

Deployment Tempo and Retention in the Marine Corps

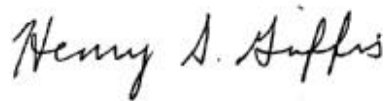
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A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Henry S. Griffis". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'H'.

Henry S. Griffis, Director
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Outline



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This slide provides an outline for the annotated briefing. We first provide some background on deployment and reenlistment (which comes from our statistical work) and on the structure of our focus groups. Then, we discuss each of the deployment-related concerns raised in our focus groups. The briefing concludes with a summary, which offers some recommendations for consideration.

Introduction



- ACMC asked CNA to examine the effects of current deployment tempo on retention
- DC, M&RA sponsored the study
- Sponsor is already taking action on many study findings

The Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps (ACMC) asked CNA to examine the effects of current deployment tempo on retention. The Deputy Commandant, Manpower and Reserve Affairs (DC, M&RA) sponsored the study and has already begun acting on several of the study's findings.

Approach



- **Statistical analysis of deployed-day data matched with Marines' personnel records**
- **Focus group input**
 - 26 groups (13 from each coast), each with 20 to 30 Marines (E-3 to O-6)
 - Represented all operational and base/support element units of eastern North Carolina and southern California
 - Separated FTAP/STAP by GCE/ACE/CSSE/Base and Station affiliation
 - Commanding Officers (COs) of O-5- and O-6-level commands
 - Officers not currently in command (O-3/O-4/CWO under 15 YOS)
 - Career Retention Specialists (CRSs) from all units

The study's approach consisted of two components: (1) the statistical analysis of deployed-day data matched with Marines' personnel records and (2) information collected through a series of focus groups.

We traveled to North Carolina (Feb 28 to Mar 4) and California (Jun 6–10) to speak with Marines about the effect of the current deployment tempo on their reenlistment/continuation decisions.

We considered focus groups to be useful for three reasons. First, we thought that the information gathered could guide and shape our statistical analysis (e.g., did Marines like deployments to Iraq/Afghanistan more than other types of deployments?) Second, we thought that the discussions might highlight deployment-related problems or issues that might not be apparent in statistical analysis (e.g., if the availability of nondeployable billets was an issue for reenlisters). Finally, we thought that these discussions might give us a sense of future trends that might not (as yet) be visible in the data.

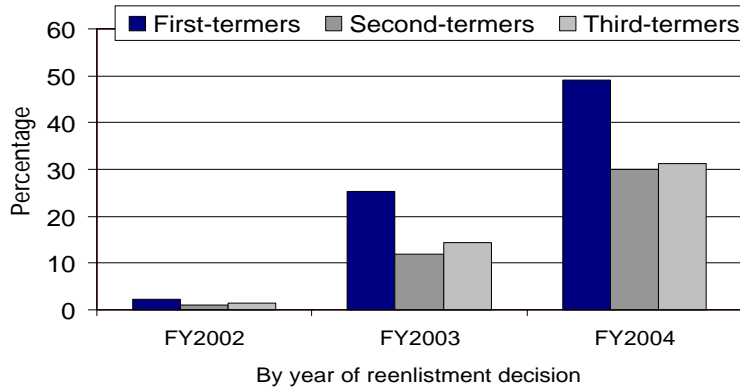
Each focus group ran about 1½ hours. We developed nine questions (with subcategories) in advance to shape the discussion but used them only as a guide. The discussions were free-flowing, with lively and enthusiastic participation from all attendees. We also got extremely good cooperation and support from all local commands involved. We developed a stratified sample methodology for our focus groups. We met with 26 separate groups (13 from each coast), each with 20 to 30 Marines or Officers (grades E-3 through O-6). Marines and Officers in these groups represented all operational and base/support element units of eastern

North Carolina and southern California. The eight first-term alignment plan (FTAP)¹ groups consisted of Marines who were fully qualified and recommended for reenlistment and in their 3rd or 4th year of a 4- or 5-year contract. The eight subsequent-term alignment plan (STAP)² groups consisted of NCOs and SNCOs with up to 15 years of service. In addition to separating groups based on FTAP/STAP status, we divided groups based on whether the Marines were in an operational, supporting, or FSSG/MAW unit. We also met with four groups of Commanding Officers (COs) of O-5- and O-6-level commands, and four groups of officers not currently in command, who were in the O-3, O-4, and CWO grades with 6 to 15 years of service. We did not divide our officer groups by type of unit. Finally, we met with two groups of Career Retention Specialists (CRSs) from all types of units.

