

Small Wars— —Vanishing Art?

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by LtCol Robert D. Heinl, Jr.

The Marine Corps of 1950, if you stop to think about it, probably includes more officers who know how a division operates in battle, than those who possess the know-how and experience required to exercise command in an independent small-unit operation.

Offhand, that statement sounds haywire. Any student in the Junior Course at Quantico will tell you he spends time aplenty in problems and exercises involving tactics for the company and battalion. But that, while entirely true, isn't what I mean.

Call it raider operations, commando work, small wars, partisan warfare, or whatever. "Independent, small-unit operations" is perhaps a good way of lumping them all without hanging any undesirable past associations or preconceptions onto what will always, whether we like it or not, be a role

Will World War II's hard-fought complex amphibious operations relegate small wars training to a few hours? During the first 16 decades of existence, this type warfare was a Marine's stock-in-trade. In the last 10 years this speciality has almost vanished.

which Marines will be expected to perform, and perform peculiarly well.

Considering the fact that such operations constituted during our first 16 decades a fast-moving item in the Marine's combat stock-in-trade, it seems all the more strange that the specialty has, within little more than a decade, waned almost to the vanishing point.

Of course, as there are good reasons for almost any phenomenon, so, on ex-

amination, the following reasons can be adduced for this:

(1) World War II's campaigning, for Marines, at any rate, consisted mostly of a series of very hard-fought, complex amphibious assaults involving Marine divisions or amphibious corps. As a result, the great preponderance of our existing lode of combat experience centers today about divisional or higher-level battles.



(2) In the training hurly-burly of the past decade, peace and war, the study and indeed the teaching of small wars has assumed less and less importance, while, at the same time, those who possess the qualifying experience to teach from real life have progressed nearer and nearer to the old soldiers' home.

(3) The entire "raider" concept, especially in its *Gung-Ho* aspects during the past war, came in for a deservedly bad professional name as being synonymous with indiscipline, aggressive nonconformity, and combat snafu.

Before we go any further, and with particular reference to point (3) just stated, it might be well to emphasize again that, *whether we like it or not*, high-quality performance of independent small-unit operations is a long-standing, traditional, a wholly bona-fide job for Marines—and it is one which, if ineptly performed, can get us into a lot of hot water very quickly.

Moreover, it is entirely possible, especially if the next war were to settle down into Eurasian stalemate, that an unparalleled demand would arise for units trained to carry out partisan-type operations in the occupied areas marginal to Eurasia. This demand would naturally be heightened if, as a consequence of any number of unhappy eventualities, we found ourselves without continental footholds on the Eurasian mainland,

and few, if any advanced bases from which to start in again.

In such a Eurasian war, the battle-grounds, one regrets to reflect, would in the main lie in the margins of the Eurasian heartland, in the territories of occupied nations friendly to the United States, with whom we possess common bonds of blood and tradition. Military operations in those areas (where hostility toward the conquerors who had overrun them would burn high) would create occasion for hundreds of dramatically important independent small-unit or even individual operations, ranging from raids and reconnaissance missions to the support and organization of entire dissident armies within the peripheral occupied lands. Ejection of U. S. forces from the continent of Eurasia—as might conceivably happen soon after the outbreak of war—would serve only to increase the need for highly-trained partisan units able to keep resistance alive and to prepare for the ultimate seaborne/airborne attempt at recapture.

Assuming that such a distressing state of affairs had come about, what distinctive capabilities and characteristics would we find it useful for a Marine unit, organized and trained for independent operations, to possess?

First of all, even before we begin, such a unit should be reinforced infantry of the best quality, capable of carrying off any infantry/combined arms

