to the other reports as opposed to an even ten percent since it is one of ten reports.

There may be some arguments that this method reduces a Marine's career to just a number and board members will only focus on that number. An answer to that argument is this metric reduces the amount of analysis a board member may have to complete when reviewing the MBS. It will also reduce the variable amount of interpretation between the different board members concerning the data that is available for them to review in the MBS and how to interpret the MRO's hourglass profile. Board members will look at the numbers, regardless. But there is no guarantee that they are all looking at them in the same manner or would brief them the same way. They will look at a fitness report with a low

RV value and note that it is only one or two months long. They will look at the number of Marines a RS has written on to see if that RS has a deep or shallow profile. They will look at the relative value and see if it is increasing or decreasing under the same reporting senior. They will also take into consideration whether the RV is low given it is the first fitness report in a new rank for that Marine. So the numbers can have an influence on the board member and can influence how they brief a Marine's package. Additionally, the longer the career, the more numbers there are to review and interpret for the briefer. The numbers can have an influence on how the other board members, as they listen to the brief and review the MBS, interpret the Marine's career, and the numbers determine the structure and shape of the "hourglass" profile that all board members see but may interpret differently. Additionally, there are still other elements within the MBS a board member should review before determining their final assessment for the package. Reducing the numerical analysis for board members can provide them more time to evaluate other elements of the fitness report such as billet accomplishments over the career as well as Section I and K comments over the career.

|  | Report Length | # Reports Written | Rpt Avg | Report Length Utility Value | Reports Written Utility Value | Rpt Total Pts | Max Poss | Weight |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| FitRep1 | 3 | 12 | 82.5 | 0.6321 | 0.7769 | 116.2417 | 140.8990 | 9.3% |
| FitRep2 | 3 | 17 | 92.75 | 0.6321 | 0.8806 | 140.3018 | 151.2688 | 10.0% |
| FitRep3 | 9 | 15 | 98.5 | 0.9502 | 0.8466 | 176.9905 | 179.6858 | 11.9% |
| FitRep4 | 12 | 25 | 93.25 | 0.9817 | 0.9561 | 180.6949 | 193.7747 | 12.8% |
| FitRep5 | 1 | 3 | 80 | 0.2835 | 0.3127 | 47.6944 | 59.6179 | 3.9% |
| FitRep6 | 9 | 15 | 86.75 | 0.9502 | 0.8466 | 155.8774 | 179.6858 | 11.9% |
| FitRep7 | 12 | 21 | 92.5 | 0.9817 | 0.9276 | 176.6051 | 190.9245 | 12.6% |
| FitRep8 | 3 | 3 | 90 | 0.6321 | 0.3127 | 85.0348 | 94.4831 | 6.2% |
| FitRep9 | 11 | 17 | 94.5 | 0.9744 | 0.8806 | 175.2980 | 185.5005 | 12.2% |
| FitRep10 | 6 | 6 | 96.54 | 0.8647 | 0.5276 | 134.4125 | 139.2298 | 9.2% |
|  |  |  |  |  |  | Total All Reports | Total Max Poss | Weighted Utility Metric |
|  | Total Avg 90.73 |  |  |  |  | 1389.1511 | 1515.0700 | 91.69 |

*Table 4.*

## Conclusion

The above method described could also be employed to determine a weighted metric for each rank in a similar fashion the MBS does currently. Regardless, there are a number of methods that can be used to weight the fitness reports. The use of the utility functions in this article is simply one of many methods that can be employed. Should those exact utility functions be used? In the author's opinion, not necessarily. The utility constants for report length and reports written would not need to be six and eight, respectively. Those were simply arbitrary numbers picked to demonstrate the examples in this article. But the author does hold the opinion that it should be a function where the difference between the weights diminishes as the length of the report or the number of reports written by the RS increases. Thus, a function that yields a horizontal asymptotic curve with a decreasing slope as the report length

and number of reports written by the RS increases.

The described method only works for the RV derived from the RS markings and profile, and this is only one aspect of data the selection board uses to make an assessment. Could you use the same type of metric for the RO's comparative assessment marking? In the author's opinion, no. A RO may not necessarily have been the MRO's RO for the full length of the reporting period—nor may they have the same direct observation time of the MRO as the RS. Ideally, they would but that is not always the case and recruiting duty can serve as a good example. Additionally, their markings do not necessarily fall out in a manner where you could have an ordinal ranking as you do with the current RV metric. Does a metric need to be developed? The answer to that question is, much like the theme of this article, whether or not the metric would assist a board member's responsibility in

analyzing, understanding, and briefing the package. The goal is not to reduce the selection criteria to a number. The goal is to assist the board members in their preparation and briefing of the individual's selection package and reduce the variability in perception amongst board members when it comes to evaluating metrics. If that is the goal, then there are probably a number of ways one can analyze the collective comparative assessments from a Marine's ROs since ROs with large profiles will heavily influence the current metrics used in the hourglass profile. But that would be a separate article. The method described in this article is merely a proposal to what the Commandant published in his guidance with respect to personnel and the Performance Evaluation System.

USMC

# Rule of Law v. Sharp Power

## Capacity building and global power competition

by Maj T. Nelson Collier

>Maj Collier was an Instructor with the Law of War Training Section, Headquarters Marine Corps, and former Assistant Staff Judge Advocate/Operational Law Attorney for Marine Corps Forces, Special Operations Command. His assigned region under the Regional and Cultural Studies Program, formerly the Regional, Cultural & Language Familiarization is the Sahel region of Sub-Saharan Africa.



*The author, bottom left, in Senegal. (Photo by author.)*

The Blank Slate Review of U.S. Africa Command has intended to realign efforts on the continent toward global power competition—most notably with China and Russia—in accordance with the 2018 *National Defense Strategy*. Meanwhile, exertions of authoritarian influence by China and Russia in West Africa suggest imperatives. Rule of law is a means against sharp power. Training exercises must be based on rule of law.

The *National Defense Strategy* supports the *National Security Strategy*, and the *National Security Strategy* urges rule of law. Rule of law is also a prominent feature of the U.S. Africa strategy. Blank Slate Review replaced infantry units with military trainers.[1] This makes sense. After all, according to Service doctrine, Marines and Soldiers support rule of law by providing training and support to law enforcement and judicial personnel—a feature of capacity building.

But this solution set presents a problem. For background, Section 333 of *Title 10* authorizes capacity building. However, Section 333 also requires such programs to include "elements that promote ... [o]bservance of and respect for the law of armed conflict, human rights and fundamental freedoms, the rule of law, and civilian control of the military." The problem is that capacity building tends to undervalue these elements. An anecdote provides some context.

From July to August 2019, Marines of the GCE of the Special MAGTF-Crisis Response Africa 19.2 conducted bilateral training exercises with partner forces of Togo and Senegal. Between each culminating field evolution and end of exercise stood a two-day rule of law seminar. To complete this period of instruction, two joint teams of military lawyers lectured to military men and gendarmes.[2] Discussions were in English, notwithstanding the mostly French-speaking audiences, with non-lawyer interpreters.

Even if a two-day, foreign language period of instruction can promote observance of and respect for elements of rule of law, there are opportunities for improvement. Although capacity building is worthwhile, conditions in West Africa suggest there is even more at stake. First, some remarks are in order on instruments of national power.

### Correcting the "Category Mistake" of the DIME Discrepancy

Law is a means available to the government in its pursuit of national objectives. Yet, official U.S. doctrine no longer recognizes law as an instrument of national power. This discrepancy reveals a category mistake that must be corrected. Rather than representing a paradigm of exhaustive constructs, the

notion of instruments of national power is better understood as a framework of categories, each comprising subsets of other instruments of national power, with rule of law among them.

## The DIME Discrepancy

The DOD Dictionary defines instruments of national power as "[a]ll of the means available to the government in its pursuit of national objectives." According to the definition, these means "are expressed as diplomatic, economic, informational and military." In addition, *Joint Doctrine Note 2-19*, *Strategy*, also refers to these constructs. Therefore, in the United States, instruments of national power are discussed as diplomatic, informational, military, and economic (DIME).

However, *Joint Doctrine Note 1-18* (which *2-19* superseded) said that "there are many more instruments involved in national security policy development and implementation." Of note, *Joint Doctrine Note 1-18* recognized law as among the many instruments of national power. This recognition was long overdue. Consider the origins.

In the *Twenty Years' Crisis*, British political scientist E.H. Carr divided national power into three categories, military, economic, and power over opinion. In his original formulation, Carr acknowledged law's importance: "The peculiar quality of law which makes it a necessity in every political society resides not in its subject-matter, nor in its ethical content, but in its stability. Law gives to society that element of fixity and regularity and continuity without which no coherent life is possible."

Stability is the key term. In joint doctrine, stability activities' five functions include rule of law.[3] This acknowledges that building rule of law is, at least in part, a military responsibility.

Consider also that law can reflect and project values of democracy and liberty.[4] This point—from former Marine infantry officer and national security law expert James E. Baker—stands out in sharp relief against the background of conditions in West Africa.

Thus, law is an instrument of national power insofar as it reflects and projects values of democracy and liberty, insofar as it works for rule of law. However, with *Joint Doctrine Note 2-19* having superseded *1-18*, technically, joint doctrine no longer recognizes law as an instrument of national power. Yet, there can be no doubt that law is a means

> ## Sharp power refers to the practices of authoritarian states to project influence to undermine democracy abroad …

available to the government in its pursuit of national objectives. This presents a discrepancy. One way to resolve this discrepancy is to correct the category mistake of the instruments of national power.

## Correcting the Category Mistake

In the *Concept of Mind*, philosopher Gilbert Ryle—who was also an intelligence officer with the United Kingdom's Welsh Guard during World War II—introduced the concept of a category mistake with several examples. In one such example, Ryle explained:

> [A category mistake] would be made by a child witnessing the march-past of a division, who, having had pointed out to him such and such battalions, batteries, squadrons, etc., asked when the division was going to appear. He would be supposing that a division was a counterpart to the units already seen, partly similar to them and partly unlike them. He would be shown his mistake by being told that in watching the battalions, batteries and squadrons marching past he had been watching the division marching past. The march-past was not a parade of battalions, batteries, squadrons *and* a division; it was a parade of the battalions, batteries and squadrons *of* a division.

What Ryle presents is a framework of categories and subsets. Similarly, correcting the category mistake of the instruments of national power requires an appropriate framework of categories and subsets. What follows is this. Instruments of national power other than the DIME constructs—such as financial, law enforcement, law, etc., represented in the more recent acronyms MIDLIFE and MIDFIELD—may be standalone instruments of national power even if not altogether equivalent to the DIME constructs. Such instruments are better understood as subsets of the DIME categories. For example, in some cases, law may be better seen as a means of diplomatic power.

## Rule-of-Law Means: Countering Sharp Power

Sharp power refers to the practices of authoritarian states to project influence to undermine democracy abroad, a hallmark of the strategies of China and Russia.[5] Rule of law is a means—perhaps *the* means—to counter it.[6]

## Sharp Power

The United States' Africa strategy emphasizes that, in Africa, "Russia advances its political and economic relationships with little regard for the rule of law or accountable and transparent governance." In particular,

> [Russia] continues to sell arms and energy in exchange for votes at the United Nations—votes that keep strongmen in power, undermine peace and security, and run counter to the best interests of the African people.

Thus, far from merely disregarding it, Russia's efforts in West Africa seek to actively undermine rule of law.

China, for its part, "uses bribes, opaque agreements, and the strategic use of debt to hold states in Africa captive to Beijing's wishes and demands." Each strategy comprises efforts to distort the political environment within democracies, efforts anathema to rule of law.

## Rule of Law

A 2004 report of the United Nations Secretary General defined rule

**Bilateral exercises provide opportunities for building partner capacity and potential emphasis on Rule of Law.** (Photo by Sgt Tatum Vayavananda.)

of law as "a principle of governance in which all persons, institutions, and entities (public and private, including the State) are accountable to laws that are publicly promulgated, equally enforced and independently adjudicated, and are consistent with international human rights norms and standards."[7] This is the same definition found in United States interagency guidance and Army and Marine Corps doctrine.[8]

The author of the United Nations' report, Secretary General Kofi Annan, himself a national of Ghana, has also stressed that "the transformation of African democracies requires good governance that builds the rule of law, not the rule of force or the rule of one man."[9]

In addition, the African Charter (on Human and Peoples' Rights) says, "[e]very citizen shall have the right to participate freely in the government of his country, either directly or through freely chosen representatives in accordance with the provisions of the law." These sources reveal two key features of rule of law in West Africa: legitimacy in the state's use of force and freedom of participation in government.

The definitions of sharp power and rule of law pit one against the other. Developments in Africa show in fact what the definitions in theory suggest, and recent events in Guinea present a profound example.

## Rule of Law is Losing, Russia Winning: Guinea

On 22 March 2020—as reported in *Foreign Policy*—Guinea held a nationwide referendum on a proposed constitutional amendment to undo the president's term limit.[10] This referendum is reminiscent of similar measures in Togo and Russia, a correlation that is more than mere coincidence.[11]

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*... training exercises tend to undervalue elements of rule of law.*

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What makes matters worse is that, according to a poll from 2017, over 80 percent of Guineans favored a two-term limit for the presidency.[12] Yet, concerns of voter intimidation have undermined the legitimacy of the electoral process. Indeed, on 28 February 2020, Guinea's president announced the postponement of the referendum, citing concerns of the integrity of the electoral rolls. With votes now cast, it remains to be seen what will come of republican democracy in Guinea. (Guinea's president is now serving his third term.)

Meanwhile, the security forces' human rights abuses complicate the issues.[13] This is not to mention that terrorism activity in the region continues to worsen.[14]

Elsewhere, on 28 February, the same day that Guinea's president announced postponement of the term-limit referendum, U.S. Africa Command closed out Flintlock 2020, its "annual, African-led, integrated military and law enforcement exercise."[15] These and other similar training exercises, such as AFRICAN LION, align with the Blank Slate Review. More than that, training based in rule of law can be a means of diplomatic power.

## The Way

The United States can continue to achieve influence in West Africa by undertaking capacity-building efforts in the region premised on rule of law as a means of projecting democratic values in pursuit of national objectives. Yet, training exercises tend to undervalue elements of rule of law. An anecdote at the outset put the problem into proper context. Another anecdote exemplifies the way:

> During an assessment visit in March of 2002, [the Defense Institute of International Legal Studies] helped the U.S. Embassy formulate an action plan, which included two legal training evolutions in Sierra Leone during 2003. The first evolution was designed as a seminar focusing on joint training for [partner forces] and civilian leaders on the role of the military in a democracy.[16]

In the second evolution, "under simulated field conditions ... [the team] utilized military mission briefing techniques ... in an effort to incorporate [law of war] training into everyday training."

Recommendation: Flintlock, African Lion, and other training exercises must be based on rule of law. In this way, rule of law can constitute a means of diplomatic power.

Marines must lead the way. U.S. Marine Corps Forces Africa should assign a judge advocate from the Law of War Training Section to each rotation of the Special MAGTF-Crisis Response Africa.[17] That judge advocate would work with the GCE—remotely or in person—to incorporate elements of rule of law into the training program.

## The End

Training based on rule of law supports a mode of security assistance that presents to the United States a win-win method of engagement with partner states in its pursuit of national objectives. There is an opportunity for Washington—in good faith—to achieve pervasive influence throughout West Africa, strengthen alliances with West African states, and guard against competitors' authoritarian influence and deliberate undermining of democratic values. Above all, more than being part of federal law and in alignment with national strategy in West Africa, rule of law can serve as a means of diplomatic power.

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### Notes

1. Jeff Seldin & Carla Babb, "In Africa, US Sees Trainers as 'Better Fit' Than Combat Troops," *Voice of America*, (February 2020), available at https://www.voanews.com.

2. In accordance with Section 333's rule of law provision, led by the responsible International Operations Officer from the Defense Institute for International Legal Studies. The author was a member of both teams.

3. *Joint Publication 3-07* describes stability activities as "civil-military efforts [that] aim to strengthen legitimate governance, restore rule of law, support economic and infrastructure development, reform institutions to achieve sustainable peace and security, foster a sense of national unity, and create the conditions that enable the [host nation] government to reassume civic responsibilities." The same definition is found in Army and Marine Corps doctrine.

4. James E. Baker, *In the Common Defense: National Security Law for Perilous Times*, (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

5. Christopher Walker and Jessica Ludwig, "The Meaning of Sharp Power: How Authoritarian States Project Influence," *Foreign Affairs*, (November 2017), available at https://www.foreignaffairs.com. As Walker later observed: "Today's authoritarian states—notably including China and Russia—are using 'sharp power' to project their influence internationally, with the objectives of limiting free expression, spreading confusion, and distorting the political environment within democracies." Christopher Walker, "What Is 'Sharp Power'?" *Journal of International Democracy*, (July 2018), available at https://www.journalofdemocracy.org. This was in 2018. In 2020, Walker's observations play out most profoundly in West Africa.

6. Others have made a similar argument. For example, Joseph Nye, progenitor of the concept of "soft power," said, "While the rule of law and openness make democracies asymmetrically vulnerable, they are also critical values that we need to defend." Justin Chapman, "Democracies Should Fight Sharp Power with Soft Power," *Pacific Council of International Policy*, (August 2018), available at https://www.pacificcouncil.org.

7. United Nations Security Council, *The Rule of Law and Transitional Justice in Conflict and Post-Conflict Societies: Report of the Secretary-General*, (New York, NY: August 2004).

8. U.S. Agency for International Development, U.S. Department of Defense, U.S. Department of State, *Security Sector Reform,* (Washington, DC: 2009).

9. Kofi Annan and Nader Mousavizadeh, *Interventions: A Life in War and Peace,* (New York, NY: Penguin Press, 2012). Of course, the other element in Annan's remark is rule of law against autocracy. However, non-African governments cannot stand to vouchsafe models of support for African societies that even closely resemble overtures toward regime change. African societies will choose their own governments. Instead, the point is, "[a] new generation of autocrats has perfected the art of looking democratic while pursuing authoritarian goals." Tim Horley, Anne Meng, & Mila Versteeg, "The World Is Experiencing a New Form of Autocracy," *The Atlantic*, (March 2020), available at https://www.theatlantic.com. The observation alludes to China's Xi Jinping and Russia's Vladimir Putin but is equally applicable to Togo's Faure Gnassingbé and Guinea's Alpha Condé.

10. Aanu Adeoye, "West African Leaders Are Rolling Back Democratic Gains," *Foreign Policy*, (March 2020), available at https://foreignpolicy.com. The correlation is no coincidence. Therefore, part of foreign governments' strategies concerning Africa should be to support Africans' right to vote and freely participate in government as reflected in the African Charter. Facts in this subsection refer to this article unless otherwise noted.

11. Reid Standish, "Will Putin Be Russia's President for Life?" *Foreign Policy*, (March 2020), available at https://foreignpolicy.com.

12. Aanu Adeoye, "West African Leaders Are Rolling Back Democratic Gains," *Foreign Policy*, (March 2020), available at https://foreignpolicy.com. (Referring to, Staff, "Guineans Voice Strong Support for Two-term Limit for President," *Afrobarometer*, (September 2019), available at http://afrobarometer.org.)

13. "Since widespread demonstrations against the new constitution began in October 2019, security forces have used tear gas, riot gear, and, at times, firearms against protesters, who have thrown stones and other projectiles at police and gendarmes." Staff, "Guinea: Fear of Further Crackdown as Constitutional Poll Nears," *Human Rights Watch*, (February 2020), available at https://www.hrw.org. Most troubling are reports that, since October 2019, security forces have shot dead 36 demonstrators.

14. Staff, "'Unprecedented terrorist violence' in West Africa, Sahel region," *United Nations News*, (January 2020), available at https://news.un.org.

15. Staff, "Flintlock," U.S. Africa Command, (n.d.) available at https://www.africom.mil.

16. Felipe Páez, "The Defense Institute of International Legal Studies Sends a Mobile Education Team to Sierra Leone," *Journal of International Security Assistance Management,* (Washington, DC: DOD, Spring 2003). This anecdote, from 2003, was by then-Capt Felipe Páez, USMC, now Col Páez, USMCR, Branch Head, Law of War Training Section.

17. The Law of War Training Section is a cadre of judge advocate subject matter experts in law of war and human rights selected based on operational experience and knowledge of law of war and applicable human rights law. The unit is in direct support of the Commandant of the Marine Corps.

# DIME

## Not just an acronym
## by MSgt Matthew L. Higgins

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China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is a complex, multidimensional concept that has drastically changed the global landscape. The vastness of BRI requires the United States to take a holistic view to clearly identify the associated implications and opportunities in this ambitious global strategy designed to cement China as the world's dominant superpower. This initiative is the most ambitious global move that the world has witnessed since the end of World War II. To understand the scope and complexity of Chinese dominated expansion, the United States must adopt a comprehensive national strategy that carefully balances all instruments of national power. A full governmental approach that leverages each requisite government agency in a time and manner that is advantageous to their abilities is required for the United States to successfully draft, implement, and maintain a strategy that enables the country to compete with China and more specifically, the BRI. The United States is lacking a comprehensive, concerted approach, framed by a unifying strategy that leverages all available public and private resources to ensure the Nation remains the dominant global leader while also furthering its strategic goals. The instruments of national power are commonly discussed in professional military education and individually throughout the government apparatus. Many in military circles are familiar with programs, studies, and the theoretical application of diplomacy, information, military, and economic, but a much wider and coordinated implementation is required for the United States to be successful in competing with China and maintaining our superpower status. If China were to replace the United States as the domi-

nant global authority, the world order as we know it would be replaced by an oppressive, authoritarian communist model where the values of democracy, freedom, equality, justice, and basic human rights would be non-existent.

## Diplomacy

The first and arguably most important instrument to be leveraged in Chinese relations is diplomacy. The United States maintains a robust government that employs experts and agencies that are specialized in every corner of the diplomatic relations world. The United States Department of State (DOS) is the lead agency for carrying out the diplomatic means of the country. The DOS mission is stated as, "The U.S. Department of State leads America's foreign policy through diplomacy, advocacy, and assistance by advancing the interests of the American people, their safety and economic prosperity."[1] Notably, the DOS is only as successful as foreign governments will allow. China poses many diplomatic challenges for the United States; to successfully compete with China, the DOS and other national agencies, such as the Office of the President of the United States of America, should work in concert with one another to deliver a well developed and implemented plan. The Chinese have a long history of not following through with their diplomatic promises, regularly conducting deception operations in lieu of employing legitimate diplomatic means.[2] One fact that plagues America's ability to maintain credibility and assurances is the high

rate of turnover with ambassadors, presidents, and other key diplomats. The current administration's policies can be drastically altered or changed with the appointment of a different diplomat to the post, a newly elected president, or even a change in the national objectives of either of the nations.

