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MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

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TRANSFORMING CONCEPTS FOR THE MARINE CORPS INDIVIDUAL  
MOBILIZATION AUGMENTATION PROGRAM

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

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## **Executive Summary**

Subject Area: Manpower

**Title:** Transformation Concepts for the Marine Corps IMA Program

**Author:** Major Shawn P. Wonderlich

**Thesis:** The Marine Corps IMA program is substantially underperforming in its potential to provide reserve manpower augmentation to the active component. The underlying cause is a disparity between billet requirements and reserve manpower demographics. Low cost program innovations could overcome the disparity and enable it to provide greater manpower support to the active component.

**Discussion:** The purpose of the IMA program is to provide pre-trained reserve component individuals to fill time-sensitive billets in support of mobilization. To maintain readiness, reserve Marines who are part of the program train in their designated billets throughout the year, much like members of tactical reserve units. Despite a disproportionately high recruitment effort for the program, it has maintained the lowest manning levels of any Marine Corps Reserve (MCR) category over the past five years, which subsequently degrades its ability to be a source of pre-trained manpower. Additionally, the Marine Corps is reviewing the IMA program to ensure compliance with a Department of Defense (DoD) mandate to maintain an operational reserve force. There are low cost innovations that could increase the program's manning levels while better aligning it with tenants of DoD's operational reserve force concept. Recommendations advanced by this paper are to:

- modify the structure review process for the IMA program
- expand IMA drilling locations of current detachments
- create new capability oriented detachments, such as civil affairs
- create a HQMC IMA Detachment for the purpose of sourcing IAs
- extend available selected reserve incentives to the IMA program

**Conclusion:** The anemic manning level of the IMA program is the result of a disparity between billet requirements and reserve manpower demographics. The recommended low cost innovations will enable the program to reach its full potential by making it more operationally relevant as a source of individual manpower. The innovations require a paradigm shift in the relationship between organizational structure and manpower availability, specifically for the reserve component.

I extend my gratitude to my Faculty Advisor, Dr. Pauletta Otis, for the assistance and guidance provided throughout the development of this paper.

## Introduction

*"DoD's personnel management strategies and the laws, policies, and systems that support them were designed during the last century. They addressed the problems faced by the armed forces after World War II, in response to Cold War national security and force structure issues and to the demographics of the day. The 21st century presents a completely different set of challenges to planners focusing on our national security and on military manpower."*

- Commission on the National Guard and Reserves, January, 2008<sup>1</sup>

The purpose of the Marine Corps Individual Mobilization Augmentation (IMA) program is to provide a "source of trained and qualified [reserve] individuals to fill a time-sensitive portion of the active component wartime structure."<sup>2</sup> Consistent with the above excerpt, the program remains moored in structure, policies, and practices of the last century, causing it to underperform its potential as a source of manpower augmentation to the active component. Indicators of the program's sluggish performance are its anemic manning levels and marginal contribution to sourcing Individual Augmentation (IA) requirements of the Marine Corps. The program is currently manned at only 57.5 percent of its complete Table of Organization (T/O) and only 89.5 percent of its "authorized" manning level, the lowest level of any reserve category in the Marine Corps.<sup>3</sup> The low manning has resulted in a limited contribution to filling IA billets required of the Marine Corps. Only 30 percent of the IA billets are sourced by the reserves, and the IMA program represents only a fraction of that. The remaining 70 percent fall back to the active component to fill.<sup>4</sup>

Some have surmised that the cause of manpower shortfalls in the IMA program is a general unwillingness among reserve Marines to volunteer for service in billets with high potential of being activated and deployed; which is not the case. The abundant staffing of tactical reserve units, which are aggregately manned at over 100% provides evidence that reserve component Marines are willing to activate and deploy. An analysis of IMA structure in relation

to reserve manpower demographics reveals that the cause is actually rooted in systemic flaws with the IMA program.

The Marine Corps has acknowledged the potential to improve the IMA program and is conducting a comprehensive review to address its deficiencies.<sup>5</sup> This paper will lend information germane to the review and advance the following recommendations:

- Modify the structure review process for the IMA program
- Expand IMA drilling locations of current detachments
- Create new capability oriented detachments, such as civil affairs
- Create a HQMC IMA Det for the purpose of sourcing IAs
- Extend available incentives to the IMA program