¹The Marine Corps identifies the first-term population making reenlistment decisions as the FTAP population.

²The Marine Corps identifies the second- and third-term population making reenlistment decisions as the STAP population.

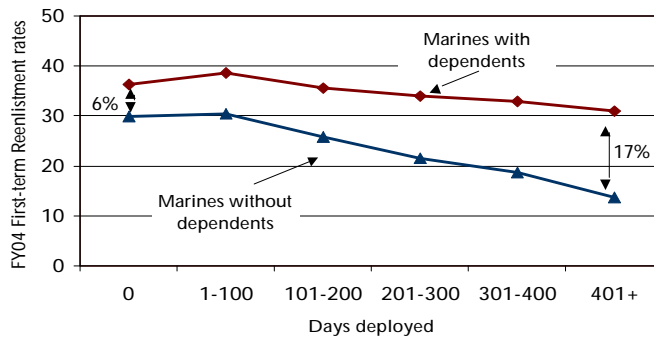
Percentage Deployed to Iraq/Afghanistan



Using data from the Contingency Tracking System (CTS) that start in FY01,³ this figure shows the percentage of first-, second-, and third-term Marines deployed to Iraq or Afghanistan (or Bosnia) by year of reenlistment decision. In FY02, fewer than 2 percent of first-, second-, and third-term Marines making reenlistment decisions had deployed to these locations; by FY04, this had risen to almost half of first-term Marines and about a third of second- and third-term Marines making reenlistment decisions.

³DMDC built the CTS from service-supplied data.

Dependency Status, Deployment Tempo, and Retention: FY04 FTAP Marines

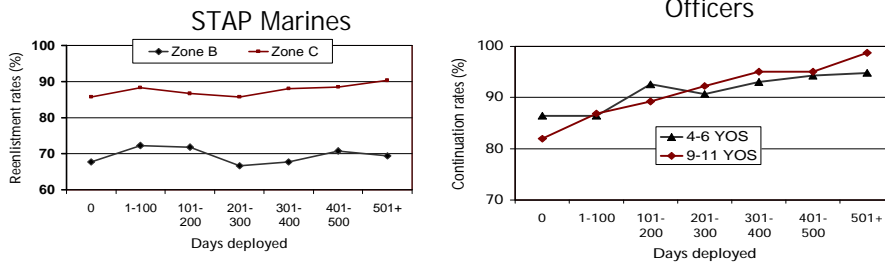


Regardless of dependency status, reenlistment rates fall as number of days deployed increases, although the decrease isn't as sharp for Marines with dependents

Our statistical analysis finds a strong relationship between days deployed⁴ and reenlistment rates for FTAP Marines. As the figure shows, the reenlistment rate falls as the number of days that a Marine is deployed during his or her first term increases. Furthermore, this negative relationship is strongest for Marines who have no dependents at the time of their reenlistment decision compared with those who do have dependents. This relationship also holds in our econometric analysis.

⁴For these Marines making first-term reenlistment decisions in FY04, we measure days deployed for the 36 months prior to the reenlistment decision point (either at reenlistment or at separation).

Relationship Between Deployment Tempo and Retention for STAP Marines and Officers



STAP Marines show no relationship between days deployed and reenlistment rates.

Officers who have deployed a lot are more likely to continue than officers who didn't deploy or who deployed very little.

Counter to our findings for first-term Marines, we find no relationship between days deployed and reenlistment rates for STAP Marines.⁵ As the figure shows, the reenlistment rate stays relatively constant as the number of days that a Marine is deployed during his or her second or third term increases. Our econometric analysis to date also shows no relationship between deployment days and reenlistment for second- and third-term Marines. Furthermore, dependency status became a less important factor over time in decisions to reenlist.

For officers, we found that those who have deployed a lot are *more* likely to continue than officers who did not deploy or who deployed very little.⁶ Because of these findings, we focus attention on FTAP—first-term—Marines.

