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Modernizing and consolidating each MEF's Force Recon Company and Division's Recon Battalion into a Force Recon Battalion and reorganizing it within a functionally aligned MEF Information Group (MIG), decreases barriers to interoperability between other Force-level information and intelligence capabilities, mitigates collection and capability gaps for MAGTF commanders or the Marine component of a Joint Task Force, and allows the MAGTF to leverage the recon community's specialized insertion and extraction capabilities to shape and access the future operating environment.

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MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

Integrating Expeditionary Ground Reconnaissance into an Optimized Marine Expeditionary Force Information Group

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Title: Integrating Expeditionary Ground Reconnaissance into an Optimized Marine Expeditionary Force Information Group

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Thesis: Modernizing and consolidating each Marine Expeditionary Force's (MEF's) Force Reconnaissance (FORECON) Company and Division's Reconnaissance Battalion (Division Recon Bn) into a FORECON Battalion and reorganizing it within a functionally aligned MEF Information Group (MIG), decreases barriers to interoperability between other Force-level information and intelligence capabilities, mitigates collection and capability gaps for Marine Air Ground Task Force (MAGTF) commanders or the Marine component of a Joint Task Force (JTF), and allows the MAGTF to leverage the reconnaissance community's specialized insertion and extraction (SPIE) capabilities to shape and access the future operating environment (FOE).

Discussion: The MIGs, established in 2017, are similar to the Surveillance, Reconnaissance, and Intelligence Groups (SRIGs) created in 1988 through the direction of then-Commandant, General Alfred Gray. Considered ahead of their time and ultimately disbanded, the SRIGs attempted to recreate the III Marine Amphibious Force's Surveillance and Reconnaissance Center (SRC) employed during the Vietnam conflict, but produced mixed results during Operations DESERT SHIELD and DESERT STORM. Unlike the SRIG, Headquarters, US Marine Corps (HQMC) decided to not integrate the MEF's FORECON Company, the Division's Recon Bn, or the Marine Aircraft Group's VMU squadron into the MIG (called the Remotely Piloted Vehicle Company in the SRIG). The non-integration of expeditionary ground and amphibious reconnaissance capabilities has created a collection and capabilities gap in the land and sea domains for a MAGTF commander or the Marine component of a JTF. Additionally, the 2006 transition of each MEF's FORECON company into United States Special Operations Command's (USSOCOM's) Marine Special Operations Battalions (MSOBs) (Marine Raider Battalions as of 2017) and their departure from the Amphibious Ready Group/Marine Expeditionary Unit (ARG/MEU) stripped the MAGTF of its "Special Operations Capable" designation and created still-unresolved command relationship (COMREL) issues between reconnaissance units, Marine Divisions, and the MEFs. What the Marine Division loses in an organic reconnaissance capability, it gains from benefiting from a more integrated multi-discipline intelligence/information capability supporting the entire MAGTF. The capabilities of Marine reconnaissance, fused with other intelligence/information disciplines remains critical in the contemporary operating environment (OE) and becomes even more important in an OE characterized by anti-access/area denial (A2/AD) capabilities, littoral combat, and information capabilities possessed by the U.S.'s pacing threats and malign totalitarian regimes.

Conclusion: Consolidating each MEF's FORECON company and Division's Recon Bn into a FORECON Battalion task-organized within and under the operational and administrative control of the MEF and a functionally realigned MIG best postures the Marine Corps to meet the requirements of the contemporary and FOE in support of the Ground Combat Element, MAGTF, and JTF.

DISCLAIMER

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

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Introduction

The *2017 National Security Strategy of the United States* and the *2018 National Defense Strategy* (*NDS*) reprioritized the adversaries of the U.S. The revisionist powers of China and Russia, now categorized as the U.S.'s strategic competitors or "pacing threats," possess the capabilities to minimize the multi-domain asymmetric overmatch the U.S. has enjoyed during the last seventeen years of operations against transnational violent extremist organizations and former totalitarian regimes in the Greater Middle East.[1,2] The Marine Corps, like the rest of the Joint Force, is reorganizing to fight in contested domains against peer- and near-peer competitors. To address the information- and intelligence-related needs of Marine Air Ground Task Force (MAGTF) commanders in the current and future operating environment (FOE), the Marine Corps is modernizing and expanding its intelligence- and information-related capabilities (IRCs) and formations. The establishment of a Deputy Commandant for Information Warfare (DC I) and the Marine Expeditionary Force Information Groups (MIGs) in 2017 represent a portion of that investment and expansion. Specifically, the MIGs, appearing like a resurrection of Commandant Alfred Gray's Surveillance, Reconnaissance, and Intelligence Groups (SRIGs) of the late-1980s and early-1990s, are the Marine Corps' first attempt at consolidating Marine Expeditionary Force-level (MEF-level) information- and intelligence-related formations to best support the MAGTF.

However, unlike the SRIGs, the MIGs lack the capabilities of the MEF's Force Reconnaissance (FORECON) Company or the Division's Reconnaissance Battalion (Recon Bn). Marine reconnaissance units, unlike other formations across the Marine Corps Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance Enterprise (MCISRE) have undergone minimal modernization despite then-Commandant General John L. Jones' "Fix Recon" initiative, multiple RAND studies, and varying degrees of success while operating as company-sized base units of the Maritime Raid Forces (MRF)

supporting the Marine Corps' Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU) deployment program. Modernizing and consolidating each MEF's FORECON Company and Division's Recon Bn into a FORECON Battalion and reorganizing it under the administrative and operational control of the MEF and within a functionally aligned MIG, decreases barriers to interoperability between other Force-level information and intelligence capabilities, mitigates collection and capability gaps for MAGTF commanders or the Marine component of a Joint Task Force (JTF), and allows the MAGTF to leverage the reconnaissance community's specialized insertion and extraction (SPIE) capabilities to shape and access the FOE.

