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This paper will examine the effects of reimplementing an involuntary mobilization deferment program for AC Marines transitioning to the SMCR and the impacts on readiness, retention, and skill proficiency to attract and sustain optimal talent. A 2012 CNA Analysis & Solutions study written by Jennifer Schulte and Michelle Dolfini-Reed, "Prior-Service Reserve Affiliation and Continuation Behavior, Volume 1 - Affiliation" found the longer a Marine spends in the Individual Ready Reserve prior to Selected Reserve (SelRes) affiliation, the lower his/her long-term continuation rates for officers and enlisted Marines, regardless of a subsequent Selected Reserve mobilization. This finding along with other Master's theses a

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MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

**AN ANALYSIS OF A MARINE CORPS RESERVE MOBILIZATION DEFERMENT
PROGRAM TO BALANCE A READY FORCE WITH STRATEGIC DEPLOYMENT
CAPABILITIES**

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

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Executive Summary

Title: An Analysis of a Marine Corps Reserve Mobilization Deferment Program to Balance a Ready Force with Strategic Deployment Capabilities

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Thesis: An involuntary mobilization deferment program for AC Marines transitioning into the Selected Reserve (SelRes) would positively impact the Reserve force to fill billet vacancies with experienced Marines having four or more years of military occupational specialty (MOS) proficiency.

Discussion: This paper examines the effects of reimplementing an involuntary mobilization deferment program for Prior Service (PS) Marines transitioning to the SMCR and the impacts on readiness, retention, and skill proficiency to attract and sustain experienced Marines. A 2012 CNA Analysis & Solutions study written by Jennifer Schulte and Michelle Dolfini-Reed, "Prior-Service Reserve Affiliation and Continuation Behavior, Volume 1 - Affiliation" found the longer a Marine spends in the Individual Ready Reserve prior to Selected Reserve (SelRes) affiliation, the lower his/her long-term continuation rates for officers and enlisted Marines, regardless of a subsequent Selected Reserve mobilization. This finding along with other Master's theses and RAND Notes provided in this study supports the implementation of initiatives that encourage early affiliation of prior-service Marines. In the wake of Unit Deployment Programs (UDPs) and augments to Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU) and Special Purpose MAGTF deployments, Prior Active Component (AC) experience has opted to transfer to the Individual Ready Reserve (IRR) instead of joining or remaining in the SelRes. The Reserve Component (RC) must explore non-monetary incentives, to entice Prior AC Marines departing the active ranks with combat experience and military occupational specialty (MOS) proficiency to fill future RC shortfalls. This study will further explore RA's desire to attract AC Marines upon departure from active service as more beneficial than recruiting them back from the IRR after skills begin to diminish.

Conclusion: On average each year, approximately 16,000 enlisted and 600 officers depart the active ranks to join the Reserve Component after their first enlistment. Most PS Marines opt to transfer to the IRR and wait out the end of their current contract. The talent, experience, and MOS proficiency sought after in the RC is necessary for the Reserves to effectively augment the active forces in the time of national emergency in accordance with Title 10 U.S. Code § 12301 and 12302. A proposed involuntary mobilization deferment program will affiliate PS Marines into the SMCR to maintain skills, MOS proficiency, and necessary qualifications for critical occupational fields resulting in increased readiness in the SelRes. A limited monetary incentive budget of \$6.85 million forces the Reserve Affairs Division to create other creative ways to incentivize Reserve leaders to affiliate with the SMCR. In the event of a national emergency and the need for a full-scale mobilization of the Ready Reserve, this proposed policy is subject to cancellation by Reserve Affairs and all able RC Marines are subject to activation regardless of deferment conditions.

DISCLAIMER

THE OPINIONS AND CONCLUSIONS EXPRESSED HEREIN ARE THOSE OF THE INDIVIDUAL STUDENT AUTHOR AND DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT THE VIEWS OF EITHER THE MARINE CORPS COMMAND AND STAFF COLLEGE OR ANY OTHER GOVERNMENTAL AGENCY. REFERENCES TO THIS STUDY SHOULD INCLUDE THE FOREGOING STATEMENT.

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Preface

After three years with Reserve Affairs Division, the Reserve Component is an attractive community with men and women willing to leave behind their primary source of income and their family to mobilize and deploy in support of a strategic or operational level contingency operation. A divided recruiting mission of Non-Prior Service and Prior Service Marines is necessary for new Marines to join the lower ranks in the Selected Marine Corps Reserve and complement the young Marines with experienced Marines from the Active Component. The proposed involuntary deferment program is a noninvasive method to think outside of the box to recruit and retain talented and experienced Prior Service Marines in the Reserve Component.

During my research, I could not have completed this endeavor without the guidance and assistance from my advisors, Dr. Bradford A. Wineman and Lieutenant Colonel Andrew D. Dausman, who were instrumental during my research and development. I need to give a special thanks to Mr. Douglas Feiring for your constant support with my work, encouragement, and friendship. Thank you to the ladies at the LCSC working behind the scenes to assist me in finishing my MMS and refining my writing prompts. Most important, I want to recognize my beautiful and loving family: my amazing wife Erin and my three wonderful children Mikayla, Violet, and Patrick, who provided me the support, drive, and motivation to accomplish yet another goal on our Marine Corps journey. I did not do this alone, and I am truly blessed to have you in my corner.

Introduction

The Marine Corps Reserve Affairs Division (RA) implemented a Selected Marine Corps Reserve (SMCR) Affiliation Involuntary Activation Deferment Program per MARADMIN 253/06 dated 21 June 2006. This policy authorized Active Component (AC) Marines transitioning to the Reserve Component (RC) to receive a two-year deferment from involuntary mobilizations. The intent of this policy incentive allowed Prior Service (PS) Marines who had completed a combat tour within twelve months before their Expiration of Active Service (EAS) to “stay Marine” while transitioning to start a civilian career.¹ Marines transitioning from the AC are seeking new employment, setting up a new home, pursuing an education, and simply settling back into the civilian lifestyle. RA cancelled the mobilization deferment program on MARADMIN 003/10 dated 7 January 2010 to increase the number of deployable Marines in the SMCR.² Marines who transition from the AC and affiliate with the SMCR are now susceptible to an immediate involuntary mobilization while making a new career, adding undue stress on the Marines and their families.³ For some PS Marines, the risk of an involuntary deployment can act as a catalyst while transitioning to a civilian career that prevents them from affiliating with the SMCR post-separation who were previously protected under the cancelled deferment program.

This paper will examine the value and reimplementation of an involuntary deployment deferment program for AC Marines transitioning to the SMCR and the impacts on readiness, retention, and skill proficiency to attract and sustain optimal talent. An involuntary mobilization deferment program for AC Marines transitioning into the Selected Reserve (SelRes) would positively impact the Reserve force to fill billet vacancies with experienced Marines having four or more years of military occupational specialty (MOS) proficiency. The program could incentivize Marines to join without the stress of an involuntary mobilization, and assist Marine

Corps Recruiting Command's (MCRC) Prior Service Recruiters (PSR) fulfill their mission within an ever-increasing fiscal year (FY) recruiting requirement. An involuntary deployment deferment program would act as an incentive for transitioning AC Marines to settle into their new life if they require flexibility and still build on their military career in the Reserves. The PS Marines required are skilled, experienced, and knowledgeable in their MOS. Utilizing the talents of the PS Marines is vital when preparing to augment the AC in the case of a national emergency in accordance with Title 10 U.S. Code.