Recommendations to effectively utilize the diplomatic arm of the United States Government include: strengthening current alliances and cultivating new alliances that are vital to national interests and strategic goals. Although the United States has adopted more of a hardline stance on certain aspects with our allies, it is crucial for these ties with key allies to be reinvigorated and revitalized. Various agreements that were negotiated with previous administrations have since been renegotiated or withdrawn from because of perceived unequal terms and fairness for the United States. Whereas this may be true in some instances, agreements that are not evenly split with incentives for both sides are still needed to maintain strong unshakable alliances, especially during times of major global change. Examples include trade agreements, defense spending for the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, and the U.S. withdrawal from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces treaty.[3] Each strategic partner should receive an individualized approach to ensure that our collective needs are aligned and in the best interest of both countries. Without solid alliances and agreements, the implementation of BRI projects and stronger bonds with increased reliance on Beijing is more

likely to occur. Our allies and other nations need reassurance that America is in it for the long game and will continue to provide a viable alternative to a Chinese-dominated world order. Offering incentives to other countries promotes advantageous outlooks for partnering with America. Incentives could include favorable trade terms, military partnerships, U.S. sponsored educational programs, joint infrastructure and energy projects, etc. U.S. alliances such as those participating in the Blue Dot Network are crucial to strengthening allied resolve and competing with BRI projects across the globe.[4] Many of the strategic decisions regarding allies and treaties between the United States and other nations have drastically changed during the last three years. Although the reasons for these actions remain ambiguous, the United States should strategically forecast its long-term goals and not rely on near-sighted band-aids that will be pulled by a future administration.

## Information

The use of information as an instrument of national power is one of the most crucial, cost-effective, and practical means of furthering American interests around the world. This includes the military's information operations campaigns but also goes well beyond as it supports policy objectives across all domains simultaneously. To be effective, information needs to be well focused, coordinated, and distributed to three major audiences. First, the American public should be kept informed by transparent government communications and intentions when these do not obstruct or harm national security. In a world that is plagued with propaganda and deliberate disinformation to support personal agendas, it is crucial to educate the public on these monumental issues that put the Nation at risk. Second, our allies and potential allies across the world need to be aware of Chinese intentions and the consequences of poorly or deceptively constructed deals and interactions. Third, informing and educating Chinese citizens on opportunities beyond an intrusive and oppressive communist

world are possible.[5] Information must be shared across all the aforementioned populations, encompassing a rudimentary understanding of China's BRI that would increase understanding, dispel misconceptions, and avoid potential negative consequences.

Additionally, exploiting and debunking Chinese information operations in order to inform the rest of the world on Chinese intentions would shed light on deceptive tactics and China's global dominance goal. Using historical and recent examples of China's duplicitous behavior and hypocritical procedures dealing with crisis situations and political unrest show how a world dominated by China would look for any poten-

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*... debunking Chinese information operations in order to inform the rest of the world on Chinese intentions would shed light on deceptive tactics and China's global dominance goal.*

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tial adversaries. Examples include the People's Republic of China's (PRC) handling of unrest in Hong Kong, proof of civil rights violations, speech censoring/social engineering, and the incarceration or disappearance of political opponents. Exposing China for who they really are could drastically shape the world's perspective of exactly who they are siding with when entering into agreements and alliances with the People's Republic of China. If done correctly, with collective prosperity as the goal and not to just serve a sole American agenda, this could greatly enhance the propensity for more prosperous and well-informed alliances beyond the BRI deals. The ability of the United States to effectively employ soft power tactics is essential to produce long-term success in the information spectrum. In this context, "Soft power is the ability to achieve desired outcomes through attraction rather than coercion."[6] The United States has been a long-lasting example of what is possible in a free and dynamic civil society. By improving and reinvigorating this legacy, the

United States can shine through as "the alternative" through practices, policies, and civil liberties that are a possibility for all people in all nations. Educating developing countries on contract negotiations, quality control, fair business practices, and additional items will allow them to analyze and validate contracts and agreements prior to being coerced or persuaded without understanding the entire process or situation.

## Military

The military has already begun a drastic shift to better prepare for the Chinese pacing threat. The notion of United States military supremacy across all domains is no longer valid. During the past three years, the United States has published multiple documents that highlight the Chinese threat and a renewed focus to orient the country's government agencies in a specific, unified direction. Through the development and distribution of several key documents and strategies including the *2017 National Security Strategy*, *2018 National Defense Strategy*, *2018 National Military Strategy*, and the *2019 DOD Indo-Pacific Strategy Report*, activities can be clearly delineated, approached, and solved with a unified effort of all security, intelligence, and defense stakeholders. As stated in the *National Defense Strategy*, "the central challenge to U.S. prosperity and security is the *reemergence of long-term, strategic competition* by revisionist powers."[7] The latest *National Defense Strategy* discusses current analysis of the strategic environment, outlining the DOD's objectives and strategic approach. Individual Services have translated this guidance into personalized approaches that effectively employ the Services while aligning with current and future Service tasks.

The Marine Corps' *Force Design 2030* and *2019 Commandant's Planning Guidance* are shining examples of shaping force objectives and reprioritizing needs. These documents undergird the Marine Corps' strategic vision and strategy for maintaining the Corps as the most competent and ready Service for strategic competition with the PRC. The shifts to further integrate with the Navy are imperative if the Marine Corps is to remain a viable maritime option to combat Chinese military capabilities:

> With the shift in our primary focus to great power competition and a renewed focus on the Indo-Pacific region, the current force has shortfalls in capabilities needed to support emerging joint, naval, and Marine Corps operating concepts.[8]

However, much more is needed in order to make fixing these shortfalls in manning, training, and technology a reality. In addition to military cooperation with large defense contractors, this coordination needs to extend further into civilian information technology and cyber defense sectors. The United States already possesses greater capabilities and innovative ideas that are harbored in the private sector. The need for a more streamlined, effective, and less bureaucratic process to shorten the progression from idea or concept to production for new technologies and equipment is paramount. Simply increasing a defense budget and continually allowing government service providers or contractors to exploit the existing system by charging for uncompetitive, astronomically overpriced goods and services must cease.

## Economic

The economic tools that the United States and her allies have at their disposal provide a wide array of options to compete with China's BRI. The biggest advantage that China currently has for promoting and obtaining deals along the BRI is the lack of competition; enormous amounts of money have been invested and continue to be invested in the economies of developing nations. However, without any known or substantial alternatives to ongoing projects and investments, emerging economies have very few reasons to refuse unfavorable terms and transactions. A 2018 study conducted by the Center for Strategic and International Studies reported, "The United States is no longer the major player for developing countries when it comes to trade, investments, and financing."[9] This alone leaves many opportunities for Chinese companies and state-owned entities to fill a void and exploit strategic locations and partnerships throughout the world. In 2006, the United States was the principal trading partner for nearly 130 nations. Ten years later, it dropped to 76 countries.[10] China capitalizes on these open sources to the full extent possible to support (PRC) interests globally. China has subverted the United States' place and become the top trading partner for 124 countries.[11]

The biggest tenet that is lacking from the United States approach to economically competing with China and BRI projects is the lack of focus. It is almost impossible to thrive without a comprehensive foundational strategy that complementarily aligns and simultaneously employs various tools to increase their effectiveness. The economic arm of the United States is long reaching but still requires full support and coordination with the other instruments of national power to be successful. Simply cutting off ties to China is neither feasible nor practical. The U.S. strategy should focus on current and attainable national strengths and not try to outperform China in Chinese strengths. Although the United States cannot match China in dollars spent or underbid their construction/infrastructure projects, there are many intangible assets America possesses that can make our deals more appealing than BRI proposals. The United States brings transparency, free-market economic principles, technology transfers, increased environmental and social safeguards, debt sustainability assessments, quality infrastructure standards, and lifecycle cost assessments. Although some developing countries and their leaders may not fully understand the importance and value to these transactions and concepts, informing them gives them those options. The various U.S. Government departments and agencies need one guiding authority to coordinate all actions to reduce unnecessary redundancy and duplicative efforts. The private sector shares an

> *The economic arm of the United States is long reaching but still requires full support and coordination with the other instruments of national power to be successful.*

equal, if not more of a vested interest in supporting global trade agreements. A holistic approach is the key to the economic superiority of the United States and its allies.

## Conclusion

China's BRI and the instruments of U.S. national power are much too complex to be summarized in a single article. The intention of this article is to give the reader a better understanding of what the United States is currently doing in respect to each instrument and various researched recommendations for competing with China. Although some say that the United States may be too late in combating the Chinese BRI threat, this is not conclusive. The threat has been noticed, actions are being taken, and the United States will continue to do what is in the best interest of the Nation and its citizens. The BRI and Chinese/American economic engagement is not a win or lose game. It is about ensuring that the United States remains a global economic and values-based superpower for itself and all nations that deserve fair, equitable, and balanced trade/economic opportunities. However, even the best of

intentions falls short when they are conceived in a vacuum. The United States faces many challenges that although not unique are not present for the PRC and the Chinese Communist Party. The vast amount and depth of state-owned enterprises in all major industries throughout the Chinese economy allows for a centralized control of policies, trading, and customers that is not possible in capitalist economies throughout the rest of the world.[12] The stranglehold that the Chinese government has on its economy, military, businesses, and citizens makes it much easier to focus all actors (national instruments of power) toward a central goal, which at this time is the BRI. A unified, comprehensive strategy that maximizes the United States' vast power must be developed—and more importantly, implemented—to ensure the United States remains capable and effective as the world's dominant superpower and economic powerhouse.

**Notes**

1. Staff, "Mission," United States Department of State, available at https://www.state.gov.

2. Michael Pillsbury, *The Hundred-Year Marathon: China's Secret Strategy to Replace America as the Global Superpower,* (New York, NY: Henry Holt and Company, 2015).

3. Staff, "U.S.-Russian Nuclear Arms Control Agreements," *Arms Control Association,* (April 2020), available at https://www.armscontrol.org.

4. Staff, "Blue Dot Network," U.S. Department of State, available at https://www.state.gov/blue-dot-network.

5. *The Hundred-Year Marathon.*

6. Amit Kumar Gupta, "Soft Power of the United States, China, and India: A Comparative Analysis," *Indian Journal of Asian Affairs,* (Manju Jain, 2013).

7. Department of Defense, *Summary of the 2018 National Defense Strategy of the United States of America*, (Washington, DC: 2018).

8. Gen David H. Berger, *Force Design 2030*, (Washington, DC: March 2020).

9. Daniel Runde, Romina Bandura, and Owen Murphy, "Renewing U.S. Economic Engagement with the Developing World," CSIS, (November 2018), available at https://www.csis.org.

10. Ibid.

11. Daniel Runde, "A Tale of Two Paths: Divergence in Development," *CSIS*, (February 2017), available at https://www.csis.org.

12. Karen Jingrong Lin, Xiaoyan Lu, Junsheng Zhang, and Ying Zheng, "State-Owned Enterprises in China: A Review of 40 Years of Research and Practice," *China Journal of Accounting Research*, (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 2020).

USMC

# Revisiting Marine Advisors

## Force Design 2030

by Maj Daniel Burns & SSgt Derek Stevenin

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Measuring effectiveness for an advisor mission in a permissive operational environment—with a host nation that is supportive—is starkly different from the advisor missions that the Marine Corps has typically conducted throughout its history, such as combat advising and advisor support to counterinsurgency operations. While there are lessons learned from combat advising that remain applicable, the reality is peacetime advising has a different end state and deserves its own set of criteria for measuring effectiveness. Specifically, the end state for peacetime advising is to set conditions for an enduring partnership—*to keep ourselves in a job.* Meanwhile, the end state for combat advising and support to counterinsurgency operations is to build partner capacity to allow transition of authority and control back to the HOST NATION—*to work ourselves out of a job.* Both end states require a different advisor mindset, strategy, and approach. Nonetheless, the preponderance of literature that exists on Marine advising, especially literature that has been published for the past two decades, has been combat advising and counterinsurgency focused to the point where advising is perceived to be an extension of counterinsurgency instead of a capability to be leveraged across the spectrum of operations.

In early April 2020, a request was submitted to the Archives Branch, Marine Corps Historical Division, for primary source material related to Marine advising activity. The Historical Division was very supportive in meeting this request and provided an abundance of material covering Marine advising in Haiti in the mid-to-late-1920s, Nicaragua elections in 1929, the Pacific Theater during World War II, El Salvador in the late-1980s-to-early 1990s, and Vietnam (1954–1975).[1] Despite these findings, the Marine Corps Historical Division also acknowledged that a gap in literature appears to exist for the more present-day Marine advisor activities as part of Phase 0 steady-state operations such as Security Assistance or through Foreign Military Sales cases.[2] This identified gap could prove to be disadvantageous to today's advisor team's engagement strategies, as Marines will typically fall back on what they learned from their experience while advising in Afghanistan and Iraq (a form of anchoring bias) and erroneously believe that is the right model for advising partners outside of a conflict zone. Perhaps a reason for this gap in knowledge is because there is no reporting requirement for current Marine advisor teams to provide their insight through submissions to Marine Corps Center for Lessons Learned. In the future, Marine Corps Security Cooperation Group could help to close this knowledge gap by ensuring the Marine Corps Center for Lessons Learned receives lessons learned and after actions from advisor teams in the field and at the same time incorporate those lessons into its Marine Advisor Course curriculum.

Taking all of this into account, this proposal focuses on the implementation of coding and analysis of qualitative data—advisor conversations with counterparts—to derive findings that could give insight into the status of the relationship with a Foreign Security Force (FSF) partner and to help determine if there is progression or regression over a defined period of time. The overarching hypothesis is that *the quality of conversations between Marine advisors and FSF counterparts reveals the status of the relationship at an individual and organizational level.* In other words, evaluating advisor conversations with FSF counterparts may prove to be valuable to understanding the state of the relationship. However, there needs to be a codified method for measuring and assessing an advisor conversation with a counterpart—one that accurately characterizes the substance and depth of a conversation and is applicable across a wide-spectrum of cultures from around the world.

## Proposed Methodology

Many Marine advisors would likely argue that the skills for evaluating relationships with FSF counterparts is intuitive and is the result of a Marine having a high level of emotional intelligence and interpersonal skills. However, there are structured methodologies that

could be used to reinforce those talents without having to obtain outside support from a team of social scientists—or worse, by compromising the advisor relationship. Often, Marine advisors have little metrics to work from, and the metrics they do have fail to capture the ground truth or what is really going on in an FSF partner's organization. Reason being: the FSF partner is not a clear-cut line and block chart; it is a web of complex interrelationships that have the underpinnings of cultural and historical complexity and nuances among other factors.

However, the one consistent variable that exists is the conversations between advisors and FSF counterparts through Key Leader Engagements or just every day interaction. If an advisor has a great deal of self-discipline, keeps an advisor journal (i.e. a record of notes on each conversation with comments that include personal reflections), and compiles them over a period of a week, a month, or six to twelve months, a great deal of qualitative information becomes accessible for evaluation. That being said, this effort requires competent information management at the individual advisor level for it to work effectively.

The idea of evaluating conversations or what others say is not a new concept. For example, there is an entire academic community of profilers (such as Dr. Jerrold Post, Walter Weintraub, David G. Winter, and Dr. Margaret Hermann) that have been pioneering methods for conducting leadership, political personality, and at-a-distance psychological profiles of key leaders based on speeches, soundbites, interviews, press releases, autobiographies, and social media posts as examples.[3] While Marine advisors are by no means expected to employ these advanced analytic techniques, there is potentially value that comes out of being more aware of the tell-tale signs that conversations with FSF counterparts are either progressing, regressing, does not exist, or altogether irrelevant to accomplishing the mission. These inputs could then be used to make an overall assessment of who the true influencers and decisionmakers are in the counterpart's organization—the critical nodes that deserve the most attention to

| Category | Description |
|---|---|
| I | Superficial, rapport building, barely scratching the surface. |
| II | Gaining familiarity, slightly influential. |
| III | Trusted, included in the FSF decision-making process, very influential. |

*Figure 1. Categories of conversations (proposed). (Figure provided by author.)*

advance the partnership or make gains in training progression.

Another consideration is that many advisor missions are for a longer duration, with some lasting over ten years. The compilation of over ten years of qualitative data and production of leadership profiles of an FSF organization could pay huge dividends when it comes to familiarity with FSF leadership, plans, intentions, and developing a shared understanding through other security cooperation activities. Therefore, the preparation of leadership profiles could shape the Marine Corps' engagement with foreign partners further down the road while at the same time mitigating the advisor team from having to reestablish a baseline every time there is an advisor turnover or redeployment.

Therefore, Figure 1 is a proposed categorization of conversations from least advisor influence and counterpart receptiveness to the most advisor influence and counterpart receptiveness, whereas Figure 2 lists potential visual or verbal indicators that could be detected by the advisor while engaging with their FSF counterpart. The indicators are not absolute and could be adjusted after one establishes a baseline. What is more

| Category | Indicators |
|---|---|
| I | • Counterpart displays hospitality, however, is quick and to the point—acts very busy.<br>• Counterpart acts like he or she cannot speak or understand English (when you have information that proves otherwise).<br>• Counterpart tells you their resume and consistently has a "they've done this before" attitude.<br>• Counterpart appears to have advisor fatigue, displays signs of not wanting to invest time in a relationship.<br>• Counterpart will state basic information about themselves and will not go further into detail about outside-of-work topics. |
| II | • Counterpart makes time for conversation.<br>• Counterpart shares frustrations and other thoughts/opinions that they would not share with their superiors.<br>• Counterpart will go beyond "small talk" and talk about family, life, and topics other than work.<br>• Counterpart will ask questions about the advisor (to include personal questions).<br>• Counterpart makes recommendations to the advisor (i.e. places to visit).<br>• Counterpart will invite advisor to join in customary activities (i.e. sharing coffee or tea).<br>• Counterpart will "make a show" out of the advisor accompanying them to gain more clout.<br>• Counterpart will tell the advisor that they are "a part of the team" and make an effort to show that he or she means it. |
| III | • Counterpart invites advisor to activities outside of work (i.e. visit to their home for a dinner).<br>• Counterpart consults with advisor prior to making decisions to talk through his or her ideas or concerns.<br>• Counterpart is willing to discuss weaknesses and vulnerabilities with the advisor.<br>• Counterpart shares deployment stories/experiences. |

*Figure 2. Indicator chart (proposed). (Figure provided by author.)*

| Counterparts | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Notes |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Brigade Commander | I | I | I | I | II | II | II | II | | Brigade Commander is conducting Change of Command, will need to start new relationship with replacement in Sep. The change from Category I to II during Apr-May timeframe was because of the success of Unit Enhancement Training (UET) as it satisfied FSF training requirements. |
| Brigade Training Officer | | | | | II | II | II | II | II | Relationship began in May and counterpart has been consistently a Category II. May meet counterpart outside of work for a fishing trip. There is potential that this relationship will progress to Category 3 in the next few months. |
| 1st Battalion Commander | I | I | I | I | I | I | I | I | I | This relationship may not be worth advisor investment due to 1st Battalion Commander not being present at work on a consistent basis, nor demonstrating real interest in his people and organization. |
| 1st Battalion Training Officer | III | III | III | III | I | I | I | I | I | Battalion Training Officer conducted a turnover in May, new Training Officer does not appear to have an interest in having relationship with advisor or conducting training. |
| Company 1 Commander, 1st Battalion | III | III | III | III | III | III | III | III | III | Company Commander was Battalion Training Officer and relationship was consistently a Category 3. Since change in billet, relationship continues to be a Category 3. Company Commander has more influence than his Battalion Training Officer or Battalion Commander combined |

*Figure 3. Category, indicator, and advisor notes combined (proposed).* **(Figure provided by author.)**

important is that the advisor applies critical thinking and uses the process to make judgements. When considering the differences between Category 1-3 in Figure 2, the key distinguishing feature of Category 3 is the advisor becomes a part of the FSF partner decision-making process. An example would be an FSF brigade commander consults with the Marine advisor and talks through ideas about a training plan before deciding on brigade training priorities.

Over the course of many months collecting this data, it may become apparent that the relationship is regressing with certain counterparts from a Category 3 to a Category 1. If this happens, the advisor will be aware of it, consider the driving factors for why there is a regression, and then can implement a plan to get the relationship back on track. Figure 3 is a simulation of the combined categories, indicators, and advisor notes and how it feeds into the overall picture of the status of advisor-FSF counterpart relationships. The key is understanding the *why* behind sudden changes in relationships and reevaluating if that key personality is truly an influencer/decisionmaker or an obstacle to progress.

## Conclusion

The character of Marine advisor missions is evolving. Traditional notions of Marine advisor missions from experiences in Afghanistan and Iraq are becoming less applicable, especially in regions and countries outside of conflict zones and in a Phase 0 permissive opera-

> **The character of Marine advisor missions is evolving.**

tional environment where the partner nation or host nation is keen to have a more enduring partnership instead of a removal of U.S. presence. Advising as part of steady-state operations will be critical to retaining key regional partnerships in the Middle East while the Marine Corps focuses on the Pacific and begins forging partnerships with relatively obscure island nations to counter the influence and presence of the People's Republic of China. However, as the Marine Corps implements many of the initiatives outlined in *Force Design 2030*, the community should continue

to discuss the role that advisors play in Phase 0 and discuss ongoing trends and new and emerging methodologies to make our advisor teams more effective. Relationships with foreign partners are not something that one can just *turn on* in a crisis; they require a commitment that goes beyond one-to-two-week theater security cooperation exercises, which embedded advisor teams and training teams could advance, as it all begins with a skillful conversation.

### Notes

1. Personal email correspondence between author and Annette Amerman on 7 April 2020.

2. Ibid.

3. Jerrold M. Post, *The Psychological Assessment of Political Leaders*, (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 2003).

USMC

# "Ghost of the Sea"

## The Korps Marina and the GBASMs that enable them

### by Col Mike Fallon, USMC(Ret)

>Col Fallon served 33 years as an Infantry, Reconnaissance, and Intelligence Officer. He commanded in combat at every level from Recon Team leader thru Task Force. He directly supported Marines as a defense contractor for the past twenty years in Command and Control. Currently, he is the Principal Consultant with Presley O'Bannon Grayback Consulting. He is an Archer in the Order of St. Crispin.

It is 2031, the Chinese Year of the White Pig. The Peoples Republic of China (PRC) has continued its "Gray War" in the South China Sea with nightly fishing incursions into the Natura Sea. These subtle movements are met by the *"Ghost of the Sea"* (Ghost of the Sea are the Korps Marina [KorMar] of the Indonesian Armed Forces). Indonesia, with the largest fishing fleet and industry on the globe resulting in the world's largest fishing economy, must defend its Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and its national economy. The primary capability and key enabler that allows them to meet the Chinese fishing vessels in their home waters is the GBASM (Ground Based Anti-Ship Missiles) umbrella provided by the Indonesian KorMar Battery located 48 nautical miles north of the Marine Corps battery stationed on Natura Baser Island in the Natura Sea.

The 38th Commandant of Marines Corps' visionary decision in response to the Nation's "Pacific Pivot" resulted in establishing the Program Manager, Ground Based Air Defense organization. The subsequent funding and development of an anti-ship missile capability from land has been the key enabler to overcome the risk associated with meeting the Chinese in the Gray Zone of the Gray War. The GBASM systems have forward deployed as part of an inside forces capability. Without which, the Indonesian and United States would have been outgunned and outranged in the disputed South China Sea.