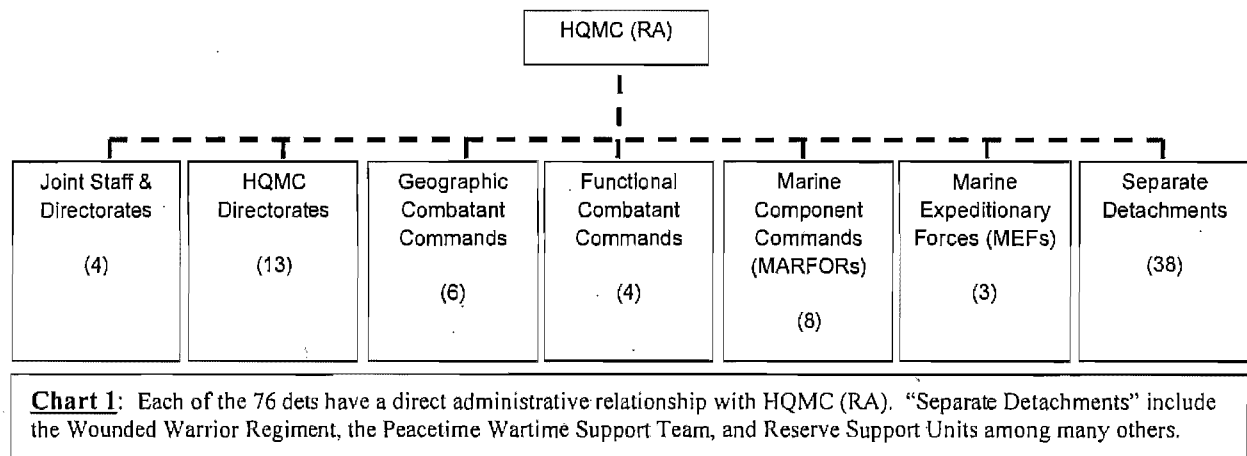
### **Background**

The IMA program has been around, under different names, since prior to the Korean War.<sup>6</sup> It fills an important role in the Marine Corps mobilization process and has a recent track record of individual success, despite the overall program underperforming its potential. Since the onset of the Global War on Terror, individual Marines sourced from the IMA program have been viewed by gaining commands as being more successful in their billets than that of their Individual Ready Reserve (IRR) and Selected Marine Corps Reserve (SMCR) counterparts. The relative success is attributed to the training and familiarity they had with the billet prior to activation.<sup>7</sup>

While gaining command's view individual IMA Marines as being successful, the overarching program is underperforming its full potential due to general manpower shortfalls. The manpower shortfalls stem from fundamental structure problems, specifically a geographic

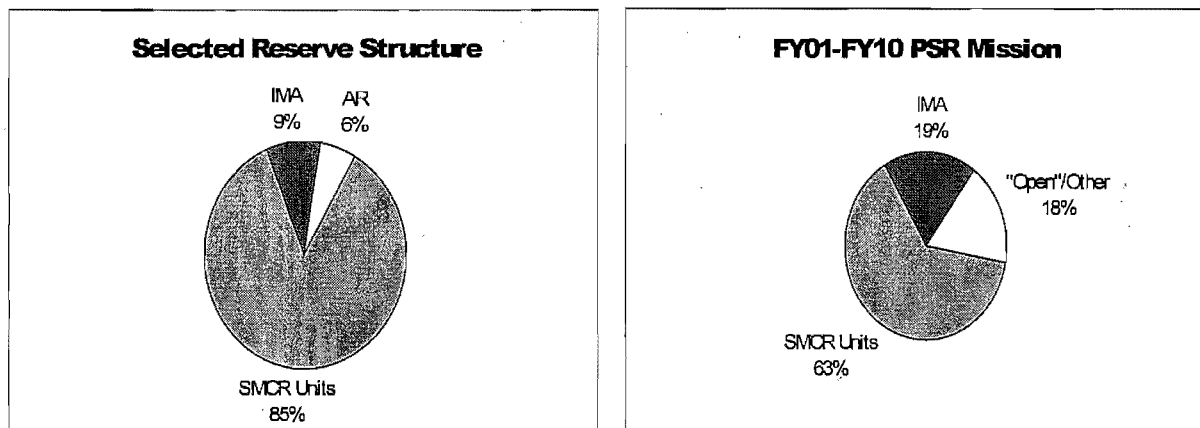
and occupational disconnect between billets and the manpower needed to fill them. The following two sections will describe the program's organization, unique source of staffing, and inherent manpower challenges.

**Organization.** The individual Marines assigned to the IMA program are organized into detachments, associated with their respective gaining command, who they train to serve with upon activation. There are 76 detachments that range in size from 1 to 452 billets, the largest of which are the three Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF) headquarters, with one exception.<sup>8</sup> The distribution of detachments across the DoD is reflected in the following chart:



Each of the gaining commands has an active duty Marine or full time civilian assigned to serve as the Operational Sponsor (OpSponsor). OpSponsors are usually part of the J1/G1 staff, and oversee the administrative duties associated with the detachment, to include new join processing and Table of Organization (T/O) management. They are integral to the success of their respective IMA detachment because they are the conduit between the recruiting force that sources personnel to the program, and the section within the gaining command that will actually train and employ the IMA Marine.

**Staffing.** The IMA program is manned at only 57.5 percent of it's T/O strength and there are currently 1,148 vacant billets OpSponsors have identified as needing to be filled. Because the IMA structure does not include billets for entry level personnel, there is effectively one manpower source that feeds into it; the Prior Service Recruiting (PSR) element of the Marine Corps Recruiting Command (MCRC). The PSR force consists of 81 recruiters spread throughout the country who are specifically charged with the recruitment of Individual Ready Reserve (IRR) Marines to fill open billets in the IMA program and other categories of the reserve component.



