

*United States Marine Corps
Command and Staff College
Marine Corps University
2076 South Street
Marine Corps Combat Development Command
Quantico, Virginia 22134-5068*

MASTERS OF MILITARY STUDIES

US Navy Individual Augmentee Program:
Is it the Correct Approach to GWOT Service?

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LCDR Alan Worthy

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Executive Summary

Title: US Navy Individual Augmentee Program: Is it the Correct Approach to GWOT Service?

Author: LCDR Alan Worthy / CG 9

Thesis: Billeting Sailors to US Army and Marine Corps GWOT units on the ground in the CENTCOM AOR, though controversial, is a worthwhile investment for the US Navy.

Discussion: Within the Global War on Terrorism the Navy has expanded the contribution its Sailors are bringing to the fight by assigning Sailors as Individual Augmentees (IAs) to Army and Marine Corps ground units throughout the CENTCOM AOR. The Navy has demonstrated a new capability while relieving some of the stress Army and Marine Corps units have felt from multiple deployments. This new policy has been extremely contentious and widely debated among Sailors. They consistently question the methods in which it has been implemented, the need for the program and the utility gained. Leadership has also done a substandard job providing information and support to Sailors and families directly affected by the program.

While those who oppose the program argue that it is detrimental to the Navy's retention, readiness, and core competencies, evidence to validate those arguments is insufficient or inconclusive. Sailors who have had the opportunity to serve as IAs have expressed overwhelmingly positive feedback about their IA experiences. The concerns expressed by Sailors have more to do with the way the Navy has operated the program and not whether the IA program will detrimentally affect the Navy's ability to execute its maritime requirements. Opponents have not been able to change the Navy's overall desire to employ IAs, but they have been effective enough in pointing out shortcomings causing the Navy to reevaluate and make changes.

To attempt to combat the former mistakes, the Navy remodeled the IA program as the GWOT Support Assignment system (GSA). The GSA system focuses on making the process more manageable and centralized. It also aims to provide better information and support to Sailors and their families. The GSA system will not be fully implemented until 2009. However, the new system seems to address the major issues and reduce the uncertainty and apprehension most Sailors have expressed.

Conclusion: The IA program was initiated incorrectly and required numerous modifications to make it worthwhile for the Navy. Regardless of the mistakes and remaining challenges, the benefits of IA program for Sailors, the Navy and the Army and Marine Corps far outweigh the negatives. The program is effective on multiple levels and is proving to be a worthwhile investment.

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Preface

I was inspired to undertake this research project because of the profound reactions and sentiments expressed to me over the last three years from Sailors I came in contact with. My experiences as aide provided me the opportunity to meet Sailors from all around the fleet. The sheer apprehension and misunderstanding generated from a single instituted Navy program amazed me and inspired me to delve further into the topic and see what the realities were.

The bulk of the research comes from conversations with Sailors: via phone and in person. A significant portion of the information that helped me formulate my thoughts on the topic not only came from the interviews, but also from being able to be in the room with the most senior Sailor, ADM Mullen as he spoke to hundreds of Sailors throughout the fleet.

Thanks to the many Sailors who were willing to sit down with me or take my numerous phone calls. Their candid answers were essential to the validity of this project. Though some at the Naval Personnel Command thought that I was not qualified to write this until I did an IA -- which they were happy to volunteer me for, they were willing to help me with the information that I requested.

Thank to Dr. Jasparo for his guidance and direction in the writing this paper.

Introduction

The days of blue water, fleet versus fleet naval battles have passed. Nevertheless, the US Navy continues to deploy blue water and other forces around the world in support of the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT). With its ability to project power and secure maritime dominance, the Navy will always be an integral part of our national security. In peacetime as in the GWOT, a Carrier Strike Group (CSG) and Expeditionary Strike Group (ESG) have maintained a presence in the Middle East. Navy ships, submarines, aircraft and Sailors currently carry out traditional naval roles by ensuring open sea lines of communication, protecting territorial waters and Iraqi oil infrastructure, and identifying and intercepting terrorists and weapons of mass destruction at sea. Navy medical and Seabee teams are deployed supporting Marines on the ground, hospital ships are conducting good will missions, and Navy Special Operations units are involved in GWOT operations worldwide.