Context

Most recent assessments of the FOE including The Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Operating Environment 2035* (July 2016) and Marine Corps Intelligence Activity's *Future Operating Environment 2015-2035* (June 2015) characterize the future security environment as one featuring credible competitors, both state and non-state, possessing the abilities to deny, disrupt, and/or degrade the U.S. across the warfighting domains. The Marine Corps' MAGTF, whether a component of a JTF or an element of a Naval Task Force (TF), will likely have to fight into and within a contested operating environment (OE). Whether tasked with seizing a lodgment for a follow-on echelon during a Joint Forcible Entry Operation or executing more limited objectives like a noncombatant evacuation of a U.S. Embassy, future MAGTFs will require intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) formations and advance forces capable of penetrating denied areas, conducting low-visibility/signature operations, and collecting information to answer a commander's critical information requirements (CCIRs). The current answer has been the creation of the MIGs; however, like the Marine Operating Concept's (MOC's) central problem statement, the

MIGs are not organized, trained, [or] equipped to meet the demands of a future operating environment.[3]

This paper argues that the expansion and reorganization of the MIGs and the addition of Marine Reconnaissance can address the current and future domain capability gaps that exist within the MAGTF or the Marine component of a JTF. Therefore, the Marine Corps, by not integrating historically validated Force-level Marine reconnaissance forces into the MIG, nor appropriately functionally aligning the MIGs to optimize their support to MAGTF/JTFs, is accepting unmitigated-risk to current and future expeditionary operations and is becoming reliant on inorganic forces to address its capability gaps and advance force requirements.

This paper will review select historical examples of MEF-level employment of Force-level reconnaissance and the MIG's lineage, assess the current and potential future capability gaps within the MIG/MAGTF, barriers to both modernization and integration of Marine reconnaissance into the MIG, advocate for multi-disciplined/domain intelligence teaming within the MIG, and the leveraging of the Marine reconnaissance communities capabilities to provide placement and access for MIG equities in the FOE. This paper will conclude with a proposal for a reorganization of Marine Reconnaissance and the MIGs as well as proposed scalable detachments to support different-sized MAGTFs.

This paper will not argue whether Marine Reconnaissance is an intelligence or maneuver function or capability, nor will it argue a change in its alignment or advocacy within Headquarters, US Marine Corps (HQMC). It is also beyond the scope of this paper to address the emerging concept of adding an Information Combat Element to the MAGTF, but it will highlight potential span-of-control and functional employment issue for MIG commanders and advocate for the need to fragment the MIG into an Information Regiment and a Support Group and task-organize MIG

detachments with a commander and staff. This paper will also address the loss of the Ground Combat Element's organic Recon Bns and mitigation measures to ensure the GCE is supported.

Current State of Ground Reconnaissance

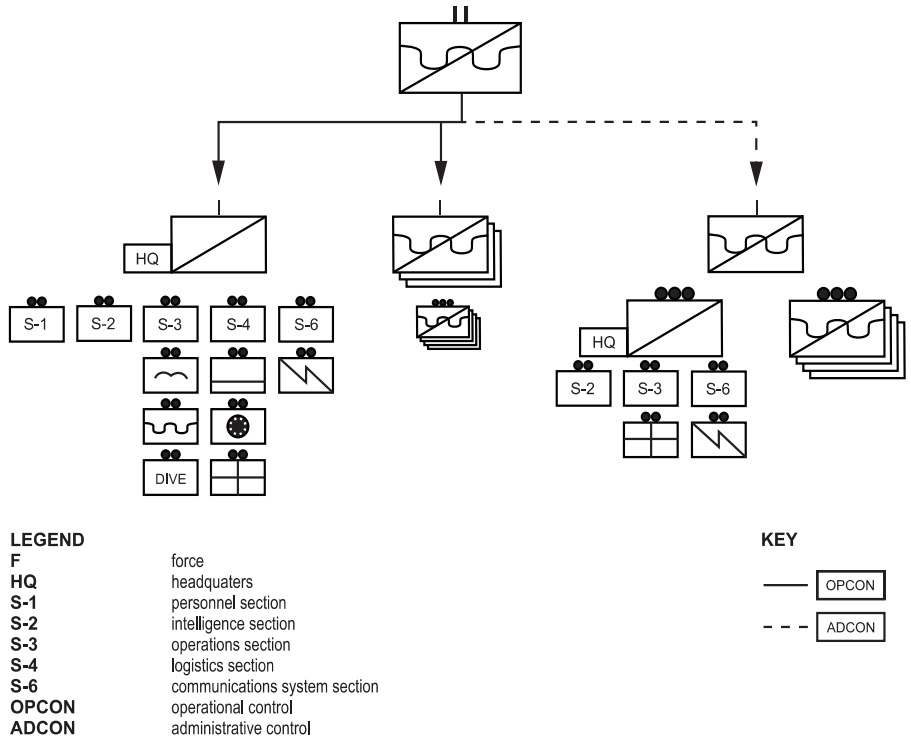

Figure 1: Reconnaissance Battalion with ADCON FORECON Company
Source: Headquarters, US Marine Corps, *Ground Reconnaissance Operations*, MCRP 2-10A.6. (Washington, DC: Headquarters, US Marine Corps, April 4, 2018), 2-10.

According to *Ground Reconnaissance Operations, MCRP 2-10A.6* there are six recognized expeditionary ground reconnaissance forces. The Radio Battalions, the Intelligence Battalion's Ground Sensor Platoons, the FORECON companies, the Reconnaissance Battalions, the Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalions, and the Infantry Battalion's Scout Sniper Platoons.[4] This paper will focus on the Recon Bns and the FORECON companies. Currently, the FORECON Companies are task-organized within and administratively controlled (ADCON) by a parent Recon Bn but are operationally controlled (OPCON) by the MEF (See Figure 1). Their mission is to "observe, identify, and report intelligence information on the enemy, weather, and terrain."[5] FORECON

companies are typically employed by the G2/S2 for reconnaissance and surveillance missions and the G-3/S-3 for offensive missions and are typically employed in the supported commander's area of interest.[6] They possess the capabilities to conduct advanced force operations, amphibious reconnaissance, underwater reconnaissance, ground reconnaissance, surveillance, battlespace shaping, and raids. The Recon Bns are organic to the GCE and doctrinally conduct a similar mission to FORECON companies but in support of the Marine division (See Figure 1).[7] Dependent on the Recon Bn's parent division or MEF, each Reconnaissance Battalion to include its FORECON company task-organizes differently to support the operational requirements of the MEF's MEU deployment program's MRF and other division and MEF operational requirements.