Background

The Marine Corps Reserve has continually changed over the last 102 years of service to the United States. By direction of the Secretary of the Navy, the Marine Corps must organize, train, and equip a Reserve Marine Force to augment and reinforce the AC during contingency operations, crises, or as directed.⁴ As a strategic force in readiness, Reserve Marines are prepared to activate and serve alongside their active duty counterparts.⁵ Whether in peacetime or war, the RC has become a ready force used in multiple operations and exercises to successfully augment the AC. These operations are not always strategic in nature, and an involuntary mobilization could qualify as an operational deployment. As necessary and directed by the Department Secretary, the drilling Reserves can activate and mobilize in support of an operation such as in Iraq or Afghanistan, or perhaps a mobilization in support of a Special Purpose Marine Air Ground Task Force (SPMAGTF), or Unit Deployment Program (UDP) exercise. To accomplish the required manning, RA and Marine Forces Reserve must affiliate and retain the appropriate readiness level of talented Marines.

The Reserve Component has three components: Ready Reserve, Standby Reserve, and the Retired Reserve. This research focuses on the SelRes, a subcomponent of the Ready Reserve

with an end strength mandated by Congress. The SelRes has four categories: Active Reserve (AR), SMCR, Individual Mobilization Augmentees (IMA), and the Initial Active Duty for Training (IADT) as depicted in Figure 1. Congress’s 2018 Appropriations bill authorized the FY19 Marine Corps Reserve SelRes end strength at 38,500 Marines.⁶ The SMCR manning control for Program Objective Memorandum 2020 (POM 20) is 30,584 out of the 38,500 authorized end strength.

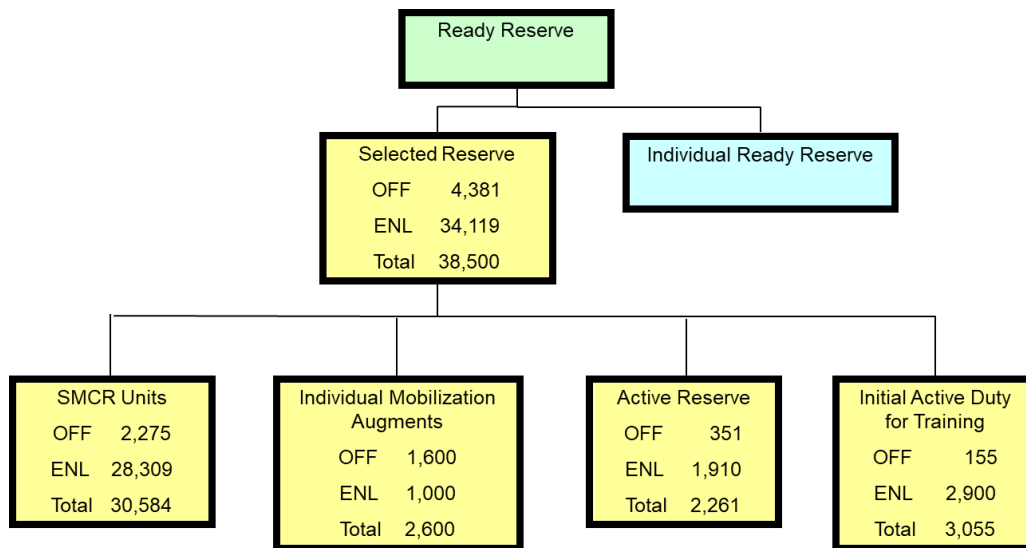


Figure 1: Marine Corps Reserve Selected Reserve FY19 Manning Controls⁷

Source: Figure from Reserve Affairs Division brief by LtCol Andrew D. Dausman. "DC, MRA Manpower Brief" (unpublished PowerPoint, 30 September 2018). Modified by the author.

There are two types of Marines who serve in the Reserve Component: one as a new accession recruited through the IADT to serve in the SMCR (non-prior service accession) and the other is a PS Marine released from active service and transfers to the RC whether to actively participate in the SelRes (prior service affiliation) or in an inactive status with the Individual Ready Reserve (IRR). Marines sign an agreement for an eight-year mandatory service obligation (MSO) where approximately 80% of PS Marines exit the AC after completing their initial four- or five-year commitment to complete the remaining obligation in the IRR or SelRes. Non-Prior Service (NPS) Marines agree to a four-, five-, or six-year drilling obligation with an eight-year

service obligation.⁸ Over 98 percent of the Reserve Contracts each year consists of 6x2 contracts where the Marine performs six years of service with the SMCR and the remaining two years in the IRR. Upon completing the MSO, officers can resign their commission or participate with a minimum of 27 retirement points each anniversary year to remain on the Active Status List (ASL), while enlisted members will either end their current contract and depart the service or reenlist for further service in the Reserves.⁹ No matter the Marine's entry into the SMCR, mandatory drill participation will differ between a PS and NPS Marine. Both types of Marines may have mandatory drill requirements tying the Reserve Marine to an obligated service.

Obligated drill participation includes NPS Marines in their initial mandatory obligation in the SMCR, NPS/PS Marine in receipt of an incentive (monetarily/non-monetarily), or lateral move/career progression training that incurs an additional drill obligation per the annual corresponding statement of understanding (SOU).¹⁰ A PS Marine affiliating with the SMCR is under no obligation to remain in the SMCR unless he/she agrees to an SOU for a bonus or other incentive to incur mandatory service in a specified Billet Identification Code (BIC). An obligated PS Marine in receipt of an incentive can transfer to the IRR but is subject to recoupment of the incentive at a prorated amount upon transfer. The termed non-obligated Marine is therefore serving in the SMCR at his or her own discretion rather than by contractual obligation. Non-obligated Marines are day-to-day participants who are eligible to freely transfer to the IRR.

As mentioned, the proposed deferment program would apply to the SMCR only. IMA Marines would not qualify for an involuntary mobilization deferment unless otherwise transferred to an SMCR unit within the eligibility window. Title 10 U.S. Code § 12301 and

12304 protect IMA Marines from involuntary deployments except in a time of national emergency.

Mobilization-to-Dwell

The current RC deployment-to-dwell or mobilization-to-dwell (M2D) threshold is 1:4 for Reserve Marines where every month a Reserve Marine is activated and deploys, he/she receives four months of dwell time before subject to another involuntary mobilization per the policy revision in MARADMIN 346/14.¹¹ The Marine Corps Reserve does not currently recognize a total force calculator for Marines separating from the AC and joining the SMCR, where a PS Marine is subject to immediate involuntary deployment upon affiliation in the RC. The previous mobilization deferment program per MARADMIN 253/06 recognized Marines who deployed while on active duty within twelve months of their expiration of active service (EAS) and provided them a two-year dwell period while participating with an SMCR unit. MARADMIN 003/10 cancelled MARADMIN 253/06 in January 2010, thus cancelling the deferment program and removed the involuntary protection for the PS Marines affiliating with the SMCR. By cancelling this program and without a total force calculator, a PS Marine that deploys while on active duty does not qualify for the 1:4 M2D threshold upon joining the RC. Once the PS Marine separates to affiliate in the RC, he/she is subject to immediate activation.

