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The United States Marine Corps' ability to meet the requirements of the DOD that broaden littoral maneuver and amphibious operations capabilities requires the effective. Discussion: With current reduction of forces in support of Operation Enduring Freedom-Afghanistan, the contemporary operational environment is moving toward hybrid warfare. The United States Marine Corps needs a world class Force Reconnaissance capability. The level of commitment required includes a rigorous selection process, specialized equipment for special insertion and extraction skills, the ability to build capability, and financial resources. The ability to operate in a dynamic, ambiguous environment that requires various capabilities in order to acquire information to provide a commander with strategic and operational level decision making is even more demanding. The analysis of the historical origins and evolution of Force Reconnaissance from World War II to Operations Enduring Freedom-Afghanistan and beyond requires a major shift in operational employment toward a future operational environment. This study identifies the current capabilities of Force Reconnaissance to support the Marine Air Ground Task Force and the ability to provide access, mobility and deep strike capable units in future operational employment. In order to support the future of the United States Marine Corps, Force Reconnaissance's way ahead must be based upon an integrated intelligence & operations, dedicated enabler packages, and a habitual relationship with air assets. The United States Marine Corps will need to prioritize its Force Reconnaissance capability to ensure it is properly manned, trained, and equipped for future threats.

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**Force Reconnaissance: A Key Enabler in the Marine Air Ground Task Force &  
Beyond**

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT  
OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE DEGREE OF  
MASTERS OF MILITARY STUDIES

**Major Bradford R Carr, USMC**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**Title:** Force Reconnaissance: A Key Enabler in the Marine Air Ground Task Force and Beyond.

**Author:** Major Bradford R. Carr, United States Marine Corps

**Thesis:** The United States Marine Corps' ability to meet the requirements of the Department of Defense that broaden littoral maneuver and amphibious operations capabilities requires the effective employment of Force Reconnaissance.

**Discussion:** The current reduction of forces in support of Operation Enduring Freedom-Afghanistan while focus the USMC back toward Marine Expeditionary Unit deployments and Unit Deployment Programs that will requirement additional MAGTF advanced force operational units. There have been significant adjustments in current power structures, proliferations of weapons of mass destruction, and emerging non-state actors. The ability to operate in a dynamic, ambiguous environment requires various methods in order to acquire access to provide a commander with his information requirements and strike capability is even more demanding. The analysis of the historical origins and evolution of Force Reconnaissance from World War II through Operations Enduring Freedom-Afghanistan requires a shift in operational employment toward intelligence and operations integration, dedicated enablers, and habitual relationship with air assets. These additions will increase current capabilities of Force Reconnaissance to support the Marine Air Ground Task Force Commander, integrated with the requirements for units to SEE, MOVE, SHOOT, and REPORT.

The contemporary environment is moving toward hybrid warfare. The United States Marine Corps needs a world class Force Reconnaissance capability. The level of commitment required includes a rigorous selection process, specialized equipment for special insertion and extraction skills, the ability to build capability, and financial resources. The ability to operate in a dynamic, ambiguous environment that requires various capabilities in order to acquire information to provide a commander with strategic and operational level decision making is even more demanding. The analysis of the historical origins and evolution of Force Reconnaissance from World War II to Operations Enduring Freedom-Afghanistan and beyond requires a major shift in operational employment toward a future operational environment. This study identifies the current capabilities of Force Reconnaissance to support the Marine Air Ground Task Force and the ability to provide access, mobility and deep strike capable units in future operational employment. The future of the United States Marine Corps Force Reconnaissance must be based upon an integrated intelligence and operations, dedicated enabler packages, and a habitual relationship with air assets.

**Conclusion:** The ability to meet the requirements of the DOD that broaden littoral maneuver and amphibious operations capabilities requires realignment of the Marine Corps in order to enhance capabilities. Force Reconnaissance's key has always been in the ability to adapt to the current environment in support of the MAGTF commander.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
<b><u>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</u></b> .....	2
<b><u>DISCLAIMER</u></b> .....	3
<b><u>TABLE OF CONTENTS</u></b> .....	4
<b><u>INTRODUCTION</u></b> .....	5
Acknowledgements.....	5
Problem.....	6
Method.....	7
<b><u>CHAPTER 1 - BACKGROUND</u></b> .....	8
WWII – Amphibious Reconnaissance.....	10
Post-WWII – Insertion/Extraction Capabilities.....	11
Vietnam – Stingray/Keyhole.....	13
MSPF – Direct Action/VBSS.....	15
OIF/OEF – Direct Action/VBSS/COIN.....	16
Post-OIF/OEF – MAGTF Advance Force Operations.....	19
Lessons Learned.....	21
<b><u>CHAPTER 2 - CURRENT CAPABILTY SETS</u></b> .....	23
Strategic Trends.....	23
Operational Trends.....	25
Tactical Trends .....	26
<b><u>CHAPTER 3 – CHALLENGES</u></b> .....	28
Intelligence & Operations integration.....	28
Dedicated Enabler Package.....	29
Habitual relationship with Air assets.....	29
<b><u>CHAPTER 4 – RECOMMENDATIONS</u></b> .....	30
Reconnaissance Regiment.....	30
Command Slatng - Force Reconnaissance Company.....	30
Advocacy.....	31
Reconnaissance Training Battalion.....	32
Reconnaissance Regiment Diagram.....	36
<b><u>CHAPTER 5 – CONCLUSION</u></b> .....	37
<b>APPENDIX A – FORCE RECONNAISSANCE COMPANY MISSION</b> .....	39
<b>APPENDIX B – MISSION ESSENTAIL TASK LIST</b> .....	39
<b>APPENDIX C – DIFFERENCE FORCE RECON &amp; RECON BATTALION</b> .....	39
<b>APPENDIX D – FORCE RECON TABLE OF ORGANIZATION</b> .....	40-42
<b>APPENDIX E – FORCE RECONNAISSANCE CAPABILITIES</b> .....	43
<b>APPENDIX F – FORCE RECONNAISSANCE TASKS</b> .....	44-45
<b>APPENDIX G – INDIVIDUAL TRAINING</b> .....	46
<b>APPENDIX H – TEAM &amp; PLATOON TRAINING</b> .....	47-48
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b> .....	49-50

## **INTRODUCTION**

As a former Commanding Officer, II MEF Force Reconnaissance Company for two-years, this study focuses on the requirement for the Marine Corps Force Reconnaissance organization to adapt to emerging operational requirements in today's dynamic, uncertain, full spectrum combat environment in order to provide a relevant deep reconnaissance capability for the Marine Corps. This paper will concentrate specifically on employment of Force Reconnaissance in order to discuss the need for Marine Corps Force Reconnaissance's organization to adapt to emerging operational requirements.

The United States Marine Corps, specifically Force Reconnaissance, is seeking ways to transform itself to meet the security challenges of the future. The changing global environment has resulted in an increase in the number of operations and a corresponding increased demand for small, highly skilled units that can conduct MAGTF advance force operations with a deep strike capability. Terrorism will increase within the frequency and scope in the future. The United States Marine Corps' ability to meet the requirements of the DOD that broaden littoral maneuver and amphibious operations capabilities requires restructuring of United States Marine Corps Force Reconnaissance.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

My dedication to the Force Reconnaissance community derives from twenty years of military service and three tours in Force Reconnaissance. As a result of my research, I realized that some of the concerns and challenges the United States Marine Corps and Force Reconnaissance face today can be traced to remaining relevant in the contemporary environment. As a former Commanding Officer, II MEF Force Reconnaissance Company, this paper focuses on the requirement for the Marine Corps Force

Reconnaissance organization to adapt to emerging operational requirements in today's dynamic, uncertain, and full spectrum combat environment in order to provide a relevant deep reconnaissance capability for the Marine Corps.

My true desire is for this to be a reference document for the way forward for the Force Reconnaissance community. My sincere appreciation is directed to Dr. Pauletta Otis, Colonel George Bristol (USMC) for their motivation and encouragement in assisting me with this study. Additional thanks go out to Colonel Pete Petronzio (USMC) (Ret) for additional insights and thoughts. The staff at the Gray Research Center provided me with editorial assistance, which I am truly thankful.

To my wife Tracy and children Devon and Kayla who have always supported me and sacrificed so much that I may become a better Man, Husband, Father and Marine Officer.

## **PROBLEM**

The United States Marine Corps is transitioning out of Afghanistan and refocusing toward a global amphibious operational reach. The core of the USMC amphibious assault missions based upon the Expeditionary Fighting Vehicle (EFV), US Navy amphibious ships, and F-35 aircraft programs are lacking financial support which threatens the Marine Corps' future amphibious capability.<sup>1</sup> The connection to Navy and Marine amphibious capabilities and Force Reconnaissance are relevant in force projection. The Pentagon has already forced the cancellation of several high-profile weapon programs belonging to its other Department of Defense services.<sup>2</sup> The critics of the amphibious assault mission argue the Marine Corps has not performed an opposed landing since the 1950s; however, the Marine Corps has conducted four amphibious

assaults in the last two decades, which are among one-hundred and four amphibious operations conducted.<sup>3</sup> As the mission of pre-assault information requirements, the future of the Marine Corps remains unclear based upon larger fiscal issues.

The organization of reconnaissance has evolved since the formation of the Amphibious Reconnaissance Battalion. During the Vietnam era, the organization did not see significant growth and transformation. The structure of Force Reconnaissance has been relatively unchanged however the nature of warfare has changed. The current table of organization is based on an out-dated structure with a Company Head Quarters and four operational platoons. Rapid advances in technology, changing capabilities of the Marine Corps, operational experience across the spectrum of conflict, and changes in the threat over the past decade have redefined the operational requirements for Force Reconnaissance. It is imperative that the Marine Corps examine the organization to see where changes are needed and then aggressively transform the force to meet those needs.