**Chart 2:** The IMA program represents only 9 percent of the selected reserve structure but has comprised 19 percent of the recruiting effort over the past decade.<sup>9 see also 10</sup>

As reflected in Chart 2, the PSR mission to support the IMA program is far greater than the program's relative size as a category of the reserve component. While it stands to reason that recruiting should have a relatively high emphasis on the program with the greatest manpower shortfalls, the fact that the imbalance has been sustained for an entire decade, with little impact on overall manning levels, is indicative of larger problems. It indicates a high level of turnover; likely a corollary to the opportunity costs associated to serving in distant IMA billets versus local SMCR unit billets, which will be further discussed in a later section.

## IMA Manpower Challenges

**Recruiting Feasibility Assessment.** The manpower sourcing system for the IMA program is unique because it is dependent on volunteers from the Individual Ready Reserve (IRR) who must also have appropriate rank and Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) credentials.

Consequently, if there is not a sufficient pool of IRR members within a reasonable commuting distance of the billet location who meet the MOS requirements, then the billet really stands no chance of being filled. This has been the case for hundreds of IMA billets that have gone unfilled for years, despite focused recruiting efforts by the PSR force. As a result of frustration with recruiting to fill the IMA structure, MCRC conducted an assessment in December 2008 to determine what structure would never likely be filled, based on best case scenarios for recruitment. Results are reflected in the following table.<sup>11</sup>

|                 | MOS or Occ Field |       |      |             |    |                        |       |
|-----------------|------------------|-------|------|-------------|----|------------------------|-------|
| Location        | Intel            | Legal | Comm | Admin Chief | PA | Other Low Density MOSs | Total |
| NOVA/DC         | 45               | 0     | 4    | 14          | 11 | 18                     | 92    |
| Norfolk/CLNC    | 104              | 8     | 19   | 0           | 9  | 82                     | 222   |
| Georgia/Florida | 67               | 0     | 9    | 1           | 2  | 11                     | 90    |
| New Orleans     | 10               | 0     | 4    | 3           | 1  | 6                      | 24    |
| Kansas City     | 0                | 43    | 1    | 17          | 0  | 0                      | 61    |
| Southern CA     | 12               | 10    | 4    | 4           | 4  | 32                     | 66    |
| Hawaii          | 78               | 0     | 5    | 2           | 1  | 20                     | 106   |
| Overseas        | 46               | 1     | 10   | 3           | 2  | 26                     | 88    |
| Other           | 12               | 0     | 0    | 3           | 2  | 8                      | 25    |
| Total           | 374              | 62    | 56   | 47          | 32 | 203                    | 774   |

**Table 1:** IMA structure determined to be “unsupportable” with manpower, by the recruiting force. The basis for the determination was a lack of sufficient IRR Marines in the area with the right MOS.

The following two sections provide further information and analysis on occupational and geographical demographics of the IRR population in relation to IMA structure, which explains how the PSR force arrived at the above conclusion. This structure is hereafter referred to as “unsupportable” due to the low likelihood of pairing a qualified reserve volunteer to the billet.

Occupational Demographics: A primary flaw with current IMA structure is the low density of IRR population with the appropriate Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) credentials to support it. As reflected in Table 1, most of the structure MCRC found to be unsupportable from a manpower perspective is not among the most common occupational fields in the Marine Corps; they are considered low density MOSs. In fact, the specific occupational fields and MOSs listed (intelligence, legal, communications, administrative chief, and public affairs) comprise 34.1 percent of the total IMA structure.<sup>12</sup> However, they only account for 7.2 percent of the total IRR population.<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, SMCR units have manpower deficiencies in those same specialties and are effectively competing for limited IRR population that possess the necessary rank and MOS credentials.<sup>14</sup>

The difficulty associated with recruiting enough IRR Marines with the MOS credentials to serve in the IMA program is not likely to change in the foreseeable future. One reason is that these individuals are sought for retention on active duty, limiting the number going into the IRR relative to other MOSs. Another is that many of the individuals in these occupational fields leave active service as a result of dissatisfaction serving in their particular MOS. For instance, many of the communicators and administrators who leave active duty will only serve in an SMCR unit contingent upon doing so in another MOS. As will be discussed later, that opportunity is not available for the IMA program, hindering recruitment. The disproportionate amount of these low density MOSs that comprise current IMA structure limits the degree of manning that can reasonably be expected, given the limited manpower resources available.

Geographical Demographics. As Table (1) also illustrates, the preponderance of the unsupportable structure is located in the vicinity of major Marine Corps bases and installations, which is where 84 percent of all IMA billets are located. However, far less than 84 percent of the reserve manpower population live in those areas. Reserve Marines are geographically dispersed throughout the country in a manner that is reflective of the general population, from which they are recruited upon initial entry into the Marine Corps. While small percentages of Marines who leave the active component prior to retirement remain in the vicinity of a Marine base, the vast majority either return to their geographic area of origin or elsewhere to pursue education, career, or family goals. The result is that far too many IMA billets are geographically incompatible with their manpower source.

Manpower planners for active component commands rarely, if ever, have to take this dynamic into consideration. Active duty Marines are simply assigned orders and physically relocated to the geographic location they are needed, at government expense. This is not the case for Marines performing reserve duty with the IMA program, who live in the geographical area of their choice based on many factors, not the least of which is the necessity to financially sustain themselves in the civilian sector.

