

<b>REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE</b>					Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188	
<p>The public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing the burden, to Department of Defense, Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports (0704-0188), 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to any penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number.</p> <p><b>PLEASE DO NOT RETURN YOUR FORM TO THE ABOVE ADDRESS.</b></p>						
<b>1. REPORT DATE (DD-MM-YYYY)</b> 03/01/2021		<b>2. REPORT TYPE</b> Master of Military Studies Research Paper			<b>3. DATES COVERED (From - To)</b> SEPTEMBER 2020 - MARCH 2021	
<b>4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE</b> The Marine Corps and the Joint Force: Are We Postured for the Future Fight?					<b>5a. CONTRACT NUMBER</b> N/A	
					<b>5b. GRANT NUMBER</b> N/A	
					<b>5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER</b> N/A	
					<b>5d. PROJECT NUMBER</b> N/A	
<b>6. AUTHOR(S)</b> MICHAEL F. MASTERS, MAJOR UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS					<b>5e. TASK NUMBER</b> N/A	
					<b>5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER</b> N/A	
<b>7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)</b> USMC COMMAND AND STAFF COLLEGE MARINE CORPS UNIVERSITY 2076 SOUTH STREET QUANTICO, VIRGINIA 22134-5068					<b>8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER</b> N/A	
<b>9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)</b> N/A					<b>10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)</b> N/A	
					<b>11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)</b> N/A	
<b>12. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT</b> Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited.						
<b>13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES</b> N/A						
<b>14. ABSTRACT</b> The former U.S. administration, the DoD, and the CJCS latest release of their capstone policy documents such as the NSS, NDS, and NMS have prompted each service to evaluate their current and future desired force postures. Within the USMC, the implications of this new guidance coupled with China's rising global status have triggered an iterative decade-long service redesign project entitled FD2030. The following examination of recent U.S. national security policy documents, service level guidance along with relevant critiques, and an assessment of the current Indo-Pacific Operating Environment is presented to illuminate opportunities to inform the USMC's current restructure process.						
<b>15. SUBJECT TERMS</b> Joint Force, SOF, Integration, Interdependence, Interoperability, Deconfliction (I3D), USINDOPACOM, Manpower, Assignments, Manpower Modernization, Command Selection Process, Force Design 2030 (FD2030), Joint Assignments, Marine Corps (USMC), MARSOC, MARSO, EABO,						
<b>16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:</b>			<b>17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT</b>  UU	<b>18. NUMBER OF PAGES</b>	<b>19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON</b> Marine Corps University/ Command and Staff Col	
<b>a. REPORT</b>	<b>b. ABSTRACT</b>	<b>c. THIS PAGE</b>			<b>19b. TELEPHONE NUMBER (Include area code)</b> (703) 784-3330 (Admin Office)	
Unclass	Unclass	Unclass				

MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

---

**TITLE:**

THE MARINE CORPS AND THE JOINT FORCE: ARE WE POSTURED FOR THE FUTURE  
FIGHT?

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

**AUTHOR:**

MAJOR MICHAEL F. MASTERS JR.

AY 2020-21

---

MMS Mentor Team and Oral Defense Committee Member:

Sinan Ciddi  
Approved: 01 March 2021  
Date: 01 March 2021

MMS Mentor Team and Oral Defense Committee Member:

Nathan Packard, PhD  
Approved: 01 March 2021 / NMP  
Date: 01 March 2021

## DISCLAIMER

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

QUOTATION FROM, ABSTRACTION FROM, OR REPRODUCTION OF ALL OR ANY PART OF THIS DOCUMENT IS PERMITTED PROVIDED PROPER ACKNOWLEDGEMENT IS MADE.

## Illustrations

	Page
Figure 1. Competition Continuum – CJCS, 2018 .....	6
Figure 2. USINDOPACOM Area of Responsibility – USINDOPACOM, 2020 .....	7

Figure 3. Officer Assignments by Type – MMOA, 2020.....	15
Figure 4. USMC-SOF I3D Continuum – Author, 2020 .....	19
Figure 5. USMC-SOF Shared Missions & Capabilities – Author, 2020 .....	20

## **Table of Contents**

	Page
DISCLAIMER .....	iv
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.....	v
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY .....	vii
PREFACE.....	viii

INTRODUCTION .....	1
STRATEGIC & OPERATIONAL IMPERATIVES .....	2
MARINE CORPS FORCE DESIGN 2030 .....	4
THE FUTURE PACIFIC FIGHT .....	7
OPPORTUNITIES FOR JOINT FORCE ALIGNMENT .....	9
MANPOWER MODERNIZATION .....	10
Officer Assignments .....	10
Command Selection Process .....	12
SUPPORT TO THE JOINT FORCE .....	13
Joint Force Investment .....	14
Joint Billet Assignment Process .....	16
SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES I3D.....	18
Deconfliction .....	20
Integration .....	21
Interdependence.....	23
Interoperability .....	24
CONCLUSIONS.....	27
APPENDIX A: RESEARCH DESIGN & COMMON TERMINOLOGY .....	30
ENDNOTES .....	34
BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	40

### **Executive Summary**

**Title:** The Marine Corps and the Joint Force: Are We Postured for the Future Fight?

**Author:** Major Michael F. Masters Jr., United States Marine Corps

**Thesis:** To more closely align with the *2018 National Defense Strategy* and remain a relevant and viable contributor to the Joint Force, the USMC *Force Design 2030* concept requires supplemental enhancement in the areas of (1) Manpower modernization; (2) Support to the Joint Force and; (3) Special Operations Force (SOF) I3D (Integration, Interdependence, Interoperability, & Deconfliction).

**Discussion:** The former U.S. administration, the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD), and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff's (CJCS) latest release of their capstone policy documents such as the *National Security Strategy (NSS)*, *National Defense Strategy (NDS)*, and *National*

*Military Strategy (NMS)* have prompted each service to evaluate their current and future desired force postures. Due to the fundamental shift of national security away from counterterrorism (CT) towards Great Power Competition (GPC), this round of documents is more significant than previous years. Although the DoD identified the People's Republic of China's (PRC) ambitions of becoming a "great power" (i.e., strong, modernized, unified, and wealthy nation) in a detailed report to the U.S. Congress two decades ago, many analysts believe China is well on its way to achieving their ambition to field a "world-class" military by 2049. Within the U.S. Marine Corps (USMC), the implications of this new guidance coupled with China's rising global status have triggered an iterative decade-long service redesign project entitled *Force Design 2030 (FD2030)*. The following examination of recent U.S. national security policy documents, service level guidance along with relevant critiques, and an assessment of the current Indo-Pacific Operating Environment is presented to illuminate opportunities to inform the USMC's current restructure process. My research's main themes are centered on manpower modernization opportunities, identifying appropriate levels of Joint Force support, and USMC-Special Operations Force (SOF) I3D (Integration, Interdependence, Interoperability, & Deconfliction) within the developing *FD2030* construct.

**Conclusion:** Critical omissions from the USMC FD2030 concept, such as strategies for manpower modernization, joint force support, and SOF Integration, Interdependence, Interoperability, & Deconfliction, if not addressed, will inhibit future operational success; particularly in the INDOPACOM Area of Responsibility. This study offers (13) recommendations across (3) focus areas for closer service alignment to the NDS and adaptation to the future operating environment for *FD2030* planners and Integrated Planning Teams (IPT) to consider.

## **Preface**

From personal experience, while assigned to Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC) and discussions over the span of my career with subordinates, peers, and senior officers, there appears to be a credible institutional bias within the Marine Corps towards servicing internal requirements and assignments over those of the Joint Force. I wanted to examine the Marine Corps current plan for Force Design 2030 with the intent of applying academic research, my personal experiences, selected business literature, and first-hand accounts of those immersed in the Indo-Pacific problem set, as well as Joint Staff members, to identify the impediments to the Marine Corps' ability to effectively operate within the future Joint Force construct and Joint Operating Environments. The intended outputs of my research are supplemental

recommendations for improvement to Force Design 2030. My three focus areas include (1) Manpower Modernization – Officer Assignments and Command Selection Process, (2) Support to the Joint Force – Joint Force Investment and Joint Billet Assignment Process, and (3) SOF I3D – Analysis of future Marine Corps Missions in the Indo-Pacific Region and identification of opportunities for USMC-SOF Integration, Interdependence, Interoperability, and Deconfliction.

Throughout the course of my research and writing, I would like to acknowledge the following people for their support, time, and mentorship throughout this process:

**My family:** Lisa, Lillian (2), Ava (5mo), & Layla (5mo)

**Marine Corps University Mentor Team:** Dr. Sinan Ciddi & Dr. Nathan Packard

**Contributors:** CWO4 Adam Jones; Majors – Eric Prentice, Paul Bailey, Matt Verdin, Drew MacDougall, Norm Renfro, & Lindsay Bartucco; Lieutenant Colonels – Sean Barnes, Brandon Turner, David Nasca, David Grabow, & Meghan Cumpston; DoD Civilians - Mr. Stephen Kifer & Anthony “Bull” Marro

## **Introduction**

The former U.S. administration, the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD), and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff's (CJCS) latest release of their capstone policy documents, such as the *National Security Strategy (NSS)*, *National Defense Strategy (NDS)*, and *National Military Strategy (NMS)*, have prompted each service to evaluate their current and future desired force postures. Due to the fundamental shift of national security away from counterterrorism (CT) towards Great Power Competition (GPC), this round of documents is more significant than previous years. Although the DoD identified the People's Republic of China's (PRC) ambitions of becoming a "great power" (i.e., strong, modernized, unified, and wealthy nation) in a detailed report to the U.S. Congress two decades ago, many analysts believe China is now well on its way to achieving their ambition to field a "world-class" military by 2049.<sup>1</sup> Within the U.S. Marine Corps (USMC), the implications of this new guidance coupled with China's rising global status have triggered an iterative decade-long service redesign project entitled *Force Design 2030 (FD2030)*. The following examination of recent U.S. national security policy documents, service level guidance, along with relevant critiques and an assessment of the current Indo-Pacific Operating Environment is presented to illuminate opportunities to inform the USMC's current restructure process. To more closely align with the *2018 National Defense Strategy (NDS18)* and remain a relevant and viable contributor to the Joint Force, the USMC *FD2030* concept requires supplemental enhancement in the areas of (1) Manpower modernization; (2) Support to the Joint Force, and (3) Special Operations Force (SOF) I3D (Integration, Interdependence, Interoperability, & Deconfliction).

This study offers (13) recommendations across (3) focus areas for closer service alignment to the *NDS* and adaptation to the future operating environment for *FD2030* planners



and Integrated Planning Teams (IPT) to consider. Within the manpower realm, the USMC must adapt its tactics to maintain an acute awareness of who is in their inventory and how best to employ their unique skill sets to include their command potential. There are endless possibilities for process improvement and automation to steer the force away from the subjective and antiquated status quo towards a flexible but enduring manpower apparatus. Regarding the USMC's support to the joint force, there remains room for marked improvement through increased officer investment, a formalized and scrutinized applications process, and post joint assignment service level tracking mechanisms to recognize unique skill sets and experiences for follow-on assignment. Lastly, the future operating environment and the USMC's Expeditionary Advanced Base Operations (EABO) concept will likely demand closer USMC-SOF I3D in execution. The value in realizing similar mission sets and potential capability gaps and requirements before hostilities presents opportunities for increased mutually beneficial training opportunities, identification of reliable partners, and potential for future cost savings in the procurement of the service's next generation of equipment that is required to communicate in a highly joint and multi-domain operating environment.