⁵For these Marines making second- and third-term reenlistment decisions in FY04, we measure days deployed for the previous 36 months from the reenlistment decision point (either at reenlistment or at separation).

⁶Continuation rates are measured from March 2004 to March 2005. If the officer separated, we tabulated the number of days deployed in the 42 months before separation. For officers who did not separate, we tabulated the number of days deployed in the 42 months preceding March 2005.

Single Marines (no dependents)



- **Make up over half of first-term reenlistment pool**
- Historically, reenlist at much lower rates
 - 22% (of 11,700) vs. 35% (of 9,100) for those with dependents
 - Marine Corps making reenlistment goals
- **Issues:**
 - Barracks life/CONUS messing
 - Felt more likely to be used for short-notice deployments
 - Felt overused

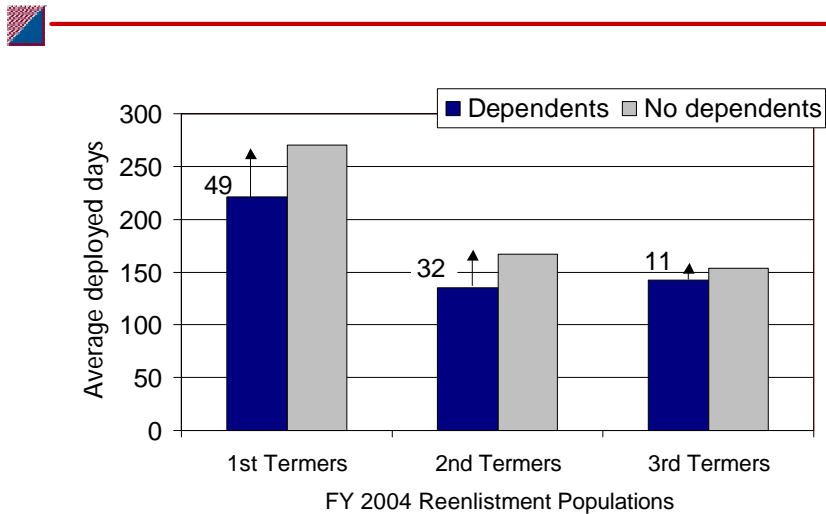
We believe that deployment-related issues affecting single Marines (those without dependents) should receive particular attention since they make up over half of the first-term reenlistment pool.

Particularly at the end of the first term of service, single Marines (those without dependents) reenlist at substantially lower rates than Marines with dependents. And, as previously noted, single Marines' reenlistment probabilities also are more heavily depressed by deployment tempo.

Two of the main dissatisfiers for single Marines without dependents are barracks life and in-CONUS messing. Particularly if high operational tempo is to continue, Marine Corps leadership could consider Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH) and Basic Allowance for Subsistence (BAS) for meritorious NCOs. It also could consider ways to make in-CONUS messing more attractive to those who live in the barracks, possibly by granting more Marines BAS.

In several focus groups, single Marines indicated that they felt more likely to be used for short-notice deployments. They also said that they felt overused relative to their married counterparts.

Marines Without Dependents Deploy More



Our statistical analysis supports the belief that single Marines deploy more than their married counterparts; we found that first-term Marines without dependents were deployed, on average, about 50 days more than first-term Marines with dependents in 2004.⁷ Differences were also apparent for single Marines in their second or third terms.

⁷Deployed days are measured for the 36 months prior to the reenlistment or separation decision.

Voluntary Exchanges



- **Deployment days are not spread evenly over 1st termers**
For FY04 FTAPers:
 - 28% deployed less than 100 days
 - 25% deployed 400 days or more
- **Lots of interest in exchanges**
 - Nondeployers want to deploy and heavy deployers want a break
 - Commanders supported, but
 - Short-staffed nondeploying units may be unwilling to give up experienced Marines
 - Deploying units may want to retain experienced Marines
- **Need senior leadership to support and create mechanisms/incentives**

Note that deployment days are not spread evenly over all first-term Marines. For example, of first-term Marines making reenlistment decisions in 2004, 28 percent had deployed only 1 to 100 days (and 12 percent had no deployed days). At the other side of the distribution, 25 percent had more than 400 days deployed.