The cancellation of the deferment program took away what protection the PS Marines had from another deployment during their transition from the AC unless they qualify for another authorized deferment in accordance with MARADMIN 049/03.¹² As mentioned earlier, PS Marines do not avoid mobilizations; however, some PS Marines are less apt to affiliate with the SMCR if the operational tempo means another deployment during their transitioning phase to civilian life. Due to a high operational tempo in the AC for high valued MOSs, Marines may

separate from the AC and join the RC to break from the constant deployments. Marine Medium Tiltrotor Squadron 764 (VMM-764) experienced a high separation when 20 percent of the aviators transferred to the IRR two months prior to an involuntary mobilization in an already critically short MOS.¹³ The reasons for each individual pilot to transfer may differ, but those who separated had also deployed while on active duty, and requiring these aviators to activate again after they affiliated with the SMCR forced their decision to transfer to the IRR. SMCR pilots, among other specialties, affiliating with the Reserves are subject to more activations and deployments due to their critical skills and shortfalls in the total force.

Although difficult due to shortfalls in critical MOSs, the M2D 1:4 threshold with the total force calculator should remain true for PS Marines regardless of their MOS. As the RC strives to become more operational by augmenting the AC on UDPs, MEUs, and SPMAGTFs, activating Reserve Marines comes at a cost to the readiness level regarding non-obligated participation. Since non-obligated PS Marines are eligible to transfer to the IRR at will, an increase in operational deployments above the M2D threshold is likely to increase the chances of losing PS Marines as they pursue their primary source of income over the Reserves. A Reserve Marine is willing to serve and deploy; however, the Marine Corps must consider the Marine's civilian career and whether the Marine can make the sacrifice regarding his/her career, or family situation. Otherwise, Marines with critical skilled MOSs are potentially less likely to affiliate pending an immediate, or numerous activations.

As mentioned earlier, Marines do not shy from deployments, but a Marine may leave the drilling Reserves if the timing is not favorable when faced with an activation. If an SMCR Marine favors deploying regardless of a deferment program, he/she will deploy with the unit voluntarily. Most recently, the Marines of 1st Battalion, 25th Marine Regiment had the

opportunity to deploy. As expected, some non-obligated PS Marines agreed to activate with the unit while others have transferred to the IRR overtime, giving MARFORRES the chance to fill the vacancies from across the SMCR. The case was the same for 2d Battalion, 23rd Marine Regiment during the unit's recent activation. An involuntary deployment deferment program would not increase the likelihood of a PS Marine to deploy, but it may entice the Marine to deploy with his/her fellow Marines when these opportunities arise, no matter the M2D.

Current Shortfalls

The most recent SelRes FY end strength was 38,333 in FY18. This end strength was within .5 percent of the 38,500 authorized end strength as depicted in Figure 2. The SMCR 30,272 total end strength was 1.02 percent below the Marine Corps' approved manning controls. The overall officer numbers are healthy, yet recruiting and retaining the enlisted population has posed difficulty for both NPS and PS numbers. As the SelRes settles into a steady state of 38,500 and maintains an 85 percent BIC match rate, filling open billets at SMCR units will continue to be a struggle and has negative consequences on end strength numbers. The current recruiting mission is already above the preferred average monthly ratio of one recruiter for every four SelRes joins for MCRC (PSR) turning the focus on retention versus recruitment. Ideally, RA can reduce the PSR's mission to provide more recruiting hours focusing on chronically and critically short MOSs when retention in the SMCR is higher among PS Marines. The SMCR also benefits from this PSR mission reduction when MCRC (PSR) can focus more on recruiting chronically and critically short MOS to fill necessary shortfalls. As detailed in the Deputy Commandant for Manpower and Reserve Affairs' 2015 letter, even in the best of times, the MOSs deemed as chronically and critically short will not have high readiness levels.¹⁴ Closing the delta between the gap and an acceptable level is feasible with an incentive that attracts more

Marines who have likely deployed often in the AC to join the RC for another opportunity to remain in the Marine Corps.

The SelRes end strength fluctuated over the last five years during the drawdown. Tables 1 to 4 show the SelRes manning controls from FY14 to FY19 by Reserve Category as the authorized end strength reduced from 39,600 to the current 38,500 steady state. As the manning controls reduced the SelRes by 1,100 personnel, the SMCR manning controls dropped from 30,783 to 30,584 at the steady state level as seen between Tables 1 and 4. Monetary and non-monetary incentives are essential tools for recruitment, affiliation, and retention to fulfill grade adjusted recapitulation (GAR) requirements; however, focusing on continuation as related to keeping who is serving can reduce the recruiting mission and increase long-term readiness discussed further later in this paper.

Although the SMCR end strength was 99.56 percent of the manning control shown in Tables 1 to 4, the overall BIC match rate was 85 percent. Based on the 30,584 SMCR manning control, an FY18 SMCR end strength snapshot was 30,272, of which 3,513 Marines were serving in excess BICs outside of their MOS and/or grade, and 4,678 BICs were open according to the 1 October 2018 SMCR BIC Report produced by RA. The open BICs included 2,775 enlisted billets from E-4 to E-7 and 151 officer billets from O3-O4 who are also the prime ranks for MCRC (PSR) to recruit for increased readiness. A few open billet MOSs that are chronically and/or critically short, or in need of attention include: 0211 (136), 0326 (63), 0241 (35), 2862 (26), 1721 (7), 7502 (15), and 7557 (8). Allowing for a mechanism like an involuntary deferment program to attract PS Marines with high demand PMOSs in the AC and SMCR to participate is beneficial to the RC to fill necessary gaps.

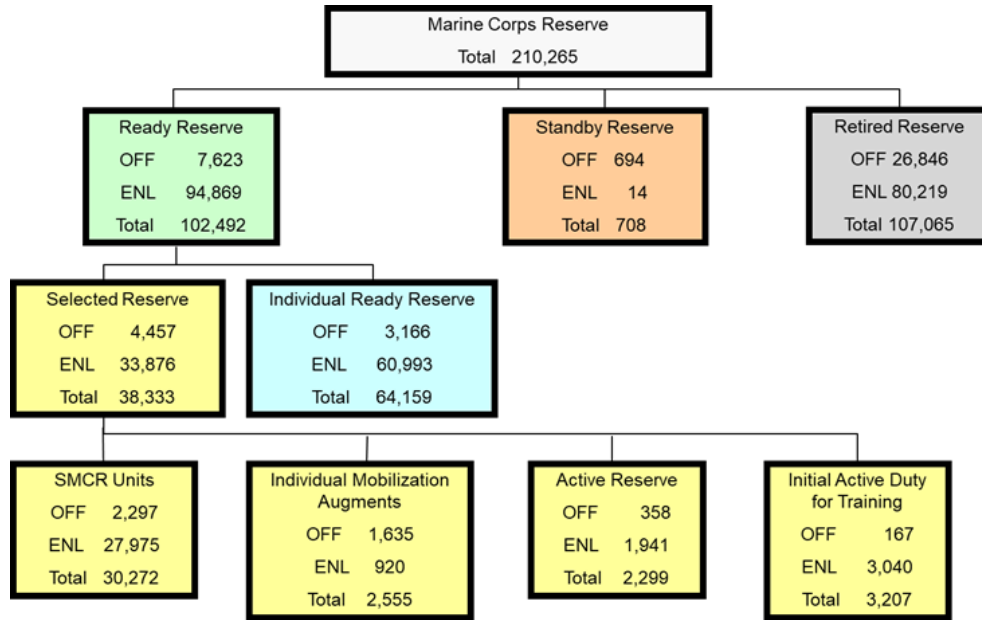


Figure 2: 30 September 2018 Marine Corps Reserve Readiness¹⁵

Source: Figure from Reserve Affairs Division brief by LtCol Andrew D. Dausman. "DC, MRA Manpower Brief" (unpublished PowerPoint, 30 September 2018). Modified by the author.