In 2014, the KorMar as well as the Indonesia Navy and Air Force started defending their fishing grounds from *illegal, unreported, unregulated* (*IUU*) fishing from the Vietnamese, Philippine, and Melanesian commercial fishermen. Then they were losing an estimated $4 billion per year from *IUU* activities. Between 2014 and 2019, the *"Ghost of the Sea"* and Indonesian Navy sank over 10,000 *IUU* fishing vessels from sampans to trawlers. The pressing question then became: What to do about the largest violator, the Peoples Republic of China and its highly organized commercial fishing fleet who were routinely escorted and guarded by the Chinese Coast Guard? It became *the political issue* in Jakarta. The Republic of Indonesia, who traditionally took a middle road between the east and west, were being forced toward the west.

A major political adjustment occurred in 2017 when Indonesia renamed the northern portion of its Exclusive Economic Zone to North Natuna Sea. The Natura Sea is located *north and south* of the 271 islands in the Natura Island chain. The Natura Sea is positioned between the South China Sea to the *north and northeast*, Karimata Strait to the *southeast*, and the Strait of Singapore to the *west*. The shallow water of the Natuna Sea is geologically part of the Sunda Shelf. The shallow Sunda Shelf provides easy drilling access to one of the world's largest deposit of natural gas. However, the real value of the shelf's shallow water is its renewable fishers, if not overfished. *For Indonesia, this is a food chain sustainability fight for access to food to feed its large growing population and as the engine that drives the largest fishing economy in the world. This is a vital national interest for the Republic of Indonesia.*

Building on the United Nations Permanent Court of Arbitrations landmark ruling in 2016, the Indonesian government in 2018 notified the United Nations formally of their claim to the North Natura Sea. The original suit filed by the Philippines against the PRC's Nine Dash Line Map denied the Nine Dash Line Map, which China had used historically to justify its sea and island claims in the South China Sea. The PCA ruled in favor of the legal precedents of Exclusive Economic Zones. They denied the historical Chinese Nine Dash Line map claim. The Nine Dash Line does not go as far south as the actual Natura Island chain and China has recognized the chain of Natura Islands as Indonesian. What was disputed is the North Natura Sea and its seabed. The Nine Dash Line crosses over the Indonesian 200 nautical miles EEZ and over the Sunda Shelf. For orientation, the Nine Dash line dips 683 nautical miles south of the Spratly Islands.

Again, in January 2020, Indonesia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a statement against the Chinese fishing in the Natura Sea. The press release invoked the United Nations Permanent Court of Arbitrations' South China Sea arbitration ruling to warn the PRC of the continual encroachment by organized Chinese fleets fishing the North Natura Sea in violation of the Exclusive Economic Zone. Indonesian stated the Nine Dash Line Map ruling and the

historical rights claim clearly lacks international legal support and is in violation of United Nation Convention on Law of the Sea.

In May 2020, the Trump Administration tightened its stand and fully backed the Indonesian position. The Secretary of State made publicized statements that the United States would side with Indonesia in the disputed sea. Emphasizing this U.S. position was the deployment of the USS *Ronald Regan* and USS *Nimitz* aircraft carriers to the South China Sea. They conducted freedom of navigation ops past the Spratley's and the Chinese artificial islands of Woody Island in the Paracel Islands, Fiery Cross Reef, Mischief Reef, Second Thomas Shoal, and the Indonesian Natura Island Chain as they exited south and then conducted port calls in South East Asia.

Fast forward to 2028, to protect its national interest, Indonesia signed a bilateral treaty with the United States. This treaty builds upon the existing Trilateral Cooperative Arrangement between Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines—which the United States endorsed. This agreement is oriented to preserve each party's mutual interest against outside interference within their respective Exclusion Economic Zones and to counter overfishing.

Operationally, to provide counter maritime incursion capabilities, the Indonesians have built a large Naval Base on Natura Besar Island. They are determined to protect their fisheries within the Exclusive Economic Zone especially over the Sunda Shelf.

As a result, the Indonesian Marine Corps or Korps Marina (KorMar), the *"Ghost of the Sea"* have permanently moved their 3d Reconnaissance Battalion to Natura Naval Base and have continued their annual training exercise exchange with the Marine Corps.

Today is 3 February 2031. GySgt "Iron Mike" Franklin is on exchange duty for three years with the KorMar. He defines his primary responsibility as facilitating the Indonesia Marine Corps interest with the U.S. Joint Task Force-Natura (JTF-N) and their Intelligence, Training, and Transition Mission. Franklin is standing on the

Natura Naval Base landing zone just after sundown. He is waiting for the arrival of both Commandants—his and the Indonesian Marine Corps'. While he waits, he reflects back to 2019 when he was a lance corporal with 1/3 Mar on a month-long training exchange with the KorMar. His platoon and a KorMar platoon had spent two weeks together in live fire training in Hawaii and then flown together to Eastern Java for jungle training. The 3d Marine Littoral Regiment homebased in K-Bay had been conducting these exchanges at platoon and company sized units since 2015.

GySgt Franklin is now stationed with the KorMar 3d Recon Battalion at Naval Base Besar. Besar is the largest island of the Natura chain located 400 nautical miles northeast of Sumatra. The base is a strategic base to defend the sovereignty and economic interest of the Indonesian Exclusive Economic Zone. This area of

the Northern Natura Sea overlaps with the historical Chinese's Nine Dash Line in the southern end of the South China Sea. Since the Arbitrated ruling and Indonesia's changed political posture, there has been continual tension along with multiple incidents between Indonesia and China over the Sunda Shelf, its fishing grounds, and the economic development of natural gas deposits.

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The surveyed deposits, named Natura D-Alpha Block, hold gas fields at depth of 60m. The Indonesian Maritime Ministry has jealously guarded their territorial fishing grounds. In 2018 to support the Maritime Ministry, the Indonesian Armed Forces established a new Tri-Command ("THI,'" Natura Integrated Unit). "THI" comprised of units from Navy, Air Force, and KorMar are assigned to the command at the Naval Base Natura Baser. Their mission is to maintain Indonesian Sovereignty over



*Indonesia's Marines, the Korps Marina are capable and complimentary partners for U.S. Marines. (Photo by Cpl Danny Gonzalez.)*

the North Natura Sea and to monitor and physically challenge all foreign fishing fleets and vessels, especially the large commercial Chinese fishing fleet escorted by the Chinese Coast Guard.

In 2030, the Indonesia government, in accordance with the bilateral treaty with the United States, has quietly allowed the establishment of a Coalition Sea Surveillance Center (CSSC) inside the Indonesian Sea Surveillance Center (ISSC) at the Natura Baser Naval Base. The CSSC's mission is to link overhead surveillance with the newly developed undersea surveillance of the Chinese Fishing fleet in both the Natura Sea and the South China Sea. This fused intelligence has allowed the Tri-Service Unit to employ its surface vessels and aircraft efficiently to challenge each incursion of the Chinese Fishing fleet. The KorMar now routinely videos infractions and physically escort foreign vessels out of their EEZ. The Marine Corps leads the JTF-N, mans the CSSC, and runs the training and transition mission from the Natura baser Naval Base. The CSSC function is straight forward intelligence analysis and coordination with the ISSC and is accomplished by the JTF-N's Intelligence section. The JTF-N's training and transition mission is to train and then transition Foreign Military Sales (FMS) systems to the Indonesian Armed Forces. The four current systems are GBASM, Unmanned Underwater Vehicles (UUV), Unmanned Surface Vessels (USV), and the "Big Dog" surveillance systems.

GySgt Franklin spends the majority of his time escorting his KorMar counterparts to meetings with the training branch and with the transition branch, coordinating both the training schedules and maintenance classes. He has learned that the maintenance never ends

and is reliant on a long supply chain for parts back to the United States. Parts are needed regardless of ownership. Each of the four FMS systems transiting has unique parts issues. The most complex systems are the GBASM mounted on Joint Light Tactical vehicles, closely followed by both the UUVs and the USV. Even the Big Dogs who have been in inventory for eleven years need parts.

The Navy's classified deployment of a large detachment of both unmanned, undersurface vehicles Bluefin 6.0 series and the Medium Unmanned Surface Vessels (MUSV) are also on the island. The detachment maintains and runs the two systems in support of the CSSC. Their mission is to monitor both the sub-surface and surface of both the Northern Natural Sea and the South China Sea, providing electronic data and videos via the CSSC to the ISSC.

GySgt Franklin is meeting the inbound flight of two MV-22's from Singapore that are bringing the Commandant of the Marine Corps and the Sergeant Major of Marine Corps (SMMC) along with the Indonesian CNO and KorMar Commandant to tour not only the CSSC/ISSC but to conduct military to military talks supporting the on-going dialog on bilateral intelligence, training and transition missions, and their proposed schedules.

*The TLS that connects the island with the U.S. networks via submersible cables is the critical* trusted communications path *to Hawaii and the United States as well as Indonesian Commands.*

This Natura Naval base with the U.S. JTF and Navy/Marine Corps presence providing security for not only the CSSC but also the secret subsea Tactical Landing Site (TLS) is the focus of the 41st CMC's trip. The TLS that connects the island with the U.S. networks via submersible cables is the critical *trusted communications path* to Hawaii and the United States as well as Indonesian Commands. Franklin remembered being on the first TLS

operation on Panjang Island in South China Sea Operating Area. Now having been fully briefed on the mission of the CSSC, he understands the importance of that 2027 proof of concept operations and the critical importance of the fully developed capability now linking Natural Besar Naval base with both the Indonesian and U.S. commands thousands of miles away without SatComm.

Franklin's billet as an exchange Foreign Area Specialist is to build relations as the SMMC had personally explained to him before he transferred to Indonesia. GySgt Franklin was sent to language school in Monterey for the *bahasa Indonesian language* in order to learn from and to mentor the Indonesian Marines. This was a long-term investment as a foreign area specialist. With the additional MOS, he could expect to spend the rest of his career in Indonesia or on stateside assignments directly linked to the KorMar such as combined arms training in Hawaii where bilateral training takes place.

The meeting with CMC and SMMC was an opportunity for GySgt Franklin to update them on not only the relationships but also on issues important to both parties such as the parts and maintenance challenges. He thought what was needed on Natura was not riflemen from 3d Commando Company for security but rather mechanics and software engineers who could support, teach, and instruct on the FMS transitioning systems. The Gunny knew statistics would support his recommendations. He had been gathering them at the Robotic Dog Kennel. The Robotic Dog Platoon composed of 21 "Big Dogs" outfitted with day and night TV cameras and direction-finding radio interceptors did a great job of physical and electronic security of the 13 Natura Besar beaches. The issue was keeping up with each dog's routine maintenance scheduled and maintaining the robots' on-board systems fully mission capable. The two maintenance Marines and one contractor software technician simply could not keep the dogs up. The dogs were running 48 percent availability and had to deploy partially mission capable dogs to remote beaches, thereby increas-

*As a regional ally, Indonesia could provide the access and support essential to the Inside Force.* (Photo by Cpl Danny Gonzalez.)

ing the security risk to the secret CSSC and TLS. The KorMar Dog Platoon on the outer northern islands' availability numbers were lower. The Robotic Dog Platoon strength was that they could go on and stay on as long as their batteries were charged. Franklin had worked the power issue by building a charging station behind each beach connected into the island electric grid. As long as the island had power, each charging station enabled 24/7 use of one dog patrolling per beach. Franklin was in the process of supporting the KorMar's effort on the northern islands to building a solar panel power grid next to the Dog Platoon "Kennel."

It took Franklin a day or two to figure out what the young Marines had named each Dog. He would share this with the SMMC. He had deciphered the acronyms and names painted on each Dog. When they arrived, they were simply Dog 1 through 21. Now Dog 1 was POG (Presley O'Bannon Grayback), and Dog 2 was PBD (Papa Bear Dog, named in respect for the 29th CMC), while Dog 3 was TFR (named after TF Ripper).

As the MV-22 approached the island, he heard them first and really did not see them until the last minute as they had been flying low level, lights out to avoid the Chinese surveillance. The

birds would shut down and move inside the hanger and remain overnight. The next day they would depart at sunset as CMC was continuing his Southeast Asia swing and would head to Cam Ranh Bay, Vietnam, for discussion about the PRC with the Vietnamese number one adversary.

> **The Robotic Dog Platoon strength was that they could go on and stay on as long as their batteries were charged. Franklin had worked the power issue by building a charging station behind each beach connected intothe island electric grid.**

Franklin had a tight knot in his stomach, which he knew was good. He wanted the island visit to go well. He knew his exchange role well. But his role as interpreter for CMC always

made him nervous. Yes, there would be embassy interpreters and Indonesian interpreters, but he took pride during the post meetings closed door sessions with CMC and SMMC in explaining nuances. The sessions always revolved around relationships and nuances that Franklin observed or heard on Indonesian affairs. Sometimes they talked around issues such as maintenance and parts and operational risk such as how far north the Navy patrolled their UUV's and MUSV's from Natura Naval Base north into the South China Sea Operating Area.

The two MV-22's landed, and Franklin got the VIP party into vehicles and headed for the welcome dinner. After dinner would be the closed-door prebrief for tomorrow's schedule with CMC and SMMC, then short night's sleep and breakfast with all Marines on island. This was followed by tours of the ISSC/CSSC and the communication Tactical Landing site and a short visit to UUV/MUSV maintenance hangar. The afternoon was dedicated to military-to-military talks plus a final meeting with the Maritime Fisheries Administration representatives where Franklin served as one of the interpreters.

Late that afternoon, after the formal bi-lateral meetings, Franklin met with the 41st Commandant and the Sergeant Major in their guest quarters and provided a classified update brief on the Cooperative Afloat Readiness and Training 35th Year, which was due in the Natuna Islands for a GBASM demonstration on a smaller island 42 miles to their north. The working brief was followed by the farewell reception and post sundown MV-22 departure launch of the VIP party.

The next day, GySgt Franklin got an "eyes only message" handed to him by the Navy Comm Chief from the U.S. Tactical Landing Site communication room. It simply read, "For Franklin, from SMMC: BZ, Marine!!!" That message made Franklin's day and would enable him to really enjoy a "cold one" at the Marine House bar in Selaf Lampa town that evening.

USMC

# Marine Amphibious Reconnaissance in the Littorals

## A ready solution to mobility inside the maritime gray zone
### by Capt Francisco Garza

The Commandant has a bold vision to re-organize the Corps into an effective counter punch for near-peer aggression in the littoral battlespace by 2030. In order to fight and win in the contested waters such as the South China Sea, the Commandant will shed legacy systems and many formations within the MEF to save money and invest in new technologies and capabilities. He will divest the Marine Corps of three law enforcement battalions, three infantry battalions, and all tanks for the purpose of investing that money in rocket artillery and UAS capabilities. As of May 2020, the formation of the first Marine Littoral Regiment (MLR) is underway in Hawaii, utilizing a unique force structure designed to deny the enemy freedom of movement in contested island chains. An innovative solution for the MLR commander's need for security and intelligence is to re-imagine the use of our amphibious reconnaissance (recon) units to save money and increase lethality in the littoral. Recon is the fiduciarily responsible choice for the MLR as an already standing amphibious reconnaissance and surveillance (R&S) unit. Recon can also provide offensive capabilities to the MLR through hunter-killer operations inside the enemy weapon engagement zone (WEZ) and provide counter reconnaissance for the MLR, thus increasing survivability.

It is important to understand that in a financially constrained environment we must use pre-existing assets when

>*Capt Garza is a Reconnaissance Officer currently assigned to the Defense Intelligence Agency.*

able. Assuming that every commander will want some sort of R&S asset in direct support even in an amphibious environment, I will point to the *MCWP 2-25* describing Amphibious Reconnaissance and its methods,

> Insertion by foot or by ground vehicle, the most common means of insertion in sustained operations ashore, is seldom option in amphibious operations. Amphibious reconnaissance/ underwater reconnaissance, therefore, depends more on specialized reconnaissance forces that are trained in sophisticated insertion and extraction techniques including parachute, helocast, boats, submarines, combatant diving, and combat swimming.[1]

This passage from the publication can only reasonably make you assume that recon has an important role to play in *Force Design 2030*. A part of the effort laid out in *Force Design 2030* is the idea that we as a Corps need to save money by divesting non-essential items to reinvest in technologies tailored to the contested maritime environment. Littoral operations in a contested environment is defined as,

> Recognizing that capability and capacity will always be subject to resource constraints, the Navy and Marine Corps team will examine ways to leverage existing capabilities while also

seeking relatively low-cost means to further negate adversary capacity.[2]

Within this definition lies the fiduciary key to open the vast repository of capabilities recon units already possess. Recon is tasked organized to support the full range amphibious operations, to include not only the capabilities listed in the *MCWP* but others such as long-range communications. On one end, infantry battalions can pay to train scout swimmers and employ their companies and platoons in amphibious operations, but the number of qualified Marines and the caliber of their training pale in comparison to the Basic Reconnaissance Course and what the recon community already has internal to its units. If a Marine recon company were to be assigned to the MLR, it could utilize these assets without the need to spend time and money training Marines of a different MOS to accomplish the same goals. In his force design, the Commandant also explicitly states the need for upfront training to increase,

> We will need to increase our upfront, entry-level training investment, and then look to make corresponding modifications to advanced infantry training to develop the quality, maturity and capabilities envisioned—including the multi-disciplinary infantry approach—in the IPT findings. This effort should include looking at ways to include all components of the 03XX occupational field, including reconnaissance and LAR. Explore ways to challenge existing models and paradigms to yield

*Unlike infantry units, reconnaissance units routinely maintain the skills required in small boat operations.* (Photo by Cpl Austin Long.)

a more capable and mature infantry and reconnaissance force.[3]

Whereas an infantry company will need to invest heavily in its Marines to gain just a rudimentary understanding of small boat operations and maintain a scout swimmer capability, a recon company has inherent in its skill sets the ability to conduct small boat operations, parachute water landings, diving, scout swimmer operations, and follow on R&S missions after insertion from the sea. As future commanders will seek to have a direct support R&S asset inside the MLR, the constraints associated with littoral operations in a contested environment are accounted for in the literature and recon as it provides a clear example of utilization of existing capabilities responsibly:

> Recognizing that capability and capacity will always be subject to resource constraints, the Navy and Marine Corps team will examine ways to leverage existing capabilities while also seeking relatively low-cost means to further negate adversary capacity.[4]

Lastly, the concept of Expeditionary Advanced Base Operations (EABO) must be discussed as it is a large part of our force design for 2030. Broadly defined, "EABO seek to further distribute lethality by providing land-based options for increasing the number of sensors and shooters beyond the upper limit imposed by the quantity of sea-going platforms available. The EABO concept espouses employing mobile, relatively low-cost capabilities in austere, temporary locations forward as integral elements of fleet/JFMCC operations."[5]

Recon Teams are four to eight man teams that are trained for amphibious clandestine insertion and carry with them the ability to employ long range precision fires and the communication capabilities to utilize indirect fire capabilities. The combination of a unit that already poses all the necessary upfront skills to be employed in the combat zone of the future is truly a blessing for future commanders. The Marine Corps does not need to re-invent the wheel by cultivating capabilities or repurposing Marines by simply going to a recon unit and employing units that are already accounted for. Money can be saved by the MLR by eliminating scout/snipers and by not sending a whole infantry company to learn to be scout swimmers; instead, a recon company can be utilized without incurring additional costs for the Marine Corps as a whole.

Recon providing offensive capabilities to the joint Navy/Marine Corps team has a historical precedence. The Guadalcanal campaign, for instance, is an excellent example of what we can expect in the opening stages of fighting a near-peer adversary in a contested littoral battlespace. Strategically, a conflict in the South China Sea will be defensive initially to allow the United States and its allies to build combat power and mass naval forces. It is in this strategically defensive posture that operational offensives must become a priority to ensure the enemy will not have the initiative. Guadalcanal could be considered an EABO action in that, "The EABO concept provides the opportunity to turn the sea denial table on potential adversaries and deter fait accompli actions."[6] By seizing Guadalcanal, we secured an airbase in the Solomon Islands that protected the sea lanes to our main allies in the region: Australia and New Zealand. The Marine Corps of World War II realized that they needed to have the ability to conduct offensive operations even if they were strategically operating defensively; thus, they created the Marine Corps Raiders, and the Raiders played a large part in the battle of Tulagi and Guadalcanal to secure that island for the Allies. Understanding the needs that drove the creation of the Marine Raiders understandably explains the current Marine Recon doctrine on Hunter-Killer operations:

> Hunter-Killer operations. Ground reconnaissance patrols can conduct prolonged operations in which they operate behind enemy lines or in hostile, safe haven, or semi-permissive environments, employing unorthodox tactics, for the sole purpose of achieving attrition predominantly against the personnel, leadership, or resources of the enemy.[7]

Recon is the only conventional Marine unit that can execute these types of operations. Small teams of recon Marines are trained to operate small boat and insert behind enemy lines and they have demo, sniper, and joint terminal attack controller capabilities down to the team level. The current crisis in the South China Sea is similar to an aggressive Japan in the 1930s, and the Marine Corps invested in its Marine Raiders with the understanding that we needed to retain an offensive mindset no matter what. Like our predecessors, we must understand the situation and plan to utilize units on hand to maintain the initiative. There will be some that claim that technology is the answer and not the Marines and Sailors on the ground. Technology has its place and must be embraced to maintain the competitive advantage over our enemies; however,

"Technology can increase effectiveness on a battlefield but it cannot replace people or equipment. This is why these recent proposals should be examined with the utmost scrutiny."[8] The harsh reality is that in a near-peer situation the technological race for superiority is neck and neck—enter recon. A well-trained Marine leading a recon team behind enemy lines can not be jammed or hacked; with a commander's intent, that team can truly be a force multiplier and rob the enemy of the initiative.