### **Strategic & Operational Imperatives**

The *2017 National Security Strategy of the United States of America (NSS)* introduces the notion of “[a] competitive world” where near-peer state actors such as Russia and China are actively seeking to limit America’s global “...power, influence, and interests...” in order to set U.S. security and prosperity on a sharp decline.<sup>2</sup> To counter this possibility, former President Trump charges the military establishment with five priority actions (Modernization, Acquisition, Capacity, Improve Readiness, Retain a Full-Spectrum Force), all of which have implications for the DoD and the USMC.<sup>3</sup>

The following year, former Secretary of Defense (SecDef), James Mattis, published *The Summary of the 2018 National Defense Strategy of the United States of America (NDS18)*, calling for "...urgent change at a significant scale,"<sup>4</sup> as well as illustrating upfront the negative impacts to the United States' interest both at home and abroad that would stem from non-compliance by our military services.<sup>5</sup> The *NDS18* directs service chiefs to realign their focuses towards three primary lines of effort: (1) Build a more lethal force, (2) Strengthen alliances and attract new partners, and (3) Reform the department for greater performance and affordability.<sup>6</sup> Of particular note are the aspects of the *NDS18* that directly harken back to guidance from the *Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986*, that call upon the DoD to "adapt their organizational structures to best support the Joint Force."<sup>7</sup> At the service level, this should be considered by senior leaders as a call to modernize legacy manpower and talent management apparatuses.

The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS), General Mark Milley, distills the SecDef's guidance still further to the military service chiefs in the *Description of the National Military Strategy 2018 (NMS)*, by emphasizing *NDS18* security trends, establishing three strategy time horizons (i.e., force employment, force development, force design) for global integration, and "...introducing the notion of joint combined arms, defined as the conduct of operational art through the integration of joint capabilities in all domains."<sup>8</sup> To this end, the chairman highlights exercises as a key component to effectively employing the Joint Force by "...build[ing] readiness, interoperability, and mutual trust required for a joint combined arms approach to global campaigning."<sup>9</sup> Further, in his *Message to the Joint Force*, General Milley includes in his five key areas the themes of "Improve[ing] joint warfighting readiness," "Develop[ing] the Joint Force of the future," Develop[ing] and empower[ing] Joint Force leaders

as focal points of a Joint Force capable of meeting the security challenges of tomorrow in a renewed GPC environment.<sup>10</sup>

### **Marine Corps Force Design 2030**

In accordance with higher-level guidance, the Commandant of the Marine Corps (CMC), General David Berger, issued the *38th Commandant's Planning Guidance (CPG)* in July of 2019, in which he sets his "...five priority focus areas: force design, warfighting, education and training, core values, and command and leadership"; while abruptly canceling all previous CMC force shaping directives such as *Marine Operating Concept or Force 2025 (MOC)*.<sup>11</sup> In acknowledgment of *NDS18* guidance, the CMC clarifies that the Fleet Marine Force (FMF) is not optimized to handle tomorrow's security challenges while making a case for increased naval integration and development of stand-in forces for the conduct of EABO, and force modernization.<sup>12</sup> Although the document does sparingly reference enabling the Joint Force, there are no clear lines of effort assigned to Joint Force integration. Further, the CPG does not refer to how the Marine Corps will integrate or support SOF, which is a distinct departure from the MOC and the outgoing CMC's (General Robert Neller) pledge to improve institutional and operational cooperation between the USMC and USSOCOM in his 2017 agreement, *United States Marine Corps and United States Special Operations Command Concept for Integration, Interdependence, and Interoperability*.<sup>13</sup>

In response to these guiding policies and in line with *CPG* priorities, the CMC has moved forward with the implementation of *FD2030*. The document requires the USMC to reduce in size, fully divest armor capabilities, reduce the number of active infantry battalions and their corresponding support structure, and begin forming and experimenting with Marine Littoral Regiments (MLR), presumably to serve as the aforementioned stand-in forces.<sup>14</sup> The

restructure's main goal is establishing a modernized high-end force capable of shifting mission sets to counter a high-end adversary.<sup>15</sup> As General Berger rightly notes in *FD2030*, there is further planning required to include follow-on assessments of "...our Reserve Component and our Supporting Establishment."<sup>16</sup> The following month, in June of 2020, the CMC published an article in the Marine Corps Gazette entitled *The Case for Change*, which served to further build on his *CPG* and *FD2030* concepts and clarifies his vision for future USMC missions. Specifically, as a part of an integrated naval force, the USMC will play a pivotal role in "...sea control and denial, long-range strike, and limited operations..."<sup>17</sup> In the November 2020 *Proceedings*, the CMC has openly added Anti-Submarine Warfare against Russia and China to the USMC's future force portfolio.<sup>18</sup> Most recently, in December 2020, a tri-service maritime operating strategy entitled, *Advantage at Sea: Prevailing with Integrated All-Domain Naval Power*, was signed by the maritime service chiefs (USMC, U.S. Navy, and U.S. Coast Guard) released to foster "...innovation and cooperation within the Naval Service..." and enabling success in future conflict through "...building unity of effort within joint, whole-of-government, allied, and partner activities."<sup>19</sup>

A bold plan such as *FD2030* came with immediate criticisms both from outside the USMC and internally. Most notably perhaps is Ryan Evans' observation, in *A Chat with the Commandant: Gen. David H. Berger on the Marine Corps' New Direction*, that the CMC's plan was not joint in nature as it mainly hinges on naval integration.<sup>20</sup> This facet of *FD2030* is in direct conflict with the DoD's primary methodology to conduct joint operations by employing "...two or more Services (from two Military Departments) in a single operation, particularly in combat..."<sup>21</sup> Further, Ben Jensen raises the question of whether anti-ship missiles on lonely pacific islands would deter a "great power" such as China or if allies and partners are interested

in hosting Marine forces to occupy their littorals risk of suffering economic losses by losing China as a trading partner.<sup>22</sup> As Joint Publication 3-05, *Special Operations*, notes the “[u]se of SOF and [Special Operations] (SO), concurrent with [Conventional Forces] (CF) capabilities in...” “...deterrence activities help shape the operational environment and



*Competition Continuum (Figure 1)*

keep the day-to-day tensions between nations or groups below the threshold of armed conflict, which serves to maintain US global influence.”<sup>23</sup> Mark Cancian from the Center for Strategic and International Studies, in *The Marine Corps’ Radical Shift Toward China*, notes the plan’s overall lack of hedging against the possible need to address other “...regional and stability conflicts...” while deterring a great power such as China.<sup>24</sup> Moreover, CMC's vision for the employment of USMC forces is singularly focused on the Joint Force Commander (JFC) organizing all maritime assets functionally, as in under the authority of a Joint Force Maritime Component Commander (JFMCC).<sup>25</sup> Additionally, critical omissions from *FD 2030*, such as the need to modernize the USMC’s manpower apparatus (i.e., manpower systems, joint assignments, promotion, and command boards) per *NDS18* direction, is a concern of many as the status quo could result in the proper organizational structure devoid of the required talent to lead and execute new mission sets.<sup>26</sup> As Marine Corps Doctrinal Publication 1 notes, “Marines of a given grade and occupational specialty are not interchangeable and [we] should assign people to billets based on [their] specific ability and temperament.”<sup>27</sup> This maxim has never held more true than in today’s complex joint operating environment where our commanders are expected to “...precisely convey degrees of strategic initiative or restraint’ throughout what the CJCS dubs

the “competition continuum (Figure 1).”<sup>28</sup> Of note, talent management and manpower modernization is one aspect of the *NDS18* mandates that the U.S. Army has aggressively taken on as they have recently overhauled their battalion commander selection and assignment process.<sup>29</sup>

### **The Future Pacific Fight**

To add some context to the problem facing U.S. decision-makers in the Indo-Pacific, and by extension, the U.S. military must holistically consider the cultural, societal, economic, and geopolitical diversity of the region.<sup>30</sup> The USINDOPACOM Area of Responsibility (AOR) (Figure 2) is the largest of any of the U.S. Geographic Combatant Commands (GCC). It is comprised of thirty-six nations housing half of the world's population.<sup>31</sup> During a recent discussion with the Foundation for Defense Democracies (FDD) entitled, *Reversing America’s Eroding Military Edge in the Pacific: A Conversation with INDOPACOM Commander Admiral Philip S. Davidson*, the GCC Commander labels China as the “...strategic threat of the century...”, asserting that China’s “...closed and authoritarian vision...” is in direct conflict with the U.S. and its allies view of a “...free and open Indo-Pacific..”<sup>32</sup> Admiral Davidson goes on to describe the specific actions China is taking via a “...whole of nation approach...” to realize their grand strategy in the region that includes:



*USINDOPACOM Area of Responsibility (Figure 2)*

[A]n immense propaganda machine that is meant to undermine allies and partners. It includes wolf warrior and mask diplomacy, where they seek agreements not to challenge Chinese equities in order to benefit from those things. And of course, it includes a very pernicious economic approach where they use the corruption of business elites and

governmental elites, and undermine other nation sovereignty with projects and funding vehicles that threaten the security of nations. Whether it's free economic zones and other areas in which China wants to control the security and access to, or whether it is the very poor-quality kind of developmental projects that they've been pushing under the Belt and Road Initiative [(BRI)].<sup>33</sup>

In addition to China's geopolitical and geoeconomic aims in the Indo-Pacific, Admiral Davidson echoes his previous sentiment that he delivered to the U.S. Congress earlier in 2020 regarding the implications of the rapidness of China's military modernization effort creating an unfavorable military balance of power.<sup>34</sup>

To collectively realign DoD and service resources to counterbalance China's overtures in the region, Nathan Freir and John Schaus in *Geostrategic Net Assessment INDOPACOM through 2030* assert that a "...deliberate and innovative combination of service strengths" through a "...hypercompetitive approach..." is required.<sup>35</sup> In their article, they advocate for the U.S. Army to become the overall "...Joint multi- or all-domain..." theater operations enabler through "...reconfiguration and employment of Army mission command, protection, sustainment, movement, and intelligence (and information) capabilities."<sup>36</sup> Although an Army-led joint force effort to transform USINDOPACOM's posture into a credible GPC framework has its merit, Admiral Davidson views effective deterrence as an integrated joint force.<sup>37</sup> Expanding on his desire for jointness in the Indo-Pacific, he emphasized continued joint and combined exercises with a multi-domain approach in which "...special operations forces, cyber capabilities, space forces, and ground forces equipped with long-range fires, to present an effective deterrent that holds an adversary..."<sup>38</sup> Further, a collaborative U.S. Army and USMC approach to developing ground-based long-range artillery to counter land and maritime threats was directed in the *U.S. Congress National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2020*.<sup>39</sup> The theme of true joint force integration emphasized by the USINDOPACOM Commander is

not readily apparent in *FD2030*, as it is devoid of any mention of "Joint Warfighter" development, increased operational or tactical level joint training, emphasis on joint education or assignments, or joint technical and operational interoperability.<sup>40</sup> Similarly, the concept of SOF enabling maritime forces is downplayed in *FD2030*. As Turner and Bailey assert, in the GPC arena SOF serve as a vital connector to the joint and maritime force units that enable their movement, intelligence gathering, combined arms, and innovation.<sup>41</sup>