As part of its ongoing efforts, the Navy has implemented an initiative called the Individual Augmentee (IA) program. The IA program is designed to take Sailors off ships, submarines and out of squadrons and assign them to billets on the ground in Army and Marine Corps commands. This initiative of developing what *Virginian Pilot* writer Tom Philpott has called "Sandbox Sailors"¹ has dramatically impacted the Navy and has arguably been the most contentious issue in the Navy since the GWOT began. The program's value, implementation, necessity, and its effect on the Navy and its Sailors have come under great scrutiny, mainly from Sailors themselves. Many believe that the program is not a worthwhile investment and should be discontinued.

Although Sailors have questioned the value of the program and have pointed out its numerous challenges and potential ill effects, I contend that its benefits outweigh its

drawbacks and that the Navy should maintain its efforts to provide Sailors as IAs.

Individual Augment (IA) Program

According to Army Chief of Staff, General George Casey, "Soldiers, families, and equipment are stretched and stressed by the demands of lengthy and repeated deployments with insufficient recovery time."² With the IA program, the Navy is attempting to relieve some of the stress the war has put on the Army and Marine Corps. Chief of Naval Operations (CNO), Admiral Mike Mullen, explained, "The brunt of this war has been borne by the ground forces. I want to be very clear. We will continue the IA (Individual Augmentee) process to principally relieve those ground forces. This is a national effort. It's not a Marine war, or an Army war."³

Program Details

IA billet requests are sent from combatant commanders to Fleet Forces Command (FFC) in Norfolk, VA. FFC in turn tasks type/wing commanders who then task unit commanders to select individual Sailors for duty. After selection, Sailors depart via temporary active duty (TAD) to a Navy processing center where they are screened and processed for training. The Army provides Sailors three-weeks of weapons, convoy, force protection, and other necessary training. Sailors then deploy for 180-365 days to units predominately in the Central Command (CENTCOM), AOR that includes Iraq, Afghanistan, Kuwait, Bahrain, and the Horn of Africa.

Sailor Locations and Duties

Since 9/11, approximately 60,000 Sailors ranging in rank from seaman to admiral have

deployed as IAs.⁴ Currently, there are over than 10,000 Sailors filling IA billets on the ground in Iraq and Afghanistan⁵. Even with a CSG and an ESG on station, there have been times when more Sailors have been on the ground in the CENTCOM AOR than were at sea.

Ideally, IA Sailors are to acquire billets that directly relate to their Navy qualifications. According to Navy leadership, the majority of Sailors use skills sets they acquired in the Navy to fulfill their IA duties.⁶ For example, Navy security specialists receive assignments to the detention facility in Bucca, Iraq. Commanders regularly request Hospital corpsmen, lawyers, construction men, and information technicians specifically because of their skill sets. However, it is also common for other Sailors to receive billets assignments that require training on site. According to the Naval Personnel Command, one of the most significant challenges to matching billets with skills sets is with junior officer aviators, submariners, and surface warfare. Junior officers from all three specialties currently serve in Iraq in billets ranging from logistics and electronic warfare officers to security officers.⁷

Perceptions / Challenges

From May 2006-June 2007, I attended over 40 Sailor all-hands calls with CNO Admiral Mullen. Often I documented comments and questions he received from Sailors. During that year, an IA question came up in every all hands call. The majority of the time, it was the first question asked.

Historically, the IA program filled billets by what Deputy Chief of Naval Personnel, RADM Sonny Masso calls the “rip to fill” method. Sailors were “ripped” from commands and placed in IA billets. Often by the time a billet request made its way through the process to a specific unit, there would be very little time before the designated report date. Sailors often

deployed very shortly after notification. In the worst cases, Sailors received "Friday to Monday" orders, meaning a Sailor would receive orders on a Friday and have to depart the following Monday. In 2005 and early 2006, Sailors typically received less than 30 days notice of IA duty.⁸ Furthermore, Sailors selected for IAs would often receive only the name and location of their assignment and not any information regarding the specific duties.