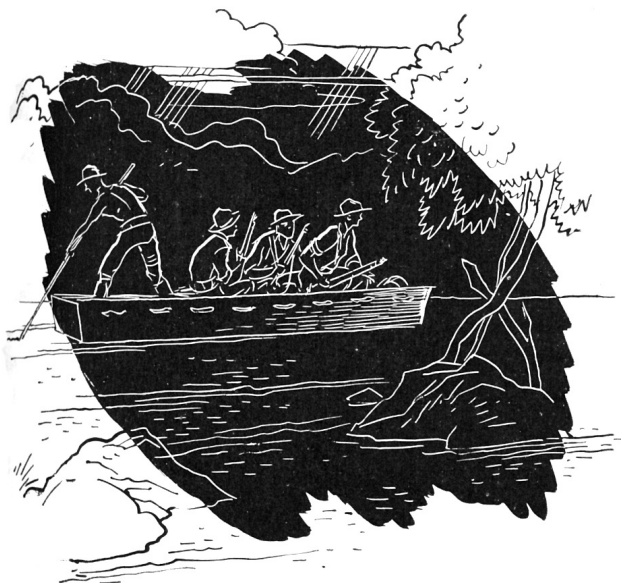
mission which might be expected of a normally organized unit of corresponding strength. This basic requirement would take in a multitude of combat skills, ranging from weapons qualifications to scouting and patrolling, and the ability to make intelligent, efficient use of every possible variety of supporting firepower.

Second, much emphasis should be placed on all types of reconnaissance techniques, not only amphibious but airborne. Every member of the unit should be equally at home paddling onto a beach from a submarine or dropping by helicopter or parachute into enemy strongholds.

Third, readiness for movement, and complete adaptability to every possible means of movement—both well-developed Marine Corps characteristics, fortunately—should be hallmarks of independent operations troops. The entire unit should be air-transportable and thoroughly versed in airborne techniques.

Fourth—and hand-in-hand with special capabilities in the fields of readiness and movement—the unit's logistic "tail" should be streamlined and tapered to a minimum. The techniques of air supply, of foraging, of employment of nonstandard, Allied or enemy material, all these should be stressed.

Fifth, the techniques of demolition and sabotage should become second na-



ture to Marine independent operations men.

Sixth, special training should be laid on the control and fullest exploitation of non-typical supporting firepower. What do we mean by that mouthful, “non-typical supporting firepower”? Well, as an example, neither the submarine nor the destroyer-transport (APD) is considered to be a normal type of fire support ship, and most Fleet Marine Force shore fire control parties would

to find out just what the Marine can do, or is likely to be called upon to do along these lines. Such research should include not only a careful study of modern partisan or commando actions, but should by all means go to living sources. No pains should be spared to interrogate every Marine with firsthand knowledge or experience in independent operations. From research, naturally, we could evolve more precise concepts, both as to doctrine and organization.

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feel both frustrated and uneasy if forced to rely on either type as a source of naval gunfire support. Yet it might well be—would probably be, in fact—that the only artillery-sized fire support available during a seaborne independent operation would have to come from a submarine or an APD. Close air support provides another example. Conceivably, air might be the *only* external supporting agency which could help out Marine forces on small independent operations. Such air support, though close, would have to be conducted minus most of the rather elaborate ritual of prior negotiation, air coordinators, Plan Victor, etc., and might be rather trying, if only in its novelty, both to tactical air control personnel on the ground and to the pilots first engaged in any such work.

Anyone who had the pleasure of reading LtCol McGlashan's *The Bottom of the Barrel* will realize that today's Marine Corps possesses less than no spare manpower which might be formed for experiment's sake into even a single independent operations battalion. But there are a few things which could be done to restore somewhat the Marine Corps' whilom and much admired monopoly in the field of independent small unit work.

Systematic research into the entire field is perhaps most important, if only

Teaching is a logical sequel to research and the shaping of doctrine. In our schools and in our troop training programs, it would be possible to work in subject-matter of value to potential future practitioners of independent operations. Since, in this field at any rate, the preeminent qualifications of our respected sister corps, the Royal Marines, are well established, might we not set up a Royal Marine billet at Marine Corps Schools with the job of teaching independent operations?

And while we are thinking about the teaching side of this matter, it might be well for Marines to reflect on the fact that nowhere in the U. S. Armed Services is more than cursory,¹ part-time attention—if any at all—given to partisan operations.

Field Service Regulations devote only eight paragraphs to the whole specialty (just about as few as were devoted to amphibious operations in prewar editions of the same Army publication). Here, perhaps, is an opportunity for the Marine Corps to pioneer still another military specialty which may prove invaluable in future war.

Many a reader who has gotten this far will already be wringing his hands and crying out “heresy!” if nothing less printable. What could be worse for the Marine Corps, he will demand, than

that we seem to emulate Alice in Wonderland when she took the pellet which shrunk her down to keyhole size?