Counter reconnaissance is a topic that is rarely discussed below the battalion level. The reality of that conversation is that much of it is theoretical and counter reconnaissance requires unconventional thinking that will invariably change from situation to situation. When looking in the *MCWP 2-25* for guidance, you will find:

> Battlespace shaping is prepared through surveillance, reconnaissance and counter reconnaissance, intelligence preparation, and targeting. These enable the commander to shape or exploit each of the enemy's dimensions providing tactical advantage, and assist in the evaluation of enemy capabilities, vulnerabilities, and probable courses of action.[9]

From this, we can deduce that counter reconnaissance is a critical element of battlespace shaping. As a function, the ability to deny the enemy reconnaissance is to deny the enemy the ability to make intelligent decisions; it would also allow friendly forces the ability to maneuver without being observed by he enemy to facilitate surprise. The Commandant outlines his plan for these types of units in *Force Design 2030*:

> Forces that can continue to operate inside an adversary's long-range precision fire weapons engagement zone (WEZ) are more operationally relevant than forces that must rapidly maneuver to positions outside the WEZ in order to remain survivable. These 'stand-in' forces attrite adversary forces, enable joint force access requirements, complicate targeting and consume adversary ISR resources, and prevent fait accompli scenarios.[10]

Through this, we can deduce that one acceptable method for successful counter reconnaissance is to make the enemy's rear area so contested that it absorbs the majority of its assets in the pursuit of security. Recon provides future commanders with a unit that is trained to survive behind enemy lines, conduct clandestine insertion, and have the mastery of long-range communication. Surviving behind enemy lines is fundamentally the most important: "The hider-versus finder competition is real. Losing this competition has enormous and potentially catastrophic consequences. This makes success in the reconnaissance/counter reconnaissance mission an imperative for success."[11] Future Marine Corps operations will require us to find the enemy before they find us; to do so we will require Recon units capable of inflicting damage on to an enemy in his rear area. Recon is particularly suited for aggressive counter reconnaissance that should effectively blind the enemy and allow the Navy/Marine Corps team to cease the initiative. This ability is driven by the recon team's mobility, "Mobility inside the WEZ is a competitive advantage and an operational imperative."[12] Operationally, an aggressive counter reconnaissance force will allow a strategically defensive Navy/Marine Corps team to take offensive operations. This requires survivability inside the enemy WEZ and the ability to not only reconnoiter the enemy but the ability to disrupt the enemy's rear area thus soaking up their ability to move forward.

In a future war in the South China Sea, it is reasonable to assume that an MLR will be dispatched to deny the enemy freedom of movement. That MLR could use a Marine Recon company—one that is already accounted for under current financial constraints—to deploy its platoons into the enemy's rear. That recon company could use parachute water landings, small boat insertion, helocast, and combatant diving to place a wide arc of teams across the AO; these teams would report back to the MLR's Reconnaissance Operations Center, and they will use their joint terminal attack controller and joint fires observers to call for rocket artillery to decimate exposed enemy targets. The teams would conduct precision fires

to kill high value targets or to degrade enemy C2. The teams would be highly mobile thanks to their special insertion skills and the training the Marines and Sailors themselves received upon entry into the recon community. Once our aggressive counter reconnaissance efforts rob the enemy of the initiative, the MLR commander has determined it is time to go on the offensive, and he needs a hydro graphic survey and in-depth littoral reconnaissance that he could readily task his recon company. With that amphibious reconnaissance complete, the MLR could go on the offensive and allow the Navy/Marine Corps team to transition to a strategically offensive posture. Although this is a hypothetical, it is the fiduciarily responsible option for the corps to innovate within the recon community to answer the call of the Commandant's *Force Design 2030*.

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# The New China Marines

## Keep the Corps focused on infantry closure to counter China in the Indo-Pacific

### by Capt John Vrolyk

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As the Marine Corps sprints to counter the pacing threat from China in the Indo-Pacific, it risks abandoning its core cultural touchstone and long-standing institutional comparative advantage: the unity of purpose it achieves by orienting on decisive closure in combat.

The emergence of the mature precision strike regime demands that the United States develop the ability to contest naval space—especially via forward-positioned groundbased strike capabilities of our own.[1] Marine planners are eagerly promoting the Marine Corps as the right Service for this important job. They appear to have gained traction in the new tri-service strategy document, *Advantage at Sea: Prevailing with Integrated All-Domain Naval Power*, which—at least on the "most contested battlefields"—orients the Marine Corps on "us[ing] maneuver, cover, and concealment to employ lethal long-range precision fires."[2]

*Someone* needs to operate firebases on isolated islands in the Western Pacific to support the Navy. But should it be the primary function of our future Marine Corps—a Service built to fight and win complex three-block battles in the Indo-Pacific's littoral cities with only its organic firepower? The Marine Corps should be too busy decisively closing with the enemy in the urban littorals to be distracted by defending missile launchers.

### The Marine Corps' Long-Time Favorite Child: Maneuver

As a young infantry lieutenant at the integrated training exercise, I watched an artillery battalion commander fire an awe-inspiring "battalion two"—eighteen guns, two rounds per tube, more than 3,700 pounds of iron and high-explosive in the space of a minute—in a bid to "kill" a simulated anti-aircraft gun. The rounds were on target, and the tank hulk disappeared in a maelstrom of explosions, smoke, and dust.

But the effect assessed by our evaluators? Merely suppressed, and only until the dust cloud cleared. The battalion commander stormed away livid, but nobody else was surprised. Marine fires instructors never allow anyone to kill *anything* with indirect fire. It is a lesson they instill over and over again: maneuver without fire may be suicidal, but fire without maneuver is indecisive.[3] Only maneuver actually kills the enemy because killing requires closure, and only maneuver closes. Artillery, with its multiple rocket launchers and towering cannons, may call itself the king of battle, but the king sits on a supporting effort throne.

Because maneuver is ultimately decisive, instructors repeat until they are blue in the face that fires always support maneuver, never vice versa. Following this logic to its conclusion, a rifle squad—with the mission of "locate, close with and destroy the enemy"—must always eventually comprise the main effort.[4]

This logic organizes the entire Marine Corps, creating a unity of purpose that spans every Marine. Everything is—or at least ought to be—committed to getting a tired, dirty, terrified nineteen-year-old lance corporal to successfully close with the enemy. It is a simple principle that unites admin clerks and F-35 pilots with infantry non-commissioned officers. More than infantry skills, its indoctrination into the cult-of-closure that provides the institutional rationale for sending every marine to the School of Infantry and every officer to The Basic School.

### Rapid Change in the Indo-Pacific

China's accelerating deployment of long-range precision fires in an anti-access/area denial strategy would seem to obsolete the core Marine belief in the primacy of closure.[5] After all, how can a rifle squad close when the enemy has *missiles with multi-thousand-mile ranges*?[6]

Indeed, recent joint Navy-Marine Corps operational concepts—Littoral Operations in a Contested Environment and Expeditionary Advanced Base Operations (EABO)—suggest that the Marine Corps is interpreting the Commandant's guidance to "prepare to oper-

ate inside actively contested maritime spaces" as authorizing the abandonment of the Corps' long-standing closure-based model in favor of a fires-centric approach.[7]

EABO in particular positions the Corps as a provider of supporting fires for naval maneuver rather than a maneuver force in its own right. Marines ashore are tasked with "providing land-based options for increasing the number of sensors and shooters beyond the upper limit imposed by the quantity of seagoing platforms available." The end state is securing "sea lines of communications and chokepoints" to facilitate decisive action afloat.

The Marine Corps has already begun implementing these concepts with new programs launched to build capabilities in everything from ship-targeting variants of rocket artillery to integrating anti-submarine warfare capabilities into the Corps' toolbox.[8] Individual Marines have moved out to consider employment models, authoring innovative proposals ranging from warbot companies serving as nodes for loitering autonomous weapons to asymmetric, small-craft based strategies.[9]

Advocates suggest that EABO links Navy and Marine Corps fires together into a "mutually supporting fires complex" capable of "dominat[ing] the maritime domain."[10] This afloat-ashore Navy-Marine Corps fires complex will "turn the sea denial table" on the enemy, using Marine fires for suppression to allow the Navy to maneuver across the Indo-Pacific's mostly oceanic geography.[11]

## Asking the Obvious: Why is this a Mission for the Marines?

I argue that inverting the anti-access/area denial dilemma onto China, right against their front door, is an ingenious strategy. Since the Indo-Pacific is contested terrain, maneuver within requires supporting fires. Basing those fires ashore on unsinkable islands, via forward deploying landbased sensors/shooters, makes complete sense to enable naval maneuver.

Like most Marines, I maintain the irrational yet unshakeable conviction that our Service does everything better

than everyone else. But in this case, I find myself wondering whether this mission should really belong to the Corps.

It is not an inherently amphibious task, since EABO doesn't contemplate getting sensors/shooters ashore via joint forcible entry. Nor does targeting ships inherently demand nominally "maritime" forces—an Army Multi-Domain Task Force successfully fired on a naval target using shorebased missiles in 2018.[12]

Indeed, the Army has long been the DOD's preeminent expert on and lead for surface fires and leads the charge on developing new capabilities. Long-range precision fires are the overall Army's number one modernization priority.[13] Through this effort, the Army is simultaneously pursuing extended range rocket launch systems, upgrades to the Army Tactical Missile System to including ship-targeting, the next generation Precision Strike Missile, and improvements to traditional cannon artillery.[14] Meanwhile, Congress cut funding to develop the Marine Corps-specific Ground-Based Anti-Ship Missile in half and reduced its long-range precision fires research budget by a quarter, citing "concurrency," "early to need," and "excess to need."[15] Historically, Marine artillery has handled procurement by tagging along on Army-led acquisitions.[16] It may be a cheap shot, but it is telling we do not even have our own schoolhouse, as our artillerymen are trained the U.S. Army's Field Artillery Training Center.[17]

Marine fires are not inferior, but they are very much oriented toward a different end. The mission of Army artillery ("to suppress, neutralize, or destroy the enemy through cannon, rocket, and missile fires and to integrate all fires into combined arms operations") emphasizes the effects inflicted by artillery on the enemy.[18] In contrast, the mission of Marine artillery ("to furnish close and continuous fire support by neutralizing, destroying or suppressing targets that threaten the success of the supported unit") focuses the battery (alongside the rest of the Corps) on supporting maneuver—which ultimately means an infantry lance corporal closing with the enemy.[19]

The EABO concept is not focused on Marines closing with objectives. Indeed, establishing dispersed, low-signature, and survivable firing points on remote islands suggests the opposite approach entirely, that of staying unobserved and unnoticed until it is time to inflict effects through fires alone. Thus, the comparative advantage of Marine Corps fires (their bred-in-the-wool understanding that supporting closure is their *raison d'etre*) is not relevant under the EABO construct.

At the same time, reorienting the Marine Corps to prioritize fires will undermine what is perhaps the Corps' greatest cultural asset: its unapologetically aggressive offensive mindset. As retired Marine Col Mark Cancian noted, infantry who see their purpose as protecting the artillery are a very different breed from infantry who see their purpose as killing the enemy.[20]

Absent a genuine comparative advantage on the relevant fires capabilities, the Marine Corps' claim to the EABO mission rests on our supposedly more expeditionary mindset, existing working relationships with the Navy, or naval heritage. We can hardly blame resource-constrained policymakers and legislators for balking at investing in duplicative capabilities instead of just demanding that Army fires unit figure out how to operate a bit lighter, embark on ships, and make friends in the Navy mess.[21]

The Marine Corps may have been first to realize that distributing land-based sensors/shooters inside the threat WEZ in the Indo-Pacific will be mission-critical. It should get credit for recognizing the need. But finders-keepers is not—and probably should not be—how the Pentagon assigns missions to services. Even more so because there is an essential mission out there for the Marine Corps in the Indo-Pacific—one meant for an institution purpose-built to support closure by the infantry.

## Evaluating Key Maritime Terrain: Why There's A Better Mission for the Marine Corps Out There

The *Commandant's Planning Guidance* tells the Corps to "focus on exploiting positional advantage and defending

key maritime terrain that enables persistent sea control and denial operations forward."[22] Underpinning the LOCE/EABO concepts is the view that "key maritime terrain" is inherently geographic: the sea lines of communication and islands capable of affecting them. This is accurate at the naval operational level.

At the strategic level, however, key maritime terrain is fundamentally different because it is the region's population centers. The region's center of gravity is its population (the world's largest) and economic growth (the world's fastest)—both predominantly based in the Indo-Pacific's littoral cities.[23] It is this center of gravity that motivates U.S. interest in the region and underscores the importance of preventing China from shutting us out.

Remember our President's constant aphorism on how to figure out someone's priorities: "show me your budget, and I'll tell you what you value."[24] Now look at how China spends its money. Militarizing rocks in the middle of the South China Sea is not cheap.[25] But it pales in comparison to the more than $1 trillion China has invested in buying influencing and economic sway among the population via the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).[26] Which do you think they see as more important?

Sea lines of communication matter, of course—but not intrinsically, only instrumentally, because they link together and control access to the region's population centers. Access to sea lines of communication is necessary but not sufficient to defending U.S. interests in the Indo-Pacific. To drive the point home, consider an Indo-Pacific where the Navy has complete freedom of navigation on the bluewater ocean—but China controls all the cities and by extension the people. That is a losing outcome for the United States.[27]

Deterring Chinese coercion over, and by extension defending, urban littoral cities requires the credible capability to not just contest oceanic space but to fight and win in urban littoral terrain.

*This* is where the Marine Corps comes in. Fighting and winning in complex urban littoral terrain requires closure-focused close combat forces—

the comparative advantage (indeed, institutional obsession) of the Corps. It is terrain that plays to our strengths, evident in the historical battles we valorize, from Seoul to Hue to Fallujah to Ramadi. This is terrain in which combat is inherently "primarily a small unit, infantry intensive operation" in which combined arms integration is essential.[28]

Infantry-intensive, combined arms maneuver is something the Marine Corps does well, perhaps better than anyone. It is a mission at which our organizational heritage and our training pipeline give us a unique comparative advantage. It is a type of combat in which our key units—companies and battalions—are more mission-capable and more attrition-resistant, rather than just more noticeable and targetable, than small SOF teams.[29] Since almost all cities are littoral, it is also something that directly implicates our amphibious expertise.[30]

> ### *... China's most likely course of action is not pursuing a high-intensity shooting war ...*

You might suggest that while closure-focused infantry might be required to retake Taipei after a full-scale Chinese invasion, that is a fairly remote threat.[31] In contrast, the EABO fires mission counters what's happening already—the fait accompli and coercion strategies China pursues while we engage in policy debates.[32]

Taking the Corps role as the pre-eminent urban littoral force seriously, however, implies more than just focusing on high-intensity amphibious landings. I freely admit that China's most likely course of action is not pursuing a high-intensity shooting war; in fact, it is a point I and others have made previously.[33] To deter, and if necessary defeat, Chinese aggression across the *full* spectrum of conflict—from coercion to information operations to proxy insur-

gencies to—will require the Corps build and retain full-spectrum capabilities.

Full-spectrum capabilities in the urban littorals, however, requires a closure-focused force, albeit one with the intellectually flexibility to understand that the key lesson of counterinsurgency applies to all levels of conflict: that the population is the prize.[34] Fortunately, the Marine Corps has long been the Service most institutionally inclined toward multi-intensity operations or, to use the term our past Commandant invented, three-block wars.[35] Right up after integrated infantry-centric attacks, it is a core comparative advantage. What leads to success in these environments—close integration between military and non-military tools of state power; careful judgment paired with the capacity for unbridled aggression; and thoughtful, empowered junior leaders—are core to the Corps' institutional character.

In fact, the Corps has spent much more time doing these sorts of operations than conducting forcible entry amphibious landings. We ought to be reminded of that every year by Gen Lejeune's birthday message, which reminds us to take pride that "in the long era of tranquility at home generation after generation of Marines have grown gray in war in both hemispheres."[36] Alongside the hallowed names of past urban battles stand the years spent during the Banana Wars as the "State Department's Army," working with Vietnamese villagers in the Combined Action Platoons, and developing relationships with elders while fighting Al-Qaida during the Anbar Awakening.[37] This mission is one at which the Corps has succeeded in the past and can again, if so directed.

### Getting to the Fight Is Half the Battle—Unless You're Already There

You might agree with most of what I have said—that key strategic maritime terrain in the Indo-Pacific are urban littoral population centers, that the United States ought to be able to defend or contest them, and that the Marine Corps is particularly well-suited to that mission—and yet see it all as irrelevant. After all, without EABO suppressing China's anti-access/area denial capabili-

ties, we cannot even get to the conflict theater via amphibious shipping—let alone sustain once we are there.[38]

But what if the Marines were already there? It sounds revolutionary, but it is an old idea—one with roots in Marine heritage as old as amphibious operations. 1/4 Mar (my old unit) earned its callsign, "China Marines," from the fourteen years it spent in Shanghai, from 1927–1941, defending the American legation there. It did not need to rely on amphibious shipping to get to the fight; they went forward before the shooting started, and they stayed.

What if we did this today? Why not make this—rather than having rotations among abandoned islands—how we operationalize Marine Littoral Regiments?[39] It would certainly require extensive collaboration and negotiations with our partners in the region, who remain wary of our service members and concerned about sovereignty.[40] But Chinese aggression is blowing winds of

you help the Thai military improve their planning for real-world operations to better secure their border to China-linked Burmese warlords. The Marine Corps flies you home once a year for a combined arms exercise at Twentynine Palms, a few weeks of family leave, and an intensive four-week professional military education course.

Your "broadening" assignment outside an infantry battalion is with an advisor unit in the Philippines, where you collaborate on small-craft attack strategies to hold Chinese aircraft carriers at-risk in Philippine waters. By the time you take command of the independent rifle company reinforced based in Cam Ranh Bay, Vietnam, you have working proficiency in the languages of two key regional partners, dozens of close friends and professional contacts across Southeast Asia, and an irreplaceable on-the-ground (and on-the-water) feel for the theater. And that company? Its Marines bring hundreds of years

terrain—the Indo-Pacific population—they need to defend.

This is not an easy thing. Even the "simple" aspects would be enormous challenges—from negotiating basing arrangements to accommodating military families, let alone dealing with the consequences of accepting reasonable amounts of risk (both of misbehavior by Marines and of exposure to foreign threat actors).[44] That does not even consider solving the logistical challenge of prepositioning supplies forward to make these units sustainable—and therefore combat credible—without constant resupply from the continental United States or how to deal with casualty evacuation.[45]

But at least as I see it, the Marine Corps was born for this mission. Marines sign up because we *want* to grow gray at war in the world's far-flung corners so the American people can rest easy at home. This mission, this vocation, is one which would excite Marines.

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*Modernizing the Corps to be capable "stand-in" forces—whether they get there amphibiously or are already there—will require real reform to the Corps …*

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foreign policy change, with even our former enemy Vietnam welcoming increased U.S. defense cooperation.[41]

Let us imagine for a moment if Marine battalions were permanently stationed forward, distributed across the Indo-Pacific. You are a gung-ho infantry officer who gets a choice assignment: your platoon command time will be with 1/1 Mar, now based out of a Thai Army base. Your regular field exercises are conducted on the Thai military's training grounds, where you build small unit proficiency in jungle combat, urban operations, and infiltration—all while picking up a working knowledge of the Thai language and close friends among the officers of your Thai sister battalion. Your longer exercises—no need to "deploy" since you're already there—are joint ASEAN affairs designed to develop readiness to repel multi-faceted Chinese campaigns. Between exercises,

of combined experience in the region. They speak the languages, have trained in the hills, and walked the streets of the capitals they might be asked to defend. They know the real-world area of operations the way Marines today only know the backyards of their cantonment areas and the desert of Twentynine Palms.

Putting it all together, it sure feels more relevant to working with our allies to deter and counter Chinese bullying in the Indo-Pacific than semi-annual cruises by the 31st MEU and the occasional Cobra Gold, does it not?[42]

To be fair, the Marine Corps has tentatively explored this model, putting rotational forces in Australia, expanding its presence on Guam, and considering other options to position forward.[43] But these options are insufficient to move the needle and more importantly isolate forward deployed Marines from the key

### *Force Design 2030* Is an Important Step Forward

In his *Force Design 2030* paper, the Commandant rightly notes that advances in long-range precision fires necessitate adaptations in the equipment, operational employment, tactics, techniques, and procedures required to operate inside contested spaces.[46] The expansion of the enemy weapons engagement zone (WEZ) creates a stark division between forces capable of operating inside the WEZ ("stand-in" forces) and those which must retreat outside it to remain survivable. The former is essential; the latter face an uphill battle to even get to the fight.

Modernizing the Corps to be capable "stand-in" forces—whether they get there amphibiously or are already there—will require real reform to the Corps. Marine infantry operating inside the enemy WEZ will need to fight with unprecedented dispersion, supported by lethal autonomous warbots, without air support or even superiority, and with limited external sustainment.[47] Preparing for these tasks will require more rigorous attrition-based selection processes, tougher and longer training, better equipment, and (as argued above)

rethinking their long-term positioning.[48]

But Gen Berger may be uniquely capable of getting it done. He has already demonstrated admirable bureaucratic courage to push through once-unthinkable changes, from eliminating tanks to cutting Osprey squadrons to forcing a review of the acquisition requirement for the perennial congressional-darling F-35.[49] These dramatic acts have served an essential signaling as well as budgetary function—changing an organization as hidebound and hierarchical as a military service requires leadership capable of unflinchingly killing sacred cows.

In fact, I would venture that the Commandant himself shares my vision for forward-positioned, closure-focused infantry as the Corps' key future capability. In testimony to Congress, he stressed that he will push infantry and conventional reconnaissance units to a level "traditionally associated with special forces and commando units." In questioning, he reiterated the imperative to have these units *forward* "to paint a picture of what's happening in front" to supply intelligence and targeting to the fires complex, the fleet and combatant commanders.[50] To put it bluntly, I do not think the Commandant would ask Congress to invest in commando training so the infantry can pull fixed-site security on firebases.

The problem thus far—driving reluctance among some observers and reticence in the operating forces—has been seeing *Force Design 2030* as intrinsically linked to EABO's fires-centric strategy.[51] Many of the force design reforms—increasing infantry lethality and developing the capacity to conduct *truly* distributed operations—are even more necessary if the Corps remains closure-focused. The problem is not primarily with *Force Design 2030*; it is about how it has been communicated.

Per *MCDP 1 Warfighting*, the face of warfare is ever changing; militaries must change with it or face irrelevance.[52] Yet, despite its changing face, some aspects of war are immutable. The end of closure as the decisive act has been forecast before—from the first spear designed to be thrown to the invention of the longbow to the machine gun—and yet it remains timelessly decisive.

We should be similarly skeptical that this latest advancement in precision long-range fires demands that the Marine Corps abandon its long-held commitment to closure and rely on fires alone. There is a compelling case that reinforcing—rather than undermining—the Corps' unified pursuit of decisive closure with the enemy is the path to relevance in the Indo-Pacific fight to come.