Table 1: End of Fiscal Year 2014 SelRes Manning Controls

Reserve Category	Officer	Enlisted	Total
Selected Marine Corps Reserve	1,915	28,868	30,783
Individual Mobilization Augmentee	1,667	1,249	2,916
Active Reserve	351	1,910	2,261
Initial Active Duty for Training	162	3,478	3,640
	4,095	35,505	39,600

Source: Data received from Total Force Data Warehouse by RA Division, 18 December 2018.

Table 2: End of Fiscal Year 2015 SelRes Manning Controls

Reserve Category	Officer	Enlisted	Total
Selected Marine Corps Reserve	2,250	28,644	30,894
Individual Mobilization Augmentee	1,620	1,130	2,750
Active Reserve	351	1,910	2,261
Initial Active Duty for Training	165	3,130	3,295
	4,386	34,814	39,200

Source: Data received from Total Force Data Warehouse by RA Division, 18 December 2018.

Table 3: End of Fiscal Year 2016 SelRes Manning Controls

Reserve Category	Officer	Enlisted	Total
Selected Marine Corps Reserve	2,250	28,479	30,729
Individual Mobilization Augmentee	1,620	1,030	2,650
Active Reserve	351	1,910	2,261
Initial Active Duty for Training	185	3,075	3,260
	4,406	34,494	38,900

Source: Data received from Total Force Data Warehouse by RA Division, 18 December 2018.

Table 4: End of Fiscal Years 2017-2019 SelRes Manning Controls

Reserve Category	Officer	Enlisted	Total
Selected Marine Corps Reserve	2,275	28,309	30,584
Individual Mobilization Augmentee	1,600	1,000	2,600
Active Reserve	351	1,910	2,261
Initial Active Duty for Training	155	2,900	3,055
	4,381	34,119	38,500

Source: Data received from Total Force Data Warehouse by RA Division, 18 December 2018.

Prior Service Recruitment/Retention

Affiliating and retaining PS Marines is a principal topic of discussion in RA Division and Marine Forces Reserve. The Marine Corps Reserve must pursue new approaches to increase retention among Reserve Marines, rather than focusing efforts on recruiting more PS Marines. MCRC has a mission to recruit NPS Marines and PS Marines to sustain an effective SelRes end strength. The enlisted NPS mission averages between 5,000 and 5,500 provided the drop rate at the two Recruit Depots remains below 12 percent. Reserve NPS recruitment hinges on bed spaces at the Depots and an already healthy E-1 to E-3 rank structure.

MCRC (PSR) is responsible for the remaining SMCR recruiting mission through the direct affiliation program (DAP), joins from other components of the Ready Reserve, or from off-contract accessions. The total PSR mission from FY14 to FY19 ranged between 3,500 and 4,000 for officer and enlisted Marines affiliating or assessing with the SelRes. The SelRes mission for PSR includes SMCR, IMA, AR, and through an open category (officer or enlisted

member affiliating with an SMCR unit or the IMA program). MCRC (PSR) accomplishes its mission with eighty-one PSR recruiters aligned with the six Marine Corps Recruiting Districts.

Data from the Deputy Commandant, Manpower and Reserve Affairs FY14 through FY19's Memo-01 on the PSR mission is shown in Table 5. Although recruiting numbers were lower in FY14 to FY16 during the SelRes drawdown from 39,600 to 38,500, the SelRes is functioning at its current steady state as of FY17. Based on recent attrition rates from the SMCR, the PSR mission may increase to meet the SelRes manning control (38,500). If SMCR attrition continues to climb, MCRC (PSR) staffing structure will struggle to accomplish any recruiting mission above 4,000 Marines affecting end strength over time.

Before assigning a Marine to a valid BIC, he or she must show to be medically, mentally, and morally qualified through a demanding assignment criterion. A small group of PSR recruiters are responsible to affiliate an average of four Marines every month to the SelRes under this criterion that requires a significant number of hours between first contact to the Marine assigned to the BIC. For a PSR recruiter to receive a join credit, the affiliated Marine must remain drilling at the SMCR/IMA unit for a minimum of 90 days.¹⁶ Additionally, higher retention rates will effectively reduce the PSR mission and subsequently maintain readiness at the individual units assisting PSR with the annual mission.

Table 5: Prior Service Recruiting Accession Plan numbers for FY14-19¹⁷

	Prior Service Recruiting SMCR Mission				SelRes Mission
	Officer	Enlisted	Total	Open BIC*	Total Mission
FY14	420	2,312	2,732	N/A	3,576
FY15	348	2,378	2,726	N/A	3,629
FY16	450	2,510	2,960	N/A	3,879
FY17	404	2,585	2,989	N/A	3,780
FY18	384	2,200	2,584	504	3,655
FY19	358	2,460	2,818	677	3,991

*Note the open BIC category includes SMCR and IMA officer or enlisted BICs
Source: Deputy Commandant for Manpower and Reserve Affairs, Fiscal Year 2014-2019 Memo-01, Reserve Component Accession and Retention Plan.

A high attrition rate in the SelRes, mainly the SMCR, increases the PSR mission in order to meet end strength requirements. A *Task and Purpose* article written in March 2018 by Jared Keller highlights the effects of a large recruiting mission caused by high attrition. In the article, MCRC Commanding General Major General Paul Kennedy requested Deputy Commandant for Manpower and Reserve Affairs Lieutenant General Michael A. Rocco to reduce the FY18 PSR mission of 3,655 to 3,200 to alleviate pressure on MCRC (PSR) to accomplish its assigned mission.¹⁸ A mission reduction would have decreased SelRes readiness by unprecedented levels far below the end strength requirement. As a result, to account for the mission reduction from FY18, the FY19 mission requirement would increase as the previous reduction only transfers the mission into the next fiscal year. As attrition rates and recruiting missions increase, MCRC (PSR) will continue to struggle to achieve its goal to fit the right Marine, in the right place, at the right time. An involuntary deployment deferment program can be a useful tool for MCRC (PSR) to affiliate transitioning Marines and a promising method to reduce the recruiting mission in the out years from a potentially higher retention rate without having detrimental effects on readiness.