## **METHOD**

This section provides a brief historical analysis of the organization of Force Reconnaissance. It includes a review of the inception in World War II and used in the island hopping campaigns through the past seventy years including a detailed summary of recent Force Reconnaissance's missions. Next, the paper analyzes the current operational environment with the intent of identifying specific Force Reconnaissance requirements. The Commandant of the Marine Corps through Headquarters Marine Corps, Plans, Policy & Operations policies have released operational observations and future operational environments the Marine Corps may operate within the CMC 2011 Posture of the United States Marine Corps.<sup>4</sup> This analysis provides the characteristics and environment that

MAGTF advanced forces will be expected to operate. Recent operations in Iraq and Afghanistan are used to provide specific, real-world details and show the nature of Force Reconnaissance. The historical background of Force Reconnaissance will support my thesis through showing changes in mission essential tasks based upon the current operational forces.

This paper is based on source material in the form of government documents and books, journals, periodical articles, and papers. Additionally, interviews with subject matter experts have been used whenever available to supplement the research.

## **CHAPTER 1**

### **BACKGROUND**

Since World War II, Force Reconnaissance Marines have conducted extensive deployments outside the continental United States (OCONUS). Recent major operational commitments for Force Reconnaissance Marines involving the application of MAGTF advance force operation skills include Iraq, Somalia, Haiti, Bosnia, Kosovo, and Afghanistan. Over the last two decades, the environment has changed and the nature of Force Reconnaissance operations needs to evolve because of it. Force Reconnaissance's ability to adapt to current challenges and continue to SEE-MOVE-SHOOT-REPORT will be the way forward.

Marine commanders and planners have applied the tenets of maneuver warfare by seeking gaps in the enemy's total system, and by creating and exploiting vulnerabilities. The Marine Corps Combat Development Command (MCCDC) has focused on achieving the capability of avoiding enemy strengths, striking directly against critical vulnerabilities and enemy centers of gravity. The Marine Corps development of operating concepts of ship-to-objective maneuver and capabilities embodied in systems of the MV-22 Osprey

that allow the Marines to strike directly at operational objectives deep inland instead of conducting costly, manpower-intensive, attrition-based operations. It is within this specific context that Force Reconnaissance needs to be readily aware of the past with an eye toward future operational employment with the MEU of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

Force Reconnaissance's key contribution has been the ability to adapt to the current environment to support the MAGTF commander. The historical thread that has provided relevance through the years has been in Force Reconnaissance's ability to simply: SEE-MOVE-SHOOT-REPORT. <sup>5</sup>

SEE: Commanders have always had the ability to see and eliminate the enemy. From the old frontier scouts onward, someone has to be "over the hills and far away" to see the enemy in order to kill the enemy. Reconnaissance units were born first and foremost to see the enemy or observe key locations. <sup>6</sup>

MOVE: Large conventional units do not move well on the modern battlefield. Even with the increased mobility assets, the movement of large units continues to be very burdensome. Combat is a movement based activity and Reconnaissance units are highly mobile. These units can facilitate maneuver by allowing the commander to see and make decisions more effectively and efficiently. <sup>7</sup>

SHOOT: Though small in size, Force Reconnaissance possesses a combined arms lethality force on the battlefield. Force Reconnaissance units are highly mobile. These units can shoot if required with the current capability of the organic Joint Tactical Air Ground certified personnel to deliver precision ordnance on target. <sup>8</sup>

REPORT: Commanders need to know what is going on in the battle space. Reporting consistent and accurate information greatly assists with the critical

commander's information requirements (CCIRs). Force Reconnaissance provides the commander with a variety of communication assets with real time imagery capabilities.<sup>9</sup>

In order for Force Reconnaissance to continue providing a viable and effective deep reconnaissance capability, the organizational structure of Force Reconnaissance must meet the requirements of a new, dynamic, rapidly changing current operational environment. The operational gaps of Force Reconnaissance are in the current lack of appropriate level of intelligence and operations integration, enabler packages, and habitual relationship with air support. The gaps with Force Reconnaissance table of organization, training program, and advocacy at Head Quarters Marine Corps must be capable of providing sustained deep reconnaissance operations in multiple theaters of operation, and sustain the deep reconnaissance capability.

## **WORLD WAR II**

Of the accounts of approximately one-hundred and eighty amphibious landings of the United States Marines beginning with the assault of the Bahamas in 1776 to 1943, there are few which reflect preliminary reconnaissance.<sup>10</sup> The first unit in Marine history to be organized and trained specifically for amphibious reconnaissance was created during World War II in January 1943 with leaders as Captain James L. Jones.<sup>11</sup> The beginnings of Force Reconnaissance can be traced back to the Amphibious Reconnaissance Battalion. The units conducted numerous pre-D-Day reconnaissances of enemy beaches and fortifications during the Pacific campaign of World War II. These units worked directly for the landing force commander tasked in confirming the commander's critical information requirements (CCIRs) to see and report the enemy's fortification before launching the landing force. Based upon the unit's ability to conduct

amphibious reconnaissance, these Marines were tasked to scout the littoral beaches inland to confirm possible beach landing or clear obstacles that may hinder an amphibious assault or to observe enemy activity.

During the Pacific War, the Amphibious Reconnaissance Battalion scouted Japanese beaches, observed key terrain, and reported essential mission requirements for the commander.<sup>12</sup> Insertions were conducted primarily by small boats, naval shipping and submarine. The ability to see and report was essential based upon inserting platoon sized elements with specialized gear requirements that included mortars and machine guns for organic fire support. The ability to employ naval surface fires and report to the landing force remaining embarked on naval shipping makes communication pivotal.

As with the nature of reconnaissance missions, these Marines were outnumbered, surrounded and forward of friendly forces focusing on stealth in order to provide security.

## **POST WORLD WAR II**

From the initial origins during World War II, the formal establishment of Force Reconnaissance was at Camp Pendleton, California in 1954 when a test unit was formed to evaluate various methods of insertion for reconnaissance teams.<sup>13</sup> Marine Corps Test Unit One was established for development of specialized tactics, techniques and organizational concepts in the nuclear age. Marine Corps Test Unit One reconnaissance element consisted of two platoons: (1) a Parachute Reconnaissance Platoon, and (2) a Pathfinder Platoon that were eventually combined with an existing Amphibious Reconnaissance Company to form 1st Force Reconnaissance Company, later in 1957. First Force Reconnaissance Company initial focused on inserts for the Cold War

battlefield in order to see in places that are hard to get to and considered deep operations outside of indirect fire support.<sup>14</sup>

The legendary leadership of Col Bruce Myers (USMC) recognized the requirement for mobility (MOVE) to the enemy or the target on the battlefield, and he focused on experimenting with various insertion and extractions techniques and pathfinder operations which were required in order to observe (SEE) the objective. He developed various techniques, within MCTU 1 and First Force Reconnaissance Company, which included the first buoyant ascents from a United States submarines (1958) and the first parachute jump from a jet aircraft (1966), the F3D-2 Skynight.<sup>15</sup> His experience at Amphibious Reconnaissance School and Marine Corps Test Unit One provided the basis for what became known as First Force Reconnaissance Company (1957).

In 1958, one half of the First Force Reconnaissance Company was transferred to the East Coast to form Second Force Reconnaissance Company.<sup>16</sup> First Force Reconnaissance Company was then a part of Force Troops, Fleet Marine Force Pacific (FMFPac) and supported both the First and Third Marine Divisions. Second Force was assigned to Force Troops, Fleet Marine Force Atlantic (FMFLant), and supported Second Marine Division. These early years focused on developing the doctrine and insertion skills became legendary in the crucible of South East Asia, and they would be tested in Vietnam.

## VIETNAM

During the Vietnam War years, Force Reconnaissance employment was classified as “reconnaissance” or “combat patrol.” Based on the leadership of General Lewis Walt (USMC), he led to the establishment of Keyhole and Stingray missions. General Walt (USMC) recognized the requirement for mobility (MOVE) to the enemy or the target on the battlefield, and he focused on reporting on the enemy objective. He realized that he needed to know what was going on in the battle space. Through the reporting of consistent and accurate information, Force Reconnaissance was able to provide critical commander’s information requirements (CCIRs).

In areas where large-scale operations were not conducted, reconnaissance teams served as an economy of force by conducting Keyhole patrols to gain information on movements, units, and bases.<sup>17</sup> Keyhole patrols consisted of small, four to seven men teams, lightly armed, and dependant upon stealth to accomplish their mission. (Stingray combat patrols were organized to make contact with enemy forces through ambush or supporting fire. Stingray patrols were larger than reconnaissance patrols consisting of eight to twelve men, heavily armed and dependant upon aggressive operations.)

First Force Reconnaissance Company, with Third Force Reconnaissance Company, conducted combat operations in the Republic of Vietnam in 1965, supporting 3rd Marine Amphibious Force in I Corps.<sup>18</sup> During its five years in the country, Force Reconnaissance ran over 2,200 reconnaissance patrols. Over the entire Vietnam War, there were forty-four Marines and Sailors were killed or remain Missing in Action as a result (1965-1970.) The ability of Force Reconnaissance with fire support were able to see and report on enemy forces operating deep and in tough to reach terrain was pivotal

in the Marine Corps success. The enemy was operating several days out and the ability to be highly mobile allowed battle space shaping.

During the Vietnam War, Force Reconnaissance was highly successful at supporting larger operations and responsible for several thousand enemy casualties through their ability to SEE-MOVE-SHOOT-REPORT. In addition, Force Reconnaissance patrols captured prisoners, located downed aircrews, placed electronic sensors, wire-tapped communications, and manned radio-relay stations. This success was attributed to small teams, 4-6 men, to conduct battle space shaping using air/artillery support to destroy much larger units. The key lesson learned of teams integrated with Joint Tactical Air Control certified personnel is critical even today.

Based upon post Vietnam War reductions, USMC Force Reconnaissance Company's were deactivated in 1974. The post war drawdown transferred the Marines to Reconnaissance Battalions at that time in order to retain a deep reconnaissance capability for the Marine Divisions. The mixing of Force Reconnaissance Companies with Division Reconnaissance was not satisfactory, and Force Reconnaissance Company's were directed again to stand up in 1986.<sup>19</sup> Those "who have worked in reconnaissance are keenly aware of the dictates of reduced budgets and downsizing."<sup>20</sup> The personnel and fiscal decisions have created a cycle of the continual re-establishment of Force Reconnaissance that has created a dangerous situation of losing their own organic deep reconnaissance capability. The issues of command relationship, fiscal allocation and allocated mission required assets have proved to be problematic. The current command relationship creates a commanders dilemma under the Reconnaissance Battalion Commander while primarily tasked to support the Commanding General, Marine

Expeditionary Force is detrimental in the ability to truly support the MEF. The decisions of fiscal and equipping that support the Marine Division's will always take priority based upon the current command relationship. The command relationship and unity of command must be aligned to be successful which needs to be at the MEF.