I will not say that becoming modern-day China Marines—overseas for the duration, holding the key terrain, ready to close with and destroy the enemy tonight—will guarantee the Corps for the next 500 years, but it will make us indispensable and irreplaceable in the Indo-Pacific. So here is health to you and to our Corps, which we are proud to serve: a force optimized for full-spectrum expeditionary operations in the littoral domain, purpose-built to facilitate control of strategic key terrain and permanently stationed forward to maintain positional advantage. Echoing our expeditionary forebearers, that is a force in which I should like to fight.[53]

>*Author's Note: The opinions expressed are those of the author alone and do not necessarily reflect those of the Marine Corps, the DOD, of the Treasury, or the U.S. government.*

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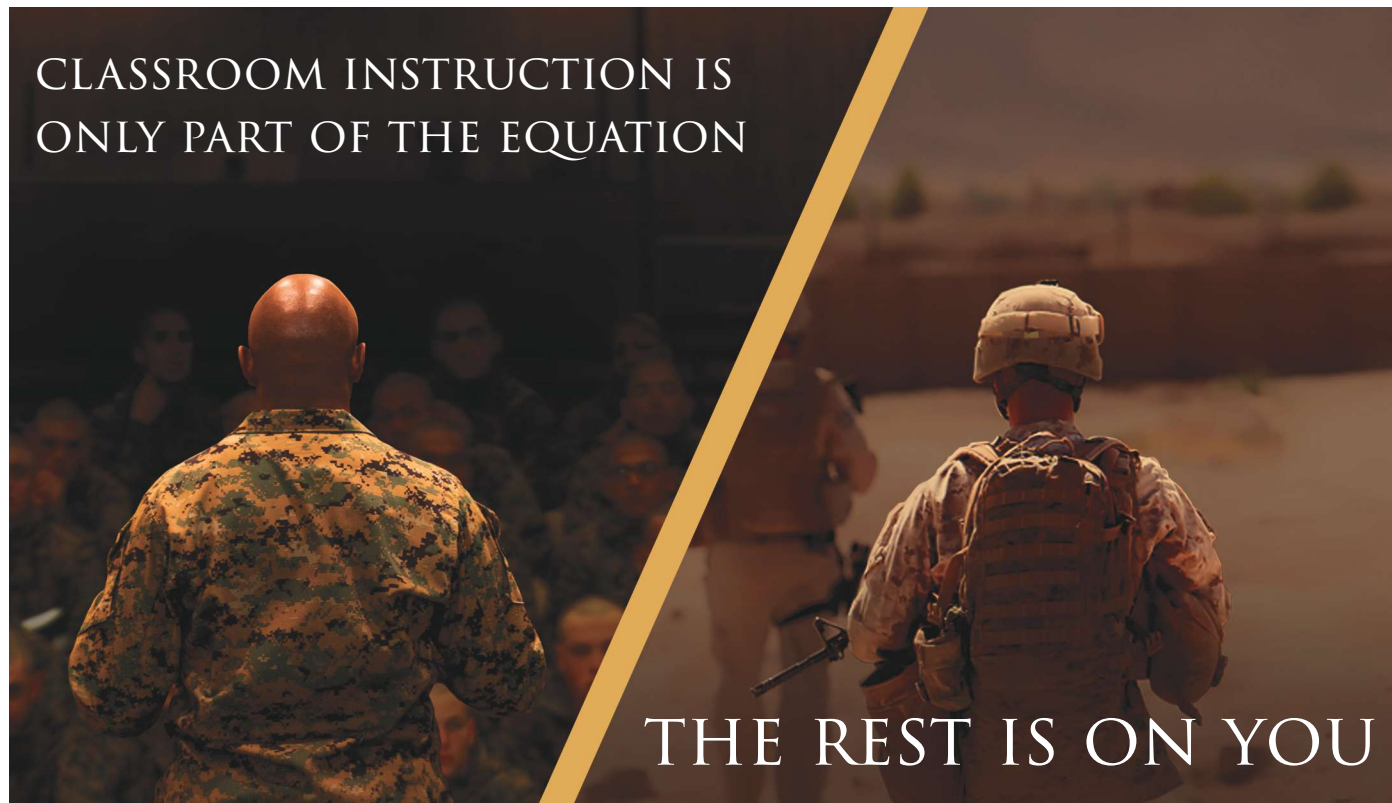
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# Supporting the Warfighter

## Naval reformation for wars great and small

### by Maj Nick Brunetti-Lihach

*"I intend to seek greater integration between the Navy and Marine Corps in our Program Objective Memorandum (POM) development process."* [1]
—Gen David H. Berger

In 1943, following the battle of Guadalcanal, BGen Gerald C. Thomas spoke to officer candidates in Quantico. Thomas issued a warning: compared to the interwar period, the fight against the Japanese was "the big leagues," and Marines had to step up to a higher level of proficiency, to include staff work and logistics.[2] Thomas' warning parallels contemporary challenges. As great power competition ushers in a return to "the big leagues," the naval Services' unity of effort is critical in pursuit of integration and modernization.

Innovation is no substitute for reform. As the sea Services develop *Distributed Maritime Operations* and *Expeditionary Advanced Base Operations*, they must re-evaluate how the force is manned, trained, and equipped. For a modern networked fleet to fight alongside Marines with small boats, unmanned systems, and long-range weapons, systems must be integrated from inception and shortfalls ruthlessly fixed.[3] Delivering integrated systems at speed requires agility and cooperation.



*The fight against the Japanese in the Pacific required the Navy and the Marine Corps to "up their game." The 1st MarDiv staff in the Solomons. (Photo by author.)*

This can be achieved by reinvigorating supporting establishment culture, updating outdated processes, and organizing to cut through bureaucracy.

The *2018 National Defense Strategy* called for performance at the "speed of relevance."[4] The strategy seeks to change the department's "culture and management systems" while updating and reforming business practices.[5] To this end, ADM Gilday and Gen Berger issued a joint memorandum focused on an integrated naval force structure assessment.[6] However, success is also

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predicated on weapons development and the integration of organizations to identify, correct, and fix gaps.

Relevance, speed, and efficiency are not the hallmark of naval programs, which treat development of unmanned systems and software similar to ships and aircraft. Programs are slow to field.[7] In fact, the Marines resorted to contracting MQ-9 Reaper as a workaround to the procurement process.[8] Bryan McGrath has noted the Navy is not "organized to think conceptually across the warfighting domains" and remains focused on "platform specific acquisition and requirements."[9] The track record of weapons development should concern the Department of the Navy. Between the failed Expeditionary Fighting Vehicle and the *Zumwalt* destroyers, the Department struggles to

*Contracting to provide required capabilities like the MQ9 Reaper cannot be a long-term substitute for procurement.* (Photo by Senior Airman Cory Payne.)

build, field, and improve new weapons. Meanwhile, China beat the Navy with the first shipboard experimental railgun at sea.[10]

Information systems are another example of technology held hostage to industrial age process. The Navy just began replacing decades-old Aegis computers with vastly smaller virtual systems, a generation after virtualization technology became commonplace with industry.[11] As Klaus Schwab has written, the hard drive cost per gigabyte has dropped from nearly one million dollars in 1980 to less than ten cents.[12] Sailors and Marines would not know it.

## Empower the AAR Process

There is much to be gained from modernizing processes. The Air Force has adopted Silicon Valley's "Agile Development" methodology to introduce software iteratively, reducing certification and accreditation timelines from 18 months to 30 days.[13] Agile promotes flatter management structure to implement changes in days and weeks instead of months and years.[14] Scaled across the Department, this would be revolutionary.

One obstacle to developing better systems is the feedback loop.[15] On the one hand, the supporting establishment is located far from tactical units and is known to resist change.[16] On the other hand, tactical units know or care little of the supporting establishment. Ironically, the most valuable tool for change—the after action report (AAR)—is under-utilized by both. Unit AARs are typed, signed, scanned to PDF, and archived. With virtually no consolidated digital repository to efficiently store, mine, and parse information, it is nearly impossible to aggregate and compute trends or analyze measures of effectiveness and performance.

Unit AARs are a wealth of information for trends, gaps, and shortfalls. Yet by failing to leverage the underlying data and without an organization empowered to fix problems, there is no means to cut across bureaucracy. A consolidated database of unit AARs across the Navy and Marine Corps will enable an immediate feedback loop across the enterprise for the acquisition and development organizations to action. This may also empower the supporting establishment to address gaps and defects, in contrast to today's process by which units must formally submit requirements and engineer change requests. Process places the burden on the tactical unit. This is inefficient and redundant. The supporting establishment should have instant access to that information and immediately implement fix actions. This problem is exacerbated without a unified system to track, process, automate, or catalog information.

## Organize for Integration

The supporting organizations equipping the naval Services are not integrated. The Navy has Naval Warfare Development Command, and the Marine Corps has Marine Corps Combat Development Command. One ingredient to successful innovation is a flattened structure capable of transforming concepts and lessons learned into solutions. Organizational reform can reduce bureaucratic red tape and produce new efficiencies. To a large degree, the Navy and Marine Corps develop systems independently then retro fit integration into the finished product. The Department of the Navy should be empowered to adequately review requirements,

> *Information systems are another example of technology held hostage to industrial age process. The Navy just began replacing decades-old Aegis computers ...*

identify redundant programs, action shortfalls (within AARs), and promote efficiency between the Services.

It is no easy task to bridge the gap between institutional and bureaucratic precedent. Communities within the Services tend toward a narrow view of their tribe, which bleeds over to research, development, and acquisition—whether it is an aircraft or artificial intelligence. It is also difficult to establish communication between scientists, developers, acquisition professionals, and the warfighters. Yet internal barriers to change can be broken by strong leadership and an empowered staff. For example, the

Army made changes through Future Command, which reorganized and consolidated programs into cross-functional teams.[17]

## People Matter

Organizational culture cannot be overlooked. A member of the Defense Innovation Unit remarked that one key to technology adoption is a "different mindset and comfort levels."[18] This becomes problematic within a system which seeks to define every requirement years before the product is completed.[19] Josh Marcuse, Executive Director of the Defense Innovation Board, has described the environment as "a factory that shifts risk to the warfighter."[20] Studies of defense acquisition dating back to the Packard Commission in 1986 have cited shortfalls in adequate hiring and retention of the acquisition work force. To cultivate talent, recruiting and accountability policies require reexamination.

## Fix the Force

Every organization has its own unique culture. A recent study showed programs missed 93 percent of source selection schedule dates by an average of 238 days.[21] Yet there are no penalties "for acquisition programs that fail to issue or meet" a source selection schedule. Hold program managers and officers accountable for establishing and sticking to a source selection schedule.

Changing culture also requires personnel reform. Acquisition personnel should be carefully selected and allowed to serve longer tours to see projects through completion. This may include hiring outside experts as program managers—a practice already employed by DARPA and CIA, who routinely hire business and academic experts to lead programs.

Second, the sea Services must modernize processes. The Department of the Navy should embrace the flexibility offered by Other Transactional Authorities. The Air Force has aggressively leveraged rapid acquisition authorities under Section 804 of the 2016 National Defense Authorization Act and accelerated its software and computer acquisition through Kessel Run.[22]



*Genuine departmental reform is required to implement the concepts of EABO and DMO. (Photo by LCpl Erik Brooks.)*

Third, to break down barriers to integration and mediate between blue and green requirements, a dedicated organization reporting to the Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Research, Development, & Acquisition is needed. NavalX has tackled a number of innovative projects but does not have the scope or authorities needed.[23] For example, there is no reason why the Navy and Marine Corps should each test, evaluate, and accredit identical Windows or Android software independently. When it comes to information technology, the two Services effectively develop and acquire their own systems in parallel efforts and separate data networks. An organization atop the Department should be dedicated to identifying redundant efforts, coordinating efforts, and gathering the data collected in AARs.

Lastly, fix the Department's "dirty data."[24] To power decision makers with information, implement an AAR database between the Services, fed by tactical units, with pre-defined fields across DOTMLPF. This data should feed reports and graphs in a consolidated dashboard in realtime at all levels up the chain of command. Common trends will be highlighted for correction and leadership attention, with a focus on hard data, not anecdotes. Gaps will be instantaneously fed to concepts and experimentation. As an added forcing function, require development and training commands to acknowledge receipt of all AARs to ensure accountability.

> *"Together, we will build Navy-Marine Corps integration by aligning concepts, capabilities, programming, planning, budgeting, and operations to provide Integrated American Naval Power to the Joint Force."* [25]
>
> —ADM Michael M. Gilday

## Conclusion

As the United States returns to great power competition, the naval Services are at an inflection point. To avoid the institutional shortcomings of the interwar years, the supporting establish-

ment must be reinvigorated. As historian Richard B. Frank noted, the Navy suffered a "major intellectual failure" described as a "fatal lethargy of mind" before World War II. The Navy "anticipated attritional tactics with night torpedo attacks by the Imperial Navy,

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**It is time for the Department to capitalize on reform. The sea services must possess the ways and means to make the concepts of DMO and EABO a reality.**

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but its leaders failed to follow up this insight with rigorous programs of material preparation."[26] In modern terms, capability developers must be closely attuned to the warfighter.

It is time for the Department to capitalize on reform. The sea services must possess the ways and means to make the concepts of DMO and EABO a reality.[27] As Gen Berger said, the Navy and Marine Corps need "honest assessments of our strengths and weaknesses" in the face of budget challenges.[28] Today's outdated development and acquisition processes, lacking integration between the sea Services, hinders unity of effort. This failure is predictable and can be avoided if leadership addresses the culture, organization, and processes of the supporting establishment.

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2020 Gen Robert E. Hogaboom Leadership Writing Contest: First Place

# Digital Native Transformation

## Corps concepts for the Information Era

### by Col George David

The Marine Corps requires a concept to transform citizens into Marines digitally in order to meet the demands of the modern era and fully employ the information potential of its most powerful resource. Indoctrination into service culture has not adapted to the era of online personas, despite several decades of experience. Instead, the Marine Corps has adapted to negative experiences and cyber vulnerabilities by restricting the information capabilities of individual Marines to speak on behalf of the Service. Such a constraining reaction handicaps a potentially powerful information asset: the individual digital-native Marine. To harness the power of these Marines, the Service should channel their information efforts from the beginning rather than restricting them. The Marine Corps transformation must extend into the individual's online presence and prowess. Once a Marine consciously recognizes their part of the institution in all domains, 24 hours a day, then they will develop a latent capability for the force in crowd sourcing its information efforts.

"Transformation," the conversion from citizen into Marine, has been a theme of the Service. The recruit depots publish videos and information for parents on the transformation of recruits into Marines. Officer programs "transform" college students, midshipmen, and enlisted Marines into leaders of Marines. The Marine Corps has publications on *Sustaining the Transformation*, (*MCTP 6-10A*, April 2018) to

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help Marines and their leaders maintain their honor, courage, and commitment to the Corps. Yet, very little about these themes, statements, and publications describe how the digital presence of Marines must transform from those of a private citizen to a formal representative of the U.S. Government, the Marine Corps, and their future units. A recruit or candidate matriculates

into their training, leaving aside their smartphones and connectivity for a few weeks. When they emerge, however, nothing about the online personas generated and cultivated prior to their physical transformation has changed. The Service must think as seriously about the digital transformation of citizens as it does about the physical environment through which it shapes its future force.

At a Cornerstone event in late 2018, I had the privilege to discuss transformation with the sergeants major of the recruit depots. I asked what the Corps was doing for the digital transformation



**MCRD1** Indoctrination into the Corps' culture and ethos has not kept pace in era of online personas–the transformation must reach into a Marine's online presence and activities. *(Photo by WO Bobby Yarbrough.)*

of recruits, their internet and social media presence, and online personas. The question was a surprise to them at that time; they had not considered it from the perspective of transformation. The single greatest information resource that the Service has, the individual Marine, receives next to no training or guidance on transforming their digital being into Marines alongside their physical being. The recruit of today may have never experienced a world without internet and some kind of social media. In short, as the third decade of the 21st century begins, the transformation of citizens into Marines is an incomplete process without the indispensable part of their individuality represented by their online presence.

*MCTP 6-10A* has only negative things to say about the internet:

> A Marine can seriously embarrass, endanger, or cause difficulties for both himself/herself and the Marine Corps; for example, careless posts on blogs, web pages, or in social media can bring shame on the Marine or to our Corps.[1]

While that statement is true and reflects the scars of incidents such as "Marines United" and the anecdotal experiences of pre-digital era leadership, it is not the full perspective. The fact that such internet activity can generate leadership challenges at scale also reflects the potential power that online presence represents. It further illustrates, however, that the constraining, negative impact of Service attention to digital presence to date reinforces the false premise that the individual Marine lives in two separate worlds: public and private. Online presence forms part of the private world because no attention is paid to it unless or until a Marine "embarrasses" or "endangers" the Service. Yet, as most citizens in the third decade of the 21st century now recognize, nothing posted digitally can ever be truly private again. Of all the aspects of life that a Marine must manage, the most immediately public and generally available to anyone is that Marine's online presence.

Guidelines for public behavior do address many of the issues that worry senior leaders. *MCO 5354.1E*, the *Prohibited Activities and Conduct* order, seeks to address pitfall behaviors in all

domains, stating explicitly in the base order that: "The prohibitions under this order extend to acts committed through electronic communications and social media, as well as in person."[2] The Uniform Code of Military Justice and the contract Marines sign both recognize that the parameters of individual freedoms for Marines are more limited than for individual citizens. Even so, the Marine Corps as an institution has only constrained ability to dictate what a Marine can and cannot do with non-government accounts. Since many Marines interweave personal accounts with those of their families, the issue of one family member transforming into a Marine gains another layer of complexity. Nonetheless, the direction and guidance that Marines receive in everything from initial recruit training to annual requirements are all about limits: risk, security, negative fallout, and consequences.

> *The digital transformation into a Marine must be an opening not a closure.*

Furthermore, the inattention to digital presence in the transformation from citizen to Marine creates vulnerability. While Marines do receive training in operational security, even for online presence and posts, they may not understand that the "private" world of their digital presence is more than a target of open-source intelligence. The rest of the world, to include great power competitors, view a Marine as a representative of the government and so a valid cyber target. Attacking a Marine's digital accounts, financial status, home networks, and personal data equates to attacking that same Marine on the battlefield in the eyes of many competitors. Such activity is not the same as attacking noncombatants. Marines must understand that they are more at risk for malicious cyber activity than their civilian counterparts and that their

digital presence is not a private, non-Marine part of themselves.

Orders and direction, therefore, make what not to do reasonably clear. What to do online and what behaviors Marines should explore is not clear at all. With a generation of inbound Marines accustomed in their teen years before recruit training of up to nine hours of non-school-related online media use a day according to a 2015 study by Common Sense Media (although patterns of use vary and overlap with other activities including homework), the Service needs to provide productive channels for this activity. One can only assume that recruits matriculating after the pandemic spent even more hours online. If measured by what recruits are accustomed to, up to 3/8ths of a recruit depot training day should train for or have some link to online presence, more than the time set aside for sleep.

For the significant time and resource investment in question, then, the Marine Corps must also have a clear vision of its objectives for a digitally transformed force. Only then will the institution have the foundation by which to adapt. First and most obviously, the Service wants to create a consciousness of the responsibilities inherent in wearing the uniform online as well as in person. Just as stories of acts of heroism or ignominy in the physical world always begin with the information that the individual was or is a Marine, the same will be true online. In this most public of spaces, there is no private account or personal space separate from the institution even in personal or private accounts. Secondly, the digital transformation must enable and empower, not constrain and limit. Orientation, from the beginning of training, must work toward online behaviors that Marines can and should do, not just highlight what they cannot and should not. The digital transformation into a Marine must be an opening not a closure. Third, the digital transformation must bring the Marine into the information fight. Even with all the exquisite specialties of operations in the information environment (OIE), the Corps' most powerful resource remains the same: the individual Marine. Any Marine, in any MOS, might be the next

*In a Corps where the majority of Marines are digital natives, the online transformation should emphasize what individual Marines can do to best represent the Corps and support the organization's communications efforts. (Photo by Cpl Dana Beesley.)*

driver of a viral online subject. The Marine Corps needs that Marine to be as knowledgeable as possible in order to help the institution and its mission. As the Deputy Commandant for Information put it in an April 2020 letter to the *Gazette:* "This is a fight for everyone."

Moreover, the Service must drive the effort with a strategy across the entire force, not leaving it entirely to the disparate efforts of units and individual leaders. The method and message must be comprehensive, coherent, and consistent while recognizing that privacy and individual opinions matter. The Nation's adversaries have already shown that negative central control of information and tightly managed ability to have opinions can lead to historic failure such as the fall of the Soviet Union. Though the Peoples Republic of China extends that strategy into the digital age, the United States and its premier fighting force need to set a counterexample by empowering and opening resources to the individual Marine.

Transformation starts with recruiting and digital transformation must begin at that time as well. Every citizen recruited must be directed to consider their online presence and its meaning as preparation while recruiters may need to screen public personas to advise potential recruits on content issues. Although all phases of the transformation remain important, the Service needs to invest most heavily in Phase II for digital transformation. During initial training, the recruit or candidate must undertake their most significant online transformation while they are also transforming in the physical space. The digital natives entering the Service need more than knowledge; they need teaching and practical application requiring time and probably devices that can provide a controlled environment. Some may need to part with old accounts whose content might no longer appropriately represent their transformation into Marines. They should do so with help and guidance from the institution. As they complete initial training and earn the title of Marine, their initial digital transformation must be complete so that they wear the uniform correctly in the physical and the online world. Sustaining that transformation then requires investment in every follow-on institutional milestone from corporal's course to top-level school. To do so, the Service probably needs training ranges for use anywhere in the force in controlled spaces to assist in practical application, just as cyber forces train in virtual rehearsal spaces. Marines will need a safe range, a sandbox, to experiment in order to develop their skills just as they do on the rifle range.

Marines should then employ their digital transformation. We trust every Marine to be a rifleman because we train them. We must trust every Marine with their smart phone and social media for the same reasons. Instead of the reflexive muzzling of its most valuable OIE resource, the Corps should provide guidance and direction. Strategic communications plans and public affairs guidance are positive steps, but crowd sourcing the power of the individual Marine to generate content and theme requires leadership and an appetite for risk in the OIE. With this training and an explicit digital transformation, the Service can more directly hold Marines accountable for mistakes should they happen. Marines, however, can also use training and transformation as a justification to discard pre-transformation content that they wish to disassociate with their post-transformation presence. Both the institution and the individual benefit, operationally and personally.

A digital transformation will require an investment in planning, manpower, training time, and budget at the scale of the service for a coherent effort. The force redesign process is consequently the moment to undertake the change. The first smartphone will turn 29 in 2021; two-thirds of Marines are 25 or younger. In the era of the digital native, there can be no transformation from citizen to Marine without transforming that individual's online presence. The time to invest is now.

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2020 Gen Robert E. Hogaboom Leadership Writing Contest: Second Place

# "What Lieutenants Do"

## Reflections on learning to lead

### by 1stLt Victor Wu

"What do lieutenants do? That's obvious: Nothing." The master sergeant I was talking to was joking, of course, but in every good joke is at least a grain of truth. It is an open secret that SNCOs, senior officers, and even other lieutenants often say, with varying degrees of seriousness, that lieutenants are mere figureheads—not genuine leaders.[1] I want to show why this is not—or should not—be the case. I am speaking first and foremost to new lieutenants, especially those of you at The Basic School (TBS) and those who have newly joined the mythical Fleet. My goal is to explain the fundamental role of a lieutenant: to understand and improve the team you are entrusted to lead.

Let me make a prediction. You graduate TBS, maybe you even excel. You learn the basics of your MOS and then you hit the fleet. You look forward to leading Marines. But then you meet your team. Your SNCOs are older than you, know more than you, and have done more than you. Your Marines want to be like them someday, not you. To them, you are just another "butterbar."[2] Nobody cares how fast you can run (unless it is embarrassingly slow). You may be tactically proficient, but you quickly realize it is only a sliver of what is expected of you.[3] You constantly need to rely on your SNCOs and NCOs for help. You may get credit for things they do that you could not. Yet, you have been told you "lead" them. Sure.