### **Opportunities for Joint Force Alignment**

This study examines three key areas in which the USMC force design concept either omitted or lacked substantive details. Specifically, (1) Manpower modernization; (2) Support to the Joint Force and (3) Special Operations Force (SOF) I3D (Integration, Interdependence, Interoperability, & Deconfliction). Although private service level IPTs are meeting throughout the USMC enterprise on a litany of topics not covered in *FD2030* or deliberately omitted due to security classification, or other sensitivities, it is worth examining these areas for the sake of follow-on planning efforts. The long-term effects on the USMC as a viable fighting force and contributor to future joint force missions following completion of the *FD2030* redesign process is well outside the purview of this study and will likely take years to manifest. The current CMC's aggressive and simultaneous planning and execution time horizons are understandable given his limited tenure and considering historical internal bureaucratic efforts to resist implementation of previous CMC policies passively. However, his approach does seem to defy popular organizational transformational logic by setting and enacting vision without bottom-up refinement or achieving force buy-in.<sup>42</sup>



## **Manpower Modernization**

For the CMC's vision to become a reality and endure subsequent CMC tenures, it is vital to build a modern manpower apparatus that rewards innovation, fosters personal and professional growth, and aids in developing a joint warfighters officer corps. In his book *Good to Great*, any organization in transition requires what Jim Collins describes as "Level 5 leaders" – personnel that is "...fanatically driven, infected with an incurable need to produce sustained results."<sup>43</sup> This has never been truer for the USMC than in the present-day as the CMC leads the organization from its current state towards building its desired high-end force capable of full-spectrum operations against near and peer competitors as China. As noted by Ryan Pallas in his *FD2030* critique, it is essential that all modifications to force structure be met with corresponding adjustments to how the organization grooms its leaders.<sup>44</sup> To this end, the Marine Corps Manpower Management Division branch requires modernization and professionalization to keep pace with *FD2030* implementation and fully comply with *NDS18* directives, specifically in the areas of officer assignments and command selection.

## **Officer Assignments**

The USMC officer assignments process requires professionalizing to maximize each officer's potential. Each year the USMC Officer Assignments (MMOA) branch monitors bear the daunting task of managing career movements for roughly one-third to one-half of the total active-duty officer population (~16,900 officers).<sup>45</sup> It is common for the monitors to issue ~7,000 sets of individual orders (e.g., Permanent Change of Station (PCS), Permanent Change of Assignment (PCA)) while personally contacting well over that number of officers to solicit preferences and determine personal situations (e.g., retirements, curtailments, End of Active Service (EAS)).<sup>46</sup> This process is currently predicated on the algorithm-based Officer Staffing

Goal Model (OSGM) centrally controlled by the Manpower Integration Branch (IB).<sup>47</sup> This process is not only inefficient and labor-intensive, but it also does not meet *NDS18* mandates for talent management or the CJCS requirements for the services to develop strategic thinkers who can operate in fluid joint interagency environments across the competition continuum.<sup>48</sup> The CMC broadly addresses the need for talent management reform in his initial *CPG*, in the form of an “incentives-based model” to improve service retention rates; however, there are scant mentions of manpower reforms in the subsequently published *FD2030*.<sup>49</sup> The CMC recently listed talent management reform as second priority in his *Top CMC Priorities* memo to Fleet Marine Force (FMF) Commanders. However, automation of “...human capital management systems...” is listed as a challenge with no clear lines of effort or resources assigned for implementation.<sup>50</sup>

Currently, officer monitors must adhere to strict guidelines regarding officer placement based on key billet assignments necessary for command. Every USMC officer cannot hold command at the O-5 and O-6 level. However, that is the present goal of the system. It is time to consider each officer’s unique set of personal qualifications and desires when assigning them a new role. The gaining unit must also take responsibility for recruiting, assessing, and selecting their key leaders. In step with the *NDS18*, the U.S. Army has chosen a holistic approach to officer assignments that involves automation to match officers with prospective units via a virtual on-line forum that facilitates the proper placement of their officers.<sup>51</sup> This type of innovation is what *NDS18* calls upon services to exhibit better to lead tomorrow's warriors in an era of GPC.

## Command Selection Process

In addition to reforming the officer assignments process, several recent high-profile reliefs of command highlight the need to apply increased rigor to the USMC's command screening process.<sup>52</sup> Although USMC monitors prioritize assignments primarily based on the "[n]eeds of the Marine Corps" to affected officers, the current process is extremely opaque, antiquated, and subjective.<sup>53</sup> Officers often have no idea why they were assigned to a unit or placed in command over another similarly qualified officer. The resulting uncertainty contributes to highly trained human capital exiting the military prematurely. The negative impacts are manifested in reduced unit readiness, mediocre officer retention rates, and poor command climate for the service. As Colin Smith states in *A Looming Retention Crisis*, "The current military pay system is not set up to incentivize continued service..." so factors such as selection for command and better assignments tend to have positive impacts on officer retention in the place of financial drivers.<sup>54</sup> The process of selecting O-5 and O-6 commanders must be data-driven. The current process is primarily based on past performance rather than personal attributes exhibited in a standardized environment or a "level playing field."<sup>55</sup> Through their Talent Management Task Force, the U.S. Army has recently implemented a process to screen future battalion commanders that involve a 4-day reassessment of each officers' overall fitness to command to determine their selection and placement.<sup>56</sup> During 2019, the U.S. Army's new process selected 436 new O-5 commanders for \$2.5M, including physical fitness tests, writing skill and argumentative essay examinations, cognitive, communication, and psychological assessments as opposed to the strictly administrative boards the USMC currently conducts to select future commanders.<sup>57</sup> Remarkably, 96% of the candidates believed that Battalion Commander's Assessment Programs (BCAP) was a superior way to select new commanders, and

34% of the selected commanders would not have been considered eligible for command under the legacy administrative process.<sup>58</sup> The USMC should take valuable lessons learned from the U.S. Army's initial BCAP and begin adapting future command screenings.

Former Secretary Mattis has made it clear that “[c]ultivating a lethal, agile force requires more than just new technologies and posture changes; it depends on the ability of our warfighters and the Department to integrate capabilities, adapt approaches, and change business practices to achieve mission success.”<sup>59</sup> For this reason, the Marine Corps must revamp its Manpower Management Division, not only to satisfy *FD2030* and *NDS18* requirements but to remain relevant by retaining the best officers. For the USMC to adopt these types of programs, it would involve a paradigm shift away from billet vacancy spreadsheets and administrative command screening boards to create a competitive virtual marketplace and the conduct of in-person assessments for command. This is a case in which the U.S. Army has paved the way for a viable model for success to emulate. Most importantly, these updated processes will ensure that our Marine leaders are up to the task for generations to come.

### **Support to the Joint Force**

As the DoD transitions to GPC missions and the naval forces seek employment in the Indo-Pacific theater, the USMC must evaluate how the service supports joint personnel requirements and how Marines are assigned to joint and external commands. In a recent RAND study on individual military service culture impacts entitled *Movement and Maneuver*, Rebecca Zimmermann aptly notes, “Marines view their unique culture as the foundation of their combat prowess. They know how to build marines and MAGTFs, and anything that threatens to disrupt their approach is viewed with skepticism.”<sup>60</sup> This sentiment also fuels the predominant viewpoint within the USMC for junior officers to forgo the active pursuit of joint billets early on

during their careers. This culture is reinforced by field grade officer mentors at the battalion and squadron levels and further reiterated throughout the organization by Marine Corps Senior Leaders. The message to young officers is clear: if you pursue joint/external billets before completing key billet postings (e.g., Captains - Company Command, Majors -Battalion/ Squadron Executive Officer or Operations Officer), you are generally not considered on track for O5 command. Manifestations of this sentiment within the USMC take on many forms, including the USMC's reluctance to source personnel for joint or external billets or adequately internally track personnel experiences. Similar to the normal USMC officer assignment process drawbacks, within the joint assignment process, there is no clear linkage between an officer's qualifications and their assignment. Two areas in which *FD2030* planners should address through ongoing IPTs are the USMC's current level of Joint Force Investment and Joint Billet Assignment Process.

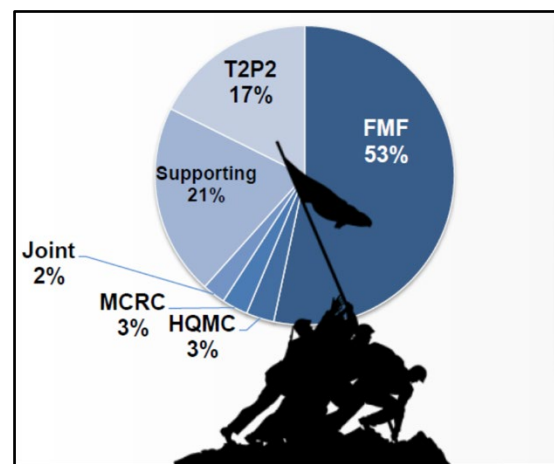
### **Joint Force Investment**

As *FD2030* begins to permanently change the Tables of Organization/ Equipment (TO&E) across the USMC enterprise, which dictate individual unit resourcing, staff planners are advised of the potential for negative impacts on the service's future joint force investments.<sup>61</sup> Despite internal policy directives for the USMC to provide proportionate representation within the joint force, the service demonstrates passive resistance via manpower channels, as USMC representatives to the Joint Manpower Validation Board (JMVB) are routinely encouraged not to give up the structure.<sup>62</sup> In fact, USMC and Joint Staff manpower systems have no interoperability, which allows the service to cloak available personnel eligible for joint force assignment.<sup>63</sup> Additionally, manpower professionals suggest there is a systemic disconnect between the USMC Plans, Policy, and Operations (PP&O) directorate, M&RA, and other staff

within the Headquarters of the Marine Corps (HQMC) to adapt to the current and future strategic and operational environments by timely identifying and validating joint force personnel requirements.<sup>64</sup> The CMC's *CPG* is the key driver for setting precedence levels for manning and staffing of joint and external billets via the *Authorized Staffing Report (ASR)*.<sup>65</sup> Additionally, the authority to dictate "excepted commands" that are deemed to fulfill a role vital to the service and should be manned at 100% of available personnel inventory rest solely with the CMC.<sup>66</sup>

Each COCOM operates based on ~750-2,500 pieces of joint structure (with USSOCOM being a notable exception at ~4-5,000).<sup>67</sup>

Although the USMC is customarily expected to fulfill 10% of the overall number of active joint personnel requirements, the service has historically manned only 6-9% of tasked joint positions, which represents a 2% investment of the total USMC Officer population (Figure 3),



*Officer Assignments by Type (Figure 3)*

while sister services are each respectively expected to fulfill up to 30% of the overall the joint force's personnel strength.<sup>68</sup> The USMC currently strives for an 85% JDAL fill rate based on the guidance provided in the 2007 Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps (ACMC) memo.<sup>69</sup> This resulted from a NDAA update, which drove the USMC fill rate adjustment from 100% down to 85%. This adjustment was consistent with the other service fill rates while still allowing the USMC to maintain an influential presence in the Joint Force. Manpower Management utilizes MCO 1300.8 *Personnel Assignments Policy* coupled with the National Defense Strategy, Commandant's Planning Guidance, and Deputy Commandant (DC) for Manpower and Reserve

Affairs (M&RA) assignments guidance to ensure the USMC is appropriately represented across the Joint Force.<sup>70</sup>

