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Title:
**The United States Marine Corps Reconnaissance Reserve: Adaptation and Integration for
the Future**

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OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

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Executive Summary

Title: The United States Marine Corps Reconnaissance Reserve: Adaptation and Integration for the Future

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Thesis: To better integrate into the future Marine Corps Reconnaissance structure, Marine Forces Reserves must restructure, relocate, and reorient the mission of their Reconnaissance Units.

Discussion: Reserve Reconnaissance units have served in every war the United States entered since Vietnam and continue to augment and support the active duty Marine Corps whenever needed. With the pending changes in the economic and political climates and the downsizing of the Marine Corps, there will be a need for a reserve reconnaissance force ready to support the Corps needs. To adapt the Marine Corps and its Reserves to a post Iraq and Afghanistan War environment, Commandant General James T. Conway USMC, ordered a Force Structure Review in 2010. With the Force Structure Review, Reserve Reconnaissance units could be used to perform the same mission as their active duty counterparts or another mission for the Combatant Commanders. General Amos also has been pursuing the concept of an operation reserves system, which will greatly change the way Reserve Reconnaissance trains and is employed to meet the needs of the Marine Corps in the future.

Conclusion: If the Marine Corps is to seriously commit to the operational reserve concept, Marine Forces Reserve must restructure, relocate, and reorient the mission of their Reconnaissance Units. Before there can be an evaluation of the future of the Reserve Reconnaissance community, there needs to be an understanding of the future of Active Duty Reconnaissance units. The Reserve Reconnaissance community will have to continue to focus on Phase III operation in order to best support the Active Duty Reconnaissance commands. Each reserve unit should also develop a TACON relationship with an Active Duty Reconnaissance command to develop a habitual training program and be prepared for integration upon activation, while still having an ADCON relationship with MFR and a newly formed billet of Marine Forces Reserve Reconnaissance Advocate. To stay basically mission capable there will also have to be additional annual training days for Reserve Reconnaissance units. The final change needed for the Reserves is to address their recruitment and retention policies to ensure that there will always be a well trained and fully manned Reserve Reconnaissance community when the nation calls.

Preface

This paper examines the future of Marine Corps Reserve Reconnaissance as the economic and strategic changes force the Marine Corps to reevaluate how it fights. The Marine Corps Reserve is a 39,000-person force that can be called upon to augment the Active Duty force wherever and whenever needed. The Marine Corps Reserve Reconnaissance community is a highly skilled yet under-managed force that could be leveraged to not only augment the active duty component, but with the right leadership, could be a force multiplier almost doubling the size of the effective Marine Corps Reconnaissance individuals.

I chose this topic after experiencing years of dealing with the challenges and problems that plagued me in a Reserve Force Reconnaissance unit. My intention is to write a paper and send it to leaders in both the Active Duty and Reserve Reconnaissance communities. I will at least provide talking points for them and an experienced opinion on possible solutions. Two major sources for my paper have been Major Ian Fletcher, Reconnaissance Advocate to Headquarters Marine Corps, and Major Eric Dill, a 14-year veteran of both the Reserve and Active Duty Reconnaissance communities. I would like to thank them for their time and dedication to the Marine Corps Reconnaissance. I would also like to thank my mentor Dr. Bradford Wineman for his advice and guidance on how to approach and organize my thesis. And finally, I would like to thank my patient wife, Katie Brooks, for her support and her editorial skills while writing this paper.

UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS RECONNAISSANCE RESERVE:

ADAPTATION AND INTREGRATION FOR THE FUTURE

Introduction

In an Act passed by the United States Congress on 29 August 1916, the U.S. Navy was authorized funding with which it issued Navy Department General Order NO. 231.¹ Order NO. 231 created the Marine Corps Reserves and provided a structure to integrate it into the Active Duty Marine Corps system. The Marine Corps would grow its reserves in preparation for WWI where they would distinguish themselves with the American Expeditionary Force and regular Marine Forces in such places as Aisne, St. Mihiel, and Belleau Wood. The Reserves were tasked with all of the same missions as the Active Duty and provided support in all forms, to include air assets. The Active Duty and Reserve relationship that the Marine Corps uses today was formalized in the 1952 Armed Forces Reserve Act. The 1952 Act organized a Marine Corps Reserve of three levels (ready, standby, and retired) to eventually mobilize in support of the Regular component.² The first named Reserve Reconnaissance unit was designated 4th Reconnaissance Company on 1 November 1959.³ Reserve Reconnaissance units have served in every war the United States entered since Vietnam and continue to augment and support the active duty Marine Corps whenever needed. After the attacks of September 11, 2001, the Marine Reserves role has been constantly analyzed and adjusted to meet operational needs. In the past year, there has been a comprehensive review of the Active Duty Reconnaissance mission, organization, and training standards, and there will soon be approved changes to all three. With the pending changes in the economic and political climates and the downsizing of the Marine Corps, there will be a need for a

Reserve Reconnaissance force ready to support the Corps needs. As the Active Duty Reconnaissance unit changes to meet this new environment, it is evident that the current Reserve Reconnaissance force lacks the structure, training, and forces. To better integrate into the future Marine Corps Reconnaissance structure, Marine Forces Reserves must restructure, relocate, and reorient the mission of their Reconnaissance Units.