This is the problem that almost every lieutenant faces. What value do you really add? Why are you in charge? Some might say that the lieutenant has bet-

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ter training or the benefits of a college education. But there is no reason why enlisted leaders could not receive the same opportunities. SNCOs could attend TBS and get bachelor's degrees too. We could even demand that all officers begin from the enlisted ranks and work their way up. In police forces, for instance, lieutenants are generally promoted and trained from among the sergeants as simply the next rank in a single leadership hierarchy.

Essentially, then, the military chooses to have inexperienced lieutenants. This is partly a legacy of historical tradition and partly a practical matter of manpower and career progression requirements. Even for prior enlisted officers, though, the jump to commissioned status is not always smooth; it is often said that the best *and* worst officers are priors.[4] This is because the role of a lieutenant—and commissioned officer in general—is fundamentally different from that of an enlisted leader.

In economics, one of the central concepts is comparative advantage: what an agent is best positioned to do relative to others in cooperative activity. What is the comparative advantage of a lieutenant? It is a set of fresh eyes, recently trained in doctrine—or, better put, what right looks like *and why*—and not yet jaded or set in certain habits. The lieutenant is best situated

by rank and perspective to relentlessly ask "Why?" about everything—why are things done this way and not that way? Accordingly, a good lieutenant must never accept "I don't know" or "because that's how we've always done it" as a sufficient answer. *In other words, use your inexperience to your advantage.* Do not stop asking questions until you either understand why things are the way they are, or you see how they could be done better.[5] That is what lieutenants do.

This core mindset will serve you well, whether with your team or with higher. As a lieutenant, there is inevitably a vast amount you must learn. Good senior officers and SNCOs understand this, and they will invest time and effort to quickly bring you up to speed. But ultimately it is your responsibility, and it is responsibility for a very particular type of learning. You have been commissioned as a leader of the institution, not simply another rifleman. As such, your primary job is not to perform or even supervise a specific function; that is the enlisted Marine's job.[6] Because of the rank you wear, you are responsible for the success or failure of your team as a whole. However, you necessarily achieve results through others; that is the challenge of leadership. To succeed, then, you need to understand the overall *system* you find yourself in and how your team operates both internally and within the wider chain of command.[7] Your job, though, is to understand the system, not merely to supervise it, and to improve it. You do this by asking questions.

First, consider your team. Your most important relationships within your team will typically be with your SNCOs

and NCOs. You cannot match their experience, and you may not achieve their level of MOS proficiency. That is okay. The enlisted leaders' job is to ensure the smooth execution of plans and processes—your vision and the vision of your higher. To enable them to do this without micromanaging, you need to invest them with a baseline of trust. This means you must avoid nitpicking and repetitive inquiries as much as possible, especially during the heat of execution. However, by regularly asking your enlisted leaders to articulate their reasons and choices—why they decided to do things a particular way—you keep them accountable for mission accomplishment and effective day-to-day management of your Marines. You both learn what they know and show them you respect their expertise. Ideally, you will also push them continually to think and improve with your deliberate questions. Too often, lieutenants are overly deferential, sitting back complacently as their enlisted leaders "do everything." If that is the case, then the lieutenant might as well not exist at all.

Looking beyond just the leadership, you must develop a deep understanding of your team as a whole, especially its capabilities and limitations. Every team has an inner social dynamic, and you must identify the key players within yours: who is respected by others, who you can trust to get stuff done, and who will tell you how things really are. Likewise, every team will have underperformers. To quickly identify who is who, beyond just your direct observations, you need to ask questions, and you need to ask around widely. Your findings may or may not correspond to the official rank hierarchy. Sometimes your corporals will be better than your SNCOs, and sometimes only that belligerent lance corporal will tell you what you really need to hear (i.e., what is not going well). You may even find some diamonds in the rough. Discovering, mentoring, and empowering these Marines is among the most rewarding work you can do as an officer.

Your end goal, though, must always be to improve the team you lead. The basic approach should be familiar enough. You observe your team at work,

orient onto major points of friction, decide what would make things better, act to implement your ideas, then begin the cycle anew to see what impact your changes have and iterate accordingly.[8] At each stage, the experience and advice of your enlisted leaders is crucial. Without this foundation, you will likely be one of those officers forever plagued by the "good idea fairy." Effective officers, by contrast, genuinely understand how their team is doing and aggressively look for ways to overcome identified deficiencies, either through internal refinement or external support. That is how you as the lieutenant set conditions for your team to succeed.

Within the team, there are three main areas of focus: people, equipment, and processes.[9] For example, you might identify that your Marines need more individual or squad-level training and counseling (people).[10] At other times, maybe you are short on operational vehicles and need to submit a feasibility of support request to an adjacent unit in order to effectively execute an upcoming operation (equipment). These are fairly familiar problems, at least at an intuitive level.

Equally essential but less commonly considered, however, are the processes by which your Marines act.[11] In any organization, people cannot simply act arbitrarily. Rather, their actions are governed by certain key processes and principles, whether formally codified or not. Solid processes (i.e., clear, well-communicated guidelines for action with responsive feedback mechanisms for adjustment) are indispensable if you hope to achieve effective decentralized execution, especially in a distributed environment.[12] This is equally true whether they are tactics, techniques, and procedures for a company fire support team or policy letters detailing standard operating procedures (SOP) for a battalion maintenance management program. Perhaps, for instance, you decide to clarify and standardize how weekly preventive maintenance is conducted by your team, since you see that existing practices are disorganized and poorly understood. In another situation, perhaps you implement an alphabetic signal plan SOP so that everyone can

more easily track the proper sequence of tactical events in the field.[13] As you come to understand your team, you may well discover that your highest-impact contributions lie here.

I must emphasize that processes cannot be mechanistic. Rules for intelligent action cannot simply be designed and executed like rote algorithms.[14] This is where the key role of intent fits in. Processes are usually developed with a set of standard conditions in mind. Your processes must be clear but flexible enough to always allow for individual initiative and judgment when conditions deviate from prior assumptions. Sometimes, your Marines may even need to go against the letter of higher's guidance in order to achieve the intent.[15] You *must* encourage and defend this sort of initiative, not punish it. It is deeply counterproductive to enforce blind, unenthusiastic adherence to standard processes when the situation calls for something different.[16]

Embarrassingly often, though, officers fail to engage critically with the processes they encounter, instead just passively operating off of vague "-isms" or whatever the previous command did. If this is all you do, then at best you will keep a status quo going, but you will have failed to live up to your potential as an officer—the reason why your rank exists at all. Good leaders leave a team better than they found it, and that requires continual change. If it is broken, fix it; if it is working, figure out how it could run even better. This is the essence of John Boyd's philosophy of "destruction and creation," the ceaseless adaptations between our constructed models and our changing environment. It is also the spirit of the Marine Corps at its best.[17]

To change how things are run is hard, though. It will require you to make difficult decisions, take calculated risks, and at times confront others, including some within your own team and among your peers. Courage—and specifically moral courage—is the indispensable leadership trait here.[18] William Deresiewicz articulates the point well when he says, "Acting with a group does not mean thinking with a group. In every context, there are questions that you

*Lieutenants need the moral courage to "speak truth to power" with senior leaders. (Photo by Sgt Ricardo Hurtado.)*

aren't supposed to ask. The job of a leader, the job of a thinker, is to identify them and ask them."[19] There is a reason why you hear that leadership is not a popularity contest. It is neither possible nor desirable to please everyone if you are doing your job right. Yet the temptation to try to do so, more than any specific administrative or tactical problem, is among the toughest tests you likely will face.

Your moral courage will also be continually tested by your other key audience, higher. Too many lieutenants—and Marines in general—are intimidated by rank, both senior enlisted and officer. They are unwilling or unable to say "No," or ask "Why?" However, respecting rank does not mean being a yes-man. In fact, it requires the exact opposite. Good commanders will expect you to—tactfully—voice disagreement backed by sound reasons and alternative recommendations for better achieving their intent, and they will expect you to give your own subordinates the same consideration. But you must first have the courage to look your commander in the eye and tell him, "Sir, I disagree, *and here's why.*" You must then have the courage to accept responsibility for your actions and your mission, even if it is not what you personally would have liked.[20] Finally, you must have the courage to

hold yourself and others accountable to those established standards and goals. If you do not, I would not want to be led by you, and neither will your Marines.

There are inevitable limits to how much I can credibly say. I am, after all, just another lieutenant. But the essentials of leadership do not change.[21] It is a daunting standard, but one that every good lieutenant must confront. In the end, a commission only makes you an officer. You must prove yourself a leader.

## Notes

1. During the Marine Artillery Officer Basic Course, conscious of the perception that lieutenants added little to no value, my close friends and I often said, only half-jokingly, that being a lieutenant was a "bs job." The term comes from David Graeber, *Bullshit Jobs: A Theory*, (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 2018).

2. See the endless number of Internet comics and memes about the lost lieutenant who the enlisted leadership coddles out of necessity. For just one example, see Maximilian Uriarte, "The Babysitter's Club II," *Terminal Lance*, (August 2017), available at https://terminallance.com.

3. In fact, tactical proficiency will most likely not be the ultimate determinant of your success or failure. As GEN George C. Marshall advised Army officer candidates in 1941, "When you are commanding, leading [soldiers] under conditions where physical exhaustion and privations

must be ignored, where the lives of [soldiers] may be sacrificed, then, the efficiency of your leadership will depend only to a minor degree on your tactical ability. It will primarily be determined by your character, your reputation, not much for courage—which will be accepted as a matter of course—but by the previous reputation you have established for fairness, for that high-minded patriotic purpose, that quality of unswerving determination to carry through any military task assigned to you." Quoted in LTC Andrew Steadman, *The Military Leader: Fundamental Insight for Developing Leaders*, (Bloomington, IN: WestBow Press, 2018).

4. For example, Maj Ballard, my former battalion executive officer and a prior enlisted Marine himself, says this frequently.

5. For valuable discussions of the challenges facing new leaders and advice for surmounting them, see Michael D. Watkins, *The First 90 Days: Proven Strategies for Getting Up to Speed Faster and Smarter*, (Boston, MA: Harvard Business Review Press, 2013); Julie Zhuo, *The Making of a Manager: What to Do When Everyone Looks to You*, (New York, NY: Penguin, 2019); Jocko Willink, *Leadership Strategy and Tactics: Field Manual*, (New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 2020); and Linda A. Hill, "Becoming the Boss," *Harvard Business Review*, (Boston, MA: January 2007), available at https://hbr.org.

6. An excellent, succinct explanation of the difference between SNCOs and officers from a SNCO's perspective is MGySgt Charles A. Walker, "SNCOs Lead, Officers Command," *Marine Corps Gazette*, (Quantico, VA: November 2014).

7. At TBS, we learn to understand and attack the enemy as a system. In the same way, you must understand your own unit as a system, identifying its centers of gravity and critical vulnerabilities. See Headquarters Marine Corps, *MCDP 1, Warfighting*, (Washington, DC: 1997).

8. This is, of course, John Boyd's famous OODA Loop. Clayton Christensen develops a broadly similar iterative framework in his theory of disruptive innovation within the business world. See Christensen, *The Innovator's Dilemma: When New Technologies Cause Great Firms to Fail*, (Boston, MA: Harvard Business Review Press, 1997).

9. In business management literature, it is common to refer to the 3 Ps: people, process, and product. I avoid this specific taxonomy here because it omits the means, i.e. equipment and resources, by which people and processes combine efforts towards an end. Furthermore,

I find "product" misleading in the context of the military. The Marine Corps does not sell a product, per se. Our "product" is our continual readiness and ability to win wars if needed.

10. Because this article approaches leadership from a specific angle—asking why and understanding systems as a whole—I only touch on the personal aspects briefly. However, this is not to imply that they are unimportant or unrelated to my discussion here. In fact, you will fundamentally not be able to succeed as an officer if you do not earn your Marines' trust and respect. Gen Mattis said it best: "Remember: As an officer, you need to win only one battle—for the hearts of your troops. Win their hearts and they will win the fights." See Jim Mattis and Bing West, *Call Sign Chaos: Learning to Lead*, (New York, NY: Penguin, 2019).

11. For the purposes of this article, I use "process" as an umbrella term to capture any sort of rules or guidance for action.

12. This idea of the importance of process for decentralized execution generalizes up to the highest levels of national security. For a compelling discussion of the challenges facing America's 21st century military and its processes in a contested environment against technological peers, see Christian Brose, *The Kill Chain: How Emerging Technologies Threaten America's Military Dominance*, (New York, NY: Hachette Books, 2020).

13. For example, "Alligator" over the company tactical net means all muster at the assembly area, "Bobcat" means first element crosses the line of departure, and so on.

14. For those interested in a philosophical discussion of this idea, see Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* (Oxford, UK: John Wiley & Sons, 2009). In particular, see his famous "rule-following paradox," summarized for a general reader in Anat Biletzki and Anat Matar, "Ludwig Wittgenstein," *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, (Spring 2020), available at https://plato.stanford.edu.

15. A good example from the Vietnam War is described in LTG (Ret) William G. Pagonis, "Leadership in a Combat Zone," *Harvard Business Review*, (Boston, MA: December 2001), available at https://hbr.org. Pagonis turned his patrol boat around to rescue comrades pinned down under fire, disobeying a direct order from higher in doing so. He received a Silver Star for his actions.

16. From Headquarters Marine Corps, *MCDP 6, Command and Control*, (Washington, DC: 1996): "We must keep in mind that procedures are merely tools to be used, modified, or discarded as the situation requires. They are not rules which we must follow slavishly." Headquarters Marine Corps, *MCDP 4, Logistics*, (Washington, DC: 1997), gives a historical example from the Anglo-Zulu War of 1879 when British quartermasters refused to deviate from "by the book" ammunition distribution procedures, and as a result, the British position was overrun.

17. See Gen David H. Berger, "Preparing for the Future: Marine Corps Support to Joint Operations in Contested Littorals," *Military Review*, (Fort Leavenworth, KS: May 2021), available at https://armyupress.army.mil. For an illuminating discussion of Boyd's ideas and their relation to the Marine Corps and maneuver warfare, see Maj Ian T. Brown, *A New Conception of War: John Boyd, The U.S. Marines, and Maneuver Warfare*, (Quantico, VA: Marine Corps University Press, 2018).

18. This was one of the most enduring lessons from my TBS Staff Platoon Commander (SPC), Capt Malkin, and I have already seen it endlessly corroborated in my short time in the Fleet thus far.

19. William Deresiewicz, *Excellent Sheep: The Miseducation of the American Elite and the Way to a Meaningful Life*, (New York, NY: Free Press, 2014). Also see Deresiewicz, "Solitude and Leadership," *The American Scholar*, (Washington, DC: Spring 2010), available at https://theamericanscholar.org, originally delivered as a speech to the plebe class at the United States Military Academy in 2009.

20. Within legal and ethical limits, of course. From *MCDP 1, Warfighting*: "Until a commander has reached and stated a decision, subordinates should consider it their duty to provide honest, professional opinions even though these may be in disagreement with the senior's opinions. However, once the decision has been reached, juniors then must support it as if it were their own."

21. This article and the associated ideas are from a peacetime lieutenant's perspective. I have not yet been in combat and possibly never will. Some may argue that in wartime, a lieutenant's job is different, focused more on heroic leadership from the front and tactical excellence. It is indisputable that the relative emphases are different in war. However, even then, I believe that all the points made here are still just as valid. As we are frequently told at TBS and elsewhere, the officer is not the "trigger puller." To use just one familiar example, in Generation Kill, what is most admirable about 1stLt Fick is not his physical courage or tactical proficiency. Rather, it is his moral courage, demonstrated in his repeated willingness to challenge poor decision making by higher and act in the best interests of his men and mission.

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2020 Gen Robert E. Hogaboom Leadership Writing Contest: Honorable Mention

# Centeredness

## An underappreciated leadership trait
### by 1stLt Charles Borinstein

As our Nation's premier fighting force and an institution that never stops evolving, the Marine Corps invests a substantial amount of resources into developing its leaders. In my admittedly brief Marine Corps experience, however, I have yet to encounter or engage in a discussion about the concept of *centeredness* as a meaningful leadership characteristic. Nonetheless, the trait finds itself among today's popular private sector leadership-circle buzzwords such as *mindfulness*, *resilience*, and *grit*. Despite its absence from our treasured acronym "JJDIDTIEBUCKLE," centeredness is an essential leadership trait and is more relevant now than it has ever been before. Given the rapid proliferation of the internet over the past decade—and with it the rise of misinformation and disinformation—our world seems more chaotic now than at any other point in our lifetimes. A look into the positive effects of centeredness reveals that our organization needs more men and women at their forefront who possess this quality. It is imperative that today's leaders project themselves to their organizations, followers, and supporters in a way that promotes consistency, stability, and commitment.

### What is Centeredness?

According to a 2010 McKinsey & Company study on organizational leadership, many of today's greatest leaders also happen to be some of the world's most centered people.[1] But what does it mean to be centered? The concept of centeredness is difficult to define but easy to recognize. McKinsey describes centered leaders as those who "master

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the art of leading from their core."[2] In other words, centered leaders do not hide behind façades or try to pose as someone that they are not. They are comfortable with who they are, and this is clear to those with whom they interact. Centered leaders are easy to identify because they demonstrate remarkable humility yet are unmistakably confident. Though they do not necessarily lack insecurities, they are able to acknowledge such insecurities and refuse to project them on others—especially those of lesser rank or status.

> *... centeredness is an essential leadership trait and is more relevant now than it has ever been ...*

### A Thousand Façades

Truly centered leaders are committed to being genuine with subordinates, peers, and seniors alike. Unfortunately, many people in leadership positions fail to understand just how critical authenticity is to earning respect and buy-in from others. As well-known author, leadership guru, and pastor Craig Groeschel concludes in his leadership podcast episodes: "Be yourself. People would rather follow a leader who is al-

ways real, rather than one who is always right."[3] Although most, if not all, of us harbor deep insecurities or even self-doubt, many leaders feel the need to erect grand façades behind which they hope to conceal their flaws and weaknesses. Most commonly, these façades involve arrogance, false bravado, and unreasonable inflexibility when interacting with subordinates but come in the form of unashamed pandering and a willingness to do whatever it takes to impress in the face of higher authority. Awkwardly, the relational walls that result from these façades are often obvious to others and end up creating the opposite effect than what their builder intends for them. Instead of earning the respect of their peers and subordinates, leaders who pretend to be someone that they are not often lose the respect of those around them.

### Respect My Authority ... ?

Many in leadership roles often fail to distinguish between what social psychologists John French and Bertram Raven defined as *positional* (legitimate) authority and *referent* authority in their 1959 study: *The Bases of Social Power*. While positional authority is granted because of one's assigned role in an organization, referent authority is earned because of one's ability to earn admiration, respect, and esteem from his followers, peers, and superiors.[4] Because the military necessitates respect for rank and position, many in leadership roles do not feel pressured to earn referent authority from those around them. When combined with the common human tendency to hide insecurities behind walls of bluster, military organizations'

bias toward positional authority can result in evidently insecure leadership who demand respect wholly because of rank, which can frequently create toxic cultures that stifle initiative, active engagement, and genuine participation at the lowest levels. While emphasis on positional authority is not necessarily antithetical to an organization's success, it certainly does not perform well alone. The most effective military leaders are those whose positional authority is undergirded with a referent authority that they have earned by being authentic to those around them.

### Centered on Themselves

Depending on one's definition of success, an "uncentered" leader is not necessarily an unsuccessful one. No single formula can definitively chart the path to leadership success because human relationships are far more complex than any comprehensive set of rules can capture. In fact, history demonstrates time and again that it is very possible for even the most uncentered of leaders to enjoy widespread success.

> *While others may shift responsibility depending on the outcome of a given event, centered leaders always take responsibility for mistakes and redirect praise to their team.*

Nevertheless, leaders who fail to demonstrate commonly respected qualities significantly decrease their probability of effectively accomplishing their personal and their organizations' objectives in the long run.[5] Uncentered leaders are often products of their personal insecurities, which can manifest in the form of micromanagement, self-absorption, or inconsistency. Whereas many of today's popular leadership schools of thought assert that good leaders effectively delegate authority and trust their subordinates with routine tasks, uncentered leaders often feel the need to control as much as possible because they fear failure and the associated scrutiny from superiors that it often brings.[6]

When uncentered leaders experience success, they are quick to take the credit. When they experience failure, however, uncentered leaders find others to blame and excuses behind which to hide. Because they can feel threatened by talented coworkers and subordinates, uncentered leaders also often earn reputations as antagonists with little appetite for novel ideas and solutions. They tend to demonstrate unpredictable behavior, which makes subordinates less likely to find creative solutions and solve problems on their own initiative. Why offer your opinion when you do not know whether it will be ignored, berated, or stolen only for your boss to take the credit? In the long run, uncentered leaders produce bitter, passive followers and toxic, unstable environments.

### What Right Looks Like

Though it may not immediately reflect in their organization's performance, uncentered leaders can create acrimonious work environments and cultures over time. Conversely, centered leaders tend to promote stability and purpose in the workplace through their grounded confidence, consistency, and focus.[7]

Whereas uncentered leaders are self-absorbed, centered leaders are self-aware and self-assured.[8] They do not

feel consistently pressured to prove themselves to others but are capable of confidently doing so when necessary. Centered leaders earn respect from others—rather than demand it—by being genuine in their interactions. Although they can certainly possess insecurities,

> *The most effective military leaders are those whose positional authority is undergirded with a referent authority that they have earned by being authentic to those around them.*

centered leaders refuse to project them onto those around them and instead elect to resonate quiet confidence and their true persona.

Centered leaders skillfully manage expectations up and down the chain of command. They do not make promises they cannot guarantee and are not afraid to communicate realistically with superiors or subordinates. While others may shift responsibility depending on the outcome of a given event, centered leaders always take responsibility for mistakes and redirect praise to their team.

Centered leaders refuse to be distracted by things other than their mission and purpose. They are intentionally consistent through time and space, which creates an environment ripe with synergy and teams that are more than the sums of their parts. By focusing on leading their organizations rather than padding their promotion prospects, centered leaders develop loyal and eager followers. But truly centered leaders do even more than that—the most centered leaders *create other leaders*.[9] Because they are not worried about controlling processes, taking credit, or letting their emotions get the best of them, centered leaders generate multiplicative results when they develop other leaders inside of their organizations. In doing so, centered leaders create innovative, agile teams capable of doing much more than those operating in a tightly controlled and centralized environment.

## Conclusion

The recent rise of the internet, social media, and mobile network technologies have introduced unparalleled advances in communication and connection throughout the globe. With these advances, however, has come a dramatic increase in the unintentional and intentional proliferation of false or manipulated information. Over the past couple of decades, our adversaries have repeatedly demonstrated an intent to harness these technologies to create chaos in our military and Nation. Now more than ever, our organization needs leaders whose conducts reduce chaos, not ones who introduce it. In a world of ever-increasing volatility, uncertainty, and relative truth, our young Marines and Sailors need leaders who can serve as pillars of unwavering focus, ideals, and morals. We need centered leaders who are comfortable in their own skin, dedicated to promoting the mission over themselves, and capable of confidently and competently leading our Nation and Corps through the best and worst of times.