### **MARITIME SPECIAL PURPOSE FORCE**

The creation of the Marine Expeditionary Unit, Special Operations Capable-MEU (SOC) by General Alfred M. Grey Jr., a former enlisted reconnaissance Marine, aided in the development of what would become designated the Surveillance, Reconnaissance, Intelligence Group (SRIG). The SRIG was a MEF level unit that combined Radio Battalion, Air Naval Gunfire Liaison Company, Force Reconnaissance, and various other intelligence elements. The Maritime Special Purpose Force (MSPF) was created from within the MEU (SOC) program. General Grey was focused on the highly mobile (MOVE) units that facilitate maneuver by allowing the commander to see (SEE) and make decisions more effectively, and he utilized Force Reconnaissance as a lethal (SHOOT) force on the battlefield.

Between mid-1980 and 2005, Force Reconnaissance focused on conducting limited scale raids and Vessel, Board, Search, and Seizure (VBSS) while attached to Marine Expeditionary Units (Special Operations Capable). Force Reconnaissance detachment routinely deployed in support of Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable).<sup>21</sup>

Within the MEU (SOC) contained a specialized sub-unit known as the Maritime Special Purpose Force (MSPF). The MSPF was a unique organization drawn from the MEU major subordinate elements. The MSPF provided the enhanced operational capability to complement or enable conventional operations or to execute selected maritime special missions. The MSPF was

not designed to operate independently of the MEU. It relied on the MEU for logistics, intelligence, communications, transportation, and supporting fire. Operational command of the MSPF remained under the control of the MEU commander. The MSPF was organized and trained to be rapidly tailored to the specific mission. The MSPF provided a commander with the ability to see a target in the deep battle space, and the ability to service a target quickly. The “Black Gear in a Bag” concept was highly effective for the commander, and the MSPF was a highly revered organization and utilized for various mission sets.<sup>22</sup>

The MSPF was, a task organized unit, composed of the following: Command Element consisting of Marine Major, Forward Air Controller, and radio operators, Assault Element consisting of the deployed Force Reconnaissance Direct Action Platoon (DAP) with Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) detachment, Security Element consisting of one reinforced rifle platoon (usually a specially trained platoon from the MEU(SOC) boat or helicopter company, Reconnaissance and Surveillance (R&S) Support Element composed of the Battalion Landing Teams (BLT) Reconnaissance Platoon, Surveillance and Target Acquisition (STA) Platoon, and Human Exploitation Teams (HET), a Radio Reconnaissance Team (RRT) from the Radio Battalion Detachment, and elements of the MEU(SOC) intelligence section. MSPF tasks include: Deep Reconnaissance, Direct Action, Tactical Recovery of Personnel and Equipment, Gas and Oil Platform (GOPLAT) Operations, Vessel, Board, Search, and Seizure, and Amphibious Reconnaissance.<sup>23</sup> The Reconnaissance and Surveillance element is organized to conduct reconnaissance and surveillance, sniper control and support, counter-intelligence, human and signal intelligence, and electronic warfare. The Aviation support element to provide assault support, and close air support (CAS), and a Naval Special Warfare element deployed with the MEU (SOC).”<sup>24</sup>

Force Reconnaissance also conducted traditional ground and amphibious reconnaissance missions; however their primary mission focus was direct action missions

designated as the assault element within the Maritime Special Purpose Force. The MSPF was a highly lethal force and conducted a six month interoperability training including a certification exercise period before deploying in support of MEU (SOC).<sup>25</sup> The current origination of the Maritime Raid Force (MRF) is current version of the MSPF, however the MRF has not been effectively embraced by all three MEFs.

### **OIF/OEF-AFGHANISTAN**

While in support of Operation IRAQI FREEDOM and ENDURING FREEDOM-AFGHANISTAN, the majority of Force Reconnaissance missions were focused toward supporting Marine Air Ground Task Force and MEU (SOC) operations. The missions focused on conducting direct action raids with a minor focus on Vessel Board Ship Seizure (VBSS), and the mission later in the campaigns shifted toward counter insurgency operations. While supporting OIF/OEF-Afghanistan, MAGTF commanders focused on Force Reconnaissance's mobility (MOVE) that facilitate maneuver by allowing the commander to see (SEE) and make decisions more effectively, and commanders utilized Force Reconnaissance as a surgical (SHOOT) force on the battlefield.

From discussions with previous Force Reconnaissance Company Commanders, "there was limited guidance on operational employment," and it was a matter of "developing your own missions to provide the Commander with a battle space shaping capacity that focused on designated High Value Targets (HVT).<sup>26</sup>" There also seemed to be a "lack of willingness from commanders to realistically employ Force Reconnaissance to full capacity."<sup>27</sup> Large numbers of personnel and vehicles did not support clandestine mission insertions. The large footprint of personnel and vehicles creates an active

compromise criteria situation. Based upon the urban environment, the operational focus was directed toward limited scale raids. The focus toward limited scale raids had a diminishing effect on ground reconnaissance skills.

The ability to conduct ground reconnaissance in an urban environment was limited to twenty-four hours based upon the proximity of the civilian population in a sparse and open terrain. Even though Afghanistan and Iraq's sparse concealment and large numbers of people, the commander's need for ground reconnaissance remained valid. The requirement for additional training and synergy between reconnaissance and human intelligence units was required to provide a more complete picture. The realities of passive and active compromise were a level of expectation which created a limited ability to provide information to the commanders. This situation pushed many commanders away from ground reconnaissance operations and to rely on Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS) to answer their information requirements.

One major asset that has provided additional situation awareness is Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS). This technological advancement undoubtedly aided in numerous commander information requirements; however, the significant shortfalls of a limited time on station, availability and the lack in ability to see through any weather condition. Ground reconnaissance is more persistent than any UAS, and the force reconnaissance team also has an organic JTAC qualified Marines who are capable of directing supporting arms. The ability of battle space shaping provides the commander the ability to observe, report, and strike within mission requirements. Commanders are better served to consider integration of Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR) assets that can be further enhanced with units that are able to shape the battle space. The commander's way

forward is through the employment of a unit that can simply: SEE-MOVE-SHOOT-REPORT.

In 2006, the United States Marines Corps directed two-thirds of the Force Reconnaissance Company's to form the nucleus of the newly created U.S. Marine Corps Forces Special Operations Command.<sup>28</sup> The remaining personnel and equipment assigned to the Force Reconnaissance Company were assigned to each of the Reconnaissance Battalions. In 2008, the Commandant of Marine Corps, General James Conway, identified a significant gap in operational capability and redirected the re-establishment of the Force Reconnaissance Company's in order to support all three Marine Expeditionary Force commanders.<sup>29</sup> Marine Special Operations Command was built off the back of the USMC Force Reconnaissance Companies. This caused a gain for USSOCOM however this shift created an operational deficiency within the USMC.

As an economy of force, the employment of reconnaissance battalions was relegated to be assigned battle space. This completely restricts the operational capabilities of the Marine Corps most highly lethal units. Based upon the operational environment, the reconnaissance mission sets shifted towards supporting counter-insurgency operations (2008-2010). The majority of the reconnaissance units were tasked with non-traditional missions based upon an economy of force, therefore the Marine Expeditionary Force commanders directed their Force Reconnaissance Companies to support detachments on all East and West Coast MEUs.

### **POST-OIF/OEF**

In 2009, the MV-22 was first deployed in support offensive combat operations in Afghanistan. The tactical operation of personnel insertion and air delivery was further refined within the Marine Air Ground Task Force (MAGTF) with a vision toward future operational

employment and emerging capabilities.<sup>30</sup> When used alongside the long-range and high altitude capabilities of the MV-22, these airborne insertions during direct combat operations take on a whole new chapter of tactical relevance in shaping the battle space.

In December 2010, the concept of the deep strike capabilities exercise was derived from combining the MAGTF aviation combat element's indigenous medium lift assault support aircraft with the MAGTF command element's organic II MEF Force Reconnaissance Company.<sup>31</sup> The natural objective was to exploit existent capabilities at the corner of each respective capabilities. The MV-22B, with its long range and 25,000 feet mean sea level service ceiling, makes power projection take on a new operational dimension.<sup>32</sup> The Osprey's high-altitude capabilities make for an insertion platform that can vertically bypass surface-to-air threat systems like no other sea based Marine Corps assault support platform in the past. The MV-22's before mentioned capabilities, when merged with the force reconnaissance element's specialized equipment and training, allow for exiting aircraft at altitudes well above enemy surface-to-air threat systems and also with very low risk of mission compromise.<sup>33</sup>

From the sea, a Force Reconnaissance detachment can fly deep and insert via airborne silently into a preplanned insertion point. Once linked up, the detachment conducted movement to observe key terrain to confirm or deny presence of enemy. An example of mission, a Force Reconnaissance team can conduct a pathfinder operational mission established landing zones or links up with Special Operations Forces for battle space handover.

Once established inland, a Force Reconnaissance detachment can conduct a deep strike insertion that would consist of a Ranger-style long range movement to confirm or deny the enemy. Once inserted, the mission profiles can consist of Initial Terminal

Guidance (ITG) of rotary wing aircraft or control of supporting arms with the ability to service targets with organic JTACs or conduct limited scale raids.

This capability fusion can allow the operational planner to carefully place deep reconnaissance elements at points on the map where they can observe, verify, report, and potentially engage targets of opportunity at times and places that were previously impossible when the capabilities of now legacy Marine transport aircraft were limited to much smaller radii of action and lower service ceilings.<sup>34</sup> The fusion of high altitude air delivery of personnel with the range and ceiling of the MV-22 can give the Marine commander an organic deep strike capability not presently realized. The capability to place a ground joint terminal air controller at points on the map previously not considered is at the commander's fingertips. Observing a critical node in the remote area and then prosecuting with terminally controlled fires when required can meet rules of engagement considerations and produce changes in enemy behavior in ways not currently taking place. The future will determine if the deep strike capability can be further refined towards future employment. The ability to increase personal structure would assist in achieving a level sufficient to build and maintain this type capability along with adequate time, resources, and equipment.