Given this, FTAP Marines who have been heavily deployed, or Marines who had little deployment time and wanted to deploy, liked the idea of voluntary exchanges. We heard several instances of Marines who perceived themselves to be “the same” (in terms of MOS and skill) as heavily deployed Marines but who were unable to switch places with them for a deployment (usually because they were assigned to the base or station).

Commanders agreed that, although they did not oppose such switches, they often preferred to deploy with a Marine who already had deployment experience and/or leave a Marine with shop experience in the rear. That said, both overdeployed and underdeployed Marines said they were unhappy and would choose not to reenlist. Although the monitors with whom we spoke said that they would facilitate such switches if they came to their attention, they also acknowledged that they rely heavily on SNCOs (e.g., maintenance chiefs) to bring such opportunities to their attention. Unfortunately, there are no incentives within the current system to pursue or facilitate such switches, even if it would result in the retention of two Marines, both of whom might otherwise separate. As a result, we recommend that senior leadership support and create such mechanisms and also build incentives for such switches.

Assignment Policies: Individual Augmentees (IAs) and Unit Fills



- No one in **operational forces** liked IAs
 - Time between notification and deployment is short
 - Several were unexpected or unneeded
 - Many worked out of MOS for the deployment
 - Attachment/detachments were most affected
- Churn in units among platoon leaders/OICs/SNCOICs
 - Affects morale and degrades training
 - Limits observation time for reporting seniors (not observed Fitness Reports, Pro/Con marks)

One issue that seemed to be particularly troubling to all focus group participants was that of Individual Augmentees (IAs).⁸ IAs are requests for individuals to fill emerging requirements, which are not in the Table of Organizations (T/O). When an IA request comes to a unit (either a joint or internal Marine Corps requirement), commanders say that they are reluctant to fill the request, hoping it will either go away or be filled by a Marine from another unit. When it becomes apparent that they have no choice but to fill the requirement, it results in a Marine or Officer getting “last-minute” notification of his or her deployment.

Beyond the last-minute nature of IA deployments, Marines who had served as IAs also expressed dissatisfaction with their use once they arrived at the new command. We heard several accounts of IAs arriving in theater, only to find they were unexpected or unneeded. Some were assigned work outside their MOSs but kept at the new unit; others were sent back. Finally, IAs from operational commands would return from IA duty to find that their parent unit was about to deploy.

Commanders verified that this occurs and expressed doubt that all emerging requirements have been properly validated. It is not surprising that these assignments caused real morale problems, with attachments and detachments being most affected. Unfortunately, monitors at the Personnel Management division (MM) have little ability to track and monitor these assignments.

⁸It was difficult for us to assess whether all assignments discussed were really IAs or if some were Request for Forces (RFFs).

The second issue raised was that of unit fills. There has always been some churn before a unit deploys, but we heard from focus group participants that this has become more widespread in the current operational environment. Deploying in small groups as detachments to different units, several Marines said that they felt unneeded or unwanted when they got to the new unit. As with IAs, we also heard that Marines ended up working outside their MOSs—sometimes for the entire deployment. Marines also said that, contrary to past practice, those who are not planning to reenlist are still being sent for 2 to 4 months of a deployment, then being returned home at EAS to separate from the Marine Corps.

Perhaps most important, we heard that there is a “revolving door” for platoon leaders and OICs—with very short tenure with a unit before being transferred to a different unit. We were told that this type of constant churn affects morale and degrades training. It also allows only limited observation time for reporting seniors (resulting in not observed Fitness Reports and Pro/Con marks). Many junior Marines were disconcerted by high turnover among their immediate leadership (some cited several OICs and SNCOs in the months before a deployment), and several said that it influenced their reenlistment decisions.