As a department head in a helicopter squadron, I recall conversations with Sailors who were on the list we created for the upcoming IAs. I routinely had to tell my Sailors that I had very limited to no information on upcoming IA billets or timelines but that IA assignments were definitely forthcoming. The process requires significant guesswork and flexibility and garnered little confidence from Sailors. Consequently, with most Sailors, the term "IA" carries a very negative connotation.

For unit commanders, the IA program presented different challenges. Commanders had the burden of selecting Sailors, while weighing their command qualification requirements. They had to select Sailors who met the Navy's needs yet would not undermine their command's ability to accomplish its mission. Consequently, Sailors who were new to a command, unknown to commanders, or who held the least qualifications were often the first selected for IA billets.

In some cases, Sailors and their families were "lost" during their IAs. During a Sailor's IA deployment, parent commands were responsible for processing, tracking and providing professional and personal assistance to IA Sailors and their families. However, support was always sufficient. On more than one occasion during my department head tour, IA Sailors were forgotten by the chain of command. They were marked absent for musters and squadron functions. They were sent email notices for mandatory urinalysis and class attendance. We would not remember that they were deployed until they marked as absent.

IA Sailors often suffered professionally because while they were expected to compete with Sailors who were at home, their chain of command would hold it against them that they were not directly contributing to the home unit mission. Army and Marine Corps units had to be reminded to submit performance comments because home unit commanders otherwise could not document what their Sailors had accomplished during their IAs.

Reality

During my year with the CNO, it became obvious that there were fleet-wide concerns from Sailors regarding IAs. Not only were there misperceptions, but there was also a general sense of apprehension. While most Sailors that I talked to believed that an IA was in their future and there was no way to avoid it, most communities and commands have only had a small percentage of Sailors selected as IAs. In a speech to the Surface Warfare Association 16 December, RADM Masso remarked, "IA duty affects two percent of the surface warfare officer (SWO) community, yet if you speak to a junior officer on the waterfront, you would think that half of their wardroom are IA's."⁹

On a visit to NAS Brunswick in 2006, a squadron commanding officer stated to the CNO that he was having a difficult time keeping up with mission demand due to the number of IAs that were taken from his squadron. As it turns out, he had four IA Sailors out of over 400 assigned to his command: less than one percent.¹⁰

On the other hand, there are commands, mainly those with Sailors in high IA demand skill sets, which have felt significant IA requirement burdens. Naval Hospital Quantico, for instance, currently has 14 percent of its assigned hospital corpsmen deployed as IAs.¹¹ Medical, judge advocate general, intelligence, construction, security, and administration communities are

in high demand and employ a significant number of IAs.

In my discussions with different commands, the burden of IAs affects each differently. Those commands who provide information and feedback to Sailors and whose leaders are proactive in incorporating initiatives to manage the IA requirements tend to fare better coping with the burden of IAs. At Naval Hospital Quantico, as part of a Sailors initial check in brief, the Command Master Chief Timothy Perkett discusses the hospital's requirements for IAs. He paints a clear picture to his Sailors that they can expect to deploy as an IA. He makes an effort to work with individual Sailors to pick the right IA for their specific skill set and consider any of their desires and personal concerns. His proactive leadership has enabled the hospital to meet its IA duty requirements predominately with volunteers, while still providing quality service to the Marines and their families in Quantico.¹²

Shortcomings

In my discussions with Sailors, their main concerns centered on perceived program shortcomings including:¹³

- Lack of oversight, structure and tracking
- Short fill orders and limited billet description information
- Inadequate pre-deployment training
- Lack of support and family assistance
- Command manning instability
- Unpredictability of IA assignment
- Limited means to volunteer for assignments
- Limited incentives and career recognition for IA completion

Changes

In January of 2006, in an effort to add more structure and support into the system, the Naval Expeditionary Combat Command (NECC) stood up the Naval Expeditionary Combat Readiness Center (ECRC). The ECRC now serves as a single source provider for "oversight to

ensure effective processing, equipping, training, certification, deployment, reach-back, redeployment and proactive family support of combat-trained Navy Individual Augmentees (IA)...”¹⁴ Shortly thereafter, the Navy stood up Task Force IA (TFIA), to examine the IA process and review current policies and initiatives. RADM Sonny Masso, TFIA chair described the task force’s mission as follows:

“We were stood up in April to do three things,” said Masso. “First, we took a look at the sourcing and notification process. Then we looked at the training pipeline to get our Sailors ready to go into harms way. Finally, we wanted to make sure we were taking care of the families of those who were serving as IA’s, and make sure they knew how much we valued their service.” The ultimate goal of the task force is to work ourselves out of a job. If we are able to get these processes ingrained into the way we do business on a daily basis, then the task force would no longer be needed.”¹⁵

As Admiral Mullen put it, "This is very vital work our IA's are doing at an incredibly critical time in our nation's history, and I am committed to making sure the Navy gets it right when it comes to recognizing that fact."¹⁶ TFIA’s first significant task was fixing the notification window.

“We all knew [increasing the window] was the right thing to do. The CNO gave us very specific guidance on getting this job done. Through the work of TFIA, the average notification window has increased from under 30 days to a high of 80 days in December 2006”¹⁷

ECRC began working in conjunction with the Fleet Forces Command and the Naval Personnel Command to standardize and streamline the process. ECRC started answering Sailors questions, providing Sailors a means to get information, and assisting them and their families from time of selection to return from deployment. The focus of the program shifted to the Sailors and their families rather than filling assignments.

ECRC implemented an IA deployment checklist, spouse programs, ombudsmen program, and a family connection website that advertises group meetings and puts IA families in contact

with one another. Their website (www.ecrc.Navy.mil) provides information, guidance, points of contact, and other valuable information. ECRC also began publishing an IA family newsletter, the *IA Family Connection*.

TFIA examined the process and program including the incentives and rewards program that Naval Personnel Command (NPC) had instituted. IA incentives or rewards included:¹⁸

- #1 distribution priority for orders upon return. Sailors pick their coast and billet for follow on duty
- Overseas duty credit
- Joint duty credit
- Recognition of IA duty on promotion / screen boards
- Automatic board eligibility for E-7
- Options for advancement exam deferment
- Points on promotion exams
- Continuation bonuses for selected commitments

From 2003-2007, NPC with ECRC constantly examined the program and made numerous changes. However, even with these necessary changes, combating misunderstandings about the program remained a constant challenge. Consequently, in 2006, RADM Masso along with his senior enlisted leadership began traveling around the fleet on a “myth-busting” tour. They would meet with Sailors, address their questions and present the facts of the IA program, with the goal of spreading the truth, touting the successes, and dispelling the rumors and fears.

IA Program Change Two: The GSA System

In July 2007, the Chief of Naval Personnel, VADM John Harvey announced the Global War on Terrorism Support Assignment (GSA) detailing system. The GSA system changes the IA program from the “normal short notice, mid-tour, temporary duty, individual augmentee assignments, to a norm of permanent change of station, GWOT support assignments negotiated in the Sailors normal detailing window”. The purpose of the change is to “improve predictability

for Sailors and their families, enable volunteerism, improve manning stability at the unit level, and add greater detailer oversight for professional development and career progression.”¹⁹

The GSA system eliminates the need to rip Sailors from commands and replaces it with a system that assigns GSA billets at a Sailor’s planned rotation date (PRD). It also gives Sailors a greater ability to get assignment information and to volunteer for a GSA of their choosing. Sailors are able to go online, view a list of potential GSA;s and work with their detailers to select a billet. NPC then provides them permanent change of station (PCS) orders to a Naval Mobility Processing Center (NMPC) in San Diego, Norfolk. The change to PCS rather than TAD orders gives Sailors the option of moving their family member to San Diego or Norfolk, or keeping them in their current CONUS location. Once assigned to a NMPC (Port Hueneme and Gulfport have NMPC sites as well, but Sailors are not yet permitted to move their families to those locations) Sailors are sent on temporary active duty orders to their training site and subsequently to their final IA duty station.