Context

To adapt the Marine Corps and its Reserves to a post Iraq and Afghanistan War environment, Commandant General James T. Conway USMC, ordered a Force Structure Review in 2010. The results were released on 8 November 2011, and stated that the United States needs a “21st century Marine Corps that builds on our historic role as the nation’s crisis response force and provides the ‘best value’ in terms of capability, cost, and readiness relative to the operational requirements of our Geographic Combatant Commanders.”⁴ As a theme, the Commandant stressed the need to maintain the ability to be the United States “middleweight” fighting force, while reducing force structure and continuing to meet joint and operational requirements, “for more closely integrated operation with our Navy, special operations, and inter-agency partners.”⁵

Originally, the Marine Corps Reconnaissance community was formed to provide an asset to the MAGTF commander that could conduct both “deep reconnaissance” and “direct action” missions. With the current development of the United States Marine Corps Special Operations Command (MARSOC) and a more sophisticated battlefield reliant upon special operations capable forces, the Marine Corps identified a need for a special operation capable force directly under the control of a MAGTF commander.

With this guidance on the “way ahead” and the identified need, leaders in the Active Duty Reconnaissance community searched for a way to retask and reorganize itself to meet the Commandant’s guidance. Major Ian Fletcher, the Advocate between the Reconnaissance community and Headquarters Marine Corps, was tasked with reviewing the Active Duty Reconnaissance mission, and how it fits the needs of Marine Expeditionary Force Commanders, and how to streamline training to facilitate that lean, interoperable, and special operation capable Reconnaissance force.⁶ The end result would be a revolutionized ground Reconnaissance community that would integrate into the Marine Corps Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance Enterprise (MCISRE).⁷ The leadership of the Marine Forces Reserves and the Commandant now must decide what role it will play in support of the active duty mission. The Reserve Reconnaissance units could be used to perform the same mission as their active duty counterparts or another mission for the Combatant Commanders. Once the mission for Reserve Reconnaissance is agreed upon, Marine Forces Reserves will then need to address how issues such as recruiting, operational reserves, training, relocation, and total force integration will be handled.

The Active Duty Reconnaissance’s New Missions and Roles

First, the Reconnaissance Advocate analyzed how the Reconnaissance community would fit into Marine Corps operations in the joint environment.⁸ Integration in the Joint Operation Access Concept (JOAC), and in the Movement and Maneuver Task JOA-013, is “the ability to conduct and support operational maneuver over strategic distances along multiple axes of advance by air and sea.”⁹ This joint definition provided a framework for what the missions of Marine Corps Reconnaissance Units should be but the when would

be answered in the National Operation Plan Phases. (See Appendix 1) The vision of the Marine Corps Reconnaissance is that it will be able to be effective on the battlefield in all Phases 0-V; however, the majority of Active Duty missions would occur during Phase I (Deter) and II (Seize Initiative). There are plans for the Marine Corps Reconnaissance to be extremely active in Phase 0 within the new Phase-0 Reconnaissance/Intelligence Operations To Enable Unified Surveys (PROTEUS) Concept.¹⁰ In accordance with Title X Authorities, USMC Intelligence will formally partner with United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) Integrated Survey Program and provide a scalable, combined Reconnaissance and HUMINT element that surveys and identifies Global Point of Entry.¹¹ The key to Phase 0 operations will be working with SOCOM to deconflict operations and ensure that each of the assets is reporting on the same informational requirement.

With the decision to work in Phase I and Phase II level operations, the next step would be to review the types of operations that the Reconnaissance community would be executing. The Reconnaissance Advocate analyzed and decided that Active Duty Reconnaissance would focus on three types of operations: Access, Maneuver, and Targeting Operations.¹² Access Operations are associated with Deep Operations within the enemy Area of Operation, which shape conditions for a Commander to make a decision. Maneuver Operations are operations that set conditions for the movement and maneuver of conventional forces and are usually associated with Close Operations in relation to friendly units. Targeting Operations are operations on an objective area such as manned and persistent Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance Operations (ISR) that shape the environment to create the commanders desired effects. In order to

conduct those Phase I and Phase II operations, the Marine Corps Reconnaissance community will have to be able to complete several tasks. These basic tasks will be the focus of the future Marine Reconnaissance. They are Underwater Reconnaissance, Amphibious Reconnaissance, Ground Reconnaissance, seizure of supporting positions through specialized limited scale raids, and providing terminal guidance and battle damage assessment to offensive air strikes.¹³ These are the core tasks of the Marine Reconnaissance community and can be applied to all phases. Special insertion techniques such as High Altitude Low Open Parachuting and Subsurface SCUBA training will still be needed for mission execution. This focus is a return to many of the Marine Reconnaissance skills that were used before 9/11. During OEF and OIF, many Reconnaissance units did not utilize many of their special skills and training and many times were used as a mounted infantry force executing long-range convoys. This was due to the nature of the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts and the need for the Marine Corps to have its own direct action units responsive to the needs of the Marine commander who did not have access to Special Operations units.