This small contingent of USMC personnel is heavily relied upon to provide supported Joint Force Commanders (JFC) and their staff with professional knowledge within their functional area of expertise and looked upon to advise USMC employment forces and capabilities.<sup>71</sup> As the former Governor of Texas Ann Richards used to say, "When you're not at the table, you're on the menu."<sup>72</sup> This overall lack of USMC representation within joint commands carries with it the risk of irrelevance. If the organization's members are not present, or not senior enough or unknowledgeable, during the time for operational decision-making, it stands to reason the USMC's core capabilities will not be widely propagated or understood across COCOMs or Joint Task Force (JTF) headquarters or staffs for consideration of employment.<sup>73</sup> This possibility runs in stark contrast to the CMC's intent within *FD2030* for the USMC to carve its niche roles as the premier joint force access enabler.<sup>74</sup>

### **Joint Billet Assignment Process**

In addition to being present within joint force formations, USMC representatives fulfilling joint or external billets must be knowledgeable and high-performing individuals with proven track records. Joint officer billet placement is primarily the Joint Matters Officer (JMO) responsibility, in concert with MMOA monitors. The current joint assignment process provides unlimited opportunities for officers with various backgrounds and career aspirations to serve on behalf of the USMC across the Joint Force. The assignment of senior officers who are post-command and post-Top-Level School (TLS) tend to be a key driver and opportune career window for the most challenging Joint assignments.<sup>75</sup> However, the current process lacks any mechanism to ensure officers being assigned to any of the (750) Joint Duty Assignment List

(JDAL) and non- JDAL joint billets are competitive and capable or will not retire from active service following or during their joint tour. Currently, those considered highly qualified and competitive officers on track for command represent approximately 1/3 of the company and junior field grade officers being assigned to joint duty, making it difficult for the service to recoup any long-term benefit from their joint assignment experience. Further, there is no way to readily track field grade officers with prior joint experience unless they successfully applied for joint credit. Additionally, prior joint service and special skills or training are not considered for follow-on assignments.

As the department and the Joint Staff begin to pool current joint manpower resources from existing validated joint assignment structures to fill newly validated space and cyber joint billets, it would serve the USMC well to track those Marines who complete joint tours. One possible mechanism for this is an additional MOS (A-MOS) or an X-Code in the Marine Corps Total Forces System (MCTFS), especially for those with prior SOF, Cyber, or Space enabler experience, allowing monitors to identify special skills and unique experiences for future assignments readily.<sup>76</sup> Additionally, increased rigor is required on the front-end of the joint assignments process to ensure the most qualified officer represents the service within the joint environment via a more stringent application and screening process.

Like the previously described traditional officer assignment process, the current joint assignment process needs an overhaul to meet *NDS18* intent and future joint force requirements. Shrinking promotion zones further complicate matters for USMC Majors, which reduces the time available for joint assignment and completing a traditional USMC key billet necessary for advancement.<sup>77</sup> Automation and tracking are required better to match service member capability with joint force billet requirements. Additionally, control measures are required to ensure the

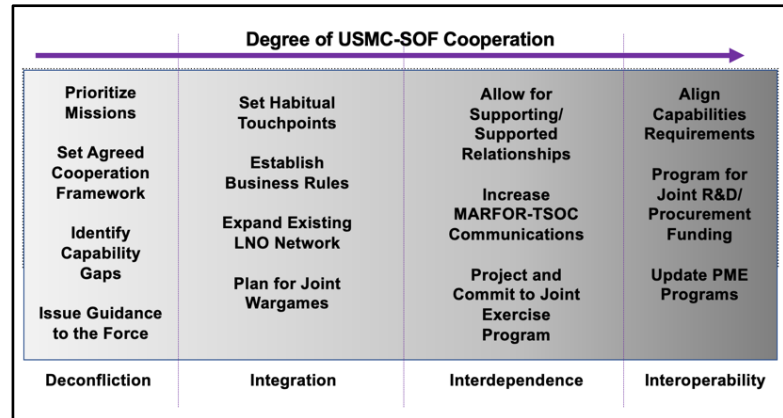


USMC's return on investment post-joint assignment beginning with creating an application-based marketplace to match service member talent to joint forces consumer requirements by unclinking viable personnel populations. To modernize the service's officer corps' education regarding the available joint force billets and a shift in senior leader and mentor thinking towards encouraging company-grade officer interest in early joint assignments is required.

### **Special Operations Forces I3D**

Within the future Indo-Pacific fight, no single service or joint force component will likely be ordained to accomplish the COCOM Commanders' intent. The USMC will likely be directed to partner in various capacities with SOF units from the operational to the tactical level. In General Stanley McChrystal's book, *Team of Teams*, he highlights the importance of collaboration in complex interdependent environments, noting that "[i]ncentivizing collaboration..." "...is easier said than done" but is often "...necessary [for] survival."<sup>78</sup> While commanding a Joint Special Operations Task Force (JSOTF) in Iraq in 2003, he constantly grappled with how to "...nurture shared consciousness..." and "...achieve cross-functionality..." among partner organizations.<sup>79</sup> Although his JSOTF was facing a much different CT problem-set, his sentiment on breaking down organizational silos to build trust and generate team like cooperation applies to how the Joint Force, and the USMC, must approach China's militarization of the South China Sea and disruptive actions within the Indo-Pacific region. The USMC's contributions to the future Pacific fight are outlined in the recently released tri-service maritime strategy. However, the document only vaguely mentions Naval SOF's unique skill sets and ability to prepare the operating environment for maritime force access without delineating clear lines of effort or aligning resources.<sup>80</sup>

The current USINDOPACOM Commander, Admiral Davidson, envisions the future Indo-Pacific operating environment in which China's persistent whole of nation approach and rapid military modernization



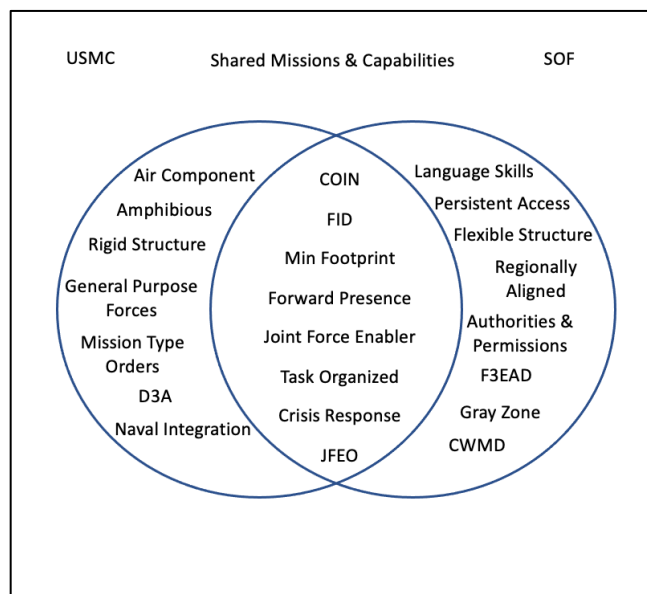
USMC-SOF I3D Continuum (Figure 4)

serves as a forcing function for greater U.S. joint force collaboration.<sup>81</sup> His espoused methodology for effective military deterrence operations against China requires a multi-domain approach utilizing integrated joint force capabilities.<sup>82</sup> Future joint force mission sets will likely aim to counter China's measures short of armed conflict known as "gray zone activities" or "gray zone operations," such as their global BRI, which not only seeks to erode U.S. influence and power, as well as upend the "...liberal rules-based world order."<sup>83</sup> The CMC through *FD2030* is explicitly re-tooling the USMC structure to combat China's gray zone activities within the USINDOPACOM AOR. In General Berger's vision, a key tenet is the USMC's mastery of the EABO concept outlined in the *EABO Handbook* released in 2018. Although the document states that the USMC, by way of EABO, will "...advance persistent naval and joint sensors, shooters, and sustainment capabilities," the reality is that EABO will require a significant amount of joint force support, most notably from persistent SOF elements.<sup>84</sup> To visualize the possibilities of future USMC-SOF I3D, it is helpful to consider a continuum of conventional force and SOF cooperation from deconfliction measures on the low end to opportunities for Integration, Interdependence, and Interoperability on the high-end (Figure 4). Although the 2017 USMC-USSOCOM agreement was nullified by *FD2030's* release, the U.S.

Navy, USMC, and USSOCOM is currently staffing a classified concept for Naval SOF integration that has the potential to reinvigorate the movement for closer USMC-SOF collaboration and codify current trends towards USMC-SOF I3D.<sup>85</sup> To this end, the current MARSOC Commanding General, Major General Glynn, recently published an open letter to the force acknowledging Marine Special Operations Command's (MARSOC) responsibility to serve as a vital connector between the USMC and USSOCOM while asserting that MARSOC is well suited as the USMC SOF component to "...prepare the operating environment for potential future operations in competition and conflict."<sup>86</sup> In concert with the U.S. Navy, the USMC must institutionalize varying levels of SOF I3D to successfully compete and deter China within gray zones within the Indo-Pacific region in the near-term or risk systematic defeat and future irrelevance.

### Deconfliction

As the time lapses and the USMC, SOF elements, and the greater DoD moves forward from their collective experiences in Afghanistan and Iraq, therein lies a propensity for established USMC-SOF relationships to devolve into mere time-space deconfliction, similar to in the beginnings of both conflicts.<sup>87</sup> The



*USMC-SOF Shared Missions (Figure 5)*

USMC and USSOCOM must work together to prioritize activities and deconflict mission sets to come to complementary solutions that meet the USINDOPACOM Commander's intent. Each

has extensive capabilities to offer each other to pursue greater strategic and operational objectives (Figure 5).<sup>88</sup> As one MARSOC operational planner contends, “[a]t the service level, it would be helpful if capability gaps and mitigation measures were discussed/actioned in a meaningful way and to ensure proper investments over the mid to long term to ensure complementary efforts and reduce duplicative or even redundant capabilities (Figure 4).”<sup>89</sup> Assessing shared missions and capabilities has direct operational implications and is also advisable due to looming DoD fiscal constraints as the joint force emerges from the Global War on Terror, in which Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO) funding abounded. Since 2014, the DoD contends that joint CF-SOF operations in Iraq and Syria have achieved strategic successes while also proving cost-effectiveness; however, such partnerships require institutionalization.<sup>90</sup>

### **Integration**

Although SOFI3D shouldn’t necessarily be regarded as a linear process, the next level in terms of USMC-SOF degree of cooperation is integration (Figure 4). The recently released DoD, *Summary of the Irregular Warfare Annex to the National Defense Strategy of the United States of America (NDS-IW20)*, holds that “[s]uccessful military contributions to irregular warfare require a deliberate and sustained integration of conventional and special operations capabilities.”<sup>91</sup> As the USMC experiments with newly formed MLRs, within the USINDOPACOM AOR, there will surely be USMC capability gaps and resource shortfalls.<sup>92</sup> While the U.S. military postures forces in the Indo-Pacific to deter China, USMC and SOF units will likely operate within the same battlespace framework. Just as in the previous two decades of conflict, SOF will encounter capability gaps that USMC personnel augmentation and capabilities can and should satisfy.<sup>93</sup> While the voided 2017 USMC-USSOCOM agreement lays out several approaches to USMC-SOF integration (e.g., SOF-led, USMC-led), it failed to address the reality

that USMC forces are difficult to request successfully and employ due to service imposed restrictions.<sup>94</sup> To expedite rapid deployment of USMC capabilities in support of SOF (and vice-versa) business rules for USMC and SOF units deploying within USINDOPACOM should be established to alleviate significant lags in support request fulfillment. Ideally, pre-established business rules for negotiated force packages within the USINDOPACOM AOR will enhance overall unity of effort and improve planning time horizons for EAB establishment. One possibility is the USMC's ability to capitalize on persistent SOF presence in an area to service Advanced Force Operations (AFO) requirements before a Battle Handover (BHO) to USMC forces conducting EABO.<sup>95</sup>

To sense and enable such responsive intra-theater shifts in USMC and SOF capabilities, there must be vast improvements made to the existing USMC-USSOCOM Special Operations Forces Liaison Element (SOFLE) program. Established in 2013, the program is currently exclusive to the Amphibious Ready Group/Marine Expeditionary Units (ARG/MEU). The USMC, in concert with USSOCOM, must expand their respective Liaison Officer (LNO) networks, potentially using USMC Special Operations Officers (SOO) to form permanent connecting files with Theater Special Operations Commands (TSOC), specifically Special Operations Command Pacific (SOCPAC), the Maritime Operating Centers (MOC), and the Marine Forces Component Commands (MARFOR).<sup>96</sup> Additionally, the USMC would benefit from operationalizing existing global IA/IC networks (e.g., Country Teams, Foreign and Regional Area Officers (FAO/RAO)) via service component SOF (MARSOC) assets to advertise USMC capabilities and build trust ahead of hostilities.