Historically, the FORECON companies contained more senior and experienced Reconnaissance Marines selected from the operating forces and the Recon Bns, however the training continuum for all Reconnaissance Marines is now standardized. All Reconnaissance Marines attend the Basic Reconnaissance Course (BRC), under the Reconnaissance Training Company (RTC), Advanced Infantry Training Battalion, School of Infantry-West, Training and Education Command. Follow-on SPIE courses like Airborne, Multi-Mission Parachute Course (Military Freefall Parachuting), and Marine Combatant Diver Course, follow BRC. These courses, historically coordinated by the Marine's parent command during the individual training phase, are now a part of a training pipeline. Recon Bns and FORECON companies typically receive a new Reconnaissance Marine that has attended some or all of these courses before assignment to the unit. This has significantly reduced the administrative burden of coordinating individual training on the Recon Bns. Additional individual training courses like Scout Sniper Basic Course, Reconnaissance Team Leader's Course, and Methods of Entry (Breaching) are still coordinated by the parent command. Additionally, each MEF's Expeditionary Operations Training Group provides additional advanced training like Close

Quarters Tactics Course, Urban/Advanced Surveillance and Reconnaissance, and Helicopter Rope Suspension Training as well as evaluation and certification for MAGTF deployment programs.

The *2017 Initial Capabilities Document for Expeditionary Ground Reconnaissance* (*ICD for EGR)* contains the *2010 Capabilities Based Assessment (2010 CBA) Summary* which identified significant gaps in Marine Reconnaissance across the Doctrine, Organization, Training, Materiel, Leadership and Education, Personnel, and Facilities (DOTMLPF) spectrum.[8] The consensus from the *2010 CBA Summary, the* 2016 RAND *Expeditionary Ground Reconnaissance: A Mission Analysis,* the most recent *2017 ICD,* and the 2019 *Ground Combat Element Future Reconnaissance Wargame Quicklook Report* is that Marine Reconnaissance is not optimized, trained, or equipped to fight in FOE scenarios like those indicated in the 2016 *MOC* or the 2018 *NDS.*

Chapter 1: A Select History of MAGTF Reconnaissance and the MIG

Doctrine and the Emergence of a Task-Organized MAGTF-Level Reconnaissance Unit (1906-1947)

Marine BGen Dion Williams, as a Major in 1906, is generally credited with developing Naval Reconnaissance doctrine in his work, *Naval Reconnaissance, Instructions for the Reconnaissance of Bays, Harbors, and Adjacent Country* (updated in 1917).[9] However, it was not until after LtCol Earl H. Ellis' *Advance Base Operations in Micronesia in* 1921 (adopted as Operation Plan 712, the precursor to War Plan ORANGE), the publication of *FTP 167, Landing Operations Doctrine* in 1938, and experimentation during Fleet Landing Exercises in the 1930s that task-organized reconnaissance forces emerged.[10] Shortly after the 7 December 1941 Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, the Observer Group became the first task-organized reconnaissance force.

A joint force consisting of specially selected Army and Navy personnel, the Observer Group was the precursor to Marine Reconnaissance, special operations forces (SOF), and the Office of Strategic

Studies (precursor to the Central Intelligence Agency). Formed at Quantico, Virginia, in December of 1941, the unit was comprised of about twenty-two men selected from battalion and regiment intelligence sections.[11] It was disestablished in September of 1942 after the War Department defined the Pacific and Atlantic theater responsibilities for the Navy and Army. The Marine component was sent to Camp Elliot (vicinity San Diego, California) and re-designated as the Amphibious Reconnaissance Company (ARC), Amphibious Corps, Pacific Fleet under General Holland Smith in August of 1943.[12,13]

HQMC expanded and re-designated the ARC as the Amphibious Reconnaissance Battalion (ARB) in April of 1944 due to increasing operational commitments within the Pacific Theater.[14] Despite the successful operations of similar forces like the Marine Raider Battalions, Marine Division Recon units, and the Army's Special Reconnaissance Units, the ARB/Cs were the first examples of task-organized units designed to conduct clandestine amphibious reconnaissance with SPIE techniques to infiltrate enemy territory and collect information in support of a TF commander's information requirements (IRs). Shortly after WWII, HQMC disestablished the ARB and a Force-level reconnaissance force did not re-emerge until after the National Security Act of 1947 and Department of Defense reforms.

Post-WWII Reforms and the Re-establishment of Force-Level Reconnaissance (1947-1954)

Michael Lanning and Ray Stubbe's work, *Inside Force Recon,* describes a post-National Security Act of 1947 board studying the assigned missions of the Marine Corps. The board's report, *Organization of the Fleet Marine Force War and* Peace (1948), identified the need for a Force-level reconnaissance unit and recommended the creation of a Force ARB.[15] The post-WWII force draw-down and budget austerity did not support its creation, but limited reconnaissance experimentation continued until the start of the Korean War.[16]

The Marine Corps considered its amphibious reconnaissance capabilities unnecessary and mostly abandoned them due to the Korean War's static nature. Commanders relegated the Division Recon Bns to non-reconnaissance functions despite several successful amphibious raids and vehicle-borne deep-reconnaissance missions. It was not until 1 December 1950 that Force-level reconnaissance forces re-emerged. The Second ARB, Force Troops, formed in Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, and reorganized under the Commanding General (CG), Fleet Marine Force Atlantic (FMFLANT) in April of 1951.[17,18] On 12 March 1951 the First Amphibious Reconnaissance Platoon formed in Camp Pendleton, California, expanded and re-designated several times throughout the early 1950s. Unlike its sister unit on the east coast, it remained attached to the Division.[19,20] Both units survived the post-Korean War force draw-downs and budgetary constraints, but their task-organization remained in a constant state of flux.