Effects from Deployments

Michelle Dolfini-Reed and Cathleen M. McHugh's CNA Study, "The Effect of Deployment Tempo on Marine Corps Selected Reserve Retention" observed the retention rates of PS Marines in the SMCR from September 2001 to September 2006 and found that no matter the length of deployment for PS Marines, E-3s and E-4s were 50 percent more likely to leave the SelRes as opposed to E-5s. Likewise, company grade officers were 40 percent more likely to leave as opposed to O4s. Furthermore, PS Marines that affiliate earlier after separation from the AC with the SelRes are more likely to remain in the SelRes over those that affiliate from the IRR six months or greater.¹⁹ PS Marines make up less than 15 percent of the total SelRes population

and are on average older and more senior in rank than NPS Marines. Two important implications come from this study; one is early affiliation for PS Marines increases the likelihood of retention discussed later in this paper and second, middle-grade enlisted and officers are likely to remain after a deployment when activated in the SMCR. This paper identifies middle-grades as E-4 to E-6 and O3 to O4, who are subsequently important for MCRC (PSR) for recruitment from the AC as Marine Forces Reserve struggles to retain non-obligated and PS Marines. The NPS Master's thesis "An Analysis of Factors Affecting Affiliation in the Marine Corps Reserves" written by Lieutenant Commander Benny Volkmann (USN), Lieutenant Adam Shapiro (USN), and Captain Jason Barnes (USMC) found Reserve Marines do not shy away from the opportunity to deploy and deployments can have a positive effect on retention further demonstrating a PS Marine's likelihood to volunteer for a deployment if provided the opportunity.²⁰ Marines, in general, are not anti-deployment; however, some Marines would not consider joining the RC given the probability of receiving an involuntary deployment while transitioning from the AC to the civilian sector. An involuntary mobilization deferment program would not detract eligible Marines from voluntarily deploying who are likely seek the opportunity to remain with the Marines in the unit. The program would aim to entice PS Marines who would typically opt out from affiliating with the RC to join an SMCR unit. Additionally, PS Marines who affiliate through the deferment program provide knowledge and a different perspective based on their years of active duty experience to the NPS Marines.

Dolfini-Reed and McHugh also concluded that Marines do not have an issue with deploying and deployments can have a positive effect on whether an individual remains in the SelRes. Of note for consideration, the operational deployment tempo is not as high as when Dolfini-Reed and McHugh conducted their study, nor is the tempo as high as it was during the

2006 surge in Iraq or the 2010 surge in Afghanistan. While the United States begins to withdraw ground forces from the Middle-East, this study suggests both Active and Reserve Marines are likely to seek deployment opportunities. Although during a high deployment period for many Marines, the study found that Reserve Marines activated for periods lasting eight to twelve months have a 25 percent lower risk of leaving the SelRes compared to those that do not activate at all.²¹ The implementation of a deferment program will not prevent Marines from volunteering for a deployment, but rather provide options to transitioning Marines to decide if they are willing or able to accept the opportunity to deploy.

Recognizing the problem with attrition, RA focused more effort on retaining the middle-grade Marines in the SMCR. RA sponsored retention studies from the Naval Postgraduate School Operational Research department to identify the Marine Reserve's current effects on retention. The NPS thesis, "Continuation Study for the Selected Marine Corps Reserve" written by Ensign Lily M. Brose found in her regression model the more deployments an NPS Marine has, the more likely he/she is to attrite.²² There is a difference between the PS and NPS Marines regarding deployments. Unlike the NPS Marines, PS Marines show more willingness to serve and deploy when afforded the opportunity. Captain Waverly C. McFarland's NPS thesis, "Post-First Term Enlistment Retention Analysis for the Selected Marine Corps Reserve" found in his analysis that deployment experience shows a positive effect on retention where opportunities to deploy are favorable and as a result, the more likely the PS Marines are to continue service. The results from McFarland's study mirror the CNA study by Dolfini-Reed and McHugh.²³ Based on the results of these studies, a deferment program option will not deter PS Marines from activation and deployment in the long term, but rather attract more Marines to affiliate with the SMCR without an inconvenient activation during a PS Marine's transition.

Incentive Programs for Drilling Reserves

Reserve Affairs currently offers three types of monetary incentives to PS Marines for accession, affiliation, and retention in the SMCR. The current incentive programs fill gaps in critical MOS shortfalls, not necessarily by attracting talent or those who want to serve, but through a “first come first served” criteria. Although TRICARE Reserve Select and the MGIB-Selected Reserve are valued benefits for Marines to participate in the RC, there are additional methods to attract and obligate Marines to participate in the SMCR. The FY19 bonus incentives budget for the SelRes is currently \$6,850,000 spread across twenty-one different monetary incentive programs for a total of 520 allocations. The Active Reserve program receives thirty allocations totaling \$640,000 for enlisted Marines and career recruiters to access with the AR Program. The remaining funding for 490 SMCR allocations falls in one of the three types of incentives. New accession bonuses including an enlistment bonus totaling \$390,000 and the Officer Accession Incentive totaling \$150,000 are available to new enlisted and officers accessing with the SMCR. The budget of \$5,670,000 is for SMCR enlisted and officers in exchange for a one- to four-year mandatory drill participation as specified by the individual incentive policy the Marine is applying to receive.

Only 490 Marines out of a possible 30,584 per year are eligible to receive a monetary incentive. For this reason, RA must analyze other means to attract and retain talent and experience among the middle-grades. The expertise the PS Marines bring to the SMCR units is vital to the unit’s success and to fill necessary BICs. A budget of \$6,850,000 cannot guarantee the talent necessary to build an effective and lethal Reserve fighting force.

PS Marines that join an SMCR unit will not necessarily have an available BIC within 150 miles of their home of record in the same PMOS. The Inactive Duty Training (IDT) Travel

Reimbursement program is an incentive offered to officers, staff non-commissioned officers, and specified non-commissioned officers serving in a valid BIC in accordance with the annual correspondence message. Eligible Marines approved for travel outside of 150 miles from the home training center will receive reimbursement of up to \$500 per drill period. This incentive cuts down on out of pocket costs for travel to allow Marines to conduct their drilling obligation. As PS Marines separate from the AC to pursue a new career, a drill center with an MOS and grade match is not always available, forcing the Marine to decline participation in the SMCR, conduct a lateral move, or travel a long distance to continue enhancing in his/her MOS. The IDT Travel Reimbursement significantly benefits Marine Forces Reserve to fill what would be vacancies if a member had to spend his/her entire drill pay on travel to affiliate with the SMCR. Distance from a Marine's home of record and the Reserve Training Center matters for PS Marines when considering affiliation with a Reserve unit. The greater the distance, the more time consuming and costly it becomes for Marines to maintain a Reserve career. The greater the distance alone is a deterrent for Marines to participate in the SMCR.

Marines traveling over 100 miles are more likely to remain drilling over those within 51 to 100 miles; however, less likely do drill than those traveling less than 50 miles in accordance with findings from Captain Jennifer A. Alstat's master's thesis "Effects of commuting distance on participation rates for obligated selected Marine Corps Reserves."²⁴ Alstat's study suggested that those authorized IDT Travel Reimbursement and those traveling over 100 miles to drill are more invested to continue service, thus further incentivizing PS Marines to affiliate and remain in the SMCR when their travel costs are supplemented. The IDT Travel Reimbursement is an essential program that attracts many non-obligated senior Marines to continue serving.

Financial incentives such as the Montgomery GI Bill benefits (MGIB) and TRICARE benefits are not always enough to attract the right talent, as concluded in Volkmann, Shapiro, and Barnes NPS Master's thesis. The NPS thesis surveyed Reserve Marines on what it took for Reserve Marines to affiliate and remain active in the SMCR. The study found that financial incentives were not a major factor to affiliate or continue participation in the SMCR. A Reserve Marine has a primary source of income, and even those that take a financial incentive were planning to affiliate.²⁵ A primary source of income (being their civilian career) is what allows many PS Marines to remain affiliated in the SMCR. If the primary source of income becomes threatened due to an operational mobilization, the PS Marine is likely to transfer from the SMCR unless the activation is worth it. An activation for a strategic mobilization in accordance with Title 10 U.S. Code would not apply if the Marine has an MSO. In the end, incentives obligate PS Marines that would not otherwise require an obligation to drill, and do not necessarily target talent the RC would prefer to affiliate in the SMCR.