## **Interdependence**

Regarding Conventional Force (CF) and SOF interdependence, the *NDS-IW20* clarifies that CF and SOF have and must continue to maximize support relationships (i.e., supporting/supported) to compete and win in a reemerging era of GPC as they have done since the Vietnam conflict.<sup>97</sup> One method to increase USMC-SOF interdependence within the Indo-Pacific, and other theaters, is for the service to actively pursue coordinated joint Theater Security Cooperation (TSC) opportunities with similar partners. Currently, “Marines and SOF both engage in TSC activities, often concurrently, but not often jointly.”<sup>98</sup> A potential venue to cultivate enduring USMC-SOF-Partner relationships is committing to the Joint Combined Partner Exchange Training Program (JCET). Conceptually, USMC and SOF planners would template JCET participation years in advance to areas that benefit both element’s equities in a particular region.<sup>99</sup> This will not only build trust among USMC-SOF-Partner elements but may also offer the USMC “...access to locations, agencies, funding, (potentially authorities) and ideally missions that have impacts in the competition space, above and beyond the status quo of reassuring allies and partners.”<sup>100</sup>

Another similar venue that has the potential to drive interdependence is regular USMC-SOF participation joint exercises (e.g., COBRA GOLD, TANDEM THRUST, FLINTLOCK) and service level Large Scale Exercises (LSE) (e.g., MEFEX). Although both elements annually commit to several joint and service level exercises, there is significant work to be done to align realistic training objectives and force packages to aid in cementing supporting relationships before committing to future contingency or gray area operations in which the USMC and SOF elements are dependent on each other for mission accomplishment.<sup>101</sup> For this environment to effectively forge meaningful partnerships, these exercises must be committed to habitually, and

the participants identified with wide planning time horizons. Thus, a closer relationship between MARFOR and TSOC planners is required, in this case, MARFORPAC and SOCPAC, to ensure SOF capability gaps for joint exercises leverage the appropriate USMC capabilities.<sup>102</sup> Additionally, exercise duration and depth of scripting must improve to test new joint USMC-SOF capabilities and concepts with partners.<sup>103</sup> Admittedly, USMC-SOF interdependence is a high bar to achieve; however, it will likely prove essential to future joint and multinational missions that fall into the USMC's portfolio in the Indo-Pacific theater.

### **Interoperability**

Interoperability between USMC and SOF elements is the highest standard of cooperation possible within a notional USMC-SOF I3D Continuum (Figure 4). For the truest form of interoperability to take hold and sustain, it is most helpful for USMC and USSOCOM planners to think about operational and technical interoperability. Operational interoperability referring to "...knowledge and experience bases of military personnel and tailored to improving operational design below the level of strategy" and technical interoperability, referencing "...capabilities of combat systems..."<sup>104</sup> Both types of interoperability between the USMC and SOF are advisable, considering the high probability of shared mission sets (Figure 5) and codified future supporting relationships during EABO within the Indo-Pacific in the near-term.

To enhance operational interoperability, the USMC must introduce SOF concepts and core activities to Marine officers at key waypoints during officer Professional Military Education (PME). Natural service level touchpoints for SOF instruction include but are not limited to: The Basic School (TBS), Expeditionary Warfare School (EWS), and Command & Staff College. (CSC). Although CSC offers a two-week SOF elective, blocks of SOF instruction must occur before Lieutenants take command of platoons in joint combat scenarios involving interaction

with SOF elements and before Captains, as Company Commanders are required to provide detachments of Marines to SOF elements within a given theater. From the 2017 USMC-USSCOM agreement it was recommended that “[a] tailored SOF employment program of instruction through the USMC Expeditionary Operations Training Group (EOTG) that targets MAGTF commanders and their staffs likely to operate with SOF in integrated command structures...” be developed and added to unit Pre-Deployment Training Programs (PTP). In addition to formal PME enhancement, there are opportunities within virtual learning environments supported by Marine Corps University (i.e., MarineNet) and within Joint Special Operations University's on-line offerings to further individual knowledge before arriving at future deployment locations.

In terms of technical interoperability, the CMC's vision to bolster joint “kill chains” through investment in resilient low-cost redundant systems and capabilities is a central pillar to achieving tactical and operational success while executing EABO the Indo-Pacific.<sup>105</sup> In John Kolb's recent *Proceedings* article entitled *High-Density, Low-Cost C2 for Expeditionary Advanced Base Operations*, he provides the CMC with a viable solution to mask USMC's electromagnetic signature and enable friendly kill chains.<sup>106</sup> By [u]sing remote sensing and communication capabilities, the Marine Corps and joint partners can exercise command and control from protected environments, reducing the risk not only from adversary targeting but also the inherent risk of both detection and safety that comes from movement.<sup>107</sup> In other words, whichever C2, ISR, and fire control systems the USMC decides upon for the future Pacific fight, they will require significant joint technical interoperability, particularly with advanced forces or adjacent units to include SOF elements.



These are just two broad examples of how conceptually a committed USMC-SOF team could foster enduring interoperability operationally and technically. Understanding pre-deployment and service level annual training requirements are vast; not all units will require SOF familiarization training. However, this does not alleviate the service's responsibility to expose USMC officers to SOF concepts and employment considerations at every available opportunity in a sterile learning environment before taking command or joining a Marine Corps Air-Ground Task Force (MAGTF) or joint staff or multinational staff. Lastly, there are legitimate concerns both in the U.S. Congress and throughout the DoD going forward as to the viability of single service solutions to security problems. In fact, it is advisable that the USMC partner with USSOCOM programmatically when considering the next generation of sensors and shooters (i.e., radars, long-range precision fire control systems, and unmanned ariel systems). Once emerging capabilities requirements for the Indo-Pacific region for both the USMC and USSOCOM are analyzed via the Joint Requirements Oversight Council (JROC) process and binned into similar Joint Capability Area (JCA) portfolios, both cost savings and overall acquisitions process efficiencies will likely be gained.<sup>108</sup>

## **Conclusions**

Critical omissions from the USMC *FD2030* concept, such as strategies for manpower modernization, joint force support, and SOF Integration, Interdependence, Interoperability, & Deconfliction, if not addressed, will inhibit future operational success; particularly in the INDOPACOM AOR. The following service-level recommendations are submitted for further detailed planning as part of ongoing USMC *FD2030* IPTs to align the service with DoD and CJCS directives under the *NDS18* and the *NMS18*.

To modernize the USMC's manpower apparatus, it is advisable to model the U.S. Army's approach in Officer Assignments and the Command Selection Process. Creating a competitive virtual marketplace would allow gaining commands to consider each officer's unique set of personal qualifications and preferences before assignment to their new role within the organization. Additionally, the development of a holistic, in-person, command screening program and elimination of administrative boards for O-5 & O-6 level commanders would allow for the use of updated metrics akin to the U.S. Army's Battalion Commander's Assessment Programs (BCAP) to better evaluate each candidates' ability to lead across the competition continuum.

The USMC can better support joint force missions by increasing overall joint force investment and streamlining the joint assignment process. It is recommended that the USMC place experienced, knowledgeable, and competitive senior Company Grade and junior Field Grade Officers at Combatant Commands, Joint Task Forces, and within the Joint Staff. Implementing an automated screening and selection process that matches joint force requirements with highly skilled Marine officers that are more likely to offer the service a return on investment is required. Further, an incremental increase of the overall USMC investment

within the joint force is recommend. It is advisable for all Joint Duty Assignment List (JDAL), non- JDAL joint billets, and external billets to be recoded as “excepted commands” in the near term. Concurrently, the USMC must seek to increase the percentage of USMC Senior Enlisted Advisors and senior Field Grade Officers at Combatant Commands to maintain relevance and influence in a future conflict. To fully harness resident skillsets within the USMC, manpower inventory tracking mechanisms for Marines completing joint tours are required. Two viable mechanisms include additional MOS (A-MOS) or an X-Code entry in the Marine Corps Total Forces System (MCTFS), especially for those officers with prior SOF, Cyber, or Space enabler experience to allow monitors to identify special skills and unique experiences for future assignments readily. To bridge the gap between joint force personnel requirements and USMC manpower solutions, a quarterly joint personnel meeting between PP&O, M&RA, and selected HQMC Staff is recommend. This touchpoint allows PP&O, which specializes in identifying emerging USMC-joint force requirements, in assisting M&RA in actively identifying uniquely qualified personnel to represent the Marine Corps within joint environments.

In step with the DoD’s shift from CT to GPC, the USMC should actively seek opportunities for Special Operations Forces I3D. To set and manage overall expectations, it imperative that the forthcoming classified Concept for Naval SOF Integration include an unclassified annex to ensure the widest dissemination and adherence to emerging USMC-SOF collaborative concepts. Towards greater USMC-SOF integration, the establishment of COCOM approved business rules within USINDOPACOM is recommended to allow for more rapid responses to the Request for Forces and intra-theater SOF requirements. This will allow for the employment of niche USMC capabilities under fewer pre-conditions and enable cost-sharing for the use of USMC detachments when partnered with supported SOF elements. Additionally, the

USMC LNO network must be operationalized for GPC. In concert with USSOCOM, the USMC must work to expand the current SOFLE program. Permanent assignment of Marine Special Operations Officers to the TSOCs, MARFORs, and the MOCs while leveraging existing FAO/RAO and Country Team relationships to advertise both USMC conventional and special operations capabilities within selected theaters is also advisable.

To achieve USMC-SOF interdependence and give the USMC-SOF team a competitive advantage during gray zone operations against near-peer competitors, joint participation in JCET, Joint, and service level exercise programs in desired regions is required. A critical requirement for these actions is increased communication between USMC planners at the MARFORs and the TSOCs to hammer out exercise opportunities, training objectives, locations, and reliable partner list years in advance. Lastly, to achieve USMC-SOF interoperability, modifications are required to current USMC officer PME programs and programming efforts. At a minimum, the USMC's officer PME programs must include SOF blocks of instruction at TBS, EWS, and CSC. This allows students to exercise and experiment with predominantly SOF capabilities and plan for integrated USMC-SOF composite units with flexible command relationships. Similarly, the USMC should seek opportunities to program jointly with USSOCOM. There are efficiencies to be gained in the R&D and acquisitions process for the USMC's next generation of sensors and shooters by coordinating resourcing actions with USSOCOM to the extent possible via the JROC process.