Deciding what operations the Marine Reconnaissance needs to conduct allowed the Reconnaissance Advocate and his staff to re-evaluate training, command and control, and force structure issues. Traditionally, Reconnaissance battalions reported to the Marine Division Commander and the Force Reconnaissance Companies would report to the Marine Expeditionary Force Commander. From a Marine Corps perspective, a Reconnaissance Marine with the Military Occupational Specialty (0321) could serve in either of the units. It had become an unwritten rule that an 0321 would start in the Reconnaissance Battalions and as they gain experience and schooling, they would then

move to the Force Reconnaissance Company.¹⁴ Technically, the only difference between the two units was their chain of commands. After graduating from the Basic Reconnaissance Course, it would take a new Reconnaissance recruit up to four years to complete the baseline training and special insertion courses needed to execute all the previously stated missions. These schools are the Basic Reconnaissance Course, Survival, Evasion, Resistance, and Escape Course (SERE), Basic Airborne School, Multi-Mission Parachutist Course, and the Combatant Diver Course. In order to ensure that Reconnaissance commanders have units that are mission capable, the Reconnaissance Advocate has reorganized a basic training “pipeline” that is more like that of the Navy SEAL’s.¹⁵ Currently, a Reconnaissance Marine will complete Basic Marine Training, the School of Infantry, and the Basic Reconnaissance Course and then report to his unit and complete schools when they were available, sometimes taking years to complete all needed schools. Under the system to be implemented by the Marine Corps Active Duty Advocate in FY2013, a basic recruit contracted to become a Reconnaissance Marine will attend Basic Marine Training, the School of Infantry, a Basic Weapons Training Package and the rest of the schools listed above before reporting into their units.¹⁶ The Reserve Reconnaissance Marines would be placed in the same training pipeline with an active duty Marine before checking into the Reserve Commands. The Commanding General of Plans, Policies & Operations, Headquarters United States Marine Corps has already approved these changes and they are awaiting the Commandants approval.¹⁷

The evaluation of the training pipeline and missions also required the examination of the force structures and command and control structure of the Marine Corps

Reconnaissance community. Currently, there is no centralized or senior Reconnaissance commander for the entire Marine Corps. This allows for very different training practices and standards across the Marine Corps. The highest Active Duty Reconnaissance command billet is the Battalion Commander positions for either First, Second, or Third Reconnaissance Battalions. Each commander operates and conducts training with guidance from his direct Commander, which varies greatly with the Commander's knowledge of Reconnaissance employment.¹⁸ The Reconnaissance Advocate has successfully reorganized the Reconnaissance structure to include a command structure that provides guidance and standards across all levels of Marine Corps Reconnaissance. This command structure will also be tasked with training senior Reconnaissance community leadership, to include those officers of the new MOS 0307, Expeditionary Ground Reconnaissance Officer. The command will be at Headquarters Marine Corps and will operate much like the Commandant does. It will not have tactical control over the Active Reconnaissance units below them but it would set all policies, training standards and standard operating procedures for the community. The command will also promote the use of Marine Corps Reconnaissance through training for Marine Air Ground Task Force Commanders and Joint Force Commander.

Marine Corps Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance Enterprise

As the Marine Corps reorganizes itself to meet the new demands of an ever-changing battlefield, it will be dedicating itself to the MCISR-E. MCISR-E will encompass “the entire Intelligence Cycle and begin with the ability to see and task of ISR platforms (persistent ISR)” by seeking to leverage all Marine Corps intelligence and surveillance assets and unify efforts to support the commander.^{19,20} The plan, which was

approved by the Commanding General of Plans, Policies, and Operations and is now awaiting approval by the Assistance Commandant, is to form an ISR Regiment that consolidates all ISR assets in the MEF.²¹ The ISR Regimental Commander would report directly to the MEF commander and facilitate a “whole of intelligence” concept.²² After extensive training and integration, detachments would then be tailored and deployed in support of different MAGTF as needed. In the MAGTF, the ISR commander would have a direct command relationship with the MAGTF Commander and have a reach back capability to the ISR Regiment for enhanced support. This ISR Regiment should and could be replicated in the Reserves, thus better preparing Reserve units for integration when activated. Currently, MFR is waiting for the Active Duty Marine Corps to complete this change before it attempts to replicate it.

Reserve Reconnaissance Mission

With a clear picture of the future Active Duty Marine Corps Reconnaissance Community outlined by PP&O, Marine Forces Reserve (MFR) can start to shape the Reserve Reconnaissance Community. MFR must start by analyzing the role that the Reserve Reconnaissance will play in the Active Duty operations. With the movement of the Active Duty Reconnaissance from a Phase III (Dominate) focused asset to a Phase I and II focused asset, Marine Forces Reserve can recommend to the Commandant three different courses of action. The first is that the Reserve Reconnaissance exactly mirrors the Active Duty component in mission and organization. The second is that the Active Duty component can work predominately in Phase I and II operations and Reserve Reconnaissance can focus on Phase III operation. The third is for the Reserve Reconnaissance to become the Marine Corps’ Primary Phase 0 force working on the

PROTEUS Project. Each of the courses of action has benefits for the Marine Corps and drawbacks as well.

A key to the selection of the best course of action is deciding which one can be most successfully executed by a reserve unit with the least amount of increased cost. The first option of a mirroring Active Duty Reconnaissance would be to create a Reserve Reconnaissance community that would be able to conduct the exact mission as the Active Duty component and could augment them quickly, if needed, due to familiarity with the mission. The major issues with mirroring the Active Duty is that the full spectrum operations for Phase I and Phase II operations take intensive and lengthy training hours, and Phase I and Phase II operations are normally time sensitive operations. To be combat ready for the full spectrum of operations required of a Reconnaissance unit, it takes intensive and constant training periods, which cannot be achieved with the present training periods given to a Reserve Reconnaissance unit. Phase I and Phase II are timed operations that normally occur anywhere from D-90 until D-Day for an operation (D-Day referring to the commencement of combat operations.)²³ For a Reserve Unit to be prepared for Phase I and Phase II operations, they would have to be activated at D-270, so they could train, meet deployable conditions and get into theater. For most of the eventual combat operations, D-270 may be too far out to predict a conflict and activating unit may be on Operational Security issues.