The disparity between geographic locations of the IRR population and reserve structure afflicts SMCR units as well, but not to the same degree it does the IMA program. As part of the structure review conducted by MCRC in December 2008, they identified geographical areas of the United States where reserve structure could be added and subtracted, based on a standardized ratio of IRR Marines to reserve unit structure in the area. A result of that assessment is reflected in Table 2, which follows:

| Potential areas to add and subtract SMCR structure |                            |          |                                   |
|----------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|----------|-----------------------------------|
| Add:                                               |                            | Subtract |                                   |
| 350                                                | Orlando, FL (120%)         | 500      | ME and CT (92.7%)                 |
| 100                                                | Hialeah, FL (104%)         | 300      | Western New York (95.3%)          |
| 400                                                | Houston, TX (108.5%)       | 200      | New Orleans, LA (62.8%)           |
| 150                                                | Aurora, CO (104.3%)        | 500      | Forth Worth, TX (94.9%)           |
| 300                                                | San Antonio, TX (116%)     | 1500     | Total structure to move elsewhere |
| 400                                                | Phoenix, AZ (116%)         |          |                                   |
| 250                                                | St Louis, MO (109.1%)      |          |                                   |
| 300                                                | Los Angeles, CA (111.7%)   |          |                                   |
| 400                                                | San Francisco, CA (113.6%) |          |                                   |
| 2650                                               | Total opportunities to add |          |                                   |

**Table 2:** Areas where SelRes structure could be added or subtracted based on IRR population in relation to existing structure in the area. Percentages reflect unit strengths in the area as of November 2008.

The areas where reserve billets can be added have a disproportionately high amount of IRR population relative to the number of total billets. Reserve units in those areas are also manned well over their T/O. The amount of additional structure recommended for those areas would bring the ratio of IRR population to reserve structure into synchronization with the national average, which is 1.64:1, or 1.64 IRR Marines for every SMCR unit billet.<sup>15</sup> Conversely, some areas are oversaturated with reserve structure comparable to the IRR population, and reserve units in those areas are collectively undermanned. The consistency with which the IRR to structure ratio is reflective of SMCR unit manning levels in different areas validates its significance.

In St Louis, Missouri, for instance, there are far more Marines seeking SelRes affiliation than there are billets to be filled. Excesses have been partially applied to surrounding units, but

due to the geographic dispersion of units in the region, many remain in the IRR who would otherwise be active participants in the SelRes. Furthermore, current SelRes structure in the area is limited to an infantry battalion headquarters company and a handful of officer IMA billets in support of US Transportation Command. The area is optimal for an injection of IMA structure because there are Marines seeking opportunities for continued service, including some at the local reserve unit looking to expand their experience base beyond those available in the headquarters company.

A misconception of many involved with staffing the IMA program over the past six years is that IRR Marines will travel farther to serve in an IMA billet than they would to fill an SMCR unit billet, making the billet locations inconsequential from a manpower perspective. While some individuals are willing to travel further, there are not enough to meet the manpower requirements of the IMA program. Longer commutes translate to increased opportunity costs for the Marines in the form of unreimbursed monetary travel costs, additional time away from civilian employment, and additional time away from family.

### **DoD and Marine Corps Review**

In October 2008, DoD Instruction 1200.17 was issued, which established overarching policies and principles for managing reserve component forces. The tasks identified for service secretaries by the directive are germane to current issues with the Marine Corps IMA program in four ways. They require (next page):

- 1) sufficient depth of individual capabilities to meet force utilization goals.
- 2) continual rebalancing of force structure and individual skill inventories to meet the full spectrum of operations.
- 3) implementation of continuum of service concept, which provides variable and flexible service options that enhance an individual's ability to continue to serve.
- 4) alignment of force structure with DoD goals for frequency of utilization, to the extent practicable.

The assessment of reserve structure and policies mandated by this directive are well timed to address and correct the systemic problems with the IMA program that have come to light in recent years. Accordingly, the Marine Corps is currently conducting an IMA program review in order to ensure organizational structure and management policies best support the mobilization workload of the total force.<sup>16</sup> Therefore, the following recommendations are offered which are collectively in keeping with the recent DoD guidance on policies and principles for managing reserve component forces.

### **Recommendations**

*"The military has made significant investments in recruiting, retaining, and training reserve personnel. Yet the DoD as a whole lacks a strategy to develop the kind of workforce needed for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Central to an effective manpower strategy is a comprehensive understanding of the nation's future force requirements. That force will need to be flexible - able to be tailored to meet total manpower needs, expanding or contracting when required."*

- Commission on the National Guard and Reserves, January, 2008<sup>17</sup>

1. **Modify the Marine Corps Structure Validation Process.** The structure validation process for the reserve component needs to take manpower availability into consideration. The 774 billets identified in Table 1 represent a significant amount of reserve structure that is incapable of being utilized to increase the readiness of the reserve component and the Marine Corps in general. Although they have little or no potential of being filled, they remain on T/Os and OpSponsors continue to list them as part of the 1,148 IMA billets that need to be filled. The

reason these remain on manning documents and continue to be considered as part of staffing equations is rooted in the fact that the Marine Corps applies the same structure review process to the IMA program as it does to the active component and SMCR units. The process is strictly requirements based, explicitly disregarding “staffing levels,...or types and quantities of personnel on hand”, according to Marine Corps Order 5311.1D.<sup>18</sup>

That process and policy is understandable for the active component and SMCR units because the Marine Corps can make adjustments to recruitment, training, and assignment policies in order to get the right manpower to the right unit, based on legitimate operational requirements. However, because the manpower sourcing pipeline for the IMA program is unique, it requires a unique structure validation process to be most effective.