Quality of Marines



- Significant drop in NEAS attrition, BUT
- Some problem Marines being kept to end of deployment/enlistment
 - Commanders need them, but NCOs/SNCOs have to deal with them
 - Affects morale and retention of quality Marines (squad leaders, platoon leaders/OICs, section leaders)
- At reenlistment, though, really good news
 - High-quality Marines make up larger share of reenlisters than separators

Participants in our focus groups also discussed the effect of the current deployment tempo on NEAS attrition. Many view the drop in NEAS attrition over the last several years as a “good news story.” But we heard, from Marines as well as commanders, that the demands of the current deployment tempo have meant that some unfit Marines, troublemakers, and Marines convicted of serious offenses (particularly drug use)—who, in the past, would have been quickly separated—are being kept to the end of their deployments or to the end of their enlistments. They cited two reasons for this. First, they said that there were few personnel on hand to take the steps needed to process problem Marines for discharge. Second, they said that Marines were needed for the deployment; in fact, some questioned whether Marines might be engaging in bad behaviors in an attempt to avoid deployment. Third, they acknowledged that there was less time available to mentor Marines who were going astray.

Although commanders need these Marines for deployment, we heard that the short-term retention of problem Marines negatively affected the morale and retention of other high-quality Marines, particularly those who were squad, platoon, or section leaders. These junior leaders of squads, platoons, and sections had to manage these problem Marines on a daily basis.

The good news, however, is that problem Marines are not reenlisted. In fact, we find that high-quality Marines make up a larger share of those who reenlist than of those who separate.

Changing Deployment Dates and Time Between Deployments



- **Changing deployment dates:**
 - Created storage/contractual problems for single Marines
 - Caused family stress for married Marines
 - Compromised leaders' credibility
 - Posed less of a problem today than earlier in operations
 - Posed more of a problem with large-scale deployments
- **Short time between deployments:**
 - Gave Marines little “downtime”—right back to training/operational workups
 - Caused Marines/Commanders to wonder whether all workups had to be done or done away from home
 - Left little time to train/mentor newly joined Marines

Changing deployment dates was a significant issue, particularly among FTAP Marines, and seemed to be more of an issue among those on the east coast than for those on the west coast, which could be due to the timing of their deployments (those Marines were involved in earlier operations). Date changes seem to be most prevalent early in operations and when large-scale deployments took place.

Both single and married Marines found that moving deployment dates caused problems. For single Marines, such delays often meant that they had already moved out of private housing and stored their gear (including their cars). Some spoke of having to “camp out” on the floor of another Marine’s barracks room until deployment. In the case of deployment extensions, single Marines found it difficult to deal with contractual arrangements (e.g., car payments) that had been prearranged for only the length of their expected absences. Married Marines found moving deployment dates to be difficult on their families; for example, multiple hellos and goodbyes were emotionally taxing. When deployments were extended or moved forward, some married Marines said it left them with less time at home to work through any marital or family financial problems that may have arisen while they were deployed.

All groups felt that leaders lost credibility with the unit when deployment dates changed repeatedly, often with no explanation. FTAP Marines were most upset by changes, whereas STAP Marines and officers viewed changes as “par for the course.” Although it is unlikely that some of these changes can be avoided, we also heard that leaders would sometimes vow to Marines that they would be home by a certain date—probably unwise given the current operational environment.

Another issue the focus groups raised was the time between deployments, which everyone agreed had shortened since the 2003 buildup. Many Marines questioned why they had to go back into the cycle of training and operational workups so soon after returning from a deployment. Others wondered if all exercises and workups were necessary after they had just been deployed. (For example, several FTAP Marines questioned why they had to go to double CAX when they had already been on two deployments to Iraq.) Even several commanders questioned whether all exercises and workups were truly necessary. Finally, some Marines asked if more training could be done at home station rather than away from home.

In general, focus groups thought that the short time between deployments affected training and mentoring and, consequently, readiness. Junior leaders noted that it left them with little time to train and mentor newly joined Marines.

Availability of “Downtime”



- All Marines (deployed or not) felt ability to take regular/routine leave is severely curtailed
 - We find increases in average leave balances and lost leave
- Every group mentioned need for a break from the deployment cycle
- Some Marines want nondeployable billets, even more than SRBs
 - CRSs have fewer to offer
- Leave “sellback,” leave lost, and lack of liberty big negatives for retention

Whether they were deployed or not, all Marines felt that their ability to take regular leave and liberty (other than block leave) was severely curtailed in the current environment. Deployers said this was due to the short duration of down-time between deployments; nondeployers said it was because their units in the rear were short-staffed. In fact, we find increases in average leave balances and lost leave (shown on the next slide).