The challenges of intelligence and operations integration, dedicated enablers, and habitual relationship with air assets are areas that require modernization in table of organization that would provide additional capabilities. It is in the interest of the Marine Corps to come to grips with the idea there are specially trained personnel in the Marine Corps.<sup>35</sup> The Marine Corps must be willing to prioritize on a deep reconnaissance capability to provide the nation greater capability.<sup>36</sup>

## **LESSONS LEARNED**

The current reduction of forces in support of Operation Enduring Freedom-Afghanistan while focus the USMC back toward Marine Expeditionary Unit deployments and Unit Deployment Programs that will requirement additional MAGTF advanced force operational units. There have been significant adjustments in current power structures, proliferations of weapons of mass destruction, and emerging non-state actors. The ability to operate in a dynamic, ambiguous environment requires various methods in order to acquire access to provide a commander with his information requirements and strike capability is even more demanding. The analysis of the historical origins and evolution of Force Reconnaissance from World War II through Operations Enduring Freedom-Afghanistan requires a shift in operational employment toward intelligence and operations integration, dedicated enablers, and habitual relationship with air assets.<sup>37</sup> These additions will increase current capabilities of Force Reconnaissance to support the Marine Air Ground Task Force Commander, integrated with the requirements for units to SEE, MOVE, SHOOT, and REPORT.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **STRATEGIC TRENDS**

The recent Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) divides the trends that effect the global security environment into two major categories: key geopolitical trends and key military-technical trends.<sup>38</sup> These trends threats and opportunities will shape the USMC strategy now and into the future. These threats will effect how the USMC and Force Reconnaissance will be employed.

The key geopolitical trends are a diminishing protection afforded by geographic distance, regional security developments, increasing challenges and threats from territories of weak failing states, diffusion of power and military capabilities to non-state actors, developing and sustaining regional security arrangements, and an increasing diversity in the sources and unpredictability of conflict.<sup>39</sup>

Recent operations in Afghanistan highlight the diverse sources and locations of conflict the U.S. will face in the future. Afghanistan presented the U.S. a variety of operational challenges. Its physical location made it difficult to reach by carrier-based aircraft and the limited airfields in friendly or allied countries. Its rugged, mountainous terrain, caves, harsh climates, and urban areas posed challenging conditions for U.S. soldiers to operate. Al Qaeda forces hid amongst the labyrinth of natural and man-made tunnels along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border. Conditions in Afghanistan do not provide a prescription to model future military capabilities; rather, Afghanistan provides a good example of the complex environments that U.S. forces could face in the future.<sup>40</sup> The reorganization of Force Reconnaissance would be more effectively organized to operate

in this environment with the additional capabilities of intelligence and operations integration, dedicated enablers, and habitual relationship with air assets,

Although the U.S. does not expect a peer competitor in the near future, there is a significant potential for regional powers to threaten critical U.S. interests. Areas of particular concern in the QDR are the Middle East and Asia.<sup>41</sup> These regions are fraught with instability from religious differences, traditional ethnic rivalries, and critical resources such as water and oil. Much of this region is fragmented along tribal, ethnic, and religious lines. The United States Marine Corps can expect to provide force projection from the sea, and this type of mission will require Force Reconnaissance to conduct MAGTF advanced force operations.

The United States faces a significant threat to its national interests and security from regions with weak, failing, and failed states. Many states are unable to provide the political, economic, and social infrastructure needed in the rapidly changing world. Such states willingly or unwillingly provide sanctuary and support for international terrorist and crime organizations. These states provide organizations such as Al Qaeda, the ability to gain and project asymmetric power globally. Traditional religious and ethnic conflicts will continue to grow, with consequences spilling across borders and around the world. As a world leader and the sole superpower, the U.S. faces a changing threat and definition of national interests, which may include a moral obligation to intervene and provide support to unstable situations globally.<sup>42</sup> The Marine Corps will need to be prepared when the nation calls, and Force Reconnaissance will be expected to shape the environment.

## OPERATIONAL TRENDS

The MAGTF commander needs to be able to realistically analyze the current and future operational employment scenarios that will support the United States Marine Corps into the future. The Marine Corps will recalibrate back towards MEU and UDP operations focusing on joint bi-lateral and forcible entry operations from the sea. Access to critical regions maybe denied, so the Marine Corps needs to be prepared to execute amphibious operations to overcome enemy defenses which will require traditional amphibious and ground reconnaissance initially with the knowledge of operational capability gaps.

The Marine Corps needs to provide the crucial capability of swiftly power project and sustained combat power ashore in the face of armed opposition, and the Marine Corps will need to leverage available joint and naval capabilities, project sustainable combat power ashore, and secure entry for follow on forces. The sea based Marine Air Ground Task Force will need to be capable of conducting initial operations independent of local infrastructure in austere areas. This capability must enable the accomplishment of amphibious joint forcible entry operations, and these strategic capabilities will require an additional level of MAGTF advanced force operations. The future challenges in the littorals will include complex terrain, urban areas, and hybrid threats. <sup>43</sup>

Force Reconnaissance's ability to gain access to the objective, mobility on the objective and provide deep strike capable units at the time and place of the Marine Corps' choosing with a high level of expertise. This requires disaggregated forces, small and highly capable units, operating from multiple platforms capable of rapid concentration and projection of combat power without regard to the traditional boundaries. Force

Reconnaissance must continue to have the ability to provide access to the operational environment via various insertion and extraction methods and capable to shape the environment in order to set the conditions for the commander to make decisions associated with deep operations.<sup>44</sup> Force Reconnaissance must retain the ability to conduct initial terminal guidance (ITG) and targeting operations to include manned and persistent ISR with a deep strike capable to achieve the decisive effect for the commander, and there will be a level of expectation to conduct the initial seizure of positions through limited scale raids on operational level objectives. Based upon these mission sets, the reorganization of Force Reconnaissance would provide additional intelligence and operations integration to provide commanders with enhanced battle space shaping. Force Reconnaissance will more effectively structured toward the MEU of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century with intelligence and operations integration, dedicated enablers, and habitual relationship with air assets.

### **TACTICAL TRENDS**

The re-establishment of Force Reconnaissance in 2008 has shown flexibility in the ability to support the spectrum from combat operations, MEU deployments, and Theater Security Cooperation events based upon a prioritization of assets. The recent operational events in support of Operation Enduring Freedom-Afghanistan, recapturing the MV Magellan Star, and TSCP events with Dutch Maritime Special Operations are fine examples of current capabilities.<sup>45</sup> The reductions in Operation Enduring Freedom-Afghanistan have required Force Reconnaissance Marines to display even more flexibility in their ability to support future missions. This must include modernization with the current structure and highlighting current operational challenges. These

operational events have highlighted gaps in an appropriate level of intelligence and operations integration, enabler packages, and habitual relationship with air support.

### **CHAPTER 3**

#### **CHALLENGES**

The United States Marine Corps' uncertain future is based upon the core amphibious assault vehicle in the Expeditionary Fighting Vehicle (EFV) program cancellations, inadequate numbers of US Navy amphibious ships and delays in the F-22 aircraft programs.<sup>46</sup> The Pentagon's response to intense budget pressure has already forced the cancellation of several high-profile weapon programs belonging to its sister services. Some critics of the amphibious assault mission argue the Marine Corps have not performed an opposed landing since Korea, but the current enemy anti-ship weapons capabilities are pushing naval forces farther out to sea further complicating the amphibious warfare mission. Advocates highlight that the EFV's 25-knot speed closes the ship-to-shore gap rapidly to operate effectively.<sup>47</sup>

Based upon the OIF/OEF requirements, Naval Special Warfare had refrained from providing SEAL detachments to the MEU's for several years. Based upon the stand off requirements of naval shipping and ship-to-shore amphibious vehicles gaps, the question of amphibious reconnaissance requirement relevance must be questioned. The future operational environment requires will require ship-to-shore movement, however without a modernized platform (EFV) to transition from ship-to-shore the Marines Corps amphibious existence is questionable. United States Marine Corps Reconnaissance has performed well, however we currently have several glaring areas of weaknesses that require modernization toward the future.

The Force Reconnaissance Company had little to no intelligence and operations integration capability gaps in the tables of organization and equipment. In order to be

functional on today's battle field, integrated, multi-disciplined intelligence consisting of (HUMINT, SIGINT, GEOINT, ALL-SOURCE) is a must. The same goes for the fires detachments which must be better integrated and the ability to employ kinetic and non-kinetic fires. These areas are required to adapt to the future operational environment. The current table of organization and equipment does not meet deep reconnaissance operations in multiple theaters of operation. Based upon future operational environment, the current training, advocacy and command slating need to be reorganized to properly sustain a deep reconnaissance capability. In order to achieve this end state, the following are three major recommendations for the way ahead.

One challenge, the current tour lengths for qualified Expeditionary Ground Reconnaissance Officers (0307) and Reconnaissance Marines (0321) does not support the additional time required for training and deployments. The United States Marine Corps 2011 establishment of the Expeditionary Ground Reconnaissance Officers (0307) has identified the requirement for specialized Officers to plan, direct and assist in the deployment and tactical employment of Force Reconnaissance units. The degree of complexity and time required to conduct reconnaissance operations is rather extensive.

Second challenge, the Reconnaissance Marine training pipeline is not currently organized in the most efficient of effective command structure. The Reconnaissance Training Company, located in Camp Pendleton, CA, current falls under the School of Infantry-West. The Reconnaissance & Raids Branch, located in Quantico, VA, currently falls under Training and Education Command. The Marine Combatant Diver Course, located in Panama City, FL, currently falls under Marine Detachment Ft Bragg, NC. Reconnaissance Marines are required to attend the following course for an airborne

capability: US Army Airborne Course, Ft Benning, GA, US Army Static Line Jump Master Course, Ft Benning, GA, USMC Multi Mission Parachute School, Coolidge, AZ, US Army Military Free Fall Jump Master Course, Yuma, AZ, and Tandem Offset Resupply Delivery System-Equipment and Personnel, USMC Airborne Mobile Training Team, Quantico, VA. The Airborne Mobile Training Team provides mobile detachments worldwide training. There is a need to establish a Reconnaissance specific training pipeline that would consolidate all reconnaissance specific tasks into one unified command producing a Reconnaissance Marine (0321) and a Expeditionary Ground Reconnaissance Officer (0307).