Testing and Validation of Specialized Insertion Techniques and Cuba (1954-1964)

The threat of proliferated nuclear weapons and the proven mobility of helicopter-borne operations in the Korean Conflict were the impetus for post-conflict experimentation in amphibious helicopter-borne assaults. A Marine landing force could no longer mass and conduct an amphibious landing on a point objective under the threat of nuclear attack. On 1 July 1954, in response to the changing OE, the Commandant of the Marine Corps (CMC) directed the activation of a reinforced helicopter-borne battalion called Marine Corps Test Unit #1 (MCTU#1).[21] Because helicopters were not all weather at the time and considered vulnerable to enemy surface-to-air fire, MCTU#1 determined that a long-range reconnaissance force was necessary to identify approach, landing points, and departure lanes for the helicopter-borne force. In response, the CMC authorized the creation of a twenty-two-man reconnaissance platoon in May of 1955.[22]

To meet the mobility needs of the new platoon, the CMC approved experimentation in parachute operations following a recommendation from General Lewis "Chesty" Puller, then CG, Amphibious Training Command, Pacific Fleet. Experimentation throughout the 1950s identified that parachute insertion techniques were a viable insertion method to support pre-assault reconnaissance and pathfinder operations in advance of the helicopter-borne assaults. MCTU#1's experimentation validated the need for a specialized reconnaissance force capable of supporting a MAGTF.

MCTU#1 was deactivated in March of 1957 and its reconnaissance platoon merged with the First ARC, FMF Pacific and a handful of Marines from the 1st Marine Division's Recon Company to become First Force Reconnaissance Company on 19 June 1957.[23] As with most Marines on Camp Pendleton at the time, the Company was organizationally placed within the 1st Marine Division. In June of 1958, half of the First Force Reconnaissance Company transferred to Camp Lejeune and merged with Second ARC to become Second Force Reconnaissance Company. However, the Second Force Reconnaissance Company was organized under Force Troops, FMFLANT instead of the division and was employed by the MEF G-2. According to Ray Stubbe in *Arrugha!* this difference in command relationships remained problematic for First Force Reconnaissance Company during preparation for an invasion of Cuba in 1962. In preparation for a Cuban invasion, First Force Reconnaissance Company flew to Norfolk, Virginia and was originally assigned to the G-2, II MEF, a unit who was familiar with reconnaissance operations because of Second Force Reconnaissance Company's organization.[24] However, First Force Reconnaissance Company was subsequently reassigned to support the 5th MEB who was unfamiliar with the planning and support requirements associated with reconnaissance operations.[25] Although the invasion never occurred the organization of reconnaissance forces in units unfamiliar with their

employment remained an issue. Besides planning for contingency operations in Cuba and exercise support, both companies continued experimenting with period-advanced concepts like military free-fall parachuting and submarine lock-in/lock-out operations until the start of the Vietnam conflict.

Force-Level Reconnaissance in Vietnam (1964-1970)

FORECON Marines partnered with Navy Underwater Demolition Teams (precursor to the U.S. Navy Seals) to conduct the first traditional amphibious reconnaissance operations at Cam Rahn Bay, Vietnam, from 6 July to 6 August 1964 resulting in the development of Cam Rahn into an advance naval base and major logistical port of entry.[26,27] Later in February of 1965, the FORECON sub-unit supporting TF 76 reconnoitered beachheads to support the landings of the first conventional Marine infantry battalions.[28] However, much like the Korean War, both Division Recon Bns and the FORECON companies were assigned to the Marine Divisions and often misemployed due to a misunderstanding of capabilities and poor advocacy. Division Recon Bns and FORECON companies, doctrinally assigned different missions (reconnaissance in close versus deep battlespace respectively), were often consolidated and the best officers and noncommissioned officers from the FORECON companies were distributed across the Division Recon Bns.

Upon assuming command in March of 1969, the CG, III Marine Amphibious Force (III MAF), LtGen Herman Nickerson, Jr. realized that he lacked the Force-level collection assets needed to answer his information requirements (IRs). He subsequently pulled the FORECON companies from their parent Recon Bns and employed them in accordance with doctrine. 1st Force Reconnaissance Company and 3d Force Reconnaissance Company (once reconstituted from its manpower dispersal within 3d Recon Bn) worked directly for the CG and his staff. Their employment by the III MAF's staff was sub-optimal despite their consolidation at the MAF-level and numerous successful operations. With unpopular U.S. domestic sentiment towards the Vietnam

conflict forcing the withdrawal of U.S. forces, LtGen Nickerson recognized that he would be responsible to accomplish the same mission with a smaller force. He directed a III MAF staff study on the integration of intelligence and surveillance capabilities.[29] This study resulted in the creation of the III MAF Surveillance and Reconnaissance Center (SRC). The FORECON companies and Recon Bns evolved little after the Vietnam conflict until the creation of the SRIG and the start of the Operation DESERT STORM.

The MIG's Lineage, III MAF's Surveillance and Reconnaissance Center (1969)

LtGen Nickerson directed the establishment of the III MAF SRC on 16 October 1969.[30] Conceptualized by then-LtCol Alfred Gray and LtCol Gerald Polakoff, the SRC represented a consolidation of all MAGTF-level intelligence-related units, including the Division Recon Bns and Radio Battalions (RadBns).[31] Although other inorganic deep-reconnaissance assets were operating within LtGen Nickerson's area of operations (I Corps' Tactical Zone (ICTZ's)), he determined that they were not responsive enough to answer his IRs. The SRC's concept of employment according to Stubbe's research on a message from FMF, Pacific to the CMC on 8 December 1969 was: "to integrate ground, aerial, signal, and sensor surveillance info from ICTZ assets as well as from assets being employed in adjacent areas in order to provide the most meaningful and appropriate utilization of each asset in a comprehensive and dynamic surveillance/reconnaissance effort."[32] The SRC The SRC, considered highly successful, informed the creation of the SRIGs in 1988.