The inability to take leave was a concern for all Marines, whether single or married. Single Marines felt that it limited their ability to develop personal relationships, whereas married Marines felt they needed more time with their families, particularly after a lengthy deployment.

Despite the lack of leave time while not deployed, some Marines said that they really liked the R&R trips to Qatar, for example, during their deployments in Iraq. Although some felt that the trips were not equally offered among personnel, those who had gone appreciated the few days’ rest. We found it surprising that most Marines said they would not like a mid-deployment trip home for R&R—they said that a short trip home would be too emotionally draining.

We also discussed combat leave in our focus groups. Many Marines (particularly FTAP Marines) misunderstood what combat leave was; they thought they were actually earning “extra” leave rather than getting their usual leave tax free for the time that they were deployed in a combat zone. Providing more information to junior Marines would help to clear up this misperception.⁹

⁹MARADMIN 462/05 was recently issued in an attempt to better explain combat leave, but it’s wording may still leave some confused.

Leave: What Do the Data Show?



- Number of Marines losing leave is increasing
 - 16,000 in FY99 to 22,000 in FY04
- More heavily deployed Marines more likely to lose leave
- Leave accumulation up most sharply for E-3s and E-4s
- **Increase in work days** (less leave) between FY99 and FY04 effectively increased Corps strength by 1,350 Marines
 - **710 of them E-3s and E-4s**

We decided to measure stress due to deployment tempo by examining how many Marines are not taking their annual leave. At the end of every fiscal year, Marines' leave balances are reduced to 60 days—the maximum number of days that can be carried over into the new fiscal year. Although there are means by which some Marines can later get lost leave restored, we take the losing of leave as an indication that Marines did not feel able to take the leave over the course of the fiscal year. We find that the number of Marines losing leave has increased over time—from about 16,000 in FY99 to 22,000 in FY04. It's no surprise that heavily deployed Marines are more likely to lose leave than other Marines.

For more junior Marines (E-3s and E-4s), who will not have had enough time in the Marine Corps to accumulate over 60 days leave, we use a different stress measure—the average number of leave days accumulated. Here, we find that the average leave accumulation is up sharply in FY04.

If Marines are taking fewer leave days, it means they are working more days. We estimate that the increase in work days that occurred between FY99 and FY04 meant that the Marine Corps' effective strength increased by 1,350 Marines.¹⁰ Most of this increase (710 Marines) is estimated to result from the increased work days of E-3s and E-4s, who were among those most heavily used in the war effort.

¹⁰To translate increased leave balances into increases in endstrength, we assume that there are 260 work days in a year.

Availability of “Downtime”



- All Marines (deployed or not) felt ability to take regular/routine leave is severely curtailed
 - We find increases in average leave balances and lost leave
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- Some Marines want nondeployable billets, even more than SRBs
 - CRSs have fewer to offer
- Leave “sellback,” leave lost, and lack of liberty big negatives for retention

Given the current operational tempo, members of every group mentioned a need for a break from the deployment cycle. Most enlisted Marines (particularly those FTAP Marines who had already been on two or three deployments to Iraq) expressed strong interest in getting a nondeployable billet. Some said they would prefer a guaranteed nondeployable billet, even if it were only for one year, to any SRB. In all cases, they believed that it would provide a break from the deployment cycle (even if it were in recruiting or on the drill field).

CRSs also told us that they were getting numerous requests for nondeployable billets, many of which they were not able to accommodate. The downside of the Marine Corps’ ongoing MilCiv conversion is that there will be even fewer nondeployable billets available in the future.

Because there seems to be little ability to ameliorate these conditions, policies that limit leave sellback and the retention of accrued leave are having negative effects on retention.

Education and Professional Development



- **Off-duty education**
 - Many FTAP Marines joined to pursue
 - Both deployers and nondeployers perceive that they haven't been able to do so (too busy or too tired)
 - Don't see situation improving
 - Army mobile education vans in Iraq
- **PME and formal schools (resident and nonresident)**
 - Curtailed ability to attend/complete
 - Concern that this might affect:
 - Future promotion chances
 - Professionalism of the Corps

Time for off-duty education was a big issue among FTAP Marines, many of whom said that the promise of education was the primary reason that they had joined the Marine Corps. Both deployers and nondeployers felt that they were either too busy (or too tired) to pursue off-duty education opportunities given the current operational environment. All said they did not foresee any improvement in the situation. In several groups, Marines mentioned that the Army had a mobile education center in Iraq that offered testing services and online courses. Although most recognized that educational opportunities would never be completely accessible to all, they felt that such a trailer would improve accessibility while deployed.