The course of action to place Reserve Reconnaissance in charge of Phase 0 operations would allow Active Duty Reconnaissance the flexibility to concentrate on Phase I, II, and III operations. Phase 0 operations consist of operations such as “Global Point of Entry surveys to support the SOCOM Integrated Survey Program and MAGTF

Phase 0 requirements.”²⁴ Due to the availability of many partnership opportunities with other nations, the Reserves would be at an advantage during common overseas training engagements available to Reserve units. However, this would take a complete retraining of the Reconnaissance Reserve to complete such missions. Along with the retraining, they would have to be strategically on Active Duty orders to complete their missions in a relevant time period. This would be a sizable increase in the MFR budget and once again there is a strong possibility of a breach in Operation Security when activated. The mission of intelligence gathering on a country during a training event would need to be classified because most countries that discovered they were being collected on during a good will training event would react negatively.

The third course of action is to operate only in the Phase III operational environment. It would provide a solid continuity for both Active Duty and Reserve Reconnaissance communities. Currently, the Reserve Reconnaissance trains to meet all the mission standards for Phase III operations and has conducted them in Iraq and Afghanistan. The problem with training specifically to work in the Phase III operations is that if there is an emerging situation where a competent reserve is needed and activated it will take a much longer time to work up to the standards needed for Phase I and II operations. What the Reserve Reconnaissance community has been training for would not have to greatly change; however, they would still need to alter how they train. Of the three options, operating in the Phase III probably makes the most sense in relationship to mission continuity, future training, experience and integration into the active duty planning.

Operational Reserve Structure

With a clear mission and role for the Reserve Reconnaissance units and focusing directly on Phase III operations, the Marine Corps and Marine Forces Reserves need to reevaluate their policies concerning recruitment, operations, training, structure and policy. In his Marine Corps Vision and Strategy 2025, General James T. Conway, former Commandant of the Marine Corps, stated, “The Marine Corps will optimize the use of its Reserve Component as an operational as well as a strategic force provider.”²⁵ Continuing in that vein, the current Commandant of the Marine Corps, General James F. Amos, stated, “the transition in utilization of the Marine Corps Reserve from a strategic to operational Reserve, as affirmed by our force structure review, expands our ability to perform as America’s Expeditionary Force in Readiness.”²⁶ The concept of an operational reserve can take many different paths for the Marine Corps, but the most beneficial one would be a Reserve that would be under tactical control of an active duty command and administrative command of the Marine Forces Reserves.

In addition to realigning existing RC structure to create a balanced mix of general purpose forces and specialized security cooperation forces, Marine Forces Reserve should establish linkages between RC units and the AC units they will most likely deploy with. Specifically, Marine Forces Reserve should direct half of its general-purpose RC unit commanders to report for planning to the Commanding General, I Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF) and the other half to report for planning to the Commanding General, II MEF. This would establish working relationships, provide mutual training opportunities, and require exchange of standard operating procedures.²⁷

This operational reserve could encompass the whole reserve or just Reconnaissance Reserves, which would model the Army and Army National Guard Special Operations units and how they train and deploy with their active duty counter parts. This could be

replicated in the Marine Corps Reserves as a whole or just for the Reserve Reconnaissance community.

How Reserve Reconnaissance Will Train

With the operational reserve concept, the Reconnaissance Reserves will have to completely change how they train. The reorganization for the Reserve Reconnaissance units would take 4th Force Reconnaissance (Alameda and Hawaii) and the 4th Reconnaissance Battalion H&S Co (San Antonio, TX), Charlie Co (San Antonio, TX), Delta Co (Albuquerque, NM) should be under tactical control of 1st Reconnaissance Battalion. 3rd Force Reconnaissance and 4th Reconnaissance Battalion, Bravo Co (Smyrna, GA) and Echo Co (Joliet, IL) should be under tactical control of 2nd Reconnaissance Battalion. The locations of individual Reserve stations will remain the same and will be a mustering point for a drilling weekend that did not require field training. For field training and live-fire evolutions, the individual units would report to either Camp Pendleton or Camp Lejeune where they would have the benefit of an active duty infrastructure to support all training needs. The Inspector and Instructor (I&I) staff, the active duty Marines at the reserve centers tasked with advising and setting up training, will have the needed specialized training support such as Dive and Jump Masters to execute all training required for operational readiness. The I&I staff would also be able to relocate all the specialized insertion equipment, the armory and vehicle assets to a consolidated location at the different MEF's. This relocation will save the Marine Corps with maintenance, PCS movement of I&I staff from the fleet to reserve centers, and duplications on safety apparatus'.

The Reserve Reconnaissance community must increase its overall required training days for a fiscal year. Currently, a reservist is authorized 48 drilling periods and 14 days of annual training without any additional funding, which equates to 38 days available for training. This means that a Reserve Reconnaissance Platoon has 38 days, on a basic level, to train to the same missions and standards an Active Duty Reconnaissance Platoon unit would in approximately 250 days. It is understood that the Reserves cannot be as ready as the Active Duty component nor are they supposed to be.