Force Reconnaissance and the Surveillance, Reconnaissance, Intelligence Group (1988-1997)

By now CMC, General Alfred Gray directed the establishment of a SRIG at each of the MEFs beginning in 1988.[33] The SRIGs attempted to duplicate the SRC's effectiveness during Vietnam, by combining the FORECON companies, intelligence companies, Remotely Piloted Vehicle Companies, RadBns, Air Naval Gun-Fire Liaison companies (ANGLICO) of the MEF into a single unit under a Colonel (See Figure 2). "The concept of a SRIG was a recent organizational innovation to improve Marine intelligence operations. It combined the personnel and equipment of previously independent intelligence collection agencies into a "type" command."[34] FMFM 3-22 (Coordinating Draft of October 1990), states that the mission of the SRIG was to "provide surveillance, reconnaissance, intelligence, counterintelligence, electronic warfare, air and naval gunfire liaison, tactical deception, maritime direct action and secure communications to MAGTFs."[35]

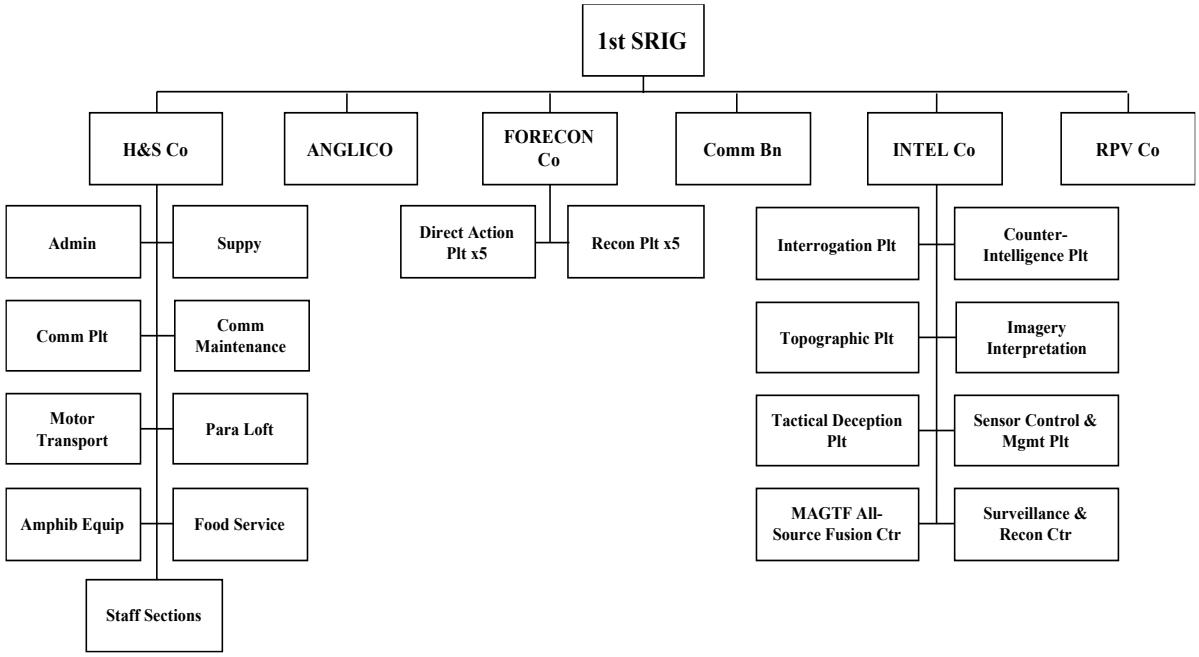

Figure 2: 1st SRIG, I MEF, 1990

Source: Combat Development Command, US Marine Corps, *Surveillance, Reconnaissance, Intelligence Group (SRIG),* FMFM 3-22 (Coordinating Draft), (Quantico, VA: Combat Development Command, October 12, 1990), 12.

During August of 1990, 1st SRIG (eventually reinforced by elements of 2nd SRIG) deployed in support of Operations DESERT SHIELD and DESERT STORM. However, political concerns on the behalf of the Saudis prevented the cross-border deployment of SRIG collection capabilities until 30 December 1990. The SRIG's FORECON teams, arrayed in observation posts along the Saudi-Iraqi border, were the first conventional forces to experience defensive combat in the war after an attempted penetration of the border by the Iraqi Army.[36] Once offensive operations began, the SRIG's FORECON teams and ANGLICO accompanied coalition forces on the left and right flanks of I MEF, reported coalition positions and conducted pathfinding operations in advance of their partnered forces.[37]

The conclusion of Operation DESERT STORM, the fall of the Soviet Union, and personnel reductions across the DOD contributed to diminished intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) capabilities within the Marine Corps. The SRIGs became MEF Headquarters Groups (MHGs) in 1997 and the FORECON Companies returned to their Division Recon Bns.[38] There is a debate on the reason the SRIGs were disestablished, but the general consensus is that the resounding defeat of the Iraqi Army, the U.S. as the sole world power, and mixed opinions on the SRIG's effectiveness among the Marine Corps' senior leadership negated its necessity. The 2016 RAND *Expeditionary Ground Reconnaissance: A Mission Analysis* also mentions that the Headquarters Commandant role in addition to ISR responsibilities reduced its effectiveness and contributing to its demise.

In the 1999 Commandants planning guidance, then CMC General Krulak directed the Marine Corps to "fix recon" and a subsequent study was formed.[39] A year later in 2000, under then CMC General Jones, the Marine Corps began a three phase "fix recon" initiative, however evolving requirements associated with Operations ENDURING FREEDOM (OEF) and IRAQI FREEDOM (OIF) and the 2006 creation of MARSOC invalidated the original requirements of the study.[40] Both

the FORECON and Recon Bns would see extensive combat in both OEF and OIF and personnel from both would eventually fill the ranks of the precursor to MARSOC, the Marine Corps U.S. Special Operations Command Detachment (DET ONE) in 2003.