For SNCOs and officers, the ability to attend and complete Professional Military Education (PME) and formal resident and nonresident schools was a big concern. Although certain PME requirements for SNCOs have been waived, they have not been waived indefinitely. SNCOs may be promoted once without PME, but they are still expected to complete the missing PME before their next selection board. There is some concern as to whether they will ever have the time needed to catch up on their missing PME. For officers, PME is not a requirement for promotion, but ALMAR 026/04 says that it may improve their probability of selection.

Finally, commanders expressed a more long-term concern that the professionalism of the Corps might also suffer if PME requirements continue to be waived.

Equipment Introduction and Provisional Rifle Companies



- New equipment is fielded during deployment without training on use or maintenance information
 - Shortage of equipment for predeployment training
 - Shortage of training ammunition—particularly for CSSE and MWSS crew-served weapons systems
- Provisional Rifle/Security Companies (Artillery/LAAD Battalion)
 - Concern about lack of training
 - Not confident of skills

Several deployment-related concerns involved equipment introduction and provisional rifle companies.

Several Marines said that the schools were not teaching them about the equipment currently used in Iraq. Some believed this is because new equipment is being fielded during deployment—leaving them no opportunity to train on the equipment or to decipher maintenance information. Although contractors and tech reps were supposed to help, Marines were generally uncomplimentary of their knowledge or availability. Others thought that unfamiliarity with deployed equipment was because of insufficient equipment available for adequate predeployment training. In addition, those in the CSSE and MWSS cited a shortage of training ammunition for their crew-served weapons systems.

Finally, Marines serving in Provisional Rifle/Security Companies (who were often pulled from artillery or LAAD battalions, for example) said that they were not confident of their skills in patrolling and security and were unfamiliar with the weapons used. Many of those who had served as part of these companies said that they would not choose to reenlist if they would have to continue to serve in these provisional companies.

Outside Opportunities



- **CRSs were very critical of outside organizations' active recruitment of Marines**
 - Consider restricting recruitment on the base/station
 - Many job fairs conducted in summer, just when big push for FTAP/STAP reenlistments begin
- **FTAP and STAP Marines talked about jobs with Kellogg, Brown and Root, and Aviation community tech reps**
 - Marines met them in Iraq
 - Big money for “doing the same thing”
 - Several Marines already had signed contracts

CRSs were very critical of outside organizations' active recruitment of Marines. They said that the Marine Corps should consider restricting recruitment on bases and stations, particularly during the summer when they are making a big push for FTAP and STAP.

FTAP and STAP Marines talked about being recruited while deployed in Iraq for jobs with a variety of government contractors, including Kellogg, Brown and Root, Blackwater, and Triple Canopy. Some who were not planning to reenlist had already accepted jobs with contractors. In general, Marines felt that these companies offered them the opportunity to earn substantially more money for “doing the same thing.” Although we explained that job opportunities might be short-lived, Marines (particularly FTAP Marines) were unconcerned about the short duration of these opportunities.

Reserve Affiliation



- Those planning to separate were usually not interested in joining the Reserves
 - Expect to deploy as much as in active force
- Could consider giving high-deployers who join the Reserves a “no deployment” break
 - Army Reserve is doing this
 - Marine Corps is considering
- CRSs are engaged in SMCR recruiting effort

In every group, except those of commanders and CRSs, there were members who planned to leave the Corps. However, those planning to separate usually said that they were not interested in joining the Reserves. In all cases, they said it was because they expected to deploy as much (if not more) in the Reserves as they had while in the active-duty force. CRSs recognize that these perceptions create an obstacle to reserve affiliation and are actively engaged in the SMCR recruiting effort.