Third challenge, the ability to provide advocacy, prioritization and synchronization of all reconnaissance assets under one unified commander is an area of deficiency. The Force Reconnaissance Company's current command relationship is established under the operational control of the MEF and the administrative control of the reconnaissance battalion.<sup>48</sup> The current command relationship established is not in the best interest of the Marine Corps. The USMC has separated the Force Reconnaissance assets from the MAGTF. Just the fact, that there is no company assigned at the MEF Headquarters Group supports this observation. Force Reconnaissance has evolved basically into a light infantry company with limited assets and the MEU Commanders have limited ideas of what to do with their reconnaissance detachments. Reconnaissance must be responsive to the MAGTF and Force Reconnaissance must be the critical enabler for battle space shaping and to do this additional operations and intelligence integration, integrated enablers, and air assets Force Reconnaissance is better organized and equipped.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The first recommendation would be with the establishment of a Reconnaissance Regiment. This would provide unity of command for the reconnaissance community under one commander within the proper command oversight. The current Force Reconnaissance Company command relationship is a significant challenge with the administrative command (ADCON) to Reconnaissance Battalion and operational command (OPCON) to Marine Expeditionary Force. The command relationship for reconnaissance units must be held at the highest level appropriate in order to be properly resourced. The MAGTF commander has to know what capabilities he has in order to properly employ, but he has to provide the assets to enable the unit to operate at full capacity. The establishment of the Reconnaissance Regiment would be the way forward based upon an organizational restructuring.

### **COMMAND SLATING**

The second recommendation would be for the establishment a command slating for the following positions: Regimental Commander (O-6) as a Reconnaissance Regimental Commander and three Commanding Officers (O-5) for Force Reconnaissance Company's supporting the three active duty MEFs. As of today, the Force Reconnaissance Company's command relationship could be considered dysfunctional at best, and the current command relationship established is not in the best interest of the Marine Corps. The mixing of Force Reconnaissance Companies with Division Reconnaissance has never been entirely satisfactory, and this issue has proven to be problematic in areas of command relationship, fiscal allocation, personnel and mission

required assets. Based upon historical examples, I strongly believe that maintaining Force Reconnaissance within the current command relationship is not the sound solution. The reduction of Force Reconnaissance from an independent unit to “just another company” within the Marine Division’s Reconnaissance Battalion is a structural error.<sup>49</sup> The re-establishment of a command slated Lieutenant Colonel would provide the appropriate level of direction required to better serve and support the future Marine Corps’ mission. The additional command oversight of the Regimental Commander would provide an advocate through synching of all reconnaissance assets under one unified commander to support the Marine Corps.

### **ADVOCACY**

The third recommendation would be to establish reconnaissance advocacy by the Regimental Commander. Command screened Officers do not enable the advocacy requirement, however the appropriate level of advocacy at the USMC level does. Currently, there is no access at the appropriate level for the Ground Board, Training & Education Command, and Head Quarters Marine Corps at a relevant and appropriate level. There is no doubt one of the biggest shortfalls has been in the lack of significant reconnaissance advocacy within the Marine Corps, and the reconnaissance community has suffered based upon this fact. Everything today is tied to a specific “Enterprise”. Does reconnaissance specifically tie to it’s own “Enterprise”? If not, is reconnaissance in the “Infantry Enterprise” or “ISR Enterprise”, or both? As this is a highly relevant issue, the ability to tie command relationships, to funding and future community evolution is a matter of major significance. Over previous years, the reconnaissance community has

fallen under both ISR and Infantry. This has been problematic and created confusion for many on operational focus and employment.

### **RECONNAISSANCE TRAINING BATTALION**

The recommended way forward is for the United States Marine Corps to establish a Reconnaissance Center of Excellence, Reconnaissance Training Battalion (RTB), which would consolidate all mission required courses under one unified command. The RTB would include a Special Skills Branch, Reconnaissance & Raids Branch, Reconnaissance Training Company, Marine Combatant Diver Course, and Airborne Branch.

The proposal of a Reconnaissance Training Battalion (RTB) would be to train Marines and sailors in entry level and advanced reconnaissance skills. The responsibilities would include the current Reconnaissance Training Company (RTC) providing the Marines Awaiting Reconnaissance Training, Basic Reconnaissance Course, Reconnaissance Team Leaders Course, and Reconnaissance Unit Leaders Course.<sup>50</sup> The additional Battalion level of command would include: Marines Awaiting Reconnaissance Training (MART), Basic Reconnaissance Course (BRC), Reconnaissance Team Leaders Course (RTLTC), and Reconnaissance Unit Leaders Course (RULC).

The purpose of Marines Awaiting Reconnaissance Training (MART) is to identify and gauge the potential of individual officers and enlisted Marines to meet the physical and mental demands imposed on Ground Reconnaissance Marines during training and combat operations. Graduates are qualified to attend the Basic Reconnaissance Course.

The purpose of the Basic Reconnaissance Course (BRC) is to train officers and enlisted Marines, in addition to other services; in the tactics, techniques, procedures, and

individual skills required of the Recon Man. Graduates are qualified to assume the roles and responsibilities of an Expeditionary Ground Reconnaissance Officer (0307) and Ground Reconnaissance Marine (0321).

The purpose of the Reconnaissance Team Leaders Course (RTLTC) is to train and evaluate officers and enlisted Marines in the tactics, techniques, and procedures of Ground Reconnaissance operations. RTLTC emphasizes critical thought and tactical decision making in order to transition the Recon Man into a Recon leader. Graduates understand tactical level operations and integration and are qualified to assume the roles and responsibilities of team and platoon level leadership.

The purpose of the Reconnaissance Unit Leaders Course (RULC) is to train and evaluate officers and senior enlisted Marines in the planning, training, execution, and evaluation of Ground Reconnaissance operations. RULC emphasizes critical thought and operational level decision making in order to transition the Recon Team Leader into a Recon Unit Leader. Graduates understand operational level planning and maneuver integration. These Marines are qualified to assume the roles and responsibilities of platoon and company level leadership through a centralized training curriculum.

A command slated Lieutenant Colonel of the Reconnaissance Training Battalion would provide command oversight to include the following additional branches within the command; Special Skills Branch, Reconnaissance and Raids Branch, Marine Combatant Diver Course, and Airborne Branch. This re-organization organizes all aspects of Reconnaissance within a central chain of command.

The purpose of the Special Skills Branch is to train and provide Force Reconnaissance an appropriate level of intelligence and operations integration, enabler

packages, Explosive Ordnance Disposal detachment and Fire Support detachment. These integrated capabilities provide unit integrity and centralization.

The purpose of the Reconnaissance and Raids Branch would be to provide advancements in Science and Technology and acquisitions in order to integrate with Training and Education Command. The importance of training and education and operational employment are of critical importance.

The purpose of the Marine Combatant Diver Course would remain the same in providing Marines and sailors in underwater tactical training and the skills needed to successfully conduct underwater navigation for infiltration and extraction. The re-organization of Reconnaissance would provide increased capacity and capability to the Marine Corps.

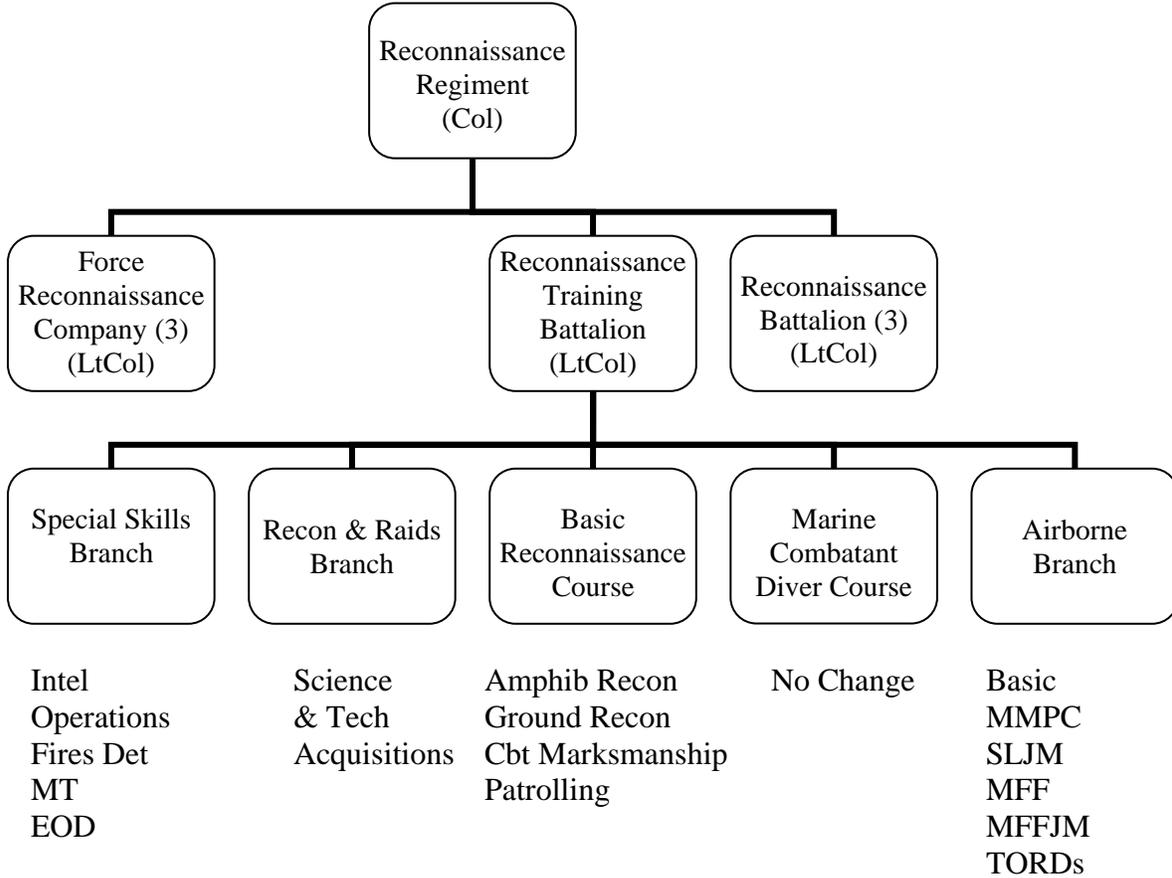
The purpose of the Airborne Branch would fuse the Airborne Mobile Training Team with Multi Mission Parachute Course under one command. This would centralize all USMC Airborne training assets under one command that would allocate and train Marines and sailors in Low Level Static Line, Double Bag Static Line, Military Free Fall certifications and coordinate Static Line Jump Master and Military Free Fall Jump Master certification.