For these anxious or indignant individuals, it might be well to suggest (1) that the Marine Corps, by its catholic tradition and nature, can never afford to turn down a combat job; (2) that the next war, if any, may find a very large volume of such jobs a-begging; (3) that quality and performance are Marine hallmarks; and (4) that capabilities for independent operations do not constitute a one-way street—e.g., that, by their infinite variety of nature, setting, and status (whether with Navy, Air Force, or Allies), independent operations can give the Marine Corps considerable functional elbow-room beyond the amphibious field.

After all, no Marine goes around hanging his head when someone remembers that it was U. S. Marines who helped cut out the ill-fated *Philadelphia*; pushed through the Coco River patrol; captured Charlemagne Peralte; carried President Polk's despatches across hostile Mexico from Washington to California; hoodwinked the Japanese on Choiseul; or led an Arab camel corps through Libya to storm the Fortress of Derna.

To achieve success in such renowned independent operations as these, there were required the ingredients of readiness, valor, discipline, and quality. When need again arises for men to perform such duties, it will seem logical to Americans that Marines be given the first opportunity. We should do well to be fully prepared, not for independent operations as our sole—and certainly not as our primary—mission, but for still another opportunity to demonstrate again past qualities which contributed to the Marine Corps of our times.

Note

1. Marine Corps Schools are now breaking the ice with 17 hours of partisan warfare in the Senior and Junior courses.



FMF Organization and Composition Board Report

Aviation

The second of a series

Originally published May 1957

Survey and revision of the structure of Fleet Marine Force aviation requires detailed consideration of a variety of important factors. Of overriding importance is the mission and character of the Fleet Marine Force as a whole, and any organization forming a part of it must be tailored to reflect the changing concepts for discharging that mission.

The concept of helicopter mobility influences all Fleet Marine Force structure. Many of the changes in the Division are permitted by reliance on the helicopter as a transportation and reconnaissance means. Other changes are feasible because of the capability of the Marine air-ground team to employ its organic air attack capability in the heavy fire support role. Further, wide frontages and basic combat unit separation owe their ready acceptance, in large measure, to expanded and more efficient employment of aerial reconnaissance. In sum, it is apparent that the concept of vertical assault places greatly increased requirements upon FMF aviation to provide direct tactical support.

Attempts to provide increased tactical air support are at present categorically limited by two external factors—aircraft and personnel ceilings. Aircraft are in a category quite apart from other military equipment. Not only are they expensive and complex, but they have a relatively short useful life, they require extensive lead time in development and production, and they require highly trained personnel for operation and maintenance.

In this era of restricted budgets and rising costs, the Department of Defense

places certain limits on Naval aviation with regard to total and operating aircraft inventories. The air component of the Marine Corps is in turn affected by these restrictions, and for the foreseeable future, authorized aircraft allowances cannot be increased.

In a similar manner, the more familiar limits on authorized personnel are essentially rigid, nor does it seem reasonable to alter to any apprecia-

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ble degree the current allocation of Marine Corps personnel between air and ground. Thus, certain inflexible guidelines circumscribe the size of FMF aviation.

FMF aviation cannot be drastically altered in character, for the Marine Corps is responsible for performing certain combat air functions. Inherent within the roles and missions assigned the Marine Corps is that of providing combat forces, both ground and air, to achieve the initial accretion ashore of combat power transferred from the sea. Landing forces with fleet assistance, therefore, must be capable of seizing and defending, against ground and air resistance, the designated objective area ashore. Obviously, this view of the landing force carries with it the requirement for an appreciable capability to repel enemy air attack.

This capability must be truly expeditionary. By so specializing, the Marine Corps fills a distinct slot in the defense structure of the country. Recommended changes in lower echelon units of the Marine Aircraft Wing are pointed toward reduction of weight and cube of squadron equipment with this idea in mind.

The Fleet Marine Force aviation structure discussed below provides a maximum capability to meet the requirements for tactical air support imposed by the vertical assault concept. At the same time it maintains sufficient combat air capability to provide a reasonable landing force contribution to the overall offensive and defensive air effort.

