



# USMC Center for Advanced Operational Culture Learning

## Overview of Results from the 2010 and 2012 CAOCL Surveys

**BLUF:** In two surveys conducted by the United States Marine Corps' Center for Advanced Operational Culture Learning (CAOCL), CAOCL found that Marines valued culture-related capabilities and linked those capabilities to effectiveness and readiness across the range of military operations and deployment locations and equated the importance of training in such capabilities with that of other predeployment training requirements. Such results reaffirm the relevance of and need for continued investment in culture-related training and education to ensure Marine forces remain mission ready.

**Background:** CAOCL conducted two surveys of the general Marine population, one in 2010 and the other in 2012.<sup>1</sup> In 2010, CAOCL sought to gain insights into Marines' satisfaction with cultural and language learning programs, their preferred method of instruction, the training's impact on operational effectiveness, and the need for and importance of such learning. As the bulk of the 2010 respondents had deployed to Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), CAOCL launched a second survey in 2012 to better understand how Marines value and use cultural knowledge and skills in non-counterinsurgency missions and operations.

### Do Marines value culture-related capabilities? Yes, they do.

- In the 2010 survey<sup>2</sup>, Marines indicated:
  - they valued cultural and language capabilities,
  - these capabilities were important to mission effectiveness,
  - these capabilities were needed for operational effectiveness, and
  - training in these capabilities made them more operationally effective.
- In the 2012 survey<sup>3</sup>, the majority of Marines agreed or strongly agreed that culture-related capabilities were a key component of operational readiness.
- In both surveys,
  - Marines, regardless of mission type or location, indicated they valued and used culture-related capabilities for their missions; and
  - Marines ranked the pre-deployment preparation in culture-related capabilities as equally important to all other pre-deployment training requirements.

### Which capabilities? Both cultural and language capabilities, but cultural capabilities were ranked higher in importance.

- The 2010 survey addressed both cultural and language capabilities. While Marines viewed both as important, they consistently ranked cultural capabilities as higher in importance to mission effectiveness than language skills.
- The 2012 survey drilled down on specific aspects of culture-related capabilities and found that Marines ranked as important:
  - the use of various culture skills (e.g. building rapport, using or interpreting body language, negotiating, and influencing and persuading) for facilitating mission accomplishment;

---

<sup>1</sup> The data supporting the statements contained in this document can be found either on the CAOCL website at: [http://www.mcu.usmc.mil/caocl/SitePages/Research\\_Assessment.aspx](http://www.mcu.usmc.mil/caocl/SitePages/Research_Assessment.aspx) or by contacting CAOCL at 703.432.1504.

<sup>2</sup> The 2010 survey asked Marines about culture and language training and capabilities in general.

<sup>3</sup> The 2012 survey drilled down on cultural knowledge and skills, one of which was using basic words or phrases in a foreign language. This survey did not address language training.

---

**DISTRIBUTION: Unlimited**

DISCLAIMER: This paper contains viewpoints that do not necessarily represent the official position of the U.S. Marine Corps or any other U.S. governmental agency.

Distribution: Unlimited

- the application of cultural knowledge for planning or decision making, understanding situations or events, anticipating second and third-order effects, and interacting with foreign individuals or groups while on deployment, assignment, or station; and
- understanding the organizational culture of foreign security forces (e.g. relations among ranks, traditions, motivations to join/serve etc.) when dealing with foreign security forces.

**Is the ground combat arms (GCA) community any different? A little. While all Marines valued cultural and language capabilities, GCA Marines used and valued them more.**

- Marines with GCA military occupational specialties (MOSs) used these capabilities more and placed a higher value on them than those with other MOSs.
- Officer vs. Enlisted GCA: the 2010 survey showed that both officer and enlisted GCA reported equally on the importance of cultural capabilities; enlisted GCA respondents ranked the importance of using language skills more highly than their officer counterparts.
- GCA vs other MOSs: In 2012, CAOCL found that GCA respondents rated the following skills as more important to their ability to accomplish mission than Marines with other MOSs: influencing/persuading, building rapport, negotiating, and using basic words or phrases in a foreign language. They also rated the use of cultural knowledge for the following tasks as more important to support their deployment or assignment: planning or decision making, anticipating second and third-order effects, and interacting with foreign individuals or groups.

**Does mission type or deployment location impact Marine perception on importance of culture-related capabilities? Only in *magnitude* of importance.**

- In 2010, CAOCL found that Marines who had deployed to locations other than Iraq and Afghanistan used culture and language skills as often as Marines who deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan but ranked higher the importance of culture and language capabilities to mission effectiveness.
- In 2012, CAOCL designed the survey intentionally to address this question and found:
  - Regardless of mission type, the majority of Marines rated the use of culture skills and application of cultural knowledge as important or very important and the understanding organizational culture as important.
  - Deployment location did not make a difference on level of importance Marines placed on the application of cultural knowledge; on the use of cultural skills, the differences between those who deployed *solely* to OEF/OIF and the other respondents who had deployed, while statistically significant, were small, and both groups tended to perceive the skills as important or very important.

**In whom should the Marine Corps invest the limited cultural and language resources? Well, that's a tough one, according to the seasoned Marines who responded to the final open ended question soliciting recommendations from the 2010 survey.**

- While endorsing the learning, these Marines were not in agreement as to who should receive it. They recommended with roughly equal frequency that all Marines and only specific groups should receive this type of learning. Focusing on key individuals, especially those willing or able, received a strong recommendation as well.
- These alternatives yield very different programmatic and policy responses. The diversity in response reveals the challenges facing policy makers as they seek to determine the most effective way to prepare the forces.
- Note: the responding Marines had more service and deployment experience and also used and placed more value on cultural and language capabilities than the rest of the 2010 survey respondents; their insights serve as a valuable resource of Marine leadership, as they have seen and experienced what has worked and what has not, both in the field and in garrison.

**When should they receive this learning? According to these same seasoned Marines, within the education continuum or during annual/regularized training throughout a Marine's career.**

- These Marines clearly more frequently recommended placing cultural and language learning within education and annual/regularized training throughout the career, possibly suggesting a stronger preference for the recommendation that all Marines receive this learning, as education and annual training requirements tend to be broadly applied across the force.
- *The responses to these two last questions suggest the answer may involve a combination of different recommendations in order to create a more effective fighting force.*

**Conclusion:** The results from these two surveys offer important insights into the value and usefulness of culture-related training and capabilities for Marines and the importance of these capabilities to the Marines' ability to accomplish missions across the range of military operations and deployment locations. CAOCL conducts studies like these to refine its curricular offerings throughout the training and education continuum and inform policy processes to ensure the Marine Corps is equipped with Marines who can effectively navigate and influence the culturally complex 21<sup>st</sup> Century operating environment in support of Marine Corps' missions and requirements.