The establishment of the Reconnaissance Training Battalion would consolidate all USMC reconnaissance specific courses under one Lieutenant Colonel. The end state would be able to provide the USMC a reconnaissance specific training pipeline for twelve months that would consolidate and standardize all reconnaissance training under one O-6 command slated, Regimental Commander. Upon graduation, this would provide all three MEF's with a fully qualified reconnaissance Marines pipeline with all required

insertion capabilities sent directly to the operational forces directly into a pre-deployment training program.

There would be a need to extend tour lengths for qualified Expeditionary Ground Reconnaissance Officers (0307) and Reconnaissance Marines (0321) to five years in order to benefit from the additional training requirements. The 2011 establishment of the Expeditionary Ground Reconnaissance Officers (0307) by HQMC confirms the requirement for specialized Officers to plan, direct and assist in the deployment and tactical employment of Force Reconnaissance units. This is a huge step forward in the ability to man, train, and equip appropriately for deep reconnaissance in support of the MEF. HQMC's establishment of the 0307 MOS recognizes the high degree of complexity required in conducting reconnaissance operations. Based upon the amount of time required to gain the appropriate level of training and expertise, tour length extensions are in the best interest of the Marine Corps.

## RECONNAISSANCE REGIMENT DIAGRAM



USMC Reconnaissance Regiment  
 3 x Force Reconnaissance Company's  
 1 x Reconnaissance Training Battalion  
     Special Skills Branch  
     Reconnaissance & Raids Branch  
     Basic Reconnaissance Course  
     Marine Combatant Divers Course  
     Airborne Branch  
 3 x Reconnaissance Battalion

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **CONCLUSION**

In order to support the future of the United States Marine Corps, Force Reconnaissance's way ahead must be based upon visionary and experienced leadership, realistic capabilities, and relevant operational employment that support the commander. If the United States Marine Corps wants a world class Force Reconnaissance capability, the level of commitment requires a rigorous selection process, ability to build capability, specialized equipment to support special insertion/extractions, and financial resources in order to maintain and further develop a deep reconnaissance capability in the harshest environments on earth toward future threats.

As a former Commanding Officer, II MEF Force Reconnaissance Company From 2009-2011, the company had little to no intelligence and operations integration capability gaps in the tables of organization and equipment. In order to be functional on today's battle field, integrated, multi-disciplined intelligence consisting of (HUMINT, SIGINT, GEOINT, ALL-SOURCE) is a must. The same goes for the fires detachments which must be better integrated and the ability to employ kinetic and non-kinetic fires. These areas are required to adapt to the future operational environment. The current table of organization and equipment does not meet deep reconnaissance operations in multiple theaters of operation. Based upon future operational environment, the current training, advocacy and command slating need to be reorganized to properly sustain a deep reconnaissance capability. In order to achieve this end state, the following are three major recommendations for the way ahead.

The first recommendation is to extend tour lengths for qualified Expeditionary Ground Reconnaissance Officers (0307) and Reconnaissance Marines (0321) to five years in order to benefit from the additional training requirements. The United States Marine Corps 2011 establishment of the Expeditionary Ground Reconnaissance Officers (0307) has identified the requirement for specialized Officers to plan, direct and assist in the deployment and tactical employment of Force Reconnaissance units. This is a huge step forward in the ability to man, train, and equip appropriately for deep reconnaissance in support of the MEF. Head Quarters Marine Corps establishment of the 0307 MOS recognizes the high degree of complexity required in conducting reconnaissance operations. Based upon the amount of time required to gain the appropriate level of training and expertise, tour length extensions are in the best interest of the Marine Corps.

The second recommendation is the establishment of a Reconnaissance Center of Excellence, structured within a Reconnaissance Training Battalion. This would include several branches consisting of Special Skills Branch, Reconnaissance & Raids Branch, Reconnaissance Training Company with associate courses, Marine Combatant Diver Course, and Airborne Branch. The establishment of the Reconnaissance Training Battalion consolidates all USMC reconnaissance specific courses under one command slated Lieutenant Colonel. The end state would be able to provide the Marine Corps and the reconnaissance community with a twelve month training pipeline that would consolidate all reconnaissance specific tasks into one unified command producing a Reconnaissance Marine (0321) that is operationally certified directly into operational commands.

The third recommendation is for the establishment command slating for the following positions; Reconnaissance Regimental Commander (O-6) and three Battalion level Commanding Officer (O-5) Force Reconnaissance Company's supporting the MEF's. The additional structure of the Regimental Commander would provide advocacy, prioritization and synchronization of all reconnaissance assets under one unified commander is the recommended way forward. As of today, the Force Reconnaissance Company's current command relationship is established under the operational control of the MEF and the administrative control of the reconnaissance battalion.<sup>51</sup> The current command relationship established is not in the best interest of the Marine Corps. The mixing of Force Reconnaissance Companies with Division Reconnaissance has never been entirely satisfactory and this issue has proven to be problematic in areas of command relationship, fiscal allocation, personnel and mission required assets. Based upon historical examples, it is believed that maintaining Force Reconnaissance within the current command relationship is not the sound solution. The reduction of Force Reconnaissance from an independent unit to "just another company" within the Marine Division's recon battalion is a structural error.<sup>52</sup> With the re-establishment of a command slated O-5 Force Reconnaissance command, the direction would better serve and support the MAGTF's mission toward the future.

When the requirement for deep reconnaissance arises again, the MEF commander's will again demand their own dedicated force reconnaissance company. Unfortunately, we continue to relearn the same lessons over again. The key aspect for the future of Force Reconnaissance will be in its ability to remain flexible in the operational environment and command relevant in a dynamic environment. There are special

Marines, and this needs to be recognized from the larger USMC. A Marine certified with specific insertion/extraction and numerous other capabilities has decided that he is going to submit himself to an extra level of sacrifice. This deserves acknowledgement, and we need to let them do the job in support of our amphibious roots toward the MEU of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

## **APPENDIX - A; FORCE RECONNAISSANCE COMPANY MISSION**

The mission of the Force Reconnaissance Company is to conduct amphibious reconnaissance, surveillance, and raids in support of the MEF, other Marine Air Ground Task Force, or Joint Task Forces (JTF) as required.

\* Ref: MCBul 5400 Dated Sep 2008 <sup>53</sup>

## **APPENDIX – B; MISSION ESSENTAIL TASK LIST**

- Conduct amphibious reconnaissance and deep ground reconnaissance and surveillance to observe, identify, and report enemy activity and collect and report other information of military significance.
- Conduct specialized terrain reconnaissance, including reconnaissance of hydrography, beaches, roads, bridges, routes, urban areas, helicopter landing zones, airborne drop zones, landing craft air cushion (LCAC) landing zones, and aircraft forwarding operating sites.
- When properly organized with other forces, equipment or personnel, conduct engineer, chemical biological radiological or nuclear (CBRN), mobile, and other unique reconnaissance missions.
- Implant and/or recover sensors and beacons.
- Collect imagery.
- Conduct counter-reconnaissance.
- Conduct initial terminal guidance (ITG) for helicopters, landing craft, and parachutists.
- Engage selected targets with supporting arms or organic weapons, as directed, including terminal guidance of precision guided munitions.
- Conduct post-strike reconnaissance to determine and report battle damage assessments (BDA) on a specific target or area.
- Conduct raids. These operations include, but are not limited to, seizing, damaging, or destroying critical enemy targets; performing static maritime platform and maritime interdiction operations; capturing selected enemy personnel; and recovering sensitive items or personnel.

\* Ref: MCBul 5400 Dated Sep 2008 <sup>54</sup>

## **APPENDIX - C; DIFFERENCE BETWEEN FORCE RECONNAISSANCE & RECONNAISSANCE BATTALION**

- Force Reconnaissance supports the Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF) commander, a Lieutenant General, a Corps equivalent, and conducts operational level reconnaissance in the deep battle space.
- Reconnaissance Battalion supports the Division commander, a Major General, and it provides tactical reconnaissance in the distant battle space.