Chapter 2 – The MARSOC Gap and Contemporary Reconnaissance

Establishment of MARSOC and the Creation of a MAGTF Capability Gap (2003)

After a successful proof of concept by Marine Corps U.S. Special Operations Command Detachment (DET ONE) (See Figure 3) from 2003-2006, then-Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld directed the creation of MARSOC.[41] Prior to its creation, its future base-units, 1st and 2nd Force Reconnaissance Companies, both O-5 level commands, were under the OPCON and ADCON of their respective MEFs. The companies, having operated as elements of the Maritime Special Purpose Forces (MSPF) of the MEU Special Operations Capable (MEU(SOC)) deployment program throughout the 1990s and early 2000s, deactivated and became Marine Special Operations Battalions (now Marine Raider Battalions), MARSOC, US Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) in 2006. The Marine Corps and USSOCOM agreed that the Marine Special Operations Companies (MSOCs) would deploy with the MEU (SOC) deployment program in place of the MSPF but would remain under the OPCON of the supported Geographic Combatant Commander (GCC) and employed by the GCC's Theater Special Operations Command. Following one iteration of a MEU (SOC) deployment on each coast and rising operational commitments for USSOCOM in the Global War on Terrorism, the MSOCs never embarked an Amphibious Ready Group/MEU again.

The MEU (SOC) deployment program was left with a gap in its abilities to conduct special operations and deep reconnaissance. As a result, HQMC directed the reconstitution of the

FORECON companies from Division Recon Bn personnel, relegated the companies to O-4 non-board selected commanders, and reorganized the companies with a COMREL, OPCON to the MEF, but ADCON to their parent Division Recon Bn. From the time of reconstitution until 2013, most MEUs deployed with one FORECON platoon attached to the MEU's Command Element (CE) to provide direct action and deep reconnaissance capabilities and one Division Recon Platoon attached to the MEU's Battalion Landing Team (BLT) to provide pre-assault amphibious assault and ground reconnaissance.

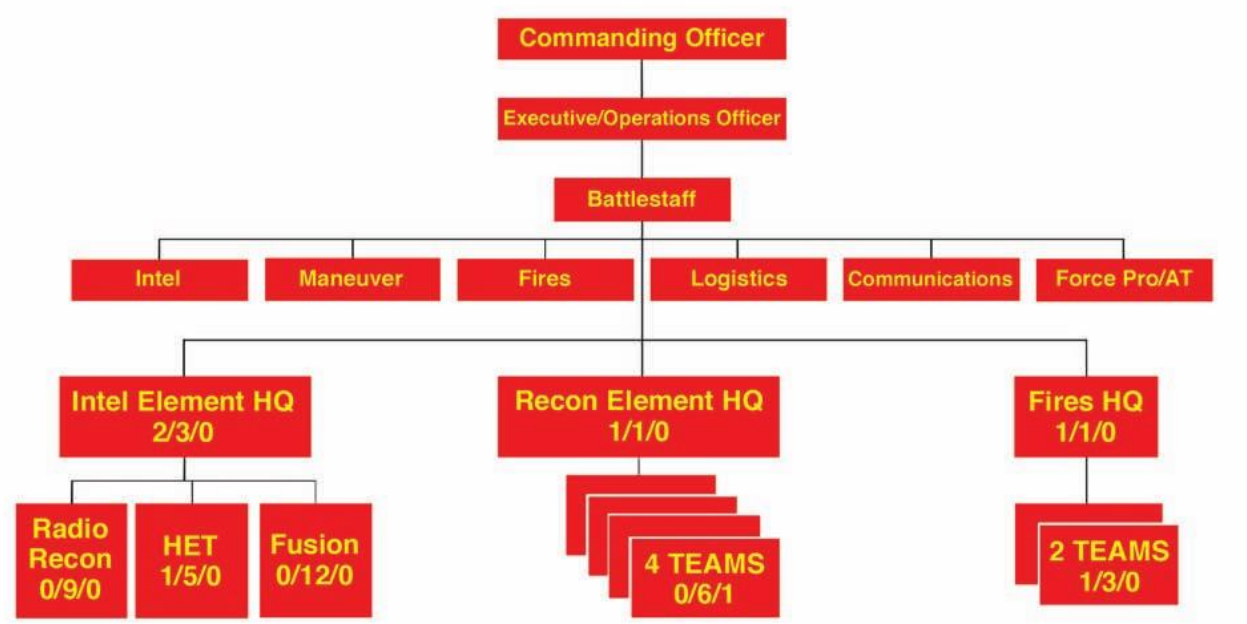

Figure 2: Marine Corps U.S. Special Operations Command Detachment (DET ONE)
Source: LtCol John P. Piedmont USMCR, DET ONE, U.S. Marine Corps U.S. Special Operations Command Detachment, 2003-2006, (Washington, DC: March 2010), 95.

Another Attempt at Creating a Force Reconnaissance Battalion (2012-2019)

The COMREL between the FORECON companies and the Division Recon Bn created a controversial command climate at 1st and 2nd Recon Bns. The MEFs, concerned with myriad of other operational requirements associated with OEF and OIF were seemingly ambivalent regarding FORECON's employment. Like the pre-SRC's establishment in the Vietnam conflict, the Division Recon Bns often spread-loaded the FORECON Company's personnel and in the case of 1st Recon

Bn even shared the FORECON company's budget across the battalion. In 2012, the Commanding Officer, 1st Recon Battalion distributed the entire FORECON Company, I MEF across his battalion to base-line the capabilities of the entire battalion to a FORECON-level and create a FORECON Battalion. As stated previously, the FORECON Companies possessed more senior Reconnaissance Marines who had received more training and possessed additional special equipment. Perhaps ahead of its time, it was not received without considerable internal criticism from the FORECON Marines and was not externally supported by the two other active duty Recon Bns.