Midshipmen Danny Hugh, Charles Patterson, Conrey Meagher, and Cole Oliver at the Naval Academy conducted an analysis on Marine Corps Reserve Incentives using over 33,000 observations from FY08 to FY15 on bonus incentives and found that not all individuals in receipt of a bonus fulfill the obligation. Of the \$60,235,752 given to approximately 4,7770 Marines, 622 Marines failed to fulfill their obligation and owed back \$3,231,318.²⁶ The Midshipmen used an algorithm to factor wasted recruiting costs created by the lower quality individuals that did not fulfill their obligation where the recruiting cost required was \$7,907,903 to replace the vacated billets. Further analyzing the first come first served basis, the capstone found 372 prior active service enlisted Marines received a negative reenlistment code from the AC prior to joining the RC, and 80 Marines failed selection for promotion resulting in additional

costs to the incentive program. As mentioned in Volkmann, Shapiro, and Barnes's master's thesis, Marines must have a desire to serve and not for a bonus incentive.²⁷ The cost for recruiting losses and bonus incentives encourages RA to find additional methods to attract and maintain tier-1 Marines at no additional cost to the budget.

Per the FY2019 Defense Manpower Requirements Report, RA Division must "continue to refine the use of incentives and MOS retraining to strengthen unit staffing in specialties and grades where we remain critically short."²⁸ A deferment program is a way to attract the undecided, talented PS Marines who have real MOS experience to affiliate with the SMCR early and remain active within the Marine Corps Reserve structure. PS Marines can test an SMCR unit without reprisal while they settle into their next chapter outside of the Marine Corps. As the Marines begin their civilian career while participating in the SMCR, there is a likelihood that they work their civilian career around their new Reserve career. There is no extra monetary cost to maintain the Marine in a drilling status. The PS Marines are also authorized to voluntarily waive the two-year deferment if they desire to mobilize; however, if it is not conducive for them at that time, instead of forcing the Marines into the IRR, or not affiliate at all, they can continue to advance, stay proficient, and engage with the NPS Marines to share experience and knowledge learned from the operational force.

Statistical Analysis: Reserve Component Five Year Readiness

This paper further examines data pulled from the Total Force Data Warehouse (TFDW). The data included five end-of-year snapshots from 1 October 2013 to 30 September 2018 to identify a potential negative impact the mobilization deferment program would pose on SMCR readiness. Table 6 shows a five-year average of PS Marines eligible for a proposed deferment program. The average PS Marine currently affiliated with the SMCR qualifying for a deferment

of fewer than two years, but greater than one year after release from active duty was 1.83 percent enlisted and 9.19 percent officer totaling 2.32 percent of the SMCR population if the involuntary deployment deferment program was available. The remaining deferment approved population with less than one-year deferment remaining as of 30 September 2018 was 1.38 percent enlisted and 7.51 percent officer, totaling 1.79 percent of the SMCR population. Overall, 4.12 percent of the SMCR population would qualify for a blanket deferment program of two years from the Marine's separation from the AC, regardless of prior deployments and affiliation period with the SMCR. The IRR population is larger given the first term Marines separating that have not completed their eight-year contractual agreement. By observation, there is 40.07 percent or 35,838 Marines in the IRR that would otherwise qualify for the SMCR deferment program and are instead subject to involuntary mobilization. As the program attracts more PS Marines to affiliate with the SMCR, the percentage is likely to increase.

Table 6: SMCR and IRR PS Marine Population Averages, FY14-18

FIVE YEAR AVERAGE						
	Total	Total Prior AC	Enlisted	Enlisted %	Officer	Officer %
SMCR Prior AC	5,035	15.37%	3,502	11.47%	1,533	68.94%
Deferment Eligible	1,349	4.12%	979	3.21%	369	16.70%
Eligible btwn 1 & 2 yrs	762	2.32%	559	1.83%	203	9.19%
Eligible < 1 yr	587	1.79%	421	1.38%	166	7.51%
IRR Prior AC	79,644	88.98%	76,807	88.99%	2,837	88.70%
Deferment Eligible	35,838	40.07%	34,372	39.84%	1,466	45.81%
Eligible btwn 1 & 2 yrs	18,100	20.25%	17,224	19.97%	875	27.39%
Eligible < 1 yr	17,738	19.82%	17,147	19.87%	591	18.42%

Source: Data received from Total Force Data Warehouse by RA Division, 18 December 2018.

Schulte and Dolfini-Reed found approximately 160,000 enlisted Marines and 5,300 Officers left active duty from October 2001 to September 2011, an average of 16,000 and 530 respectively per year.²⁹ The rate of enlisted Marines separating from the AC in their first term is 80 percent, and yet only 8.5 percent affiliate each year totaling 12 percent of the enlisted

population in the SMCR as prior service. On the other hand, the officer corps relies heavily on prior service officers to join the SMCR. Of the 530 officers that separate each year, 43.4 percent affiliate in the SelRes with a total of 71 percent of the officer population in the SMCR as prior service.

The current impact of an involuntary deployment deferment program on the SMCR would be minimal in accordance with Table 7. The table illustrates a 3.62 percent of the SMCR population as eligible for a basic deferment. The end of FY18 percentages for eligible PS Marines were lower than the average of 4.12 percent. The PS enlisted totaled at 2.85 percent (856 enlisted) and the PS officers totaled at 13.69 percent (318 officers). The PS Marines in the IRR totaled 34,925 who are eligible for a program and of those eligible, 10,456 IRR Marines are essential for consideration having less than six months separation from active duty. The under six-month population in the IRR, as well as the 16,000 or more transitioning AC Marines, are the target populations for future service in the SMCR. Although a small population, this is a concern for higher headquarters to lose 100 percent readiness with Marines deferred from involuntary deployments who are occupying a unit's BIC.

Table 7: SMCR and IRR PS Marine Population Averages, End of FY18

End of Year FY18						
	Total	Total Prior AC	Enlisted	Enlisted %	Officer	Officer %
SMCR Prior AC	4,899	15.12%	3,330	11.07%	1,569	67.54%
Deferment Eligible	1,174	3.62%	856	2.85%	318	13.69%
Eligible btwn 1 & 2 yrs	547	1.69%	383	1.27%	164	7.06%
Eligible < 1 yr	627	1.93%	473	1.57%	154	6.63%
IRR Prior AC	73,433	86.92%	70,704	86.97%	2,729	85.60%
Deferment Eligible	34,925	41.34%	32,286	39.71%	2,639	82.78%
Eligible btwn 1 & 2 yrs	18,598	22.01%	16,443	20.23%	2,155	67.60%
Eligible < 1 yr	16,327	19.33%	15,843	19.49%	484	15.18%

Source: Data received from Total Force Data Warehouse by RA Division, 18 December 2018.

Early Affiliation

Headquarters Marine Corps encourages early affiliation through direct affiliation for AC Marines transitioning from active duty directly to the RC.³⁰ MCRC (PSR) recently attained the DAP from RA as a recruiting tool to affiliate AC Marines where the Marine receives prior approval to serve in a specified billet at an SMCR or IMA unit. To enhance the program, MCRC (PSR) uses Reserve Recruiters at the two largest Marine Corps installations Camp Lejeune, North Carolina and Camp Pendleton, California to educate separating Marines before they depart the service. The DAP allows AC Marines to leave with orders in hand, providing vacant billet preferences, six months of no cost enrollment of TRICARE coverage, lateral move opportunities, affiliation bonuses, and an opportunity to stay Marine with other Marines that made the transition to the civilian sector.³¹ Overall, the MCRC (PSR) would benefit from a policy that entices additional Marines to affiliate with the SMCR early with the notion that a Marine who affiliates with the SelRes early is more likely to remain in a drilling status.³² The greater the continuation rate in the SMCR, in turn, reduces the MCRC (PSR) mission.