Considering manpower availability as part of IMA structure review and development would likely prompt gaining commands to identify other legitimate capabilities that could actually be supported with reserve manpower, as further described in a later recommendation. Rather than maintaining hollow reserve structure, which proved disastrous for the Army during the early stages of the Korean War, the Marine Corps should take reserve manpower demographics into account to ensure that it has a legitimate chance of being manned and utilized.

2. **Expand IMA Drilling Locations.** The Marine Corps has options regarding the drilling locations of IMA billets. It is not necessary that they be located predominantly in the vicinity of major bases. The options lie in the current infrastructure of Marine Forces Reserve, which consists of 181 different Reserve Training Centers (RTC) throughout CONUS, 175 of which are not on board major bases and installations.<sup>19</sup> These RTCs are where SMCR units are located. Active duty Inspector-Instructor (I-I) staffs maintain a full time presence at the RTCs in order to

supervise reserve unit training and maintain equipment for the unit. Although I-I staffs have a full time presence, the actual facility is typically only used to capacity one weekend of every month, for unit drill. This means there is opportunity to expand drill locations for IMA detachments to more sites throughout the country, making service in those billets available to a larger portion of the IRR population.

This concept would entail IMA detachments such as II MEF and III MEF, whose headquarters are not located in areas of abundant IRR populations (North Carolina and Japan, respectively), to establish satellite detachments in the geographic areas that are underrepresented with reserve structure, per Table 2. For instance, they could establish detachments in Orlando, Florida and Los Angeles, California, respectively, which drill at one of the local RTCs on weekends when SMCR units are not using the space. The MOS composition of the detachment would also have to be improvised to better align with the general IRR population, but it could serve as pre-trained staff augmentation whose mission it would be to familiarize themselves respective operational plans and situations in the III MEF area of operations. A field grade officer in the area could serve as the Detachment OIC and coordinate training, just as an SMCR unit commander would. Annual training could be conducted in support of a III MEF exercise such as Ulchi Focus Lens or Cobra Gold. The end result would be additional manpower resources available to the MEF to perform staff functions during annual exercises or in the event of emergency.

This concept already has examples of success, one of which is Marine Forces Pacific's (MARFORPAC) Marine Rear Area Operations Group (MRAOG), located in Kansas City, MO, where the ratio of IRR Marines to SMCR unit billets of 2.14:1 well exceeds the national average of 1.64:1.<sup>20</sup> Because MARFORPAC's headquarters location in Hawaii is not an area with an

abundant IRR population, they have been able to maintain a trained IMA detachment by placing it in a location that does have a relatively abundant IRR population. It shares facilities with Headquarters Company, 24<sup>th</sup> Marine Regiment, and effectively provides Marines in the headquarters company with additional assignment options in the local area during the course of their reserve career. The MRAOG is trained to perform a specific function in support of an operations plan and participates in annual exercises to maintain proficiency in doing so.

3. **Creation of New Capability Oriented Detachments.** The Marine Corps should establish new IMA detachments, focused on specific capabilities, which apply some key strengths of reserve manpower (maturity and occupational diversity) to legitimate requirements facing the Corps in conducting hybrid warfare. Because members of the IRR have completed tours in the active or reserve component, their average rank and age is higher than the active component. Additionally, their aggregate breadth of experience arguably supersedes the active component because they have all gone on to pursue goals in civilian life that often include higher education, law enforcement, business, civil administration, and other realms of government. Their combination of military and civilian experience can have applicable value to the hybrid warfare facing the Marine Corps in the foreseeable future, which emphasizes cultural awareness, interagency cooperation, civil action, and information operations. Such capability oriented detachments could range from detachments designed to focus on information operations to training, assistance, and advisory capabilities. The reserve component already has structure for detachments such as these in the Mobilization Training Unit (MTU) program, which provides IRR Marines an opportunity to train in their local area on topics ranging from intelligence to public affairs. However, Marines who participate in the MTU program do so without pay, which

negatively impacts manning. The example used to further illustrate the concept of a capability oriented IMA detachment is a Civil Affairs (CA) detachment.