The Army Reserve has recently offered those affiliating with the Selected Reserve a “no deployment” break—writing (in contracts) that PS servicemembers affiliating with the Army Reserve will not have to deploy within their first year. We believe that the Marine Corps is considering a similar provision.

Compensation and DEPTempo



- Deployers like extra money, especially tax-free SRBs
- Nondeployers feel slighted
- Several deployers complained of pay problems, specifically with:
 - Split pay
 - Casual pay
 - No Pay Dues (NPDs)
- Lump-sum NPDs
 - Can request installments, but Marines either don't see warning statements or do not know of process
 - Attachments/detachments seem most affected

Most Marines said that they liked deployment because of the extra money they received. They especially liked tax-free SRBs, something that is also evident in our econometric work to date. That said, nondeployers often felt slighted, particularly if they had repeatedly volunteered but had not been chosen for a deployment or if they were working in a severely undermanned shop. For these reasons, we think the Marine Corps should consider a Regular Reenlistment Bonus (RRB) that recognizes the sacrifices made by all Marines in the current operational environment. Marines said that even a \$1,000 bonus would make them feel more appreciated.

Although they seem less severe than those experienced by members of other Services, several Marines to whom we spoke said that they experienced pay problems—particularly with split pay, casual pay, and NPDs—while deployed. Increased churn in the current operational environment (particularly for those serving in attachments or detachments) seemed to result in some pay problems. Marines were particularly upset when NPDs came out of their paychecks in a lump sum with (what they perceived as) no warning. In fact, Marines are notified on their statements before an NPD is withdrawn, but many Marines (particularly those who are deployed) do not look at their statements or their statements are delayed. And although Marines can request that an NPD be collected in installments, most Marines are unaware of this option. As a result, we suggest that the Marine Corps reevaluate how best to collect NPDs from deployed Marines.

If DEPTEMPO Demands Continue, Who is at Risk?



Commanders said:

- First-termers in heavily deploying MOSs
- SNCOs with less than 10 years of service
- Company grade officers completing their first term of obligated service
- Younger pilots who have fulfilled initial obligation

Based on our analysis, we would add:

- Single Marines (those without dependents)
- Nondeploying first-termers

If the current pace of operational tempo continues, who will be most at risk of attriting? In our focus groups, commanders said that first-termers in heavily deploying MOSs would be at risk (something that is evident in our statistical analysis). They also were concerned about SNCOs with less than 10 years of service, company grade officers completing their first term of obligated service, and younger pilots who have fulfilled their initial obligations—but these trends are not (perhaps not yet) apparent in the data. Our statistical analysis does find, however, that Marines without dependents are at particular risk, and (to a lesser extent) nondeploying first-term Marines.

Recommendations



- Examine possibilities for exchanges between heavy deployers and nondeployers
- Continue to review and validate the IA process
- Emphasize accuracy of join/detachment dates and start/stop dates for special pays
 - Consider replacing lump-sum NPDs with installment payment NPDs
- Consider forward-deployed mobile education vans
- Consider a wartime RRB for all
- Consider BAH/BAS for outstanding FTAP NCOs

Our recommendations thus far include things that the Marine Corps could do to ease stress that high deployment tempo causes. We make these recommendations recognizing that the current wartime environment can make change difficult.

First, the Marine Corps should examine possibilities for exchanges between heavy deployers and nondeployers. Both groups seemed dissatisfied, and the Marine Corps may benefit by switches that keep more Marines of both types in the Corps. As it is currently doing, the Marine Corps should continue to review and validate the IA process. Many Marines (even commanders) were dissatisfied with the current process. To avoid future pay problems, the Marine Corps must emphasize the accuracy of join and detachment dates and start and stop dates for special pays. It also might consider changing the way in which NPDs are collected—for example, replacing lump-sum NPDs with ones paid in installments. The Marine Corps also might want to consider forward-deployed mobile education vans since many Marines said they would appreciate such a benefit. To foster more equity, the Marine Corps may want to consider a Regular Reenlistment Bonus that recognizes the sacrifices of all Marines in the current operational environment. Finally, we recommend that the Marine Corps pay particular attention to single-Marine issues—perhaps, for example, by granting commanding officers the authority to allow a percentage of meritorious NCOs to draw BAH and BAS and live off base.