**APPENDIX – D; FORCE RECONNAISSANCE TABLE OF ORGANIZATION**

- 1943 - Amphibious Reconnaissance Company, Pacific Fleet

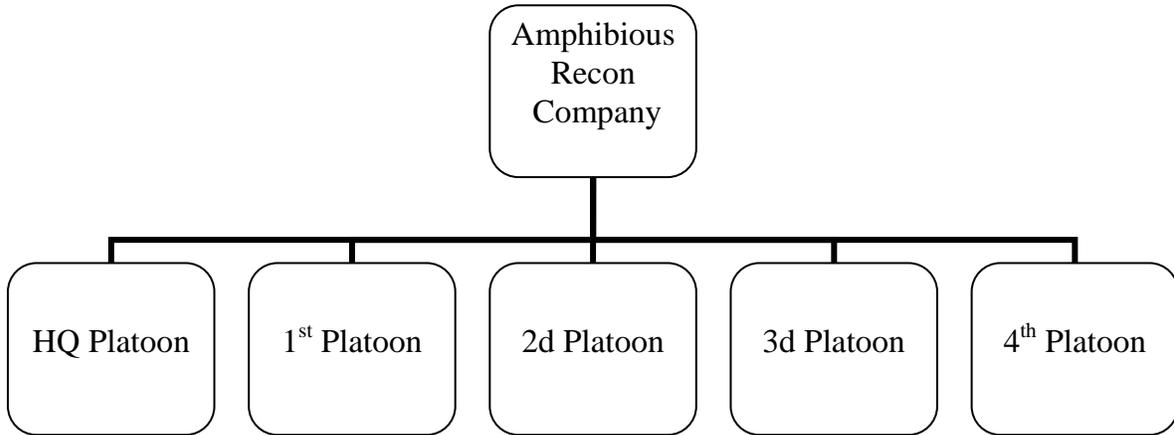


Figure 1. *AARUGAH*. United States Marine Corps. FMFRP-12-21. 1989.<sup>55</sup>

- 1957 – 1st Force Reconnaissance Company

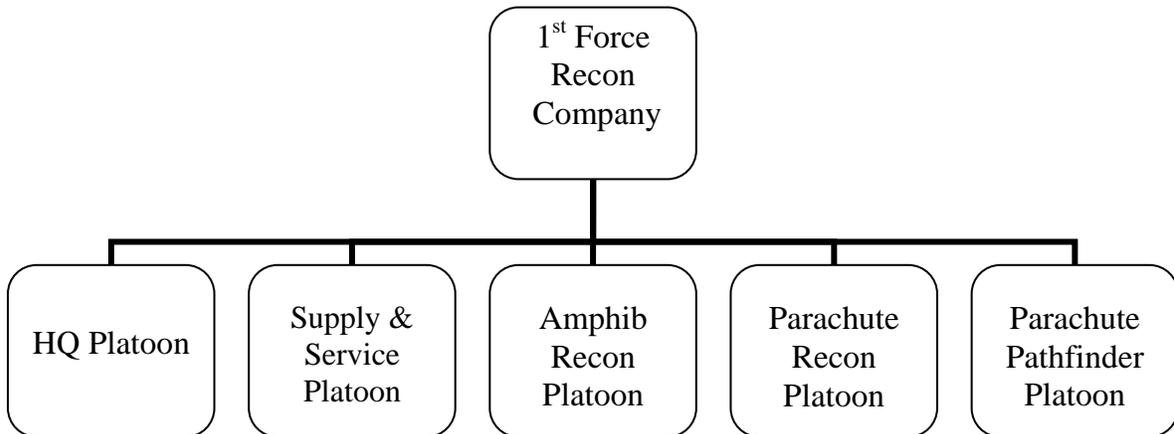


Figure 2. Col Bruce Myers (USMC Ret), *Fortune Favors the Brave – The Story of First Force Reconnaissance Company*, Naval Institute Press, 2000.<sup>56</sup>

- 1980/90's - Force Reconnaissance

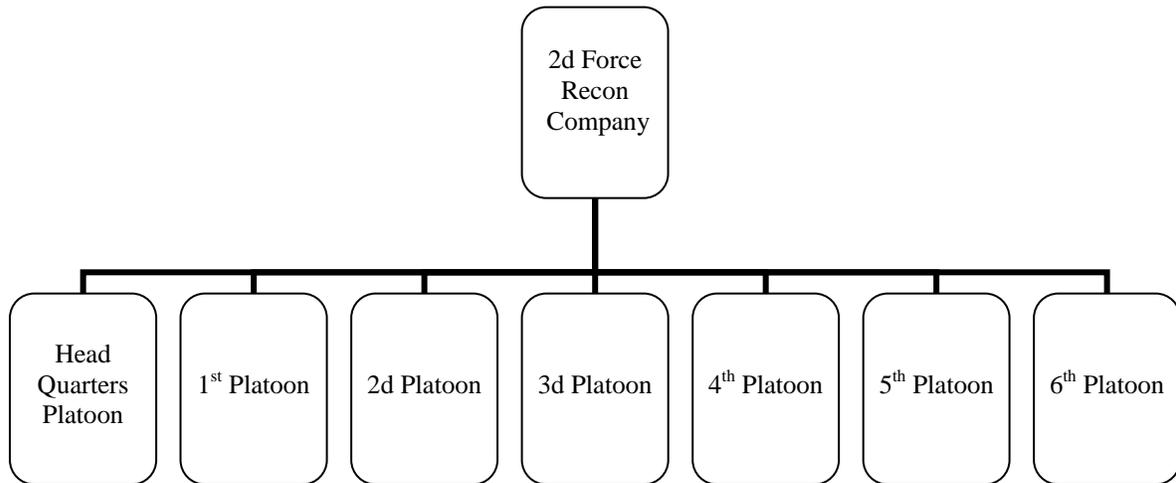


Figure 3. MCRP 5-12 D Organization of Marine Corps Forces.<sup>57</sup>

- 2004 – 2d Force Reconnaissance Company

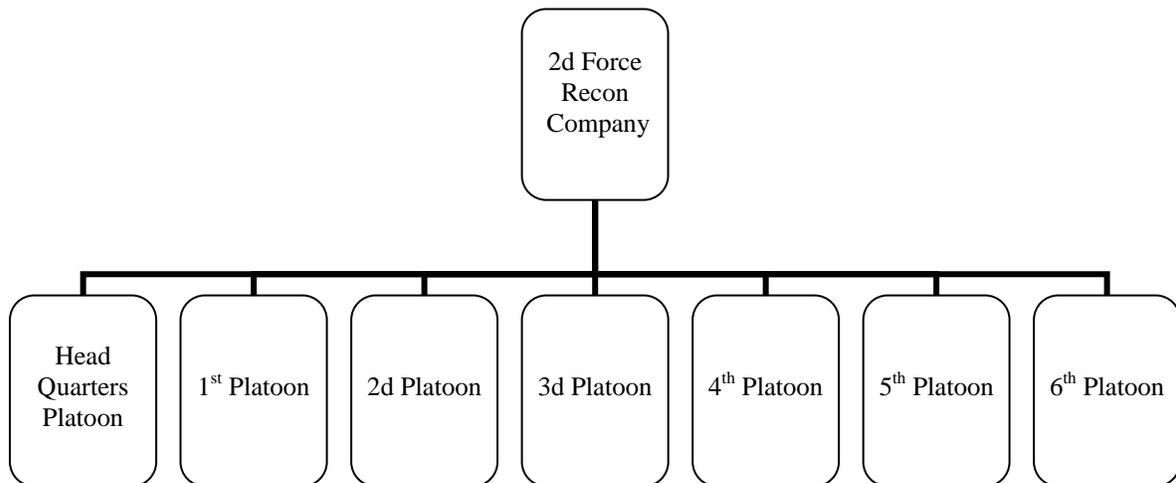


Figure 4. MCRP 5-12 D Organization of Marine Corps Forces.<sup>58</sup>

- 2011; II MEF Force Reconnaissance Company

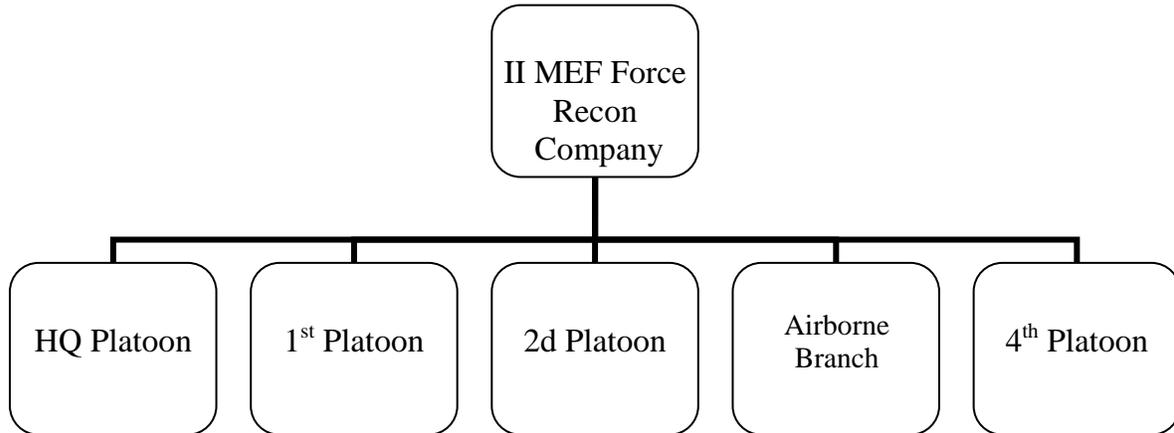


Figure 5. MCBul 5400 Re-establishment Force Reconnaissance Company. Sep 2008.<sup>59</sup>

- 2015; II MEF Force Reconnaissance Company

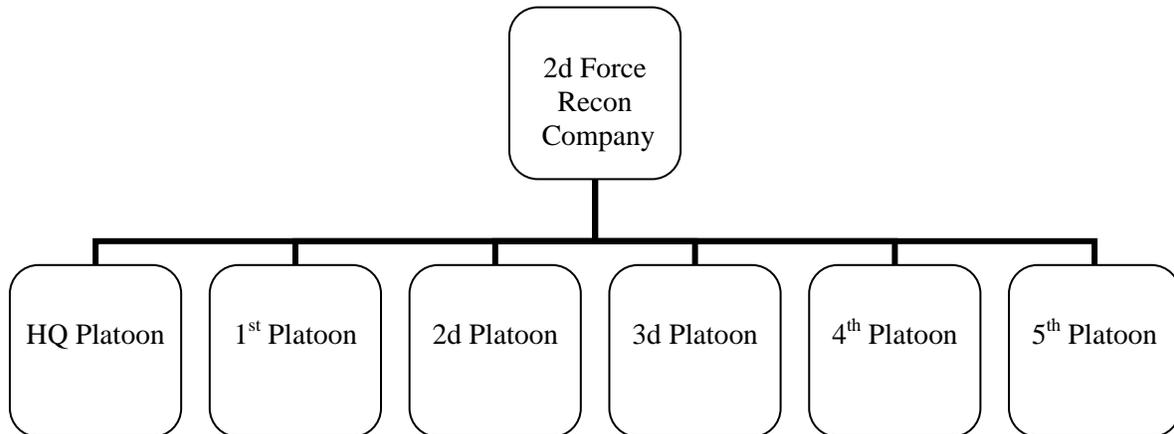


Figure 5. MCBul 5400 Re-establishment Force Reconnaissance Company. Sep 2011.<sup>60</sup>

## **APPENDIX – E; FORCE RECONNAISSANCE CHARACTERISTICS**

Access Operations: Conducted to gain access to the environment. This allows the commander to employ shaping actions to set the conditions for achieving a decision. This is associated with deep reconnaissance operations and supports plans and future operations.