### Notes

1. Joanna Barsh et al., "How Centered Leaders Achieve Extraordinary Results," *McKinsey & Company*, (October 2010), available at www.mckinsey.com.

2. Joanna Barsh and Aaron De Smet, "Centered Leadership through the Crisis: McKinsey Survey Results," *McKinsey & Company*, (October 2009), available at www.mckinsey.com.

3. Craig Groeschel, "Becoming the Centered Leader Your Team Craves," *The Craig Groeschel Leadership Podcast*, (October 2018), available at https://www.life.church.

4. John R.P. French and Bertram Raven, "The Bases of Social Power," *ResearchGate,* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan, Institute for Social Research. January 1959).

5. Adam Grant, *Give and Take: Why Helping Others Drives Our Success,* (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 2014).

6. Muriel Maignan Wilkins, "Signs That You're a Micromanager," *Harvard Business Review*, (November 2014), available at https://hbr.org.

7. "Becoming the Centered Leader Your Team Craves."

8. Ibid.

9. Ibid.

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# Board Wargaming

## Welcome to the jungle
### by Joseph Miranda

>*Mr. Miranda is a prolific board wargame designer. He is a former Army Officer and has been a featured speaker at numerous modeling and simulations conferences.*

**M**ost wargames have complete information. Players know where the forces of both sides are and their capabilities. But in reality, commanders do not have full information about their opponent's forces and capabilities, so they employ intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance assets to gain information. How do wargames model intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance?

Let us look at Congo Merc, a solitaire mini game in which the player attempts to complete commando missions during the 1964 Congo Crisis. The player assembles a task force to complete missions, but they do not know the exact location of their objective. The game uses inverted objective markers randomly placed on the map before each mission. One or two are the real objectives; the others are decoys. To reveal an objective marker, the player can move a task force into the space with an inverted objective marker and conduct a search; however, it costs extra time and potentially triggers an ambush by the Simba Rebels. It also is rarely possible to move to every objective marker in the time allowed for the mission.

The game provides for reconnaissance in three forms: armored cars or a CIA team that can be part of your task force, helicopters that can be sent on a recon flight, and intelligence gathered during the game. Each game turn, the player can assign an armored car or CIA team to recon an adjacent space before moving as well as send one helicopter to recon any space on the map. Both actions have a 50 percent chance of flipping the objective marker to reveal the real objective or remove a decoy. After the recon attempts are resolved, the task force moves, and an event card is drawn. The events range from rebel attacks and obstacles to overcome to occasional assistance and information.

The player must coordinate his recon assets with his task force movement. He will likely utilize the helicopter to search the objective farthest from his base first with his task force heading to the closest objective or a central point from which it can be redirected once the real objective is revealed. On the ground, the player decides whether to take a cautious approach and move his task force adjacent to an inverted objective marker to conduct recon first before moving in (with game time ticking away) or charge in with a greater risk of casualties (which can lead to mission failure even if the mission objective is completed).

Like Roger's Rangers (featured in the previous article), the player has a load-out or task force composition decision to make. He is limited in the number of units that can be in one task force as well as having limited funds to recruit specialized units (beyond armored cars, CIA team, and helicopters, there are combat engineers, paratroops, a Psy Op team, airstrikes, as well as commando teams). So the player has to consider what helps accomplish missions versus what best survives a rebel attack. As with most of the Commando/Raider game series, the player has four increasingly difficult missions to complete against opposition forces that grow stronger over the course of the game. Additional funding and time help, but every mission is a challenge.

# On Defeat Mechanisms

## Maneuverist Paper No. 10

### by Marinus

**M**CDP 1, *Warfighting,* does not address the concept of defeat mechanisms directly, but we argue it should. This important concept has only come into use since the revision of *Warfighting* in 1997, although it was always implicit in the development of maneuver warfare theory. It has found its way into Army doctrine. The next revision of *Warfighting* should include a discussion of this very important concept. Such a discussion of the concept may also help shed some light on the maneuver-attrition controversy that has plagued *Warfighting* since it was first published.

A defeat mechanism is the process by which you impose defeat on the enemy, whatever defeat means in any particular case. Or more accurately, it is the process that *triggers defeat in the enemy* because defeat really is a process of change that occurs *within* the enemy. This point is fundamental. You can take actions intended to cause the enemy's defeat, but whether they do or not depends at least in part on the enemy (unless you intend to completely destroy that enemy). The construct applies at any level of war, from how to inflict defeat at the strategic level to how to defeat an enemy in a specific, small unit engagement.

Maneuver warfare prefers victory by systemic disruption *where it can be achieved* because it offers the possibility of results disproportionally greater than the effort expended.

Defeat mechanism falls into that category of fundamental decisions you make with regard to the enemy—or should—during operational design. It is related to the concept of vulnerability/criticality (which we discussed in Maneuverist No. 7, *MCG* Apr21) in that both deal with thinking about how best to bring about an enemy's defeat. The vulnerability/ criticality concept deals with deciding where to strike at an enemy. The defeat mechanism concept considers what happens within the enemy when you strike at that point. The value of the concept of defeat mechanism is that it encourages commanders to think more deeply about *how* their concept of operations is meant to trigger defeat in the enemy.

## Attrition and Systemic Disruption

We have argued that historically at least two basic defeat mechanisms have been employed in war. *Attrition* works by physically eroding an adversary's human and material resources until they are eliminated or, as usually is the case, the enemy retreats or gives up the fight. Attrition is simple and straightforward. It connects with the nature of war at an essential level: warfare is about killing and destroying. It operates in the physical dimension and is triggered by means of cumulative physical destruction—although the enemy usually is defeated psychologically before he is destroyed.

*The Marine Corps application of maneuver warfare seeks to defeat an enemy through systemic disruption where it can be achieved. (Photo by Cpl Adam Dublinske.)*

In contrast, *systemic disruption* attacks the enemy's coherence or effective functioning so that even if elements of the enemy system remain undamaged, the enemy cannot operate as a coherent whole.[1] The concept of systemic disruption starts by conceiving the enemy not as a unitary mass but as a system of interacting components and then attacking the relationships of those components—whether that system is the enemy's command structure, the geographical disposition of his forces, the reliance on a particular capability, the interaction of his different combat arms, the relationship of his forces with the population, or his belief in the cause. Where attrition works in the physical dimension, systemic disruption can operate in the physical, mental, and moral dimensions.
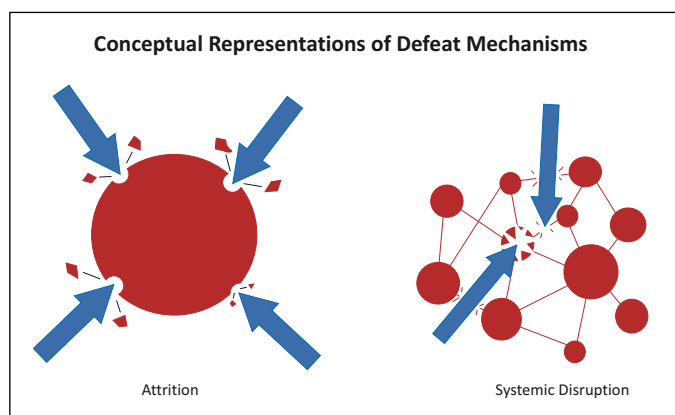


**Figure 1.** *(Figure provided by author.)*

It is important to dispel several misconceptions about systemic disruption. The first is that it somehow leads to bloodless victory—to a kinder, gentler form of warfare that aims to minimize destruction and somehow tricks or confuses the enemy into defeat. (One of the old criticisms of maneuver warfare was that it hoped to "confuse the enemy to death.") Systemic disruption most often is triggered by destruction, just as attrition is. The difference is the purpose that the destruction serves—whether the grinding down of material might or the interruption of coherent functioning. For that matter, there is no reason that both mechanisms could not occur together: at some level of magnitude, even indiscriminate destruction starts to have a systemic effect. That said, while attrition is triggered by physical destruction alone, disruption can additionally be triggered by other means—as we will discuss.

The second misconception is that systemic disruption always takes the form of command paralysis. We admit that the critical passage from *Warfighting* could be interpreted that way (more later). Moreover, command paralysis has been the default defeat mechanism for U.S. joint operations at least since Operation DESERT STORM in 1991. (Army doctrine identifies this defeat mechanism specifically as *disintegration*—more about which later.) We suggest this is a narrow interpretation of systemic disruption, which could have much broader applications in the physical, mental, and moral dimensions. As a simple example: defeating an enemy defense-in-depth by attacking it from a flank where its weapons are not oriented, or by bypassing it altogether, disrupts the logic of the defense. (Sunzi said, "The highest realization of warfare is to attack the enemy's plans."[2]) This is disruption in the mental dimension, the system in question being the logic of the enemy's defensive concept.

As we have discussed previously, maneuver warfare favors systemic disruption as the defeat mechanism of choice. Whereas attrition tends to generate proportional effects—that is, the greater the effort, the greater the resulting attrition—disruption holds out the potential for disproportionately greater effect for the amount of effort expended. Whereas attrition succeeds by damaging the components of the enemy system, disruption succeeds by interrupting the interactions among those components—whether those components are enemy units, the logical elements of the enemy's plan, or some other concept of the enemy as a system. Both defeat mechanisms can also psychologically affect the enemy's will to fight.

While the construct of defeat mechanism can apply to any level of war, consistency from one level to the next is not necessary; in other words, it is not necessary that tactics, operations, and strategy employ the same defeat mechanism. In fact, disruption and attrition can function together in a hierarchical relationship. For example, the overall concept of operations can call for the destruction of a critical function, the loss of which is expected to decisively disrupt the enemy's operations. The accomplishment of that particular task could be achieved by the attrition mechanism.

Maneuver warfare doctrine favors disruption where it can be achieved because disruption can save time, succeed more decisively, and reduce material costs. But the vulnerability of an enemy force to defeat by disruption is sensitive to both its intrinsic character and the conditions of battle. Generally, the more rigidly structured an enemy, the greater his adherence to decipherable doctrinal patterns, and the greater his reliance on continuous command and control, the greater his vulnerability to disruption. Conversely, because they tend to operate dispersed on familiar terrain, avoid regular patterns, and employ episodic and often redundant command chains, irregular forces tend to be more difficult to disrupt than regular forces. More difficult does not mean impossible, however, and given sufficient time and intelligence resources to unravel an irregular enemy's tendencies and structure, even an irregular adversary can be disrupted. Developing the knowledge and doctrine for disrupting irregular enemies comparable to that which exists for regular enemies should remain a priority.

A historical example of employing a systemic disruption mechanism in irregular warfare is the Combined Action Program from 1965 to 1971 during the Vietnam War, in which a Marine rifle squad and a Vietnamese Popular Forces platoon would take up position in or near a rural Vietnamese hamlet, thereby attempting to disrupt the Viet Cong practice of gaining sanctuary in or support from the hamlet.[3]

### That Problematic Passage in *Warfighting*

According to *Warfighting*, systemic disruption is definitional to maneuver warfare:

Maneuver warfare is a warfighting philosophy that seeks to shatter the enemy's cohesion through a variety of rapid, focused, and unexpected actions which create a turbulent and rapidly deteriorating situation with which the enemy cannot cope.[4]

In fact, *Warfighting* defines maneuver warfare not merely in terms of systemic disruption but in terms of comprehensive system *collapse*. This passage understandably has caused problems for Marinus Era Novum (*MCG*, Dec20 and Apr21), LtCol Thaddeus Drake (*MCG*, Oct20), and others, who see that complete collapse as a *sine qua non* of maneuver warfare—and who argue that such collapse may not even be a desirable end state. The language also suggests to some a state of command paralysis, which has led others to conclude that that alone is what is meant by systemic disruption.

Our interpretation of *Warfighting* has never been that literal, although we acknowledge the point. We see the passage in question, like much of *Warfighting*, as aspirational, describing maneuver warfare in its theoretically pure form, in much the same way that Clausewitz described "absolute" war in *On War*. This aspirational language describes systemic

> ... defeat ultimately is a function not directly of cumulative losses (that is, attrition), but of loss of adaptability through the loss of organizational cohesion.

disruption in the extreme. We argue there exist lesser forms of disruption, depending largely on how susceptible the enemy is to being disrupted and on the ability to understand the enemy in a way that enables you to attack him systemically. Any revision of *Warfighting* ought to address this point. For that matter, we acknowledge that, absent a systemic understanding of the enemy, you have little choice but to pursue defeat by attrition. In fact, we suspect that attrition is rarely the defeat mechanism of choice but is more often the fallback when the military leadership cannot think of a better idea—as happened notably on both sides on the Western Front during World War I and on the American side during the Vietnam War. Moreover, as we have attempted to describe, we argue there can be numerous ways of disrupting an enemy other than by inducing command paralysis.

### Defeat as Failure to Adapt

One of the most insightful treatments of the subject is *Defeat Mechanisms: Military Organizations as Complex Adaptive, Nonlinear Systems* by Michael Brown, Andrew May, and Matthew Slater.[5] As the title suggests, that study looks at military organizations as complex adaptive systems and concludes that defeat, ultimately, is a function not directly of cumulative losses (that is, attrition) but of loss of adapt-

ability through the loss of organizational cohesion. (See our discussion of complex, nonlinear systems in Maneuverist No. 3, *MCG*, Nov20.) The authors write:

> Whenever a unit enters into combat, the "primary mechanisms" of disorder and disintegration begins ... At the same time, however, a countervailing "feedback" process begins. The feedback loop is the result of adaptation by which units—and their sub-units—adapt to the damage being inflicted and the resulting disintegration. The effect of this countervailing feedback loop is effectively to maintain the military force as an organization. Adaptation, in this view, can be a powerful process and overcome the process of disintegration and "de-organization." *Only when the rate at which the pressure exerted by the enemy outpaces the adaptation process is a unit likely to be "defeated" in any meaningful sense of the word.*[6]

They conclude that

> *mechanisms of defeat were those processes that led to the de-organization of the military unit—that reduced its adaptivity, that created a whole that was equal to or less than the sum of its parts, and that reduced the cohesion that is the defining element of small units.* Once the process of de-organization have [sic] taken hold, the seeds for defeat are firmly in place.[7]

Brown, May, and Slater argue that historically there have been three basic factors that catalyze this process of "de-organization." First is loss of the ability to communicate within the unit. Without communication, there may be individual adaptation, but there is no coordinated adaptation. Second is the loss of the ability to achieve nonlinear effects through functional specialization (i.e., logistics, fire support, intelligence, etc.), which is a combat multiplier. Third is the breakdown of primary-group (i.e., small unit) cohesion.

This model of defeat mechanisms is highly compatible with our description of systemic disruption. Of note, Brown, May, and Slater do not identify attrition as a defeat mechanism at all. In fact, they argue that the common belief that attrition leads directly to defeat is not supported by historical evidence. They suggest that militaries historically have had a greater tolerance for attrition than often assumed and that the disruptive effects of combat losses will trigger before attritive effects ever do.[8]

### Normal and Catastrophic Defeat

*Defeat Mechanisms* also makes an important distinction between *normal defeat* and *catastrophic defeat*.[9] "Normal defeat is essentially the decision to change or abandon the mission—to cease an attempted advance, for example—which leaves the unit in condition to fight again."[10] Normal defeat happens routinely in warfare. It can be thought of as a form of adaptation. Knocked out of equilibrium by an enemy action, the unit recovers its equilibrium by accepting normal defeat: it halts its failing attack and transitions to the defensive or it falls back to a subsequent defensive position when its primary position has been turned, as examples.

In contrast, in a catastrophic defeat, "a force is effectively eliminated for the duration of the conflict; the internal structure of the military organization is so disrupted ... that the organization is permanently destroyed."[11] In other words, in

Brown, May, and Slater's construct, the force has failed to adapt to the demands of its new situation.

We suggest the normal-catastrophic construct is not binary but rather describes a spectrum of possible degrees of defeat—and therefore degrees of adaptation. The construct is useful because defeat can mean different things in different situations, and a key part of imposing defeat on an enemy is deciding what defeat means in any given situation. Moreover, as we have discussed repeatedly throughout this series, the nature of war as a *Zeikampf* or *Dreikampf* can lead to dynamics beyond the control of any belligerent. You may desire to impose catastrophic defeat, but the enemy may not give you that opportunity. Rapidly inflicting a series of normal



*Rapid maneuver and making contact with an enemy in a location and time outside expectations and preparations can produce systemic disruption.* **(Photo by Sgt Courtney White.)**

defeats on an enemy, however, may cumulatively stretch him beyond his ability to continue to adapt, thereby triggering catastrophic defeat. Similarly, knocking the enemy out of equilibrium through normal defeat and then keeping the pressure on to prevent him from reaching another equilibrium point—doctrinally known as a pursuit operation—could be another way of turning normal into catastrophic defeat. This is the "turbulent and rapidly deteriorating situation" described in *Warfighting*. (It is also related to John Boyd's idea of *fast-transient* maneuvers.) Deciding what is a reasonable objective in any given situation has to be a primary consideration—while always looking for the opportunity to trigger catastrophic defeat when the enemy gives you an opening. This opportunistic mentality is key to maneuver warfare as described in *Warfighting*.

## Styles of Warfare

While the term "defeat mechanism" does not appear in *Warfighting*, the manual does treat the topic, primarily in the section titled "Styles of Warfare," often considered to be one of the most controversial sections of the book. The early Maneuverists chose to explain maneuver warfare in part by contrasting it with its opposite *attrition warfare* and later sometimes *methodical battle*. If maneuver warfare was good

and enlightened, then attrition warfare must be bad. Some Marines pushed back, arguing that attrition—understood as cumulative losses—was a *fact* of war regardless of the style of warfare. How could inflicting attrition on the enemy possibly be bad?

This is why we make a careful distinction between destruction and attrition, the former being a pervasive and essential result in war *that can trigger defeat* and the latter being a process of defeat itself. Inflicting destruction on the enemy is undeniably a good thing. It is fundamental. But we argue that there generally are better ways to trigger defeat than through the process of attrition—and generally smarter uses for destruction than to trigger the attrition mechanism.

Styles of warfare and choices of defeat mechanism are not unrelated by any means. Pursuit of victory through attrition encourages an emphasis on maximizing the efficient application of combat power—and therefore on internal efficiency. In the words of Edward N. Luttwak, in *Strategy: The Logic of War and Peace*, one of the most provocative and influential books from the formative years of maneuver warfare theory:

> The enemy is treated as a mere array of targets, and success is to be obtained by the cumulative effect of superior firepower and material strength, eventually to destroy the full inventory of enemy targets, unless retreat or surrender terminates the process (as is usually the case). The greater the attrition content of a style of war, the more will routinized techniques or target acquisition, movement, and supply suffice, along with a repetitive tactical repertoire, and the smaller is the need for the application of operational method. ... There can be no victory in this style of war without an overall superiority in attritional capacity, and there can be no cheap victories, in either casualties or material loss, relative to the enemy's strength.[12]

Pursuit of victory through systemic disruption of course encourages a view of the enemy as a system, which leads to an emphasis on understanding that system—and therefore externally on the enemy. Luttwak again:

> Instead of seeking out the enemy's concentration of strength, since that is where the targets are to be found in bulk, the starting point of relational maneuver is the avoidance of the enemy's strengths, followed by the application of some selective superiority against presumed enemy weaknesses, physical or psychological, technical or organizational. While attrition is a quasi-physical process that guarantees results proportionate to the quantity and volume of the effort expended, and conversely cannot yield success without material superiority, the results of relational maneuver depend on the accuracy with which enemy weakness are identified, the surprise achieved, and the speed and precision of the action.[13]

In retrospect, that early decision to cast the issue as competing styles, one enlightened and the other benighted, was a mistake because it likely prolonged the argument over maneuver warfare by generating unnecessary antibodies.

## Defeat Mechanisms in U.S. Army Doctrine

First of all, Army doctrine at least recognizes the concept of the defeat mechanism, which it defines as "a method through which friendly forces accomplish their mission against enemy

opposition."[14] Unfortunately, that definition is not especially helpful. More importantly, it does not recognize a defeat mechanism as something that happens internally to the enemy but instead defines it as friendly method—which we believe encourages a mistaken focus on your own processes rather than focusing on understanding the enemy's.

Army doctrine identifies four defeat mechanisms, which can be used in combination: *destroy*, *dislocate*, *disintegrate*, and *isolate*. These are not defeat mechanisms as we have defined them but rather are actions we can take to trigger a defeat mechanism in the enemy. Destruction, the application of "lethal combat power on an enemy capability so that it can no longer perform any function,"[15] can trigger either attrition or disruption, as we have discussed. We suggest that dislocation, disintegration, and isolation are all specific, common ways of triggering systemic disruption. Dislocation, the employment of "forces to obtain significant positional advantage, rendering the enemy's dispositions less valuable, perhaps even irrelevant,"[16] undermines the enemy's dispositions. Disintegration means "disrupt[ing] the enemy's command and control."[17] No explanation necessary there. (Note, this is what many people think of when they think of systemic disruption.) Finally, isolation "is a tactical mission that requires a unit to seal off—both physically and psychologically—an enemy from sources of support, deny the enemy freedom of movement, and prevent the isolated enemy forces from having contact with other enemy forces."[18]

These are all fine as far as they go, but we suggest that they are far from comprehensive; there are numerous other possible ways that an insightful mind might think of to trigger disruption in the enemy system. This is not to say, however, that identifying the trigger is necessarily some arcane skill requiring genius or deep reasoning—although some enemies may be more inscrutable than others. It may be intuitive and commonsensical. Turning the enemy's flank, attacking the enemy's command and control, or cutting the enemy off from reinforcements are all common "best practices."

Of note, Army doctrine also identifies stability mechanisms, which are essentially the reverse of defeat mechanism.[19] A stability mechanism is "the primary method through which friendly forces affect civilians to attain conditions that support establishing a lasting, stable peace."[20] The four stability mechanisms, according to Army doctrine, are *compel*, *control*, *influence*, and *support*. Again, we suggest there are other ways of triggering growth and stability.