Since 16 January 2008, over 1000 Sailors have received billets under the new GSA system. According to Master Chief James Stone, head GSA enlisted detailer, “The feedback from Sailors I have detailed has been positive so far. They choose where and when they go, and it helps commands because they do not have to choose what Sailors they are going to send.”²⁰

Under the new system, advocacy, tracking, training, and feedback become centrally controlled. With ECRC in the process, Sailors and their families no longer need to seek support or assistance from their former parent commands. ECRC becomes is a one-stop-shop for all needs GSA Sailor and family member. For ECRC, having all GSA Sailors assigned to one of four designated locations vice multiple Navy facilities worldwide provides localization for their

support role. They have more control and oversight from beginning to end, but also gain more responsibility for support and advocacy.

The GSA system appears to have gotten off to a good start. The Navy anticipates it will be able to capture approximately 73 percent of current GSA requirements under the new system by mid-to-late 2008.²¹

However, the program still has significant challenges. According to ECRC, their current manning will be able to handle the volume of support required for IA Sailors and their families, but the personal service they will be able to provide to Sailors in comparison to their previous commands will be a challenge.²² With Sailor support removed from former parent commands, the support staff at ECRC will have comparatively little time to get to know Sailors before they deploy. That lack of personal time and knowledge presents a challenge as it relates to individual advocacy.

Speed of implementation is another challenge. The 1000 plus Sailors who have been able to work orders under the system are the success stories that the Navy touts. However, the Navy still currently runs most IA Sailors using the old system. The GSA system is not able to replace the old system fast enough to meet the expectations of Sailors: whose expectations have risen with the increased amount of information available.

Worthwhile Investment?

The question of whether IAs or GSAs is a worthwhile investment for the Navy is still debated fleet wide. The following is an analysis of the arguments given in support of and against the IA program.

Benefits for Sailors

A Sailor I interviewed remarked, "I would have never gotten the chance to work with or even see what the Army does if it were not for my two IAs. I got to see what was really happening on the ground instead of watching it on TV."²³ This Sailor's experience on his first IA to Afghanistan was so fulfilling and eye opening that he immediately volunteered for a second IA to Iraq. While back-to-back IA duty is rare and discouraged, his feelings about his experiences are common. The Sailors that I interviewed and those I talked with on my travels with the CNO, around the fleet and in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Djibouti, predominantly had good things to say about their experiences. They spoke highly of the education they got while deployed as IAs. Feedback to the different NMPCs and ECRC has also been positive. Even Sailors who were "voluntold" for IA duty seemed to have, in hindsight, a valuable and fulfilling learning experience.²⁴ This is not to say that there are not negative experiences and even horror stories. However, the overwhelming feedback from returning Sailors has been positive.

Common positive feedback has included:²⁵

- Opportunity to be a part of the fight
- Opportunity to get to work with other services
- Opportunity to broaden their personal and professional capabilities and experiences
- Further credibility with family, friends, shipmates
- Tax-free pay and selected bonuses
- Break from the day-to-day normalcy of their previous billets

Most of the complaints about IAs have centered on system failures such as notification, lack of information and lack of support, and not the IA experience itself.²⁶

Another Sailors benefit is relevance. The GWOT is undoubtedly more Marine Corps olive and Army green than Navy blue. However, it is a joint war. The maritime domain where the Navy reigns has received little attention and putting Sailors into the ground fight makes

Sailors more relevant in this war. Sailors feel more relevant to themselves, other Sailors, and fellow service members. These experiences build cross-service rapport, respect, and pride. IAs gives Sailors the opportunity to be a part of what is happening on the ground and those experiences are invaluable and can be life changing.

A significant number of the young Sailors I spoke with joined the Navy specifically to be part of this ongoing war. They joined after 9/11 or after the GWOT began and wanted to get into the fight. In my interviews, I was surprised to learn that a considerable percentage of Sailors did not have a good understanding of the Navy's role in the GWOT. For Sailors who were in the Navy before the war, their day-to-day duties out to sea had not significantly changed because of the war. For those who joined to fight this war, it has been difficult to see what their daily efforts out to sea were accomplishing. The strategic effects of missions such as maritime dominance and theater security cooperation are often unrealized by the average Sailor as they go about daily sea life. Unlike Marine Corps and Army accomplishments, which are in the daily news media, Sailors do not regularly get to the opportunity to see or hear how the maritime mission directly contributes to the war.