Maneuver Operations: Conducted to persist in the environment. This allows the commander to set the conditions for the movement and maneuver of the force. This is associated with close reconnaissance operations and supports future and current operations.

Target Operations: Conducted to achieve manned, persistent ISR of an objective area. This enables the assault force to create the commander's desired effects during actions on the objective. This is associated with current operations and maneuver commanders scheme of maneuver.

Ref: MCWP 2-25 USMC Ground Reconnaissance Operations, Force Reconnaissance operations can be categorized in three lines of operations.<sup>61</sup>

## **APPENDIX – F; FORCE RECONNAISSANCE TASKS**

1. MAGTF Advanced Force Operations: Units precede the main body to an objective area and set the conditions to enable the main body to assault the objective. Ground Reconnaissance support to advanced force operations includes: Underwater reconnaissance, Amphibious reconnaissance, Ground reconnaissance operations, the seizure of supporting positions through specialized limited scale raids, and providing terminal guidance and battle damage assessment to air strikes.

2. Underwater Reconnaissance: The collection and reporting of information concerning the hydrographic characteristics of a particular area, well in advance of an amphibious landing force. Ground reconnaissance units conduct subsurface, detailed hydrographic surveys in support of all US Navy landing craft and USMC amphibious assault vehicles.

3. Amphibious Reconnaissance: The discovering, clarifying, or confirming of information concerning the hydrographic, topography, and enemy activities or resources in a coastal area, well in advance of an amphibious landing force. Ground Reconnaissance units conduct initial and confirmatory beach reconnaissance, initial terminal guidance of AAV's, tactical boats, amphibious ships, landing craft, or aircraft, conduct riverine operations exploiting the waterways for maneuver, and conduct pre-assault, assault, interdiction, and supporting operations in the riverine environment.

a. Area Reconnaissance: Obtain detailed information concerning the terrain or enemy activity within a prescribed area.

b. Zone Reconnaissance: Obtain detailed information on all routes, obstacles (including CBRN), terrain, and enemy forces within a zone defined by boundaries.

c. Route Reconnaissance: Focused along a specific line of communication, such as a road, railway, or waterway to provide new or updated information on conditions and activities along the route.

d. Force Oriented Reconnaissance: Focused on a specific fighting organization, wherever it may go. Force-oriented reconnaissance concerns gathering intelligence information required about a specific enemy or target unit.

4. Surveillance: The systematic observation of aerospace, surface, or subsurface areas, places, persons, or things; by visual, aural, electronic, photographic, or other means. Ground Reconnaissance units provide the following to surveillance:

a. Human intelligence (HUMINT): that provides insight into intangible factors such as tactics, training, morale, and combat effectiveness that cannot be collected by technical means.

b. Imagery intelligence (IMINT): that provides ground perspective imagery, in near real-time, in inclement weather, and that can defeat the effects of enemy camouflage, cover, and deception activities.

5. Battle space Shaping: This area includes the employment of direct fire weapons, demolitions, indirect fires, precision guided munitions, and naval fires in order to destroy or neutralize enemy forces. Ground Reconnaissance units provide the following to shape the battle space:

- a. Terminal guidance and Bomb Damage Assessment (BDA) to air operations.
- b. Forward observation and BDA to supporting arms.
- c. Precision fires by Reconnaissance Scout Snipers.
- d. Hunter killer operations are hostile, safe haven, or semi-permissive environments conducted using unorthodox tactics for the purpose of enemy personnel, leadership, and resource attrition.

6. Specialized Limited Scale Raids: A small scale attack through the swift penetration of hostile territory to secure information, to confuse the enemy, to destroy installations, or for a specific purpose other than holding terrain. Force Reconnaissance units provide the following to raids:

- a. Physically and mentally conditioned for operations.
- b. Highly skilled in SERE, hand-to-hand combat, and various weapons.
- c. Proficient in night operations includes obstacle breaching, long-range communications include battlefield medical care, and intelligence collections.
- d. Special skills that allow the force to quickly break contact and move undetected.

7. Specialized Insertion and Extraction: Force Reconnaissance units are trained to gain access to and rapidly maneuver across the battlespace, regardless of the terrain.

Reconnaissance units maneuver using the following methods:

a. Surface:

- Rough terrain mobility mounted or dismounted
- Assault climbing techniques and animal packing
- Small boat operations
- Combat swimming
- Military skiing and snowmobile

b. Subsurface:

- Submarine operations
- Combat diving

c. Airborne/ Helicopter born:

- Parachuting: High Altitude Low Opening/High Altitude High Opening Tandem Offset Resupply Delivery System (TORDS) & Low Level Static Line
- Helicopter Rope Suspension Techniques (HRST) operations
- Helocast - Soft duck

According to USMC Ground Reconnaissance Operations MCWP 2-25, Force Reconnaissance operations can be assigned the following tasks.<sup>62</sup>

**APPENDIX – G; INDIVIDUAL TRAINING**

<b>INDIVIDUAL TRAINING</b>				
<b>SCHOOL</b>	<b>PVT-LCPL</b>	<b>CPL-SGT</b>	<b>SSGT-MGYSGT</b>	<b>LT-MAJ</b>
Basic Recon Course (BRC)*	X	X	X	X
Recon Team Leaders Course (RTLCL)*		X	X	X
Recon Unit Leaders Course (RULC)*			X	X
Ground Operations Chief Course (GOCC)			X	
SERE Level “C”*	X	X	X	X
Basic Airborne Course (BAC)	X	X	X	X
Static Line Jumpmaster (SLJM)		X	X	X
Basic Recon Course (BRC)*	X	X	X	X
Recon Team Leaders Course (RTLCL)*		X	X	X
Recon Unit Leaders Course (RULC)*			X	X
Multi-Mission Parachutist Course (MMPC)		X	X	X
Military Free-Fall Jumpmaster (MFFJM)		X	X	X
TORDS Master Equipment/ Personnel		X	X	
Marine Combatant Diver Course (MCDC)	X	X	X	X
Dive Supervisor	X	X	X	X
Joint Fires Observer (JFO)		X		
Joint Tactical Air Controller (JTAC)		X	X	
US Army Ranger	X	X	X	X
Recon Surveillance Ldrs Crse (RSLC)		X	X	
Scout Sniper		X	X	
HRST Master	X	X	X	X

- MCWP Ground Reconnaissance (Appendix B)<sup>63</sup>
- MCO 3500.73 Reconnaissance Training and Readiness Manual. Oct 2004.<sup>64</sup>

<b>PROFESSIONAL MILITARY EDUCATION</b>	<b>PVT-LCPL</b>	<b>CPL-SGT</b>	<b>SSGT-MGYSGT</b>	<b>LT-MAJ</b>
MCI-Leading Marines *		X		
Command Sponsored Corporals Course		X		
MCI- 8010 Sergeants DEP*		X		
Sergeants Course		X		
MCI-8100 Staff Noncommissioned Officers Career Distance Education Program*			X	
Staff Noncommissioned Officer Career Course			X	
MCI-8200 Staff Noncommissioned Officers Advanced Distance Education Program*			X	
Staff Noncommissioned Officers Advanced Course*			X	
MCI-Senior Enlisted Joint PME			X	
1st Sgt/ MSgt Regional Seminar*			X	
Annual MGySgt Regional Seminar*			X	
Expeditionary Warfare School DEP*	Recommend			X
<b>* DENOTES REQUIRED COURSE</b>				

- MCWP Ground Reconnaissance (Appendix B)<sup>65</sup>
- MCO 3500.73 Reconnaissance Training and Readiness Manual. Oct 2004.<sup>66</sup>

## APPENDIX - H; TEAM & PLATOON SKILLS

<b>PHASE I: INDIVIDUAL &amp; TEAM SKILLS</b>		
<b>DURATION</b>	<b>EVENT</b>	<b>NOTES</b>
2 Weeks	Basic C2 Package	Radios Antennas MSIDs COMSEC ROC Operations
2 Weeks	Combat Trauma Package	CPR Certification Basic Life Saver Combat Trauma Medicine Live Tissue Training
2 Weeks	Weapons and Tactics Package	Small Arms Machine Guns Sniper Rifles Grenades & AT-4 TM & Plt IA Drills o Patrolling o Raids
2 Weeks	Supporting Arms Package	Close Air Support Mortars & Artillery Naval Guns Battle Damage Assessment
2 Weeks	Combat Hunter Package	Tracking Counter Tracking Observation

- MCO 3500.73 Reconnaissance Training and Readiness Manual. Oct 2004.<sup>67</sup>

<b>PHASE II: PLATOON SKILLS</b>		
<b>DURATION</b>	<b>EVENT</b>	<b>NOTES</b>
2 Weeks	Advanced C2 Package	TM & Plt Operation Orders Tactical Exercise without Troops (TEWT) ROC Operations
1 Week	HRST Package	Tower & Heliborne Ops o Fast Rope o Rappel o SPIE o Asslt Climbing
2 Weeks	Amphibious Package	Small Boats Combat Swimming Helocast Beach Reports Launch and recovery from mother craft
2 Weeks	Marine Combat Dive Package	Refer to Chapter 5, MCD certification requirements
1 Week	Static Line Jump Package	Refer to Chapter 5, airborne certification Requirements
2 Weeks	MFF Jump Package	Refer to Chapter 5, airborne certification requirements

- MCO 3500.73 Reconnaissance Training and Readiness Manual. Oct 2004.<sup>68</sup>

<b>PHASE III: MAGTF ADVANCED FORCE OPERATIONS</b>		
<b>DURATION</b>	<b>EVENT</b>	<b>NOTES</b>
2 Weeks	Dismounted Patrol Package (Full Mission Profile)	Ground Reconnaissance Ground Surveillance Specialized Limited Scale Raids Amphibious Reconnaissance Underwater Reconnaissance
2 Weeks	Mounted Patrol Package (Full Mission Profile)	HMMWV Internally Transportable Vehicle (ITV) All Terrain Vehicle (ATV)
**Four weeks have been left opened for flexibility for administration and maintenance		

- MCO 3500.73 Reconnaissance Training and Readiness Manual. Oct 2004.<sup>69</sup>

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