FMF LEVEL

No essential change is made at the AirFMF command level. A Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron for the support of each AirFMF headquarters is provided. The AirFMF commander will command the FMF units assigned, will be responsible for their training and readiness, and will co-ordinate naval aero nautical logistic and administrative requirements with the respective fleet air commander.

Subordinate to the AirFMF in recent years have been the Force Aviation Headquarters Groups and the Marine Aircraft Wings. Designation of certain units as Force Aviation serves no useful purpose, and the title of Force Aviation Headquarters Groups will be changed to Marine Training Groups with the primary mission of training and refreshing pilots and other personnel in new equipment and techniques.

Two such Groups are provided, one for each Air FMF; each to be composed of a Headquarters and Maintenance Squadron, a Marine Fighter Training Squadron, a Marine All-Weather Fighter Training Squadron, a Marine Attack Squadron and a Marine Instrument Training Squadron.

WING ORGANIZATIONAL PHILOSOPHY

The squadron is the basic unit for operation of aircraft; it is the basic unit for structuring an air organization. It is a T/O type unit. Each squadron is designed to carry out a specific function, that is, attack, intercept, reconnaissance, transport, control and service-support.

Combining squadrons into groups for specific purposes, and further combining groups into wings is sound organizational practice, either for administrative or operational purposes. Such combinations permit centralized control of

training in the functions to be carried out and at the same time provide a flexible framework for transfer of squadrons between groups and groups between wings to permit the air commander to accomplish any particular mission. In this sense, groups and wings closely resemble task organizations designed for a specific purpose.

A wing, composed of either functional or composite groups, is the smallest air unit with the capability of command and control of subordinate elements in the execution of air and direct air support operations.

THE MARINE AIRCRAFT WING

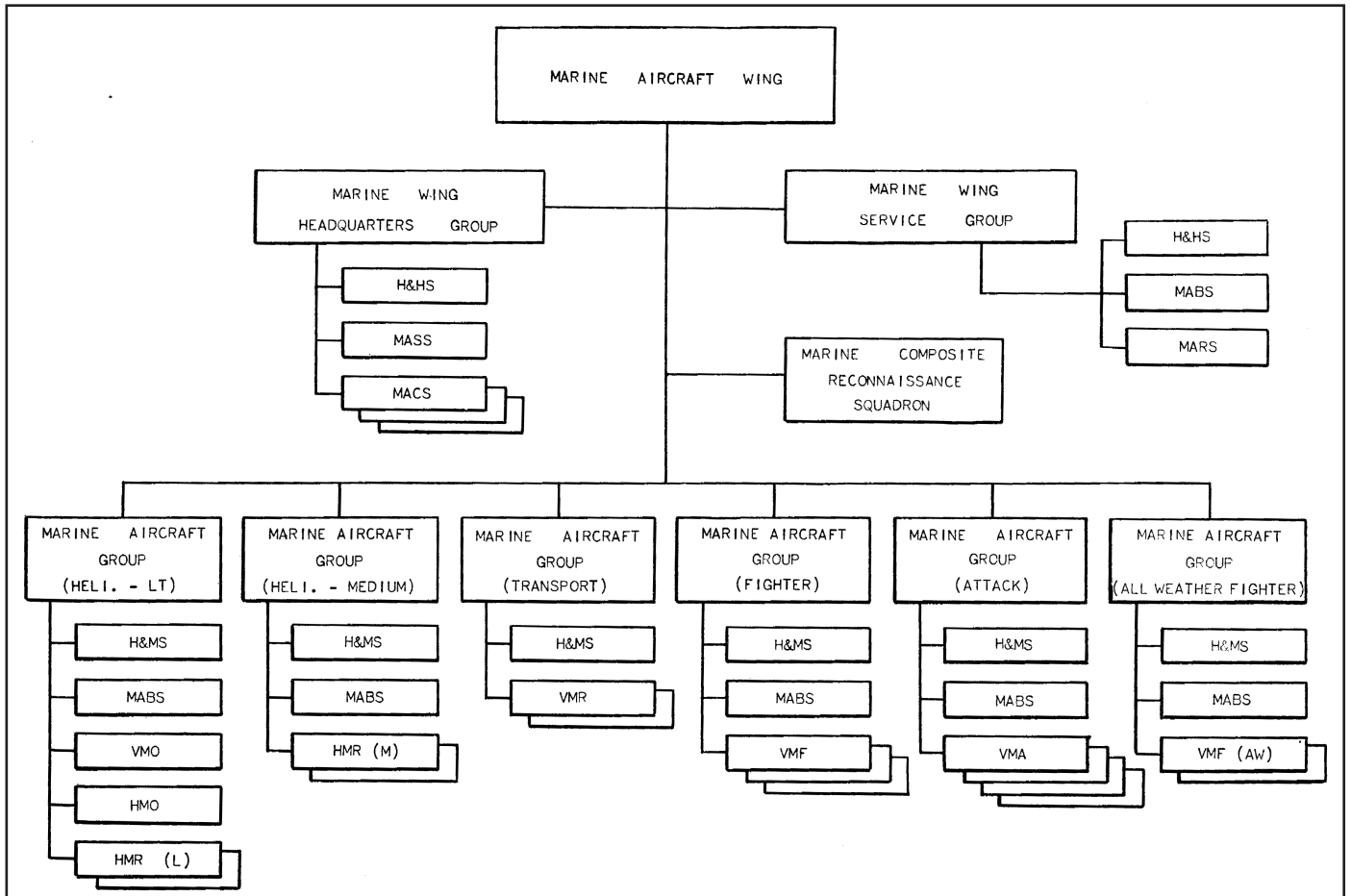
Despite the fact that rarely do two Marine Aircraft Wings resemble each other in detail, a Marine Aircraft Wing is a distinct entity. As indicated by the organizational chart, the typical wing is composed of functional groups which provide a balanced aviation force capable of executing all essential air sup-