*"The most likely operational environment will be more densely populated and urbanized. It will be rife with interdependent power, service, and information systems. Operating in these urban complexes will pose extraordinary challenges. As difficult as the physical aspect of operations in this environment will be, the cultural terrain will be more complicated to navigate. The ability to comprehend and effectively "maneuver" in the cognitive and cultural dimension of the modern battle space is paramount."*

- Marine Corps Vision and Strategy 2025<sup>21</sup>

First, it is important to understand the current CA capability of the Marine Corps and how CA requirements have been fulfilled in recent years. Currently, all Marine Corps civil affairs structure resides in the reserves, in the form of two Civil Affairs Group (CAG) SMCR units, that are structured for 190 personnel each. Due to the irregular nature of military operations since 2003, the two standing SMCR CAGs have been unable to fulfill all of the civil affairs requirements of the Marine Corps. There have been two primary solutions; developing provisional CAGs from an array different SMCR units and assigning artillery units a secondary mission of civil affairs.<sup>22</sup> In both cases, Marines from various occupational backgrounds are trained to conduct civil affairs outside of the formal MOS producing process. Consequently, their focus on civil affairs training is secondary, at best, until their unit is notified that they will be deployed to perform that mission.

To date, this construct for developing CA capabilities to sustain ongoing operations has sufficed. However, it falls short of meeting the hybrid warfare challenges we expect to encounter in coming years, which is CA intensive. Because an artillery unit cannot conduct CA and fire support simultaneously, there is an inherent risk of a capability gap in the event of a large scale mobilization. The same is true of SMCR units who have other wartime functions. Since we expect civil affairs to have an increasingly influential role in the outcome of future

military actions, we should dedicate an appropriate amount of forces to that mission, enabling them to hone their skills beyond a secondary or ad hoc mission. Due to competing demands for finite resources, the growth of CA structure in the active and reserve component in recent years has been minimal. The underutilized structure that exists in the IMA program represents an opportunity for the Marine Corps to create trained detachments of dedicated CA personnel.

The concept involves the creation of CA detachments that focus on specific regions, perhaps by Geographic Combatant Command (GCC); and to make those determinations based on a deliberate attempt to align cultural similarities of regions in the US with GCCs. For instance, using the locations identified in Table 2 as targeted areas for additional structure, GCC areas of responsibility could be correlated to different U.S. cities as follows:

| <u>GCC</u>          | <u>U.S. City</u>               | <u>Remarks</u>                                                                                         |
|---------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| US Southern Command | Phoenix, AZ<br>San Antonio, TX | Largest racial group in both cities is “Hispanic”; higher chances of language & cultural proficiency.  |
| US Africa Command   | St Louis, MO                   | Largest racial group in the city is “Black”                                                            |
| US Pacific Command  | San Francisco, CA              | San Francisco has a 32% “Asian” population; largest of any city listed on Table 2.                     |
| US Central Command  | Orlando, FL                    | - Florida has 4 <sup>th</sup> largest Arab population in the US. - In close proximity to USCENTCOM Hqs |

**Table 3:** Notional correlation of GCCs to US cities that could support more SelRes structure, per Table 1. <sup>23</sup> see also <sup>24</sup>

Racial demographics of the IRR Marines in these locations will not necessarily mirror the city’s general population; however, the potential to recruit Marines of similar ethnic backgrounds is increased substantially. Additionally, there is a reasonable expectation that cultural awareness of these racial groups will be higher in these areas, due to exposure and the availability of local resources.

As evolving national strategy moves toward theater engagement and security cooperation, specifically in US Africa and Southern Command, geographically focused CA IMA

detachments can enhance the Marine Corps' global relevance. The detachments could participate in GCC sponsored annual exercises, plying their trade and providing a conduit between the local population and participating US military units, which increasingly include reserve component units, particularly within Africa Command.

Implementation of this concept could significantly expand the CA capability in the Marine Corps and establish a cadre of personnel with a familiarity for conducting CA operations in each region of the world. While most Marines who serve in a CA IMA det will return to serving in their primary occupational specialty with an SMCR unit or even return to the IRR, the Corps benefits by retaining that cultural knowledge base to draw upon if the need arises. The concept is in keeping with the continuum of service principle put forth by the DoD for managing reserve component forces because it affords attractive reserve participation opportunities to Marines in areas who may not otherwise have them.

4. **Establish an IMA Detachment for IA Sourcing.** Currently, the Marine Corps does not apply the power of their professional recruiting force to fill IA requirements with volunteers from the IRR. The establishment of an IMA detachment used for the sole purpose of sourcing IRR volunteers to fill IA billets would reduce the strain on active component manpower caused by IAs, and increase the operational posture of the reserves.

Routinely, PSRs encounter members of the IRR who are willing to make a single deployment, but are unable to commit to the long term annual and monthly training requirements associated with affiliation in a traditional SMCR unit or IMA detachment. Although PSRs exercise personal initiative to pair those individuals with SMCR units that are deploying or an IMA detachment with a near term deployment opportunity, they often come up short because

their sphere of awareness is typically limited to their immediate geographical area or region. They are not armed with a single point of contact or comprehensive list of reserve deployment opportunities in the Marine Corps that would facilitate the mutual attainment of their mission and the IRR Marine's objectives. The Marine could be referred to the Marine Corps Mobilization Command (MOBCOM) for assistance in finding an IA billet, but there is effectively a disincentive for the PSR to do so – it does not fulfill their mission to join IRR Marines to an SMCR unit or IMA detachment. Unfortunately, the result is an entire professional recruiting force who almost exclusively solicits members of the IRR, that is effectively disengaged from the IA sourcing effort.