Beginning in 2013, 1st Recon Battalion sent a modified company-level Reconnaissance headquarters element with both FORECON and Division Recon Bn Marines and a FORECON platoon to support the MRF (successor of the MSPF) requirement of the 13th MEU's CE, but the Division Recon Bn platoon remained OPCON/ADCON to the BLT. The following 11th MEU deployed with a full reconnaissance company with two reconnaissance platoons with mirrored capabilities made up of both FORECON and Recon Bn personnel, OPCON/ADCON to the MEU's CE. The company possessed Marines with both the FORECON Company, I MEF and 1st Recon Battalion Monitor Command Codes (MCCs).[42] Because the units possessed FORECON-detailed Marines (those possessing the 1R4 MCC), it was called the "Force Recon Detachment." In 2013, a proposal to rename 1st Reconnaissance Battalion to 1st Force Reconnaissance Battalion and change its COMREL to OPCON and ADCON under the MEF was staffed, presented to CG, I MEF, and rejected. Further complicating the reorganization proposal and stalling any service momentum, the three active-duty Division Recon Bn commanders could not reach a consensus decision among themselves at the 2013 Reconnaissance Operational Advisory Group, Quantico, Virginia. I MEF's MEU deployment program has had success in deploying a base-lined Reconnaissance company (Force Recon Detachment) and it continues to be replicated. The concept supports split-ARG and

disaggregated operations, but the remains ad hoc in nature across the three active duty Recon Bns and their divisions/MEFs.

Chapter 3 – The Information Age and the Need for Change

Establishment of the DC I and the MIGs (2017)

> ***"Decision advantage in combat is a function of rapidly acquiring high-value information, performing quick and accurate analysis, and achieving immediate dissemination in the language of operations to generate speed in decision, higher-tempo operations, and combat effectiveness."***[43]
>
> Expeditionary Force 21

The U.S. *NDS* describes the need for the Joint Force to emerge from a period of strategic atrophy in order to maintain its competitive advantage over resurgent and emergent powers.[44] The U.S.'s focus on counterterrorism operations and stability operations across the Greater Middle East resulted in the shrinking of the competitive space, particularly in the U.S.'s advantage within the information environment. The Marine Corps, like the Joint Force, is adding structure and investment to reestablish its asymmetric overmatch in the conduct of operations within the information environment. In December of 2017, HQMC established the DC I and re-designated each MEF's MHG as a MIG in hope of addressing capability gaps and better supporting the MAGTF in the FOE.

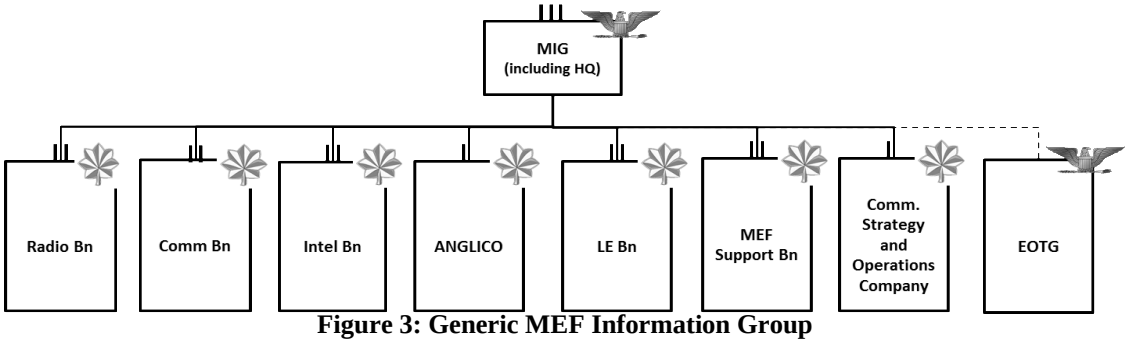

Figure 3: Generic MEF Information Group

Source: Headquarters, US Marine Corps, *Marine Air Ground Task Force Information Operations Concept of Employment*, (Washington, DC: Deputy Commandant for Combat Development and Integration, July 6, 2017), 4.

As stated earlier, its task-organization appears to be a reactivation of the SRIGs. Commanded by a Colonel, the MIG contains a Headquarters Element, Intelligence Battalion (Intel Bn), Communications Battalion (Comm Bn), RadBn, an ANGLICO, Law Enforcement Battalion (LE Bn), MIG Support Battalion (MSB), Communications Strategy and Operations Company (CommStrat), and the MEF's G-7 (Expeditionary Operations Training Group (EOTG)) (See Figure 3). Unlike the SRIGs, it does not possess a FORECON Company or a Remotely Piloted Vehicle Company, the historical equivalent of today's VMU squadron. The modern aviation specific requirements of a VMU Squadron necessitates its task organization within the Aviation Combat Element, but no such argument can be made with the FORECON Companies/Division Recon Bns and the Ground Combat Element (GCE).

Despite the lessons learned from the SRIG, the MIG and DC I are still very much in their infant stages of development. DC I is currently undergoing its first reorganization scheduled to be complete in early 2019. The Deputy Commandant for Combat Development and Integration published *Marine Air Ground Task Force Information Operations Concept of Employment* in July of 2017, but the MIGs still lack a mission essential task list (METL) and the doctrine on how they will support the MEFs and subordinate MAGTFs. As was the case for the SRIG, the span-of-control and mission responsibilities of such a functionally diverse unit may prove to be unwieldy for a single O-6 level commander and his/her staff. Informal service perspectives on the effectiveness and future utility of the MIG vary and courses of actions developed by RAND in 2016 recommended splitting the MIG and functionally align two separate command structures.[45] In 2013, LtCol James Eagan wrote a Marine Corps Command and Staff College Master Thesis on the development of an ISR Regiment within the MEF complete with a ground-reconnaissance capability.[46] The creation of such

a unit addresses the capability gaps within Force 2025's planned MAGTF and may mitigate the functional alignment issues of the MIG.