The IA experience helps close the gap between the Sailors efforts and the impact those efforts have on the war. Sailors who want more opportunities to contribute to this war can do so through IAs. Those expanded opportunities can also open new doors for recruiting and retention.

Benefits for the Navy

Path to Jointness

The ability to stay offshore and operate autonomously is a luxury the Navy has enjoyed, even with today's joint focus. The importance of joint duty as it relates to career progression has

not been historic in the Navy. For officers, JPME completion was not a prerequisite for command consideration until 2005, and is still not required for advancement. With the Navy holding four of 10 combatant commander positions and the top position in the Joint Chiefs of Staff, joint duty is becoming more a part of the Navy's future. The Navy is committed to pursuing a Path to Jointness - developing Joint leaders in both the officer and senior enlisted communities.²⁷ Officers who complete in residence JPME are detailed to joint billets to the maximum extent possible.²⁸

IA assignments serve as an avenue to detail Sailors into joint duty. Depending on length and billet duties, Sailors can receive full joint credit for IA duty. If not for qualification, the joint IA experience gives Sailors invaluable insight into joint operations and provides a base for Sailors who may later serve on joint staffs or other joint assignments.

Benefits to DOD

IA duty success has set a precedent for the Navy. IA assignments have been beneficial in alleviating some of the strain on other service forces and getting Sailors further into the fight. In the increasingly joint environment, it is reasonable to believe that the Navy will accomplish non-maritime support in future engagements. It is also reasonable to believe that Navy leadership will be willing to offer Sailor support for the benefit of DOD and the Sailors themselves. IAs have effectively widened the Navy's capabilities and increased the opportunities for Sailors to serve in more environments.

Opposition Arguments

The most common arguments against the Navy's institution of the IA program are that

the program will significantly hurt retention, adversely affect readiness, and move the Navy away from its ability to accomplish its core competencies.

Retention

Current Navy-wide retention rates are down 4 percent and 11 percent from pre-9/11 and pre-Iraq war periods respectively.²⁹ Rates have followed expected trends, increasing immediately following 9/11 and in the initial years of the GWOT and decreasing as war has protracted. While retention has decreased, the Navy has still met its recent recruiting requirements. Several high demand rates such as special warfare, medical and judge advocate general have had retention rates increase over both periods.³⁰ It is reasonable to believe that there are Sailors who will leave the Navy because of the potential of an IA assignment, yet there is minimal evidence that directly proves that IAs have had a significant impact on retention. The difficulty is in differentiation. Differentiating whether IA assignments are specifically causing the retention decline more so than the war itself, the increased wartime operational tempo (OPTEMPO) or even the current Navy downsize plan.

In surveys conducted by the Center for Personal and Professional Development at Naval Personnel Command, 40 percent of Sailors (O-4 - E-1) expressed that potential IA duty was a reason to leave the Navy, though 42 percent believed that IA duty was beneficial for their career. In the same survey, Sailors cited that "time away from home" was just as influential in their potential decision to leave.³¹ In the most vocal anti-IA group, junior officers aviators, 44 percent cited that IA duty was a reason to leave while 75 percent cited increased time spent on sea duty as an influence to leave.³²

NPC is well aware of the potential influence that the IA program could have on retention. In an effort to combat the issue, NPC generally discourages detailing Sailors to IA assignments in the months prior to their end of obligated service date: their last job in the Navy. Most Sailors will return from IA duty generally have obligated service still remaining on their contracts. The fact that most IA Sailors go on to new assignments following their IA duty makes it difficult to substantiate that the IA duty itself drove them from the Navy.