A 2012 CNA study written by Jennifer Schulte and Michelle Dolfini-Reed titled, “Prior-Service Reserve Affiliation and Continuation Behavior Volume 1- Affiliation” analyzed PS Marines transitioning from the AC between October 2001 and September 2011 throughout the height of the Global War on Terror (GWOT). The regular activations in the RC had differing effects on enlisted and officers during this war period. The analysis determined that 8.5 percent PS enlisted and 43.4 percent PS officers affiliated with either the SMCR or IMA. Of those PS Marines in the study, just 44 percent enlisted and 53 percent officers did so within the first six months after separation from the AC. The study also found that the longer a Marine spends in the IRR, the less likely he/she is to affiliate with the SelRes.³³ Schulte and Dolfini-Reed suggest

educating AC Marines on the benefits of affiliating with the SelRes after separation from the AC by informing the Marines on available programs such as retirement pay, health care and education benefits as a way to increase participation.³⁴ The study found no single reason why over 90 percent of PS enlisted and 56 percent of PS officers do not participate in the SelRes as this study does not identify why a Marine chooses not to affiliate. As influences change in the active duty, the economy improves, and the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan come to a close, RA and MARFORRES must remain attentive to PS Marines' willingness to serve in the Reserves. The SMCR should be enticing for PS Marines to serve.

A PS Marine's choice not to affiliate is conceivably due to the chance of activation while he/she is transitioning from the AC and setting up a new career and situating the family. Schulte and Dolfini-Reed further explain in the Affiliation analysis, as a PS Marine's rate of activation increases by one percentage point while with the AC can, in turn, decrease his/her rate of affiliation with the Reserves by one percent.³⁵ Although most Marines do not shy away from an opportunity to deploy, there are PS Marines exhausted from deployments who leave the AC ranks and are less likely to participate in the RC as seen in the study. This finding encourages educating Marines on the SelRes months prior to separation during the Career Planner exit interviews and the transition readiness seminar about the RC with what to expect from activations, the rate of deployments, and opportunities offered in the SelRes. The thought of activation for AC Marines transitioning to civilian life can decrease participation in the SMCR from the very thought of activation. Education on the RC increases the likelihood an AC Marine chooses to participate in a drilling status and supports the implementation of initiatives that encourage early affiliation of PS Marines such as a deferment program.³⁶

Affiliation to Activation to Continuation

Another 2012 CNA study written by Jennifer Schulte and Michelle Dolfini-Reed titled “Prior-Service Reserve Affiliation and Continuation Behavior Volume 2- Continuation” observed PS Marines between October 2001 to April 2011, who spent more months in the IRR before affiliating with the SMCR were more likely to leave the SMCR after an activation. The study found a correlation between the likelihood of remaining in the SMCR and the time in the SelRes before activation.³⁷ The similarity between an activated PS Marine related to the number of months spent gaining experience in the SelRes prior to the activation determined the likelihood of continued service. The greater the time prior to activation from affiliation was significant for PS Marine retention. For instance, the PS officers who spent at least 12 or more months in the SelRes prior to activation are 44 percent less likely to leave the SelRes than those activated within the first year of affiliation and 30 to 50 percent less likely than those who do not deploy at all.³⁸

Additionally, PS enlisted and PS officers activated between one and six months of affiliation were 67 percent and 71 percent respectively departed the SelRes within six months after activation.³⁹ As the time from affiliation to activation increased, the months affiliated with the SelRes after the activation increased. The length of deployments also mattered with continuation and showed statistical significance where the longer the deployment, the more likely a PS Marine is to stay in the SelRes.

By allowing PS Marines to join the SelRes and work alongside other Reserve Marines prior to an activation period, the PS Marine can become more comfortable in his/her billet and likewise build a stronger relationship prior to a deployment with the Unit. The more experience offered at the unit, the longer a PS Marine is willing to continue service in the SelRes after

activation. Schulte and Dolfini-Reed noted the difficulty with environmental changes for Marines that activate or do not activate. Variables such as the state of the economy and unemployment rates can alter a PS Marine's behavior and the likelihood of remaining affiliated with the SMCR; thus, external variables are contributing factors regarding affiliation and continuation.⁴⁰ Of note, the study focuses on combat deployments and does not specify the behavior of a PS Marine on continuation after an activation for UDPs and SPMAGTFs. As an activation for a UDP or SPMAGTF is shorter than a typical combat deployment or activation period, the PS Marine is more likely to transfer to the IRR in place of an activation or leave the SelRes equal to the rates in the CNA study. Overall, PS Marines do not shy away from deployments whereas the deployment must be worth leaving his/her primary source of income to warrant continued service in the SMCR.

Skill Decay

A PS Marine's experience and knowledge while on active duty is closely linked to the length of time a Marine departs from the AC to affiliation with the SelRes. The longer the period between separation and affiliation the greater the loss of proficiency and skill in his/her occupational field. A related topic for consideration regarding the 2012 CNA study "Prior-Service Reserve Affiliation and Continuation Behavior" enhances the necessity to directly affiliate PS Marines in the SMCR to mitigate the potential loss of skill and proficiency in their MOS. A research report "Individual Ready Reserve (IRR) Call-Up: Skill Decay," authored by Robert A. Wisher, Mark A. Sabol, Hillel K. Sukenik, and Richard P. Kern with the United States Army Research Institute identified skill retention had a higher rate of decay for soldiers departing active duty and entering the IRR directly.⁴¹ The report concluded that job skills begin to degrade at varying levels within the first six months after separation from the AC and weapon

qualifications began deteriorating after ten months.⁴² The authors noticed a lower skill and knowledge over the active soldiers serving due to non-use while out of the service. IRR Marines would correlate with the findings of the skill decay study for the longer the PS Marine is in the IRR, the greater the degradation in knowledge and skill is in their MOS. Considering skill decay after six months and the increased continuation rates for Marines who affiliate in the SMCR within six months, the RC benefits by attracting Marines immediately following separation from the AC.

Another related study to mitigate skill decay conducted by RAND Corporation in 1986 titled, “Individual Ready Reserve Skill Retention and Refresher Training Options,” written by Susan Bodily, Judith Fernandez, Jackie Kimbrough, and Susanna Purnell found mobilizing Marines from the IRR required refresher training in their field prior to deploying and whether using specific occupational fields from the IRR is advantageous after a certain period following release from active service.⁴³ The additional cost incurred to train Marines that have not participated in the SelRes who now require refresher skills training will not only increase the budget to retrain but increases mobilization timelines or decreases the overall deployment. This challenge highlights that the less time a PS Marine spends in the IRR post-separation from the AC, the greater the Marine’s readiness level and knowledge he/she retains.