## APPENDIX A

### **Research Design & Common Terminology**

The author's primary research method to conduct this study was the aggregation and analysis of data from Subject Matter Experts (SME) personal interviews. All interviews were conducted either face-to-face, telephonically, or via electronic communication from September 2020 until March 2021. Based on the SME's field, they were provided or asked questions from an institutionally approved questions list. The three focus areas include (1) Manpower Modernization – Officer Assignments and Command Selection Process, (2) Support to the Joint Force – Joint Force Investment and Joint Billet Assignment Process, and (3) SOF I3D – Analysis of future Marine Corps Missions in the Indo-Pacific Region and identification of opportunities for USMC-SOF Integration, Interdependence, Interoperability, and Deconfliction. In total, twelve interviewees responded to the author's inquiries. Six respondents offered professional knowledge concerning supplemental manpower modernization efforts, while six others provided interview data regarding support to the joint force and SOF I3D.

The methodology of this study applies academic research, selected business literature, the author's personal experiences, and first-hand accounts of retired and active-duty service members along with U.S. Government (USG) Civilians immersed in the Indo-Pacific problem set, as well as Joint Staff members. The central research question for which this paper is meant to satisfy is centered on identifying the impediments to the Marine Corps' ability to operate effectively within the future joint force construct and Joint Operating Environment (JOE). The intended outputs of this research are supplemental recommendations for improvement to *FD2030*. Planners should note, further research is required to validate the USMC's overall return

on investment in focusing on these areas when training to execute future missions, presumably in the USINDOPACOM AOR.

The common terms were provided to interview respondents to standardize collected data and baselining their responses for inclusion in this study. For this study, the term "joint force" will encompass a wide array of activities, personnel, missions, and requirements outside of the USMC and U.S. Navy's command and control and "... connotes activities in which elements of two or more Military Departments participate..." per Joint Publication 1, *Doctrine for the Armed Forces of the United States*.<sup>109</sup> Additionally, this study uses the Joint Publication 3-05, *Special Operations*, the definition for SOF:

...forces identified in Title 10, United States Code (USC), Section 167 or those units or forces that have since been designated as SOF by Secretary of Defense (SecDef). Generally, SOF are under the combatant command (command authority) (COCOM) of the Commander, United States Special Operations Command (CDRUSSOCOM), or the respective geographic combatant commander (GCC) to which they are assigned. SOF are those Active Component and Reserve Component forces of the Services specifically organized, trained, and equipped to conduct and support SO.<sup>110</sup>

The author has crafted and included two illustrations to aid in the reader's understanding of the proposed concepts of a USMC-SOF I3D Continuum (Figure 4) and highlight the importance of recognizing USMC-SOF Shared Missions & Capabilities (Figure 5). The Competition Continuum (Figure 1) is defined in Joint Doctrine Note 1-19, *Competition Continuum*, as "...a world of enduring competition conducted through a mixture of cooperation, competition below armed conflict, and armed conflict."<sup>111</sup> These descriptors refer to the relationship between the US and another strategic actor (state or non-state) concerning a set of specific policy objectives achieved by applying various national power instruments (diplomatic, informational, military, economic) to achieve objectives.<sup>112</sup>

The term I3D or Integration, Interdependence, Interoperability, & Deconfliction is non-doctrinal. However, the associated definitions are derived from the 2017 USMC and USSOCOM agreement, *United States Marine Corps and United States Special Operations Command Concept for Integration, Interdependence, and Interoperability*. Within the document, "deconfliction" is defined as "[t]he separation of military forces or their actions in time or space to reduce the risk of harm from one force to another."<sup>113</sup> The term "integration" is seen as "[t]he arrangement of military forces and their actions to create a force that operates by engaging as a whole. (More specific to this concept, it is the purposeful and synchronized arrangement of Marines [, Joint Force,] and SOF under a single commander to create a unified force that plans and conducts military campaigns and operations to achieve national and theater strategic objectives; the required degree of integration varying over time under different circumstances)."<sup>114</sup> Interoperability is "[t]he ability of Marines [, Joint,] and SOF systems, units, and forces to exchange information and services to operate in synergy in the execution of an assigned task."<sup>115</sup> Whereas "interdependence" is known as "[t]he purposeful reliance by Marines [, Joint Force,] and SOF on each other's capabilities to maximize the complementary and reinforcing effects of both; the required degree of interdependence varying over time under different circumstances."<sup>116</sup> Other terms specific to the Indo-Pacific region and problem set are deterrence and militarization. The operational context in which these terms are used in this study is derived from academia, joint military doctrine, and DoD reporting. Michael Mazarr, in *Understanding Deterrence*, describes deterrence as the practice of discouraging or restraining someone—in world politics, usually a nation-state—from taking unwanted actions, such as an armed attack. It involves an effort to stop or prevent an action, as opposed to the closely related but distinct concept of "compellence," which is an effort to force an actor to do

something.”<sup>117</sup> However, the narrower CJCS definition of deterrence, “...competition below armed conflict...” is also applicable to this study.<sup>118</sup> Lastly, the concept of militarization applies to this study in the context of China’s ongoing “...coercive tactics...” in the South China Sea as described in the DoD’s *Annual Report to Congress: Military and Security Developments Involving the People’s Republic of China*.<sup>119</sup>



---

<sup>1</sup> US Department of Defense. *Annual Report to Congress: Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China*, (Washington, DC, 2020), i.  
<https://media.defense.gov/2020/Sep/01/2002488689/-1/-1/2020-DOD-CHINA-MILITARY-POWER-REPORT-FINAL.PDF>.

<sup>2</sup> The White House, *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, (Washington, DC, 2017), 2, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/>.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

<sup>4</sup> US Department of Defense, *Summary of the 2018 National Defense Strategy of the United States of America*, (Washington, DC, 2018), 11.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>8</sup> Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Description of the National Military Strategy*, (Washington, DC: Joint Staff, 2018), 2.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>10</sup> Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff, *CJCS Milley's Message to the Joint Force*, October 2019.

<sup>11</sup> Headquarters US Marine Corps, 38th Commandant's Planning Guidance. (Washington, DC: Headquarters US Marine Corps, July 2019, 2, <https://hqmc.marines.mil/>.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 11-23.

<sup>13</sup> Headquarters US Marine Corps, *United States Marine Corps and United States Special Operations Command Concept for Integration, Interdependence, and Interoperability*, (Washington, DC: Headquarters US Marine Corps, July 2017), Preface.

<sup>14</sup> Headquarters US Marine Corps, *Force Design 2030*. (Washington, DC: Headquarters US Marine Corps, May 2020), 7-10, <https://hqmc.marines.mil/>.

<sup>15</sup> David Berger & Ryan Evans, *A Chat with the Commandant: Gen. David H. Berger on the Marine Corps' New Direction*. War on the Rocks, April 2020, <https://warontherocks.com/2020/04/a-chat-with-the-commandant-gen-david-h-berger-on-the-marine-corps-new-direction/>.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>17</sup> David Berger, "A Case for Change." *Marine Corps Gazette*, (June 2020), 10, <https://mca-marines.org/the-case-for-change/>.

<sup>18</sup> David Berger, "Marines Will Help Fight Submarines" Proceedings, Naval Institute Press, (November 2020), Vol. 146/11/1,413.  
<https://www.usni.org/magazines/proceedings/2020/november/marines-will-help-fight-submarines>.

<sup>19</sup> Department of the Navy, *Advantage at Sea: Prevailing with Integrated All-Domain Naval Power*, (Washington, DC, December 2020), Preface, <https://Media.defense.gov>.  
*Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>20</sup> David Berger & Ryan Evans, *A Chat with the Commandant: Gen. David H. Berger on the Marine Corps' New Direction*, War on the Rocks, (April 2020), <https://warontherocks.com/2020/04/a-chat-with-the-commandant-gen-david-h-berger-on-the-marine-corps-new-direction/>.

<sup>21</sup> Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Publication 1, *Doctrine for the Armed Forces of the United States*, (Washington, DC: Joint Staff, July 2017), xi.

- 
- <sup>22</sup> Benjamin Jensen, *The Rest of the Story: Evaluating the U.S. Marine Corps Force Design 2030*, War on the Rocks, (April 2020), <https://warontherocks.com/2020/04/the-rest-of-the-story-evaluating-the-u-s-marine-corps-force-design-2030/>.
- <sup>23</sup> Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Publication 3-05, *Special Operations*, (Washington, DC: Joint Staff, April 2011), I-3.
- <sup>24</sup> Mark Cancian, *The Marine Corps' Radical Shift Toward China* Center for Strategic and International Studies, (March 2020), <https://www.csis.org/analysis/marine-corps-radical-shift-toward-china>. <https://www.csis.org/analysis/marine-corps-radical-shift-toward-china>.
- <sup>25</sup> Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Publication 3-32, *Joint Maritime Operations*, (Washington, DC: Joint Staff, June 2018), xiv.
- <sup>26</sup> Ryan Pallas, "Force Design 2030 by Maj R. W. Pallas," *Marine Corps Gazette*, (April 2020), <https://mca-marines.org/force-design-2030-by-maj-r-w-pallas/>.
- <sup>27</sup> Headquarters US Marine Corps. Warfighting. MCDP 1. Washington, DC: Headquarters US Marine Corps, April 4, 2018, 3-13.
- <sup>28</sup> Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff. Joint Doctrine Note 1-19, *Competition Continuum*, (Washington, DC: Joint Staff, June 2019), 6.
- <sup>29</sup> Everett Spain, "Reinventing the Leader Selection Process," *Harvard Business Review*, (November-December 2020). <https://hbr.org/2020/11/reinventing-the-leader-selection-process>.
- <sup>30</sup> USINDOPACOM. "About Us," <https://www.pacom.mil/About-USINDOPACOM/USPACOM-Area-of-Responsibility/>.
- <sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>32</sup> Bradley Bowman & Phillip Davidson. *Reversing America's Eroding Military Edge in the Pacific: A Conversation with INDOPACOM Commander Admiral Philip S. Davidson*, Foundation for Defense Democracies, October 2020. <https://www.pacom.mil/Media/Speeches-Testimony/Article/2384205/reversing-americas-eroding-military-edge-in-the-pacific-a-conversation-with-ind/>.
- <sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>35</sup> Nathan P. Freier and John H. Schaus. *Geostrategic Net Assessment INDOPACOM through 2030*, Parameters 50(2), (Summer 2020), 27, [https://ssi.armywarcollege.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Parameters\\_50-2\\_Summer-2020\\_Freier.pdf](https://ssi.armywarcollege.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Parameters_50-2_Summer-2020_Freier.pdf).
- <sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 33-34.
- <sup>37</sup> Phillip Davidson, *Transforming the Joint Force: A Warfighting Concept for Great Power Competition*, USINDOPACOM, West 2020, (San Diego, CA, March 2020). <https://www.pacom.mil/Media/Speeches-Testimony/Article/2101115/transforming-the-joint-force-a-warfighting-concept-for-great-power-competition/>.
- <sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>39</sup> US Congress, *National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2020*, (Washington, DC, 2019), <https://www.congress.gov/>.
- <sup>40</sup> Michael Russ, "Interdependence, Interoperability, and Integration: Joint Force Analysis at the Operational Level." (Master's thesis, Marine Corps University, 2011), 16, <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/2aa6/d22e5e0939f065e5974e775555083dfb7b76.pdf>.
- <sup>41</sup> Turner, Brandon & Bailey, Paul. "The Joint Force-SOF Relationship," *Marine Corps Gazette* (January 2020), 12, <https://mca-marines.org/>.
- <sup>42</sup> Jim Collins, "Good to Great," HarperCollins Publishers. New York, NY, 2001, 13.