This inadvertent systemic flaw could be overcome by the establishment of an IMA detachment used for the sole purpose of applying IRR Marines in this situation to IA requirements. The concept would involve joining the Marine to the detachment only until completion of their active duty orders, and then transferring them back to the IRR; negating the requirement for anyone at HQMC to establish and execute a training schedule for the detachment. The IMA detachment would have to be established as part of either HQMC Manpower and Reserve Affairs (M&RA) or MOBCOM. The associated OpSponsor would be the intermediary between the IA requirements tracking and sourcing section within HQMC, (MPP-60), and the PSR force. It would provide a single POC, or section, to allow PSRs to pair these IRR volunteers with IA requirements, which might otherwise fall to the active component to be filled.

Currently, IRR Marines activated to serve in IA billets are unknowingly being affiliated to IMA detachments and then transferred back to the IRR upon completion of active duty orders.

This is being done by HQMC to increase the end strength of the SelRes in general. Therefore, this concept is consistent with current practice; the key differences being the ability to utilize the capable PSR force as a mechanism to source manpower to IA requirements and the individual Marine's awareness that they are technically a member of the IMA while serving in an IA billet. Keeping with DoD guidance, implementation of this concept would increase the operational posture of the reserve by increasing the number of reserve Marines filling IA requirements.

5. **Extend Incentives Available to SMCR Unit Marines.** As a result of resource allocation practices at the service headquarters, there are three incentives available to Marines in SMCR units, but not to Marines serving in IMA detachments,. Those practices effectively place a higher value on SMCR unit service than on IMA service, which should not be the case. Both serve important roles in mobilizing the Marine Corps and the expansion of operating forces in time of war or national emergency. Both are also part of the continuum of service concept advanced by DoD. Therefore, the following incentives should be extended to the IMA program. **Prior Service MOS Retraining Program (PSMRP).** Through PSMRP, formal MOS training is available for members of the IRR who join an SMCR unit to serve in a billet outside of their current MOS. The program has been very successful for the SMCR, resulting in 656 accessions in fiscal year 2009 that used the program to qualify for continued reserve service with an SMCR unit, representing 45% of all SMCR unit accessions that year.<sup>25</sup>

The fundamental reason for the program's success is that it immensely expands the population of eligible IRR Marines who can be recruited to fill a billet. Using the bulk fuel SMCR unit in Green Bay, Wisconsin as an example, the PSMRP program provides the manpower system (PSRs) a far better opportunity to fill billets with MOS qualified Marines. For

instance, without PSMRP the eligible population for those billets would be limited to the relatively few members of the local IRR with an existing bulk fuel MOS, most of which are former members of the unit and previously made a deliberate decision to leave the unit. With PSMRP, the eligible population is expanded to the general IRR population in the area, most of which will qualify for that MOS.

Although PSMRP has been successful in filling billets for SMCR units, the Marine Corps is not utilizing it for the IMA program, citing a priority to fill SMCR units as the underlying reason.<sup>26</sup> Understanding SMCR units are a much larger portion of the Marine Corps Reserve than the IMA program, and deserve a requisite level of resources, there is no solid justification to restrict the use of PSMRP from the IMA program. Again, service in both SelRes categories are equally important.

Affiliation Bonuses. While some members of the IRR who affiliate with an SMCR unit are eligible for bonuses of up to \$15,000, the incentive is not available for those who affiliate with the IMA program. This creates a significant financial disincentive to affiliate with the IMA when compared to affiliation with the SMCR. For a sergeant who is eligible for a bonus and could either affiliate with an SMCR unit in the nearest major metropolitan area or affiliate with an IMA detachment that could be states away, the decision is clear. When travel costs are considered, the financial difference could easily add up to \$20,000 over the course of a 3 year tour. As with PSMRP, affiliation bonuses should be allocated based on the needs of the entire reserve force, not just the most dominate.

Travel Reimbursement. In 2009, the Marine Corps authorized travel reimbursement for certain SMCR unit billets, in order to overcome geographical disparities between the IRR population

and billet requirements, making continued service in the SelRes a more attractive option.<sup>27</sup>

However, like PSMRP and affiliation bonuses, this feature was not extended to the IMA program. While some gaining commands headquartered outside the continental United States have had success with paying travel costs associated with IMA service, those options are not available to all IMA programs for various reasons. Therefore, because this is another tool that can be used to overcome geographic disparities, it too should be extended to the IMA program to be applied to specific billets identified as being more critical for fill.

### **Conclusion**

Marines pride themselves on making the most of all available assets. With an innovative and deliberate approach to restructuring the IMA program, the Marine Corps can make better use of its authorized reserve end strength while simultaneously providing more opportunities to retain the service and experience resident in our IRR population. The first step is to realize that available manpower must be taken into consideration when assessing the program's structure. Then, adjustments can be made to the IMA program that will enable it to better serve its purpose for the Marine Corps. Specifically (next page):

- Expand IMA drilling locations of current detachments
- Create new capability oriented detachments, such as civil affairs
- Create a HQMC IMA Det for the purpose of sourcing IAs
- Extend available incentives to the IMA program

If done deliberately, and reassessed periodically, the IMA program can be used to inject reserve structure into areas where there is excess IRR manpower capacity in relation to existing

structure. Adjusting SMCR unit locations to take advantage of that capacity is a lengthy process mired in political considerations. Adjustments to IMA structure would be much more responsive, increase reserve end strength, reduce active component manpower turbulence associated with IA assignments, and achieve objectives described by DoD for the management of the reserve component.