However, the specialized skills for the Reconnaissance Community require more training time to even stay basically qualified. Insertion skills such as combat diving and parachuting requires two separate three to four days of training evolutions every 90 days just to be considered eligible for Parachute Duty Pay and Underwater Diving Duty Pay. An increase for the Reconnaissance Reserves to reach 25 percent of the training days the Active Duty Reconnaissance has would be 25 additional training days or 50 drills periods. Reservist can be paid in two ways for these extra days of training through Active Duty Special Work (ADSW) or Drill periods. One training day or day of Active Duty Special Work is 1/30th of the monthly base pay for the Marine. One drill period is the 1/30th of the monthly base pay with entitlements but it requires two drill periods to equal one day of work. A day of ADSW cost the government a lot less to fund than a two drill periods. The difference in the quality and quantity in training can be seen in Appendix 1 (Current 38 Day Drill Schedule) and Appendix 2 (Proposed 63 Day Training Schedule Drill Schedule). It is important to understand that for scheduling training with the Reserves the months of December and May should have as little training as possible for the completion of finals and the holidays in order to maximize training participation.

With the current training schedule there is no way to meet the most basic of the Marine Reconnaissance standard. The increase of 25 training days would allow Airborne and Combatant Dive Operations once a fiscal quarter, to complete all basic training requirement, the rifle and pistol qualification range and conduct an OCONUS annual training event. Currently, if a Reserve Reconnaissance unit wants to do additional training to keep up their qualification they must submit a byname training request 180 days in advance which can not be changed once submitted. If they cannot secure this training, the unit will not meet the training standards, which often is the case. This process is used frequently and much funding is dedicated to the training but comes and goes as budget situations constantly change. The problem is that this system has very little flexibility and is subject to training cancelations due to discretionary spending budget decisions. Depending on the total or partial implementation of the operations reserve concept for the MFR, the Reserve Reconnaissance needs to implement this to be of any true operational value in the future.

The USMCR Reconnaissance Advocate

At the Marine Forces Reserve level, there is a gap in the services of how the Reserve Reconnaissance community's training and schooling needs are currently being met. The Active Duty Reconnaissance community has a Reconnaissance Advocate at Plans, Policies, and Operations, Headquarters United States Marine Corps which helps to monitor schools, policies, and international training opportunities. He has streamlined the process that allows for direct requests between Reconnaissance commands and Headquarter Marine Corps, there by eliminating layers of non-Reconnaissance decision makers in the MEF and Division staffs. For instance, if there is an issue getting an active

duty Reconnaissance Marine to attend a school, a Battalion S-3 representative can call the Advocate to authorize the school and solve any problems that might arise. Currently, there is no Advocate at the Marine Forces Reserve command or 4th Marine Division level due to the over estimation of the abilities of the current staff and lack of funding to properly staff the billet.

All Reconnaissance specific school requests, extra training requests, and logistics get routed to 4th Marine Division Headquarters for approval by a Staff Sergeant in the G-3 and then to the Marine Force Reserves where another Staff Sergeant in their Operations section must approve it. These Marines are tasked with authorizing all reserve schools and all extra training requests. These are not Reconnaissance Marines and do not have the resident knowledge needed to deal with problems that occur when dealing with Reconnaissance issues. Organizing schools and training for the Reconnaissance community takes the resident knowledge only gained by someone who has been in the community and understands all the complexity that goes along with them. In the end, MFR still has to send all Reconnaissance specific schools and training requests to the Active Duty Reconnaissance Advocate for approval.

The Reserve Reconnaissance community needs a Reconnaissance Advocate at the Marine Force Reserve level. This Advocate should be a senior experienced Reconnaissance Officer 0307 who can be Active Duty or an Activated Reservist and would also need a senior SNCO as his deputy. This Advocate would have direct control over all Reserve Reconnaissance issues and schools and report as an advisor to the MFR Commanding General on the status of the Reserve Reconnaissance. This will accomplish the streamlining of operations and ensuring optimal participation by the reservists. First,

he will be able to coordinate specialized training events, such as the double bag static line training course, as a total Reserve Reconnaissance training event. Currently, each Reserve Reconnaissance unit plans its own training events, which is a great drain on the I&I staff and the H&S units. Large training events should be paid for, prepared for and standardized at the MFR level to allow the Battalion and Companies to focus on more manageable training events. The USMCR Reconnaissance Advocate would also work in conjunction with the Active Duty Advocate to focus logistics and training efforts to achieve the total force concept. He will represent the Reconnaissance community on the MEF staff to encourage maximum employment and deployment opportunities. The Advocate would also manage a separate schools system and it would be monitored, tracked, and adjusted to ensure combat readiness. The creation of the billet of the Reserve Reconnaissance Advocate is paramount to the success of any change to the current Reserve system.

Operational Possibilities

How the Marine Corps will use an operational Reconnaissance Reserve is an important question facing the Marine Corps today. The standard that has been presented by Major General Darrell L. Moore Commander, U.S. Marine Corps Forces Reserve, is of deployment to dwell ratio of 1:5 for all the reserves no matter the Military Occupational Speciality (MOS).²⁸ This would mean within a six-year reserve enlistment contract, a reservist should be activated for only one year and in a 20-year period he should expect to be activated for approximately four years. Having this ratio would not only keep the reserves prepared in peacetime but continuing with a normal deployment

cycle during wartime. This would also allow for reserves to properly plan and adjust their lives to a scheduled activation.