---

<sup>43</sup> Jim Collins, “Good to Great,” HarperCollins Publishers. New York, NY, 2001, 39.

- 
- <sup>44</sup> Ryan Pallas, “Force Design 2030 by Maj R. W. Pallas,” *Marine Corps Gazette*, (April 2020), <https://mca-marines.org/force-design-2030-by-maj-r-w-pallas/>.
- <sup>45</sup> Major Norman Renfro, USMC, (Former MMOA Ground Monitor), discussion September 15, 2020.
- <sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>48</sup> US Department of Defense, *Summary of the 2018 National Defense Strategy of the United States of America*,” (Washington, DC, 2018), 11.  
Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Doctrine Note 1-19, *Competition Continuum*, (Washington, DC: Joint Staff, June 2019), 6.
- <sup>49</sup> Headquarters US Marine Corps, 38th Commandant’s Planning Guidance. (Washington, DC: Headquarters US Marine Corps, July 2019, 7, <https://hqmc.marines.mil/>.
- <sup>50</sup> Commandant of the Marine Corps (December 10, 2020), unpublished manuscript received as an email attachment from Lieutenant Colonel Brandon Turner, PDF file.
- <sup>51</sup> Brennan Randel, *The Army Has a Revolutionary New Talent Management System. Now We Have to Make it Work*, Modern War Institute at West Point, (December 23, 2019), <https://mwi.usma.edu/army-revolutionary-new-talent-management-system-now-make-work/>.
- <sup>52</sup> Hope Hodge Seck, *Marine Battalion Commander Relieved During Middle East Deployment*, Military.com, (May 19, 2018), <https://www.military.com/daily-news/2018/05/19/marine-battalion-commander-relieved-during-middle-east-deployment.html>.
- <sup>53</sup> Commandant of the Marine Corps, *Marine Corps Personnel Assignment Policy*, MCO 1300.8, September 18, 2014, 2-1, <https://www.marines.mil/Portals/1/MCO%201300.8.pdf>.
- <sup>54</sup> Colin Smith, *A Looming Retention Crisis*, Center for a New American Security, (July 16, 2019), <https://www.cnas.org/publications/commentary/a-looming-retention-crisis>.
- <sup>55</sup> Vincent Enriquez, *I Took Part in the Army’s New Battalion Commander Assessment Program: Here’s What I Learned*, Modern War Institute at West Point, (February 7, 2020), [mwi.usma.edu/took-part-armys-new-battalion-commander-assessment-program-heres-learned/](https://mwi.usma.edu/took-part-armys-new-battalion-commander-assessment-program-heres-learned/).
- <sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>57</sup> Everett Spain, “Reinventing the Leader Selection Process: The U.S. Army’s new approach to managing talent,” *Harvard Business Review*, (November-December 2020), <https://hbr.org/2020/11/reinventing-the-leader-selection-process>.
- <sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>59</sup> US Department of Defense, *Summary of the 2018 National Defense Strategy of the United States of America*,” (Washington, DC, 2018), 8.
- <sup>60</sup> Rebecca Zimmerman, et al., *Movement and Maneuver: Culture and the Competition for Influence Among the U.S. Military Services*. (Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation, 2019), 107.
- <sup>61</sup> CWO4 Adam Jones, USMC, (MCATSU, Personnel Officer), discussion with the author, September 23, 2020.
- <sup>62</sup> Major Lindsay Bartucco, USMC, (HQMC, Manpower Officer) discussion with the author, September 17, 2020.
- <sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>64</sup> Lieutenant Colonel David Nasca, USMC, (MCB Quantico, AC/S G-1) electronic communication to the author, December 16, 2020.
- <sup>65</sup> Commandant of the Marine Corps, *Precedence Levels for Manning and Staffing*, MCO 5320.12H 4, June 2012, 3, <https://www.marines.mil/Portals/1/Publications/MCO%205320.12H.pdf>.

---

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>67</sup> Stephen Kifer, DoD CIV, (Joint Staff J15, Chief, CONUS Requirements Branch Human Capital Division), telephone conversation with the author, September 29, 2020.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>69</sup> Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps, *Memorandum for Vice Chairman of Joint Chiefs of Staff: Joint Billet Assignments*, 1300, May 1, 2007.

<sup>70</sup> Major Matthew Verdin, USMC, (MMOA, Joint Matters Officer) discussion with the author, September 18, 2020.

<sup>71</sup> GS-15 Stephen Kifer, DoD, (Joint Staff J15, Chief, CONUS Requirements Branch Human Capital Division), telephone conversation with the author, September 29, 2020.

<sup>72</sup> Davia Temin, "What They're Saying About You When You're Not In The Room -- And What You Can Do To Influence It," *Forbes*, April 4, 2016.

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/daviatemin/2016/04/04/what-theyre-saying-about-you-when-youre-not-in-the-room-and-what-you-can-do-to-influence-it/?sh=2f729c8371ac>.

<sup>73</sup> Lieutenant Colonel David Nasca, USMC, (MCB Quantico, AC/S G-1) electronic communication to the author, December 16, 2020.

<sup>74</sup> Headquarters US Marine Corps, Force Design 2030. (Washington, DC: Headquarters US Marine Corps, May 2020), 5, <https://hqmc.marines.mil/>.

<sup>75</sup> Major Matthew Verdin, USMC, (MMOA, Joint Matters Officer) discussion with the author, September 18, 2020.

<sup>76</sup> CWO4 Adam Jones, USMC, (MCATSU, Personnel Officer), discussion with the author, September 23, 2020.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>78</sup> Stanley McChrystal, "Team of Teams: New Rules of Engagement for a Complex World," Penguin Random House LLC. New York, NY, 2015, 174-175.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>80</sup> Department of the Navy, *Advantage at Sea: Prevailing with Integrated All-Domain Naval Power*. (Washington, DC, December 2020), 13, <https://Media.defense.gov>.

<sup>81</sup> Phillip Davidson, *Transforming the Joint Force: A Warfighting Concept for Great Power Competition*, USINDOPACOM, West 2020, (San Diego, CA, March 2020).

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>83</sup> Scholl, Kaley. "The Use of US Special Operation Forces in Great Power Competition: Imposing Costs on Chinese Gray Zone Operations." *Small Wars Journal*. (December 2020). <https://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/use-us-special-operation-forces-great-power-competition-imposing-costs-chinese-gray-zone>.

<sup>84</sup> Arthur Corbett, *Expeditionary Advanced Base Operations (EABO) Handbook Considerations for Force Development and Employment*, Version 1, Quantico, VA: Marine Corps Warfighting Lab, Concepts & Plans Division. June 1, 2018, 22, <https://mca-marines.org/wp-content/uploads/Expeditionary-Advanced-Base-Operations-EABO-handbook-1.1.pdf>.

<sup>85</sup> Anthony "Bull" Marro, DoD CIV, (MARSOC, Deputy G-5/8), electronic communication to the author, December 17, 2020.

Major, USMC, (Company Commander, 3rd Marine Raider Battalion) telephone conversation with the author December 23, 2020.

<sup>86</sup> Glynn, James, F, "A Letter from the MARSOC Commander," *Marine Corps Gazette*, (January 2021), 27, <https://mca-marines.org/wp-content/uploads/A-Letter-from-the-MARSOC-Commander.pdf>.

---

<sup>87</sup> Headquarters US Marine Corps, *United States Marine Corps and United States Special*

---

*Operations Command Concept for Integration, Interdependence, and Interoperability*, (Washington, DC: Headquarters US Marine Corps, July 2017), 2.

<sup>88</sup> Lieutenant Colonel Sean Barnes, USMC, (3D Marine Division, Deputy G-3) electronic communication to the author, December 15, 2020.

<sup>89</sup> Anthony “Bull” Marro, DoD CIV, (MARSOC, Deputy G-5/8), electronic communication to the author December 17, 2020.

<sup>90</sup> US Department of Defense, *Summary of the Irregular Warfare Annex to the National Defense Strategy of the United States of America*, (Washington, DC, 2020), 5, <https://media.defense.gov/2020/Oct/02/2002510472/-1/-1/0/Irregular-Warfare-Annex-to-the-National-Defense-Strategy-Summary.PDF>.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid*, 4.

<sup>92</sup> Lieutenant Colonel David Grabow, USMC, (USINDOPACOM, J353), discussion with the author, December 17, 2020.

<sup>93</sup> Lieutenant Colonel Sean Barnes, USMC, (3D Marine Division, Deputy G-3) electronic communication to the author, December 15, 2020.

<sup>94</sup> Headquarters US Marine Corps, *United States Marine Corps and United States Special Operations Command Concept for Integration, Interdependence, and Interoperability*, (Washington, DC: Headquarters US Marine Corps, July 2017), 12-17.

<sup>95</sup> Major Eric Prentice, USMC (Former 3d Reconnaissance Battalion, S-3 and Force Company Commander) electronic communication to the author, December 1, 2020.

<sup>96</sup> Major, USMC, (3rd Marine Raider Battalion, Company Commander) telephone conversation with the author, December 23, 2020.

<sup>97</sup> US Department of Defense, *Summary of the Irregular Warfare Annex to the National Defense Strategy of the United States of America*, (Washington, DC, 2020), 4, <https://media.defense.gov/2020/Oct/02/2002510472/-1/-1/0/Irregular-Warfare-Annex-to-the-National-Defense-Strategy-Summary.PDF>.

<sup>98</sup> Headquarters US Marine Corps, *United States Marine Corps and United States Special Operations Command Concept for Integration, Interdependence, and Interoperability*, (Washington, DC: Headquarters US Marine Corps, July 2017), 12-14.

<sup>99</sup> Major, USMC, (3rd Marine Raider Battalion, Company Commander) telephone conversation with the author December 23, 2020.

<sup>100</sup> Lieutenant Colonel Sean Barnes, USMC, (3D Marine Division, Deputy G-3) electronic communication to the author, December 15, 2020.

<sup>101</sup> Anthony “Bull” Marro, DoD CIV, (MARSOC, Deputy G-5/8), electronic communication to the author, December 17, 2020.

<sup>102</sup> Anthony “Bull” Marro, DoD CIV, (MARSOC, Deputy G-5/8), electronic communication to the author, December 17, 2020.

<sup>103</sup> Major Eric Prentice, USMC (Former 3d Reconnaissance Battalion, S-3 and Force Company Commander) electronic communication to the author, December 1, 2020.

<sup>104</sup> Michael Russ, “Interdependence, Interoperability, and Integration: Joint Force Analysis at the Operational Level.” (Master’s thesis, Marine Corps University, 2011), 11-12, <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/2aa6/d22e5e0939f065e5974e77555083dfb7b76.pdf>.