port tasks for an air-ground task force of wing-division size.

THE MARINE WING HEAD-QUARTERS GROUP

The Wing Headquarters Group is composed of a Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron, one Marine Air Support Squadron and 3 Marine Air Control Squadrons. This group contains all the essential elements of the wing command echelon and the air control system. The Marine Composite Photographic Squadron is no longer included in this group in order that the group need not be established at or near an air base. It can, therefore, land early in an amphibious operation to establish ashore the means to command and control landing force aviation and such other air units as may operate in the area.

The capabilities of the Marine Air Support Squadron of this Group are enhanced by an additional Air Support Radar Team. Essentially the best



current means of providing all-weather air support, 3 such teams in a Marine Aircraft Wing add valuable flexibility to its combat employment.

MARINE WING SERVICE GROUP

An essential element of the wing is the Service Group which is normally established at a rear base within supporting distance of the objective area. It consists of a Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron, a Marine Air Base Squadron and a Marine Aircraft Repair Squadron. These subordinate elements of the Group provide wing-level service for all squadrons and groups of the wing. Principal among these service responsibilities are centralized control of supply (H&HS), wing-level aircraft maintenance (MARS) and operation of the rear area air base (MABS). Normally the Transport Group operates out of this base.

TRANSPORT CAPABILITY

Approximately 30 per cent of the assigned aircraft of the wing are in the transport category. Two helicopter groups and one fixed-wing transport group are provided. The light helicopter transport group, in addition to a Headquarters and Maintenance Squadron and an Air Base Squadron, contains a Marine Observation Squadron (VMO), a Marine Helicopter Reconnaissance Squadron (HMO), and 2 Marine Light Helicopter Transport Squadrons (HMR(L)).

The VMO is a small squadron to operate 12 light fixed-wing observation aircraft of the OE type. It is the only squadron in the group that requires anything at all approximating a prepared runway.

The HMO is a composite squadron of 12 HUS/HRS types and 12 HOKs. This squadron is designed specifically to provide tactical support for the new Division Reconnaissance Battalion in the conduct of reconnaissance operations. In addition, it can provide air evacuation for all division units, and perform such miscellaneous tasks as courier service and wire laying by helicopter.

The 2 HMR(L) squadrons are composed of 24 HUS helicopters each.

The total complement of the light helicopter group is 64 HUS type aircraft, 12 HOKs and 12 OEs. Its mission is oriented explicitly to fulfill division requirements.