With a standard of 1:5 deployment to dwell ratio, the next question that needs to be answered is how they will be used when activated. Several courses of action could include the setting up of a system of individual augments for active units, small team and platoon activation and even an entire battalion. With the TACOM relationship developed by an operational reserve, there should be a much stronger relationship between the Reserve Reconnaissance units and active duty Reconnaissance unit and system of individual augments will enhance that. As the reserve units train alongside the active duty units, individual reservists can be screened and selected as replacement for deploying Active Reconnaissance units when needed. Team size elements can be used as combat replacement teams which will give the team some cohesion in a combat environment. Reserve Reconnaissance can be activated to platoons and companies can be used to support MEU rotations, Joint Task Forces, and Special Purpose Marine Air Ground Task Forces as needed and would not only stay in line with the 1:5 deployment ratio but help the Marine Corps with shortfalls as the Corps shrinks due to budget constraints. As the Marine Corps develops habitual relationships with other countries, they can set up programs such as the Black Sea Rotation and African development programs with the Reserve Reconnaissance units to bridge gaps in Active Duty manning. Also, Reserves Reconnaissance Marines can be activated to support the Reconnaissance community at schools, with Military Training Teams, and on Reconnaissance staffs. The experience that would be gained by all of these activation options will be invaluable to the future of the Marine Reserves.

Recruitment and Retention

Retention of qualified and motivated individuals is one of the largest problems the Marine Corps Reserves faces. The initial problem with the recruitment for Reserve Reconnaissance is finding a man that can complete the Basic Reconnaissance Course, Multi-Mission Parachute Course and Combatant Diver Course with only a basic Military Entrance Processing Station (MEPS) physical and an inventory physical assessment. At the very least, there needs to be an airborne physical, Marine Corps Physical Fitness Test, and basic swim screening for any candidate looking to contract as a Reserve Reconnaissance Marine. This will save the government millions in wasted training funds on individuals who are not even basically or physically qualified for training. It will also stop the training pipeline and billets on unit tables of organization from being filled up by individuals who were never physical qualified at the start which is the largest problem with getting fully manned Reserve Reconnaissance units.

With the reorganization of the training pipeline, the Marine Corps Reserve will be experiencing a longer period of waiting for new Marines to get their units. The current program has a new Marine shipping from the Military Entrance Processing Station (MEPS), completing Basic Training, the School of Infantry and the Basic Reconnaissance Course which will have them arriving at their unit a year later. The new pipeline will add on a shooting package, Survival, Evasion, Resistance and Escape School (SERE), Air Borne, Combatant Dive School, and Multi-Mission Parachute school, which will add on approximately nine months, having them arrive at their units 18 months after shipping from MEPS. For that entire time, the unit is waiting for a new Marine, and the billet is being held for him and will be empty. If that Marine fails out of

training, the recruiters must start all over finding another recruit for that billet which could be three years or more before anyone is at the unit and training. At times, graduation from the Basic Reconnaissance Course has been 50% and adding on schools with similar success rates it would be reasonable to assume for every two Reserve Reconnaissance contracts signed only one will ever make it to the unit.²⁹

There are three ways to ensure manning goals are met for Reserve Reconnaissance units. The first way is to allow for over-recruiting of the billet and under-recruiting other billets in the command or at other close reserve stations. For instance, in Hawaii there is a Force Recon Platoon and two infantry platoons co-located at the same reserve center. If there are five open billets in the Reconnaissance and ten billets in the infantry unit, the recruiters should recruit for ten Reconnaissance Marine and five infantry billets. Using the figure of 50% attrition, five of the Reconnaissance recruits should complete the training and the other five should be retasked to become Infantry contracts. The total number of overall recruits will stay the same; there will just be an understanding that if an individual does not complete the specialized training he will join the infantry unit. This currently happens for recruits that fail out of the specialized training, but the recruiters cannot over recruit to the Reconnaissance billets to make up for the failure percentages. If there is catastrophic success and all ten Marines complete the Reconnaissance training, five can train with the Reconnaissance unit and the other five can work with the infantry until an opening becomes available.

The second way to ensure manning is to increase length of commitments for both the Active Duty and Reserve Reconnaissance contracts. For Active Duty Reconnaissance contracts, there should be a clause to allow the last active year of the contract to be

converted to a two year USMCR contract if approved by the Active Duty Marine Corps Advocate. This will ensure a strong experienced Non-Commission Officer corps in the Reconnaissance Reserves. For Reserve contracts, there should be a seven-year USMCR contract and one year in the Individual Ready Reserve (IRR). This is not a drastic change from the current six-year USMCR contract and two year IRR contract. This does not require any extra investment in money and the additional year will fill some of the gap created by the new pipeline.

The third way is to set up a better system for prior service Marines that wish to train to join the Reconnaissance community. Currently, when a prior service Marine signs a Reconnaissance contract, he affiliates a Reserve Reconnaissance unit and then must wait until there is an allotted space at either the Basic Reconnaissance Course or the School of Infantry depending on his prior MOS. The problem is that the school seats are very rare and Marines often must wait six or more months to for getting a school space. While the Marine is waiting for a school space the billet he is in is considered filled and cannot be recruited to that fiscal year. The best solution will be to prioritize these prior service Marine in the school system and have the MFR Reconnaissance advocate track his training schedule. Also, until he passes the Basic Reconnaissance Course, he should not count as a billet holder. These three simple steps would save the Marine Corps money and ensure a better manned and more experienced Marine Corps Reserve Reconnaissance Community.

Road Blocks to Change

In any large organization, there is normally resistance to institutional change. Two major reasons individuals will point out to resist change in Reserve Reconnaissance

community are it will cost too much or they fear loss of operational control. Most of the changes, however, are structural or procedural and will have limited fiscal impact. The two that make a significant fiscal impact are traveling to MEF training areas six times a year and 25 extra training days a year. The fiscal impact of these can be somewhat mitigated by personal movement to training and using a government vehicle. If it is feasible and achievable then the closure of some of the Reserve Reconnaissance centers will also offset these costs. Also, the consolidation of some of the I&I Staff and gear will eventually save money from a maintenance, security, and manpower perspective. These changes may not completely pay for themselves but the variance may just be the cost of having an operation reserve mandated by the Commandant. At first there may be reluctance by the MFR commanders who will not enjoy the new role as administrative advisors, yet with successful implementation of Reserve Reconnaissance Marines and the Commandants guidance the senior MFR leadership will truly embrace the changes.