The Center for Personal and Professional Development surveys have been inconclusive at best in pinpointing IA duty as a specific factor in the decrease in recent retention. While community managers report that some departing Sailors have expressed that potential IA duty was the reason why they were leaving the Navy, the majority of departing Sailors left for other reasons.³³

Readiness

In spite of the wartime OPTEMPO demands, the Navy has been able to maintain its readiness through the implementation of the Fleet Response Plan (FRP). FRP modified the regularly scheduled deployment construct and now requires Navy units to maintain readiness milestones in order to meet short notice deployment tasking. Preservation of FRP can be challenging and often requires increased underway, non-deployed time and robust maintenance efforts. But it requires less specific pre-deployment effort and results in increased readiness and the ability to provide combat power when and where it is needed.³⁴ Even with the implementation of IA assignments, FRP has combated fleet readiness issues and enabled the Navy to maintain its readiness during this war.

For individual commands, the implementation of the IA program can present unit readiness challenges. As aforementioned, the IA “rip to fill” method gives commanders a choice in the selection of Sailors for IA duty. Diligence on the commander’s behalf is required to select those Sailors qualified to transfer as IAs, but whose absence will not be detrimental to unit readiness. Qualification management becomes imperative. It is also the commander’s responsibility to ensure that their higher commanders understand the limits of IA tasking and how those limits impact a unit’s ability to deploy.

Core Competencies

The need for an expeditionary Navy capable of conducting pre-9/11 core missions such as maritime control, power projection, humanitarian assistance and force sustainment still exists.³⁵ Today’s Navy continues to accomplish these missions while expanding its strategy to include maritime and theater security, deterrence and forward presence.³⁶

Adding IA duty to the mission set has not made the Navy forget its roots. As previously mentioned, most Sailors and communities are performing duties as IAs within their core competencies. The IA program, for all of its flaws, has made efforts to ensure this concept. The Sailors performing duties outside of their skill sets are learning new skills, and for the most part, gaining valuable experience. The temporary shift from their Navy skill sets is not taking away from their ability to return to their Navy skill set or from the Navy’s overall ability to be the force the nation expects.

CSGs and ESGs still deploy fully capable of performing their designated missions. And the Navy still dominates the maritime domain.

Unknowns

Currently, the metrics used within the Navy to chart the progress and impact of the IA/GSA program are mainly concentrated on measures such as time to train, time to deploy, number of IAs deployed, number of IA Sailor volunteers versus draftees, and Sailors perceptions and concerns.³⁷ The Navy continually collects and assesses data in attempts to improve the program and forecast its influences.

Future analysis of the program, which is currently incomplete or inconclusive, will have to expand to include metrics to quantifiably measure the success of the stress relief IAs have provided. Additionally, metrics regarding the full cost impact of IA program requirements, the true long-term, IA specific effects on retention, and the Navy's ability to sustain IA personnel support if the GWOT prolongs will have to be developed. These metrics compared to the utility of the program will be instrumental in defining the success of the program and determining the validity of continuing it, either as part of a potentially prolonged GWOT, or as a sustained mission for the Navy.

Should the IA/GSA Concept Continue?

"I see Individual Augmentee duty as a long-term commitment by the Navy. I am anxious to pitch in as much as we possibly can, for the duration of this war. Not only can we can do our share, but [we can] take as much stress off those who are deploying back-to-back, home one year, deployed one year and now are on their third or fourth deployment."³⁸

Navy leadership is committed to Sailors continuing to support the Global War on Terrorism with IAs. Currently, I see no valid basis to stop the program. The positives for Sailors, the Navy, the sister services, the defense department, and the nation from Sailors on the

ground outweigh the negatives. IAs have increased the skill base of the Navy and increased opportunities for Sailors to fight. The IA program has brought the Navy further into the joint battle and given Sailors a larger sense of relevance and pride. The program has not deterred the Navy from its maritime legacy, nor hindered its readiness to fight. It has had limited effect on recruiting or retention.

The most significant detractor of the IA concept has always been the manner in which the Navy implemented and ran the program. "Mission first, Sailors always," is a maxim the Navy has prided itself upon upholding. The initial IA program fell far short of the motto. The GSA system is a step in the right direction and a direction in which the Navy should continue. There is no reason to take away a program that can deliver such valuable experiences to both the Navy and its Sailors.

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