The medium group contains a Headquarters and Maintenance Squadron, an Air Base Squadron and 2 HMR(M) squadrons, each of 15 HR2S aircraft.

The total lift capability of the 2 groups at one time is on the order of 1,500 personnel, or the approximate equivalent of a Battalion Landing Team.

The longer range transport function is handled by the Marine Transport Group. It consists of a Headquarters and Maintenance Squadron and 2 fixed-wing aircraft squadrons of 15 aircraft each. These squadrons will be capable of providing in-flight refueling interchangeably with cargo and personnel transport when aircraft are available to the Marine Corps with the potential for carrying out that dual role.

COMBAT CAPABILITY

The combat power of the typical wing is contained in 3 functional groups: one fighter group, one all-weather fighter group, and one attack group. The command, support and maintenance capability of each group is compartmented into 2 squadrons: a Headquarters and Maintenance Squadron and a Marine Air Base Squadron. Each Marine Aircraft Group is designed to command and support 2 to 4 tactical squadrons. Under the assumption that short of a general war, not more than 2 Marine Aircraft Wings will be simultaneously deployed, the best functional balance of combat aircraft types for the typical wing is set in the ratio of 3 fighter squadrons, 2 all-weather fighter squadrons and 4 attack squadrons. This balance, adjusted as necessary between the 3 Marine Aircraft Wings, provides optimum flexibility in task regroupment for strategic deployment and operational needs.

RECONNAISSANCE

The Composite Reconnaissance Squadron (VMCJ) is a separate squadron with a distinctive functional capability. In actual operations it will be

based on an airfield with one of the combat groups and receive its group level logistic support from that group. It is equipped with 10 photo reconnaissance aircraft and 10 configured for electronic reconnaissance.

This squadron, together with the VMO and HMO represent the Marine Aircraft Wings' contribution to the overall reconnaissance system which has been formed in the division-wing team.

MANNING LEVELS

The typical wing will operate slightly less than 400 aircraft of all types. Personnel are provided in the proposed T/Os to operate and maintain them at an aircraft utilization factor of approximately 65 flight hours per aircraft per month. Because peacetime budgets for operating expenses usually preclude realization of such high utilization factors, it is neither necessary nor desirable to actually man the wings at full strength.

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All entries eligible for publication in
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The recommended overall FMF aviation structure, manned at approximately 80 per cent for pilots, 65 per cent for aviation ground officers and 90 per cent for Marine enlisted, is adequate for employment short of general war. It should be adequate at such manning levels to meet force-in-readiness requirements and limited combat employment.

SUMMARY

The essential differences between this wing and the current L Series T/Os are summarized as follows:

a. Squadron level.

- 1) Reduced maintenance, supply and supporting personnel in VMF/VMA squadrons, caused partially by the reduction in aircraft from 24 to 20, and partially by movement of some service functions to higher echelons.
- 2) Reduced number of pilots due to lowering of pilot/seat ratio in combat squadrons and reduction in aircraft from 24 to 20.

- 3) Consolidation of S1 and Adjutants' sections accomplishing a reduction in administrative personnel.
- 4) Increase in the VMCJ squadron from 18 aircraft to 20.

b. Group level.

- 1) Elimination of all Exchange and Special Services personnel except for a special staff section at wing level; elimination of all barbers, and reduction of security personnel in VF/VA Groups.

- 2) Addition of communications personnel in helicopter groups to permit those units to operate air control teams in embarkation and landing zones during tactical and logistical air lifts.

c. Wing level.

- 1) Addition of one ASRT to the MASS with no increase in number of personnel.

- 2) Increase in responsibilities of the Marine Wing Service Group to provide pool-type motor transport

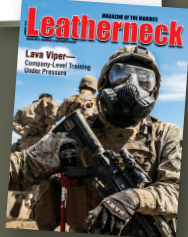
resources to operating groups and squadrons.

- 3) The formation of the Helicopter Reconnaissance Squadron as the air counterpart to the Division's Reconnaissance Battalion.

In summary, the results of this reorganization provide a closer balance between air capabilities for direct tactical support and for air defense operations. They, in addition, accomplish significant personnel savings. Finally, by further centralizing servicing capabilities in the Wing Service Group, squadrons and operating groups have been lightened to promote early establishment ashore of operating units.



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