Conclusion

In a speech given June 16, 2010 at 4th Force Reconnaissance Detachment Hawaii, the former MFR Commanding General, Lieutenant General John F. Kelly asked what the Marine Corps Reserve Reconnaissance needed.³⁰ The answer from the Major in charge of the detachment was more funding for training was needed because the drills and additional training funds were not adequate to keep the unit at a basic level of readiness. The General replied with a question, “If the drills and annual training were not keeping the unit ready is that an asset that should be in the reserves?” To this the Major replied that he did not know and that sounded like a decision for Generals, but if we are going to have a Recon Reserve we should do it properly.

The mandate given by the Commandant is that the Marine Corps will “pursue policies and operational practices to better develop and access the skill, knowledge, and expertise of Marines in the Reserve Component.”³¹ After the 2010 Force Structure Review, the Marine Corps has no plans to seriously change the Reserve Reconnaissance community.³² If the Marine Corps is to seriously commit to the operational reserve concept, Marine Forces Reserve must restructure, relocate, and reorient the mission of their Reconnaissance Units. Before there can be an evaluation of the future of the Reserve Reconnaissance community, there needs to be an understanding of the future of Active Duty Reconnaissance units. The Reserve Reconnaissance community will have to continue to focus on Phase III operation in order to best support the Active Duty Reconnaissance commands. Each reserve unit should also develop a TACON relationship with an Active Duty Reconnaissance command to develop a habitual training program and prepared for integration upon activation, while still having an ADCON relationship with MFR and a newly formed billet of Marine Forces Reserve Reconnaissance Advocate. To stay basically mission capable there will also have to be additional annual training days for Reserve Reconnaissance units. The final change needed for the Reserves is to address their recruitment and retention policies to ensure that there will always be a well trained and fully manned Reserve Reconnaissance community when the nation calls.

Appendix 1

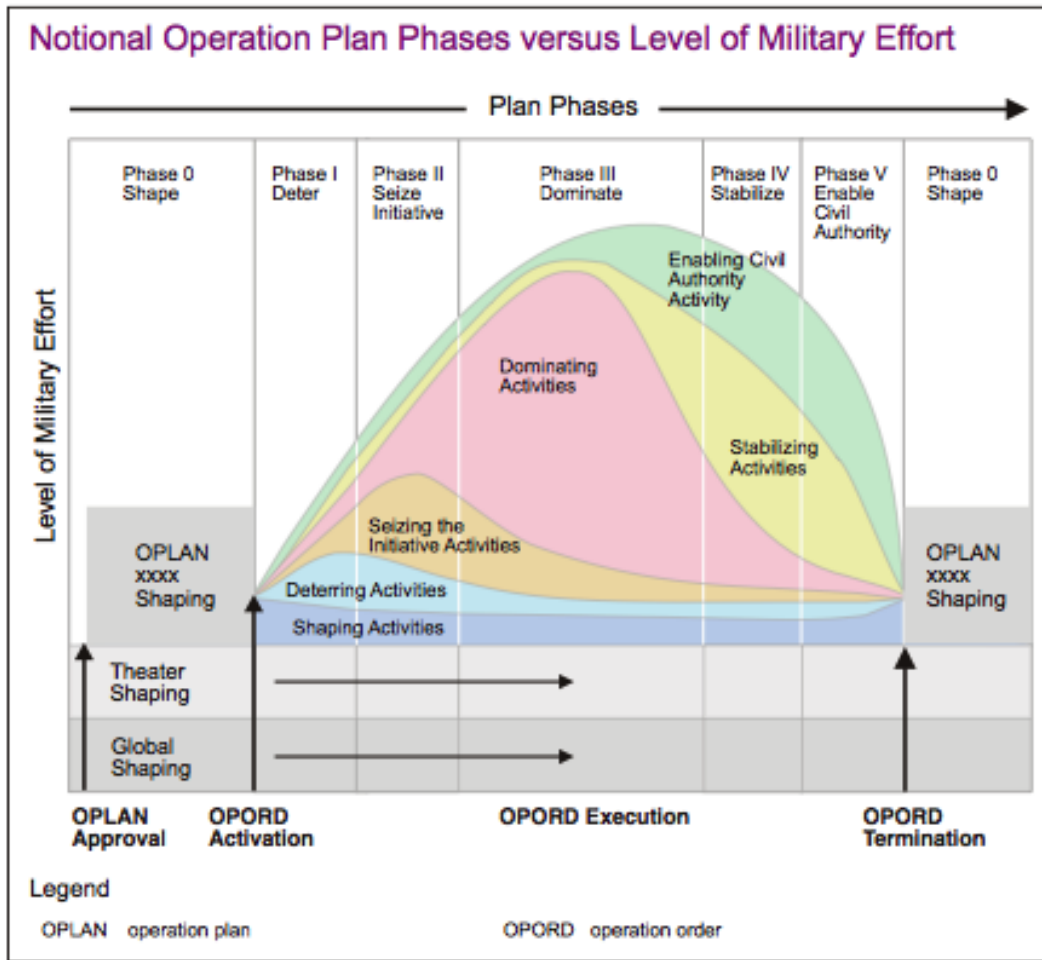


Figure V-3. Notional Operation Plan Phases versus Level of Military Effort

Department of Defense. *Joint Publication 3-0: Joint Operations*. (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, 11 August 2011), V-6.