*"The Marine Corps' agility is based on its expeditionary mindset and flexible structure, able to operate either from the sea or in sustained operations ashore. We can adapt quickly with unparalleled speed across an extraordinary range of military operations. Our organizational design and training facilitate a seamless transition between these operations, providing the necessary capability to operate effectively."*

- Marine Corps Vision and Strategy 2025<sup>28</sup>

#### End Notes:

<sup>1</sup> Department of Defense. Commission on the National Guard and Reserve: Final Report to Congress and the Secretary of Defense. 31 January, 2008. 113.

<sup>2</sup> Commandant of the Marine Corps. *Individual Mobilization Augmentee (IMA) Program Review*. MARADMIN 464/09, August 05, 2009.

<sup>3</sup> "Monthly Manpower Brief". Headquarters Marine Corps, Reserve Affairs. May 31, 2009

<sup>4</sup> Yetter, Gregg, Deputy MMFA, HQMC M&RA, email message to author, 13 January, 2010.

<sup>5</sup> Commandant of the Marine Corps. *Individual Mobilization Augmentee (IMA) Program Review*. MARADMIN 464/09, August 05, 2009.

<sup>6</sup> Giusti, Ernest H. *Mobilization of the Marine Corps Reserve in the Korean Conflict, 1950-1951*. Washington, Historical Branch, G-3 Division Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, 1967. II-7

<sup>7</sup> U.S. Marine Corps Combat Development Center. *Marine Corps Reserve Forces in Operation Iraqi Freedom: Lessons Learned/Reserve Combat Assessment Team*. Quantico, VA: U.S. Marine Corps Combat Development Center, 2003. 53

<sup>8</sup> "IMA Billet Vacancy List" Headquarters Marine Corps, Reserve Affairs. December 2009.

<sup>9</sup> Marine Corps Recruiting Command. Automated Leads Management Recruitment System (ALMRS): Sitrep. <https://www.almrs.marines.usmc.mil/>

<sup>10</sup> "Monthly Manpower Brief". Headquarters Marine Corps, Reserve Affairs. May 31, 2009.

<sup>11</sup> "IMA Recruiting Supportability". Marine Corps Recruiting Command. December 17, 2008.

<sup>12</sup> "IMA Billet Vacancy List" Headquarters Marine Corps, Reserve Affairs. December 2009.

<sup>13</sup> Marine Corps Recruiting Command. Automated Leads Management Recruitment System (ALMRS): IRR Data. <https://www.almrs.marines.usmc.mil/>

<sup>14</sup> "IMA Recruiting Supportability". Marine Corps Recruiting Command. December 17, 2008.

<sup>15</sup> "PSR National Structure Working Group After Action Report". Marine Corps Recruiting Command, December 17, 2008.

- <sup>16</sup> Commandant of the Marine Corps. *Individual Mobilization Augmentee (IMA) Program Review*. MARADMIN 464/09, August 05, 2009.
- <sup>17</sup> Department of Defense. Commission on the National Guard and Reserve: Final Report to Congress and the Secretary of Defense. 31 January, 2008. 76
- <sup>18</sup> Headquarters, U.S. Marines Corps, *Total Force Structure Process (TFSP)*, Marine Corps Order 5311.1D, February 26, 2009. 5-5
- <sup>19</sup> "SMCR Needs Report". Headquarters Marine Corps Reserve Affairs, December 2009.
- <sup>20</sup> "PSR National Structure Working Group After Action Report". Marine Corps Recruiting Command, December 17, 2008.
- <sup>21</sup> Commandant of the Marine Corps. *Marine Corps Vision and Strategy 2025*.
- <sup>22</sup> Commandant of the Marine Corps. *Assignment of Secondary Civil Military Operations Mission to the Artillery Regiments Battalions*. ALMAR 061/05, December 05, 2005.
- <sup>23</sup> Website: <http://www.city-data.com/> (accessed 23 February, 2010)
- <sup>24</sup> U.S. Census Bureau. *The Arab Population: 2000*. U.S. Department of Commerce Economics and Statistics Administration, December 2003.
- <sup>25</sup> Marine Corps Recruiting Command. Automated Leads Management Recruitment System (ALMRS): Sitrep. <https://www.almrs.marines.usmc.mil/>
- <sup>26</sup> Zimmerman, Patrick J., Marine Corps IMA Program Manager, conversation with author, 17 December, 2009.
- <sup>27</sup> Commandant of the Marine Corps. *Inactive Duty Training Travel Reimbursement*. MARADMIN 222/09, April 03, 2009.
- <sup>28</sup> Commandant of the Marine Corps. *Marine Corps Vision and Strategy 2025*.

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