<sup>105</sup> Arthur Corbett, *Expeditionary Advanced Base Operations (EABO) Handbook Considerations for Force Development and Employment*, Version 1, Quantico, VA: Marine Corps Warfighting Lab, Concepts & Plans Division. June 1, 2018, 52, <https://mca-marines.org/wp-content/uploads/Expeditionary-Advanced-Base-Operations-EABO-handbook-1.1.pdf>.

---

<sup>106</sup> John Kolb, “High-Density, Low-Cost C2 for Expeditionary Advanced Base Operations.”



---

Proceedings 147/1/1,415 (January 2021).

<https://www.usni.org/magazines/proceedings/2021/january/high-density-low-cost-c2-expeditionary-advanced-base-operations>.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>108</sup> Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff, CJCSI 5123.01H, *Charter of the Joint Requirements Oversight Council (JROC) and implementation of the Joint Capabilities Integration and Development System (JCIDS)*, (Washington, DC: Joint Staff, August 2018).

<sup>109</sup> Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Publication 1, *Doctrine for the Armed Forces of the United States*, (Washington, DC: Joint Staff, July 2017), I-1.

<sup>110</sup> Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Publication 3-05, *Special Operations*, (Washington, DC: Joint Staff, April 2011), ix.

<sup>111</sup> Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Doctrine Note 1-19, *Competition Continuum*, (Washington, DC: Joint Staff, June 2019), 2.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>113</sup> Headquarters US Marine Corps, *United States Marine Corps and United States Special Operations Command Concept for Integration, Interdependence, and Interoperability*, (Washington, DC: Headquarters US Marine Corps, July 2017), 3.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>117</sup> Michael J. Mazarr, *Understanding Deterrence*, RAND Perspectives (April 2018), 2.

<sup>118</sup> Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Doctrine Note 1-19, *Competition Continuum*, (Washington, DC: Joint Staff, June 2019), 11.

<sup>119</sup> US Department of Defense, *Annual Report to Congress: Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China*, (Washington, DC, 2020), 100.

## **Bibliography**

Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps. *Memorandum for Vice Chairman of Joint Chiefs of Staff: Joint Billet Assignments*. 1300. May 1, 2007.

Berger, David H. "A Case for Change." *Marine Corps Gazette*. (June 2020). <https://mca-marines.org/the-case-for-change/>.

Berger D. & Evans, R. *A Chat with the Commandant: Gen. David H. Berger on the Marine Corps' New Direction*. War on the Rocks. <https://warontherocks.com/2020/04/a-chat-with-the-commandant-gen-david-h-berger-on-the-marine-corps-new-direction/>.

Berger, David. "Marines Will Help Fight Submarines" *Proceedings*. Naval Institute Press.

- 
- (November 2020), Vol. 146/11/1,413.  
<https://www.usni.org/magazines/proceedings/2020/november/marines-will-help-fight-submarines>.
- Bowman, Bradley & Davidson, Phillip. *Reversing America's Eroding Military Edge in the Pacific: A Conversation with INDOPACOM Commander Admiral Philip S. Davidson*. Foundation for Defense Democracies. (October 2020).  
<https://www.pacom.mil/Media/Speeches-Testimony/Article/2384205/reversing-americas-eroding-military-edge-in-the-pacific-a-conversation-with-ind/>.
- Cancian, Mark. *The Marine Corps' Radical Shift Toward China*. Center for Strategic and International Studies (March 2020). <https://www.csis.org/analysis/marine-corps-radical-shift-toward-china>. <https://www.csis.org/analysis/marine-corps-radical-shift-toward-china>.
- Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff. CJCSI 5123.01H. *Charter of the Joint Requirements Oversight Council (JROC) and implementation of the Joint Capabilities Integration and Development System (JCIDS)*. (Washington, DC: Joint Staff, August 2018).
- Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff. *CJCS Milley's Message to the Joint Force*, October 2019.
- Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff. Joint Doctrine Note 1-19. *Competition Continuum*. (Washington, DC: Joint Staff, June 2019).
- Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff. Joint Publication 1. *Doctrine for the Armed Forces of the United States*. (Washington, DC: Joint Staff, July 2017).
- Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff. Joint Publication 3-05. *Special Operations*. (Washington, DC: Joint Staff, April 2011).
- Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff. Joint Publication 3-32. *Joint Maritime Operations*. (Washington, DC: Joint Staff, June 2018).
- Collins, Jim. "Good to Great." HarperCollins Publishers. (New York, NY, 2001).
- Commandant of the Marine Corps. "CMC Top Priorities." Unpublished manuscript received as an email attachment from Lieutenant Colonel Brandon Turner. December 10, 2020. PDF file.
- Commandant of the Marine Corps. *Marine Corps Personnel Assignment Policy*. MCO 1300.8, September 18, 2014. <https://www.marines.mil/Portals/1/MCO%201300.8.pdf>.
- Commandant of the Marine Corps. *Precedence Levels for Manning and Staffing*, MCO 5320.12H 4, June 2012.  
<https://www.marines.mil/Portals/1/Publications/MCO%205320.12H.pdf>.

- 
- Corbett, Arthur. *Expeditionary Advanced Base Operations (EABO) Handbook Considerations for Force Development and Employment*. Version 1. Quantico, VA: Marine Corps Warfighting Lab, Concepts & Plans Division. June 1, 2018. <https://mca-marines.org/wp-content/uploads/Expeditionary-Advanced-Base-Operations-EABO-handbook-1.1.pdf>.
- Davidson, Phillip. *Transforming the Joint Force: A Warfighting Concept for Great Power Competition*. USINDOPACOM. West 2020. (San Diego, CA, March 2020). <https://www.pacom.mil/Media/Speeches-Testimony/Article/2101115/transforming-the-joint-force-a-warfighting-concept-for-great-power-competition/>.
- Department of the Navy. *Advantage at Sea: Prevailing with Integrated All-Domain Naval Power*. (Washington, DC, December 2020). <https://Media.defense.gov>.
- Enriquez, Vincent. *I Took Part in the Army's New Battalion Commander Assessment Program: Here's What I Learned*. Modern War Institute at West Point. (February 7, 2020). [mwi.usma.edu/took-part-armys-new-battalion-commander-assessment-program-heres-learned/](https://mwi.usma.edu/took-part-armys-new-battalion-commander-assessment-program-heres-learned/).
- Freier, Nathan & Schaus, John. *Geostrategic Net Assessment INDOPACOM through 2030*, Parameters 50(2) (Summer 2020). [https://ssi.armywarcollege.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Parameters\\_50-2\\_Summer-2020\\_Freier.pdf](https://ssi.armywarcollege.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Parameters_50-2_Summer-2020_Freier.pdf).
- Glynn, James, F. "A Letter from the MARSOC Commander." *Marine Corps Gazette*. (January 2021). <https://mca-marines.org/wp-content/uploads/A-Letter-from-the-MARSOC-Commander.pdf>.
- Headquarters US Marine Corps. *38th Commandant's Planning Guidance*. (Washington, DC: Headquarters US Marine Corps, July 2019). <https://hqmc.marines.mil/>.
- Headquarters US Marine Corps. *Force Design 2030*. (Washington, DC: Headquarters US Marine Corps, May 2020). <https://hqmc.marines.mil/>.
- Headquarters US Marine Corps. *United States Marine Corps and United States Special Operations Command Concept for Integration, Interdependence, and Interoperability*, (Washington, DC: Headquarters US Marine Corps, July 2017).
- Headquarters US Marine Corps. *Warfighting*. MCDP 1. (Washington, DC: Headquarters US Marine Corps, April 2018).
- Hodge Seck, Hope. *Marine Battalion Commander Relieved During Middle East Deployment*. Military.com. (May 19, 2018). <https://www.military.com/daily-news/2018/05/19/marine-battalion-commander-relieved-during-middle-east-deployment.html>.
- Jensen, Benjamin. *The Rest of the Story: Evaluating the U.S. Marine Corps Force Design 2030*. War on the Rocks. (April 2020). <https://warontherocks.com/2020/04/the-rest-of-the->

---

story-evaluating-the-u-s-marine-corps-force-design-2030/.

Kolb, John. "High-Density, Low-Cost C2 for Expeditionary Advanced Base Operations."

*Proceedings* 147/1/1,415 (January 2021).

<https://www.usni.org/magazines/proceedings/2021/january/high-density-low-cost-c2-expeditionary-advanced-base-operations>.

Mazarr, Michael. *Understanding Deterrence*. RAND Perspectives. April 2018.

McChrystal, Stanley. "Team of Teams: New Rules of Engagement for a Complex World."

Penguin Random House LLC. (New York, NY, 2015).

Pallas, Ryan. "Force Design 2030 by Maj R. W. Pallas," *Marine Corps Gazette*. (April 2020).

<https://mca-marines.org/force-design-2030-by-maj-r-w-pallas/>.

Randel, Brennan. *The Army Has a Revolutionary New Talent Management System. Now We Have to Make it Work*. Modern War Institute at West Point. (December 23, 2019).

<https://mwi.usma.edu/army-revolutionary-new-talent-management-system-now-make-work/>.

Russ, Michael D. "Interdependence, Interoperability, and Integration: Joint Force Analysis at the Operational Level." (Master's thesis, Marine Corps University, 2011).

<https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/2aa6/d22e5e0939f065e5974e775555083dfb7b76.pdf>.

Scholl, Kaley. "The Use of US Special Operation Forces in Great Power Competition:

Imposing Costs on Chinese Gray Zone Operations." *Small Wars Journal*. (December 2020). <https://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/use-us-special-operation-forces-great-power-competition-imposing-costs-chinese-gray-zone>.

Smith, Colin. *A Looming Retention Crisis*, Center for a New American Security. (July 16, 2019).

<https://www.cnas.org/publications/commentary/a-looming-retention-crisis>.

Spain, Everett. "Reinventing the Leader Selection Process: The U.S. Army's new approach to managing talent." *Harvard Business Review*. (November-December 2020),

<https://hbr.org/2020/11/reinventing-the-leader-selection-process>.

Temin, Davia. "What They're Saying About You When You're Not In The Room -- And What You Can Do To Influence It." *Forbes*. April 4, 2016.

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/daviatemin/2016/04/04/what-theyre-saying-about-you-when-youre-not-in-the-room-and-what-you-can-do-to-influence-it/?sh=2f729c8371ac>.

The White House. *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*. Washington, DC, 2017. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/>.

Turner, Brandon & Bailey, Paul. "The Joint Force-SOF Relationship." *Marine Corps Gazette*.

(January 2020). <https://mca-marines.org/>.

---

US Congress. National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2020, 116th Cong., Congressional Record (December 15, 2019), S 1790. <https://www.congress.gov/>.

US Department of Defense. *Annual Report to Congress: Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China*. (Washington, DC, 2020).  
<https://media.defense.gov/2020/Sep/01/2002488689/-1/-1/1/2020-DOD-CHINA-MILITARY-POWER-REPORT-FINAL.PDF>.

US Department of Defense. *Summary of the 2018 National Defense Strategy of the United States of America*. (Washington, DC, 2018).  
<https://dod.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/pubs/2018-National-Defense-Strategy-Summary.pdf>

US Department of Defense. *Summary of the Irregular Warfare Annex to the National Defense Strategy of the United States of America*. (Washington, DC, 2020).  
<https://media.defense.gov/2020/Oct/02/2002510472/-1/-1/0/Irregular-Warfare-Annex-to-the-National-Defense-Strategy-Summary.PDF>.

Zimmerman, Rebecca et al. *Movement and Maneuver: Culture and the Competition for Influence Among the U.S. Military Services*. (Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation, 2019).