Month	Event	Location	Training Days	Info
October	CFT, BST	Reserve Center	2 Days	
November	Marine Corps Ball	Reserve Center	2 Days	
December	Toys For Tots	Reserve Center	2 Days	
January	None	None	None	
February	Patrolling/Orders	Closest Joint Training	5 Days	Patrolling
March	None	None	None	
April	Amphibious Ops	Local Pool or closest Beach	5 Days	Fining and Zodiac Skills

Appendix 2
Current 38 Day Drill Schedule

		Training Area		
May	None	None	None	
June	Combined Arms	Either Reserve	4 Days	PFT
Month	Event	Location Center or Closest	Training Days	Info
October	Dive Ops, CFT, BST	Reserve Combine Arms Center/Local Training Area Training Pool	4 Days	Annual Classes, Dive Ops
July	None	None	None	
August	Annual Training	Marine Corps	14 days	Jump, Dive,
November	Marine Corps Ball Orders and PME	MEF Base of Joint Command Training Area	5 Days	Jumping Ops, Support Other Reserve
December	Toys For Tots	Reserve Center	2 Days	Exercises
September	Convoy Ops	Joint Training area	4 days	
January	Patrolling/Orders	MEF Command	5 Days	Patrolling, Jumping Ops
Totals			38 days	

Appendix 3

February	Dive Ops/Communications	Reserve Center/ Local Training Pool	2 Days	Diving Ops
March	None	None	None	
April	Amphibious Ops	MEF Command	5 Days	Fining and Zodiac Skills Dive Ops
May	None	None	None	
June	Combined Arms, Live-Fire Weapons Package	MEF Command	7 Days	CAS, Call For Fire, Jump Ops
July	MC Rifle Range, Weapons Engagement Jump and Dive Ops AT Prep	MEF Command	11 Days	Jumping Ops, Dive Ops, Bi-Annual Rifle Range
August	(AT) Annual Training	OCONUS	14 days	Jumping Ops, Dive Ops, Combined Operations
September	Convoy Ops	MEF Command	5 days	Vehicle Familiarization and Mounted Patrolling
Totals			63 days	

Proposed 63 Day Training Schedule Drill Schedule

Endnotes

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⁴ Richard P. Mills, LtGen, USMC. *2010 Force Structure Review*. (Quantico, Va: Marine Corps Combat Development Command, 2011) p. 1.

⁵ Mills, p. 2.

- ⁶ Ian Fletcher, Major USMC, Reconnaissance Advocate to Headquarters Marine Corps, ian.fletcher@usmc.mil, January 9, 2012.
- ⁷ Ian Fletcher, Major USMC, “MCWP 2-25, *Ground Reconnaissance Operations.*” Plans. Policies and Operations, Headquarters United States Marine Corps, MCWP 2-25, 5.
- ⁸ Fletcher, Interview.
- ⁹ Department of Defense. *Joint Operational Access Concept (JOAC)*. Versions 1.0, November 22, 2011, p. 34.
- ¹⁰ Ian Fletcher, Major USMC, “*PROTEUS: Phase-0 Reconnaissance/Intelligence Operations To Enable Unified Surveys.*” Plans. Policies and Operations, Headquarters United States Marine Corps, MCWP 2-25, 5.
- ¹¹ Fletcher, “*PROTEUS: Phase-0 Reconnaissance/Intelligence Operations To Enable Unified Surveys.*”, 4.
- ¹² Fletcher, “MCWP 2-25, *Ground Reconnaissance Operations.*”, 9.
- ¹³ Fletcher, “MCWP 2-25, *Ground Reconnaissance Operations.*”, 21.
- ¹⁴ Eric Dill, Major USMC, Former Force Reconnaissance Company Commander, Eric.Dill@usmc.mil, January 11, 2012.
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- ¹⁹ Headquarters Marine Corps, *USMC Concepts & Programs 2008*, (Washington, DC: U.S. Marine Corps, 2008), 84.
- ²⁰ Headquarters Marine Corps, *USMC Concepts & Programs 2008*, 84.
- ²¹ Ian Fletcher, Major USMC, Reconnaissance Advocate to Headquarters Marine Corps, ian.fletcher@usmc.mil, January 9, 2012.
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- ²³ Fletcher, “MCWP 2-25, *Ground Reconnaissance Operations.*”, 57-59.
- ²⁴ Fletcher, “*PROTEUS: Phase-0 Reconnaissance/Intelligence Operations To Enable Unified Surveys.*”, 9.
- ²⁵ Commandant of the Marine Corps. *Marine Corps Vision and Strategy 2025*. PCN 50100654800. http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/usmc/vision-strategy_2025.pdf (assessed January 10, 2012), 17.
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²⁹ Fuentes, Gidget. "Recon-improvement plan pays off for Corps." *Marine Corps Times*, June 22, 2009, http://www.marinecorpstimes.com/news/2009/06/marine_recon_062209w.

³⁰ John F. Kelly, Lt General Commanding General, conversation with author, June 16, 2010.

³¹ Commandant of the Marine Corps. *Marine Corps Vision and Strategy 2025*. PCN 50100654800. http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/usmc/vision-strategy_2025.pdf (assessed January 10, 2012), 17.

³² Mills, p.3.

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