### Delbrück and Strategies of Attrition and Annihilation

A related, and sometimes confusing, issue is the attrition-annihilation strategic construct. Based on his reading of Clausewitz, German historian Hans Delbrück (1848–1929) identified two basic historical strategies, *Ermattungsstrategie* and *Niederwerfungsstrategie*, which were unfortunately and mistakenly translated into English as *strategy of attrition* and *strategy of annihilation*.[21] It is problematic that to most readers of English *attrition* and *annihilation* are practically synonymous. More problematic is that the two constructs are not actually strategies but are descriptions of strategic



**The combined arms effects of maneuver and joint fires can disrupt an enemy's cohesion beyond the physical destruction of his forces.** (Photo by Airman 1st Class Ridge Shan.)

defeat mechanisms. The point of confusion is the relationship between strategy of attrition and attrition warfare. *Ermattungsstrategie* is in fact based on an attrition defeat mechanism. Delbrück used *Ermattung* to describe the defeat mechanism of eighteenth-century cabinet wars, which were all about the possession of specific pieces of territory. Each side fought until it was convinced that the cost of fighting over a particular province had proved greater than the revenue it produced. In other words, *Ermattung* was a matter of forcing the enemy to spend money. Because money is so easy to count, calculation played a central role in the defeat mechanism of *Ermattung*. The central role played by calculation in strategies of exhaustion can be seen in Falkenhayn's attempt to "bleed out" the French Army by forcing it to defend Verdun. Likewise, the French strategy of *usure* ("wearing out") during the second half of World War I was closely tied to the efforts of French military intelligence to track both the supply of manpower to the German Army and the rate at which it was used up. It has since come to be recognized that, at the strategic level, attrition can be a plausible way for a weaker belligerent *with a greater willingness to suffer* to defeat a stronger enemy by raising that enemy's costs higher than he is willing to bear, thereby convincing him to accept terms rather than continue to fight.

*Niederwerfungsstrategie*, translated as *strategy of annihilation*, involved the outright defeat of the enemy's ability to resist, although it has nothing to do with reducing the enemy "to nothing" (the Latin root of the word). *Niederwerfung* literally means "throwing-down," as in a take-down in wrestling that is achieved by first unbalancing the opponent. The image of a wrestler using leverage to upset his opponent's center of gravity and then using the opponent's own body weight to topple him strongly suggests systemic disruption as we have described it.

### Conclusion

A defeat mechanism is an internal process by which defeat is triggered *within* an enemy. We can take actions intended

to trigger that mechanism, but whether it happens or not is not entirely up to us. There are two basic defeat mechanisms, attrition, and systemic disruption. Maneuver warfare pursues the latter, which can yield disproportionate results but that requires insight into the enemy as a system. While both attrition and disruption work in the physical dimension, disruption can work in the mental and moral dimensions as well. There are numerous ways to trigger systemic disruption, although we strongly suspect that many Marines do not appreciate the wide range of forms it can take. However, we argue that thinking through how we expect our actions to trigger defeat in the enemy is a crucial part of the art and science of war. (Although let us be clear: we are not advocating for the creation of a new planning routine called "Defeat Mechanism Analysis.") It should be an integral part of all command decision making. *Warfighting* does not address the concept directly, but we suggest that any future edition probably should. Moreover, doing so holds the potential to resolve one of the most controversial parts of *Warfighting.*

### Notes

1. Edward N. Luttwak, *Strategy: The Logic of War and Peace,* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987).

2. Sun-Tzu, *The Art of War,* trans. by Ralph D. Sawyer, (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1994).

3. While there is no conclusive evidence as to the program's unqualified success, and it was not employed widely enough to make a difference in the outcome of the war anyway, it generally has been considered effective where it was applied.

4. Headquarters Marine Corps, *MCDP 1, Warfighting,* (Washington, DC: 1997). It is significant that this definition does not specify a method of command and control best suited to achieve systemic disruption, although *Warfighting* later proceeds to advocate for decentralization. According to Robert R. Leonhard, there are "two distinct (though related) schools of maneuver-warfare thinking" that differ in how to accomplish systemic disruption. One is what he terms the German School, which prefers mission-type orders that allow a high degree of subordinate leader initiative and latitude in how to best accomplish the mission. The other is the Soviet School, which instead demands determined execution of specific orders exactly as given, with little tolerance for subordinate flexibility. The ramifications of this difference in practice are stark. The German school aims to find weaknesses and depends on local leaders to exploit them faster than the enemy can react—thus *Warfighting*'s emphasis on *critical vulnerabilities*. However, the Soviet school emphasizes scientifically "substantiated" centralized planning aiming to create and then exploit enemy weaknesses when and where required, so that all local leaders need do is ensure accomplishment of their assigned tasks. Robert R. Leonhard, *The Art of Maneuver: Maneuver-Warfare Theory and AirLand Battle*, (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1991).

5. Michael Brown, Andrew May, and Matthew Slater, *Defeat Mechanisms: Military Organizations as Complex Adaptive, Nonlinear Systems,* (McLean, VA: Science Applications International Corporation, 2000).

6. Ibid.

7. Ibid. Emphasis in the original.

8. Ibid.

9. Ibid.

10. Ibid.

11. Ibid.

12. *Strategy*.

13. Ibid.

14. Headquarters Department of the Army, *Army Doctrinal Reference Publication (ADRP) 3-0, Operations,* (Washington, DC: 2017).

15. Ibid.

16. Ibid.

17. Ibid.

18. Ibid.

19. The logic of attrition-disruption in reverse applies to situations in which the mission is rebuilding rather than or in addition to defeating, such as in disaster response or post-conflict stabilization. The analogue to attrition would be simply to apply resources to the situation to shore it up in its current state without attempting to implement any structural changes. The analogue to disruption would be to implement structural changes to improve the overall functioning and stability of the system in question.

20. *ADRP 3-0.*

21. Of the six English-speaking scholars who have systematically engaged the strategic dichotomy of Hans Delbrück, all translated *Niederwerfung* as "annihilation," four translated *Ermattung* as "attrition," and two translated *Ermattung* as "exhaustion." The relevant discussions of these concepts can be found in Hans Delbrück (Walter J. Renfroe, Jr., translator), *History of the Art of War within the Framework of Political History*, (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1980); Jehuda Wallach, *The Dogma of the Battle of Annihilation*, (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1986); Robert Foley, *German Strategy and the Path to Verdun*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Arden Bucholz, *Hans Delbrück and the German Military Establishment*, (Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Press, 2005); Antulio Echevarria, *After Clausewitz*, (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2000); and Gordon Craig, "Delbrück: The Military Historian" in Edward Mead Earle, editor, *Makers of Modern Strategy*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1971).

# Gear Without Training is Just Weight

## by Capt Sebastian Bailey

>Capt Bailey recently left 3/7 Mar, where he served as the Assistant Intelligence Officer and sUAS Program Manager. He is currently pursuing employment in the civilian sector.

There has been a string of initiatives over recent years to introduce small unmanned aerial systems (sUAS) at the lowest possible level and for good reason. They have the potential to be the light, stealthy, responsive, accurate sensors that expand the sphere of influence of the operating unit while risking only dollars and parts. However, because of equipment limitations and lack of training to go along with the systems, implementation at the small unit level is still mostly non-existent. Many Marines hold a very narrow view of what sUAS is capable of and often do not understand what they can provide to elements smaller than a battalion. More thorough training for both sUAS operators and leaders is necessary if Marines hope to effectively utilize these systems on the modern battlefield.

Under the current construct, the expectation is that fixed wing UAS, such as the Puma and Raven, are used at the battalion level. Generally, the battalion program manager and the preponderance of operators fall under the S2, as sUAS are generally seen as collections assets. While sUAS are one of the few collections assets available at the battalion level and should be employed as such, organizing them as a collateral billet of intelligence professionals limits their potential scope. The program manager's and operators' foremost job is effective intelligence analysis to support commanders' decision making, which leaves little focus and training time toward employing sUAS in support of fires, maneuver, or logistics operations.

Further, since sUAS is pigeonholed into a collections role under this construct, lower-level units (companies and platoons) are often unable to see the potential benefits to their operations. Especially in battalion and higher-level operations against a conventional adversary, most companies will not have a developed collections plan. If they have only ever seen sUAS employed as a collections asset, they will likely have difficulty seeing any value in taking the extra gear, operators, and risk associated with sUAS employment.

This lack of training and employment (outside of one role) suffers from a positive feedback loop at lower levels: sUAS operators are not trained to support anything other than surveillance missions through their initial qualification. The initial qualification courses focus entirely on how to operate the aircraft in the air without crashing it, with little to no time left for training events dedicated to the ins and outs of supporting different types of operations. This is obviously the focus that is needed at an initial qualification course, but

education beyond that course is extremely limited. There are currently no "intermediate" or "advanced" operators' courses that look at techniques beyond the basics, and time and equipment limitations prohibit intelligence shops from conducting such training in-house. Operators are limited to learning on the fly once they are called on to support a company or battalion-level exercise, but it is difficult for them to learn and experiment during these exercises as they are often limited to the same "circle-over-this-NAI (named area of interest) mission" that is seen as their sole function.

> *More thorough training for both sUAS operators and leaders is necessary if Marines hope to effectively utilize these systems on the modern battlefield.*

One part of the solution has already been created—sUAS Centers of Excellence (sUAS COE) are appearing on major training installations with the explicit goal of teaching advanced techniques to sUAS operators. While this is a step in the right direction, many barriers still exist to developing sUAS operators and the associated tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTP). Most of these barriers revolve around the same theme: inability to effectively train at the home unit. If sUAS operations and management were to be changed from a collateral S2 billet to a primary focus for the individuals involved, the depth and breadth of training would increase dramatically.

One way of accomplishing this is to create a sUAS subsection to the S-2 or S-3. Such a section would be solely responsible for training sUAS operators and supporting training exercises with operators and systems. With the majority of

their time devoted to training on the systems at a level beyond simply meeting currency requirements, not only would the capability of the operators increase but so would experimentation. Ideally, these Marines would develop new best practices and TTPs for both their conventional tasking and in support of a variety of missions beyond just observing an NAI. These TTPs could then be folded back into advanced training at the sUAS COE and elsewhere, thus creating a positive feedback loop in a more beneficial direction.

This issue extends beyond just the skills and training available to sUAS operators. These operators and their systems are employed by leaders in the GCE who have little to no formal training in how this capability can fit in to their scheme of maneuver. At best, it is treated as an awkward forward eye for leaders' reconnaissance and then ignored once the plan is briefed. However, upon taking a step back, it is not difficult to see how sUAS can provide early warning to actively maneuvering units, eyes to forward air controllers and forward observers, overwatch for convoys, or an expanded area of influence to a screening unit. The difference between these two concepts of employment is training. Not just training in the FMF but instruction on proper employment and chances to employ the systems as part of a scheme of maneuver at foundational schools like the Infantry Small Unit Leaders' Course and the Infantry Officers' Course. If sUAS are integrated into the array of tools that leaders have available to them from the very beginning, then they will be employed like any other tool, instead of as an afterthought.

Currently, when a battalion begins a training exercise, the sUAS stay largely with the S2 and are employed as part of a battalion collections plan with a few smaller systems utilized by the CLICs for basic leaders' reconnaissance. The systems are flown during the early phases, then largely forgotten once decisive actions begin. A more beneficial scenario is one where a sUAS section has had the time and the space to consistently train throughout a work-up. In this scenario, a battalion goes into a training exercise with a Fire Support Coordination Center Puma enabling artillery fires and close air support; concurrently, logistics trains utilize SkyRangers to provide overwatch in danger areas, and a Combined Anti-Armor Team platoon greatly expands their screen utilizing the Ravens in their vehicles. The path between the two scenarios may seem long and arduous, but it boils down to effective, consistent training and results in a more capable and integrated force.

USMC

# Bloody Okinawa

reviewed by Col Eric L. Chase, USMCR (Ret)

T he Battle of Okinawa, 20 March through 2 July 1945, the last great conflagration of World War II, was also the grand finale of numerous island campaigns in the Pacific. By far, Okinawa venued the Pacific War's biggest engagement in terms of numbers of combatants on both sides, naval and air actions, and casualties—including many thousands of civilians. Over 180,000 Allied troops initially went ashore, and over a half million servicemen were committed to the operation. Japanese forces, including thousands of Okinawan "volunteers," numbered well over 100,000.

It was a battle for the ages, and Joseph Wheelan's *Bloody Okinawa: The Last Great Battle of World War II* now adds a worthy and valuable contribution to existing histories of the battle. Wheelan sums up the campaign this way:

> The Battle of Okinawa was neither the climax nor the resolution of the Pacific war, but its battle royale—fought by the United States with crushing power and ferocity, and by Japanese forces with calculation, abandon, and fatalism. The fighting left the once peaceful island a blood-drenched battlefield. At sea, the three-month siege of the U.S. Fifth Fleet by Japanese kamikazes and conventional warplanes was unparalleled. The Battle of Okinawa stands as the longest sustained carrier campaign of World War II.

"Never before had there been, probably never again will there be, such a vicious, sprawling struggle," wrote *New York Times* correspondent Hanson Baldwin of the Battle of Okinawa.

**>Col Chase, an attorney in private practice in New Jersey, served as an infantry Platoon Commander in Vietnam and retired from the Marine Corps Reserve in 1998 after more than 30 years of active and reserve service.**

Before and during this grinding, savage campaign of over 100 days, American planners saw the mission, called Operation ICEBERG, as the last stop before the launch of Operation DOWNFALL: the anticipated invasion to defeat the Japanese Empire in the homeland itself. Although well offshore, Okinawa was part of the Ryukyu Islands and a Japanese prefecture. It was only 400 miles south of Kyushu, one of Japan's five main

## Okinawa venued the Pacific War's biggest engagement ...

islands. As such, it was the last and most important steppingstone to the ultimate invasion. DOWNFALL, which would have continued into and likely beyond 1946, never happened, as Imperial Japan surrendered on 2 September 1945 aboard the U.S.S. *Missouri* in Tokyo Bay, just weeks after the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki on 6 and 9 August 1945.

While the island battle raged, the war in the European theater ended with Germany's surrender on 7 May
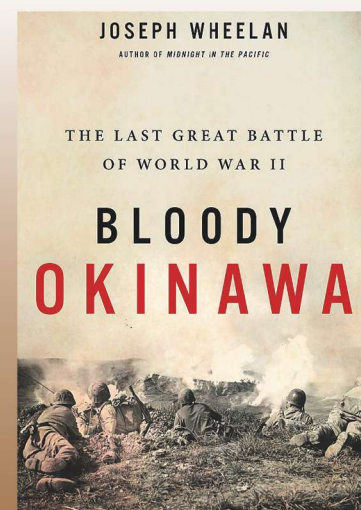
BLOODY OKINAWA: The Last Great Battle Of World War II. By Joseph Wheelan. New York, NY: Hachette Books, 2020. ISBN: 978-0306903229, 419 pp.

1945. America's war effort thereafter would concentrate on Japan alone, which meant, for now, Okinawa. By then, the American military colossus was at its peak in military strength—measured in warships, aircraft, fighting vehicles, artillery, infantry small arms, crew served weapons, and personnel. U.S. war production capability was at full throttle: "In just three years [since Guadalcanal], America had become a world-striding goliath wielding astonishing power." By contrast, Imperial Japan—three years earlier the preeminent power of the Asia-Pacific region—was now a diminishing shadow of the military leviathan it had been but could still deploy destructive forces to be reckoned with.

The well-led Japanese on Okinawa had stored and staged necessary supplies, weapons of war, and vast stockpiles of ammunition to last months (although, within weeks, ration shortages caused near-starvation conditions among Japanese soldiers). They exploited and improved countless caves, hills, and ridges where they built or refined hundreds of underground enclaves—effectively neutralizing relent-

less American bombing and naval gunnery. Japanese leaders and their troops knew that reinforcements and resupply were not possible for them. Yet, they stoically, even proudly, stared down their likely fate.

Although Allied victory was a certainty, the cost in blood on both sides on Okinawa would be horrific, and its casualties forecast a warning of much worse to come in Operation DOWNFALL. Leading up to Okinawa, the Japanese had suffered an unbroken string of crushing island defeats, including irreplaceable losses of men (including nearly all seasoned pilots), ships, aircraft, and weaponry since the Battle of Midway three years earlier. Nevertheless, the Imperial Army and Navy prepared on Okinawa to defend in depth against their American foes.

As with Iwo Jima (19 February to 26 March 1945), American forces landed on Okinawa virtually unopposed. Wheelan described the Japanese plan:

> The new Japanese strategy, the so-called defense in depth, was first seen at Peleliu and Leyte the previous fall, and at Iwo Jima in February. An important feature was the construction of mutually supporting fortifications in caves, cliffs, and hills where Japanese infantrymen waited, as mortars and artillery pounded the Americans at a distance until they reached machine-gun range. Conventional counterattacks by mobile reserves supported by tanks replaced the headlong banzai charges that figured prominently in the Japanese defense of Guadalcanal, Tarawa, and Saipan.

> The aim was to inflict maximum casualties, grind down the enemy, and break his will—a strategy summed up by the Thirty-Second Army's slogan: "One plane for one warship/One boat for one ship/One man for ten of the enemy or one tank."

The Japanese developed and carried out their patient defensive plan, with men protected deep underground, emerging at night, exploiting prepared positions with interlocking small arms fire, rolling artillery out at times of their choosing, and rolling it back after engaging.

In addition to exacting massive American casualties on scores of ridges and on hills and in valleys, often given names by the Marines (e.g., Sugar Loaf Hill; Hacksaw Ridge), Japanese kamikaze missions launched from the homeland became more frequent and deadlier than ever before—destroying or damaging numerous ships and killing or wounding a record toll of U.S. Navy personnel. In their objectives to delay a American victory and to rack up heavy enemy casualties, they succeeded but at the cost of the deaths of nearly all their island forces (although more Japanese soldiers surrendered on Okinawa than anywhere else).

Wheelan previously authored *Midnight in the Pacific: Guadalcanal—The World War II Battle That Turned the Tide of War*, as well as several books on earlier American conflicts. Thus, having now produced histories of America's first and last island invasions, he is well versed and skilled to portray the brutal, savage fighting that so characterized the Pacific War. *Bloody Okinawa* is an apt title for this detailed saga. On the island of Okinawa, as well as in the air and at sea nearby, the fighting became intensely personal and often racially motivated:

> This was no anomaly; the Japanese in fact looked down upon all other races, believing that their origin was divine and that they were preordained to rule the world. This belief rested on their conviction that Emperor Hirohito was the 124th descendent of the goddess Amaterasu, the mother of Japan's first emperor, Jimmo Tenno, whose reign began in 660 BCE.

> George Orwell, who wrote World War II broadcasts for the BBC, said the Japanese had for centuries espoused "a racial theory even more extreme than that of the Germans." For reasons of racial superiority, said Orwell, Japanese soldiers believed that it was their prerogative to slap other Asians in conquered territories, and to similarly abuse Anglo war prisoners.

As on previous islands, atrocities became commonplace, and a no-quarter practice characterized the Japanese especially—but also the Americans to a lesser extent.

Even more than *Midnight in the Pacific*, *Bloody Okinawa* is so graphic, with numerous portraits of the grisly and nightmarish close combat and suffering that some readers might pass over some of the most disturbing battle scenes. Yet, the narrative provides indispensable lessons on the ugly realities of war. Professional warfighters should gain from it a solid sense of what happens when infantries clash at close quarters for weeks and months on end, as they came to their fights with "kill-or-be-killed" expectations. Although previous island battles—like Peleliu and Iwo Jima—were all harrowing killing arenas, Okinawa was the worst.

*Bloody Okinawa* displays Wheelan's organizational and story-telling mastery, describing what were really many simultaneous or serial battles that raged in different parts of a widespread geography. He deftly provides continuity and context for the innumerable day-to-day contests. Daily struggles for yards of turf with deadly consequences characterized the fighting. The Marines and Army units would take contested high ground, only to be chased off the next day and to retake it later. Constant artillery barrages and "the accumulated days and weeks of methodical killing," abetted by the most primitive conditions of jungle rot, disease, sleeplessness, and lack of food and clean water, drove both sides to massive "shell shock" or "battle fatigue" casualties—the precursors of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), now an "officially recognized ... mental disorder." American "non-combat casualties" on Okinawa numbered in the tens of thousands.

In addition to the deadly challenges from a highly motivated enemy and conditions on the ground, there was also abundant inter-Service rivalry with Marines often chiding Army units and vice versa. Wheelan concludes that there were basic differences between the two Services' fighting philosophies. He revisits a Battle of Saipan (15 June to 9 July 1944) controversy that erupted when Marine LtGen Holland "Howlin' Mad" Smith relieved Army MGEN Ralph

Smith, Commander of the 27th Division.

The Army sacrificed speed to minimize casualties—usually advancing with deliberation following heavy preparatory gunfire, ideally with the support of tanks. By contrast, the Marines sought to quickly reach their objectives, even if it meant foregoing supporting fire and accepting a steep "butcher's bill."

The deep-seated distrust between the two Services was aggravated by the controversy that flared during the 1944 Saipan campaign. The Army resented the Marines' disparagement of the 27th Division for slowness and the dismissal of the 27th's commander for not moving faster. Many Marines believed the Army was too cautious; many soldiers thought that the Marines needlessly squandered men's lives.

Thus, the unfortunate coincidence of Marines sharing responsibilities on Okinawa with the Army's 27th Division made for unhelpful intramural animosity from the start.

Throughout *Bloody Okinawa*, Wheelan describes and quotes combatants on both sides. In doing so, flag officers appear and speak on almost every page. A puzzling aspect of Wheelan's references to generals and admirals, however, is his identification of them as "General so-and-so" or "Admiral such-and-such." He never refers to general officers by their actual ranks, except for those who happen to be of four-star rank; they are *all* "General" or "Admiral." Unfortunately, with so many flag officers in play, this shorthand approach can be confusing and cause a reader to look up the actual flag ranks to discern their levels of authority. On Okinawa, the differences among the actual ranks and seniority of participants are especially relevant to the narrative because, on both sides, the chain of command often looms large, frequently reflecting differing points of view and open disputes over tactics.

Nevertheless, *Bloody Okinawa* is a must read for a cohesive, coherent understanding of the inherently confusing day-to-day chaos of the Pacific War's biggest battle. It also serves as a poignant reminder of the extraordinary grit, stamina, and courage of the men who fought there. With his *Midnight in the Pacific* and now *Bloody Okinawa*, Wheelan admirably "bookends" the first and last island campaigns in the Pacific War.

# Editorial Policy and Writers' Guidelines

Our basic policy is to fulfill the stated purpose of the *Marine Corps Gazette* by providing a forum for open discussion and a free exchange of ideas relating to the U.S. Marine Corps and military and national defense issues, particularly as they affect the Corps.

The Board of Governors of the Marine Corps Association & Foundation has given the authority to approve manuscripts for publication to the editor and the Editorial Advisory Panel. Editorial Advisory Panel members are listed on the *Gazette*'s masthead in each issue. The panel, which normally meets as required, represents a cross section of Marines by professional interest, experience, age, rank, and gender. The panel judges all writing contests. A simple majority rules in its decisions. Material submitted for publication is accepted or rejected based on the assessment of the editor. The *Gazette* welcomes material in the following categories:

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*Timeline:* We aim to respond to your submission within 45 days; please do not query until that time has passed. If your submission is accepted for publication, please keep in mind that we schedule our line-up four to six months in advance, that we align our subject matter to specific monthly themes, and that we have limited space available. Therefore, it is not possible to provide a specific date of publication. However, we will do our best to publish your article as soon as possible, and the Senior Editor will contact you once your article is slated. If you prefer to have your article published online, please let us know upon its acceptance.

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