Reserve Deferment Programs in Other Services

The Army and Navy currently offer a mobilization deferment policy to all transitioning AC members joining their Reserve forces. Per NAVADMIN 007/07, sailors who transfer within the first six months upon release from active duty qualify for a two-year deferment commencing on the day they affiliate. Personnel who affiliate between seven and 12 months qualify for a one-year deferment on the day they affiliate.⁴⁴ As specified, sailors may volunteer for a mobilization

during this deferment period.⁴⁵ This program would attract more PS Marines early on in their separation period from the AC in keeping with the CNA study's concerns that the longer a PS Marine spends in the IRR, the less likely they are to affiliate or stay in the SelRes. Likewise, the Army offers a two-year deferment to all soldiers affiliating with the Army Reserves. The policy began as a one-year deferment for soldiers with a combat deployment within the last six months prior to separation per ALARACT 063/05 and has since changed to a two-year stabilization deferment.⁴⁶ The two branches initiated their respective policies around the same period as the Marine Corps' deferment policy during the high mobilization tempo of the GWOT. The deferment policy allows sailors and soldiers time to transition while remaining proficient in the Reserves. A similar policy for the Marine Corps would reduce the number of deployable PS Marines based on affiliation with the SMCR preventing 100 percent readiness, but would decrease the number of open BICs to meet the authorized end strength requirement.

Conclusion

On average, 16,000 enlisted and 600 officers depart the active ranks to join the RC after their first term; most PS Marines opt to transfer to the IRR and bide their time until they reach their mandatory service obligation and subsequently dropped off contract. The RC's success hinges on recruiting enough Reserve Marines to make end strength requirements by targeting the right talent, experience, and MOS proficiency. The RC relies on NPS and PS Marines to bring military and private sector experience to effectively augment the active forces in the time of national emergency in accordance with Title 10 U.S. Code § 12301 and 12302. A proposed involuntary mobilization deferment program will affiliate additional PS Marines into the SMCR to maintain MOS skill proficiency and necessary qualifications for critical occupational fields resulting in improved SelRes readiness. The current officer rates of 71 percent PS and enlisted

rates of 23 percent PS provides high levels of readiness through MOS proficiency and experience. RA could increase these percentages to fill the middle-grade structures better, and reduce the burdening recruiting mission for NPS and PS recruiting.

Several studies by CNA, RAND, and each of the Service Components (Army, Navy, and Marine Corps), have sought to explore other approaches to better increase Reserve retention. Monetary and non-monetary incentives utilized by RA attracts Marines to remain in the Marine Corps, yet there is more to accomplish for the Marines willing to put aside their primary source of income to serve in the Marine Corps Reserve. This willingness is especially relevant for the non-obligated Marines who are day-to-day and serve because they choose as Volkmann, Shapiro, and Barnes concluded in their master's thesis.⁴⁷ The bonuses entice certain personnel in the MOS shortfalls; however, those Marines are not always the most qualified or are there because they want to participate. Additionally, the limited bonus incentive budget of \$6.85 million urges RA to create programs to incentivize Reserve Marines to affiliate and continue service in the SMCR. The two-year deferment comes at no monetary cost to the Marine Corps. Implementing additional options to incentivize and attract Marines to affiliate with the drilling Reserves benefits the Marine Corps' overall readiness. The alternative to creating an involuntary deployment deferment program leads to the potential loss of talented Marines joining the SMCR.

Early affiliation is a vital component of PSR, skill proficiency, and long-term retention. Studies have shown that the earlier a PS Marine affiliates with the SMCR, the more likely they are to continue service longer than those who spend more time in the IRR. Additionally, the PS Marine remains proficient in his/her MOS. Skill decay begins to set in after six months after separation, so the longer a Marine is away from their MOS, the less their value without requiring skill enhancement training. Lastly, as Marines affiliate earlier post-separation, the higher

likelihood of continuation reduces the attrition rate and therefore reduces the PSR mission. A more manageable PSR mission allows MCRC to focus more on talent than simply filling a BIC.

RA Division and Marine Forces Reserve must produce a total force calculator for transitioning Marines. When an SMCR unit deploys, the Marines that deploy with the unit receive an M2D and not the unit. This means when an SMCR Marine inter-unit transfers to another SMCR unit, they are still non-deployable during the 1:4 threshold ratio unless voluntarily accepts mobilization orders. The same should apply to transitioning AC Marines to the SMCR. The threshold ratio applies using the total force calculator for an involuntary mobilization outside of Title 10 U.S. Code § 12301, 12302. If the deferment from the AC deployment exceeds the two-year deferment, then his/her greater dwell time would be in effect. The Marines are always eligible to waive their dwell to deploy with their fellow Marines.

Another major concern of the deferment program is the effect on overall readiness. The ultimate desire is to have 100 percent of the SMCR units deployable at a moment's notice. The observations from the five most recent FYs show a minimal impact on readiness where the benefit outweighs the loss of deployable personnel with improved recruiting in talent and higher continuation rates from early affiliation. As a PS Marine is eligible to volunteer for activation, the observations listed in this study are a worst-case scenario. The Marines want to and are willing to mobilize, however, the individuals that need more time to prepare can do so and are in the meantime, remaining proficient and prepared for a strategic activation in support of wartime operations.⁴⁸

The deferment program allows the PS Marines to choose to waive the deferment if they request consideration to volunteer for a pending mobilization. This program aims to target the recruitment of experienced and skilled Marines to affiliate into open billets to boost readiness in

the SMCR with insignificant impact on the non-deployable population for an involuntary deployment. Of note, the average affected population across the SMCR is 4.12 percent from the last five fiscal years. Those who choose to waive their deferment to pursue an activation would reduce the percentage of non-deployable Marines negating some risk to mission.

Recommendation

Reserve Affairs Division should reinstate a two-year deferment program for transitioning AC Marines from the date of their EAS who are within six months after separation from active service and a one-year deferment for Marines within six to 12-months after separation to begin from their date of affiliation with the SMCR. The population qualified to receive this incentive would include all PS Marines affiliating within one year after separation from the AC. An additional criterion for consideration would consist of limiting the population to specified PMOSs released annually via a Marine Corps message. Furthermore, RA should consider placing the non-deployable Marine into a temporary excess billet while the unit prepares for deployment allowing MARFORRES to source the billet properly.

A recommendation for Manpower and Reserve Affairs or MCRC (PSR) is to conduct an exit interview to gather information on Marine's behavior with a short questionnaire as to why an individual is separating, their knowledge and likelihood to affiliate with the SelRes, and what available incentives, if any, would entice them to affiliate. Educating Marines on the SelRes months prior to separating is a prime opportunity to encourage continued service in the SelRes.

In addition to the deferment program, the SMCR should recognize previous combat deployments for PS Marines through the implementation of a total force calculator in keeping with the 1:4 threshold ratio. The deferment program would include any Marine that immediately affiliates with the SMCR to become non-deployable for those who deployed within the last year

of their AC service. Finally, RA must continue to explore additional non-monetary options to support Reserve Marines actively affiliating with the SelRes to appropriately manage a force in readiness capable of executing their mission.

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- ⁶ Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower & Reserve Affairs, Defense Manpower Requirements Report Fiscal Year 2019 (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, 2018), 146.
- ⁷ Figure from Reserve Affairs Division brief by LtCol Andrew D. Dausman. "DC, MRA Manpower Brief" (unpublished PowerPoint, 30 September 2018). Modified by the author.
- ⁸ MCO 1133R.27 Reserve Optional Enlistment Program and Incremental Initial Active Duty Training Program, 11 Feb 2016.
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