Barriers to Change: Overcoming the Perception of a Lost Capability

A Marine Corps Director of Intelligence once generally stated that the reconnaissance community has one foot in the intel community and one foot in the infantry community and needs to decide which community in which it wants to be in. Throughout the history of Marine Reconnaissance, there has been a debate on its functional alignment. Marine reconnaissance is recognized as a member of the MCISRE, but it also conducts offensive operations more traditionally aligned with the maneuver function and the infantry. Additionally, there are conflicting opinions on who should employ it, Intelligence Officers or Infantry Officers. *Expeditionary Ground Reconnaisance MCRP 2-10A.6* states that it should be employed by both. Furthermore there are sensitivities associated with taking an organic capability away from the GCE and like many other low-density capabilities, consolidating them at the MEF-level. These arguments, unfounded fears of creating a capability gap in the GCE, and a lack of senior-level advocacy/buy-in likely contributed to Reconnaissance units being left out of the MIGs.

From 2012-2014, two former I MEF CGs were briefed on a concept to consolidate the FORECON Company, I MEF and 1st Recon Battalion to create a FORECON Battalion OPCON/ADCON to the MEF, but both CGs justified their non-concurrence on the unwillingness to create a capability gap for 1st Marine Division. The ad hoc creation of FORECON Detachments within the West Coast MEU's MRF who work directly for the MEU CE has been successful in addressing the capacity issues associated with split-ARG and even disaggregated operations. The MRF is employed by the MEU CE for its reconnaissance and surveillance and limited-scale raids needs and then is generally placed in direct support of the BLT to fulfill the pre-assault

reconnaissance needs of the BLT. In a larger MAGTF in support of a Naval TF or JTF, reconnaissance forces to include the GCE's Recon Bn would be used extensively in Phase 0 through 2 (Shape, Deter, and Seize Initiative) by the Joint Forces Maritime/Land Component Commander, subordinate TF commander, or MAGTF commander to conduct preparation of the environment (likely employed in parallel to Special Operations Forces (SOF)) and not the MAGTF's GCE. Although it is conceivable that reconnaissance forces could support GCE operations in these Phases, it is more likely that the GCE would require reconnaissance support in Phase 3 (Dominating Activities). Like all other low-density resources/capabilities typically employed by the MAGTF CE (Radio Bn, CI/HUMINT, VMU, etc.), the GCE needs only to identify its collection or support requirements and resources would be allocated based on the priorities of the MAGTF Commander. Other MEF-level assets like the Radio and Intel Bns, which are task-organized within the MIG, are routinely requested by the GCE and allocated to support validated requirements. Currently, 1st Recon Battalion's MEU MRF FORECON Detachments solely support MEF operational requirements as the Division typically does not conduct unilateral deployments without other elements of the MAGTF.

Division Recon Bn Commanders beholden to their respective Division CG's prerogative have been unable to come to a community-wide consensus on the way forward for the Reconnaissance community despite years of "fix recon" initiatives. This is evident by the different task-organizations of deploying Reconnaissance Detachments for the same MEU MRF operational requirements. 1st Recon Bn has base-lined all of its companies including its FORECON company with two platoons of mirrored capabilities commonly referred to as FORECON capabilities, but 2nd Recon Bn still provides one FORECON platoon and one Recon Bn platoon. Additionally, the Division Recon Bn Command represents the pinnacle-level for Reconnaissance Officers advocating

for change. There is no Reconnaissance Regiment or other senior-level officer billet advocating on the community's behalf. Despite having hand-selected Reconnaissance Advocates at HQMC, Plans, Policies, and Operations, the billet remains a Major's, whereas advocates in the Infantry community are LtCols.

The reality is that Marine reconnaissance is a finite resource with both intelligence collection and SOF-like unit maneuver capabilities requiring peculiar equipment and training. And like other finite resources with peculiar capabilities, it should be placed in the most advantageous task-organization to mitigate operational gaps while complementing the entire MAGTF. If the argument to not consolidate Reconnaissance forces at the MEF-level is due to creating a capability gap in the GCE and therefore a risk to mission and force, it is a risk that can be mitigated. FORECON companies and the Recon Bns were consolidated to gain efficiencies in functional area support and facility sharing. If the MEF simply pulls its OPCON FORECON company up when needed, it is just as easy for a consolidated battalion reorganized within the MEF to send a detachment in direct support to the requesting major subordinate command or GCE. As stated earlier, the Recon Bn and the FORECON company assigned to MEF-level MAGTF support the CE's requirements in the early phases of an operation and then all or a portion of them should be allocated to support the GCE's needs during GCE dominated phases. Although there is an informal consensus within the Reconnaissance community that the FORECON Companies/Division Recon Bns or an element of them belong in the MIG, there has been no senior-level buy-in to drive the change.[47]

Access Operations and Overcoming Perceptions

"Access operations allow the commander to employ shaping actions to set the conditions for achieving a decision."[48]

MCWP 2-25

In a perfect world free of manpower issues and budget uncertainty, the GCE would have every intelligence/information capability organic to its formation. However, the Marine Corps' current

organization, force-generation, and equipment and budget resources do not support the expansion and decentralization of MEF and/or service-level low-density capabilities. Although the GCE is and should always be the premier combat element of the Marine Corps, the OE is changing. The proliferation of A2/AD technologies creates challenges in deploying conventional forces from amphibious shipping or into expeditionary environments. Additionally, the current inventory of Naval and Marine Corps aviation and surface connectors may not provide the ability to penetrate a denied environment. Future access operations will require a whole-of-TF approach including the capabilities of enabled-Marine Reconnaissance.

The inherent capabilities of the MEF's MIG assets as well as its service-level through national-level reach-back will be necessary to support shaping operations that allow the GCE's access to the OE in contemporary peer/near-peer conflict or a FOE scenario. GCE commanders may perceive a reorganization of their Reconnaissance units into the MEF as an organic capability lost, but what they gain back is a better integrated multi-disciplined reconnaissance capability that can leverage the rest of their adjacent units within the MIG or MIG detachment and in turn better support the GCE's access and collection requirements. The integration of a reorganized Reconnaissance force into the MEF is a logical step in maintaining the relevance of the GCE and modernizing access operations writ large. The Reconnaissance community's current and proposed future low signature SPIE capabilities and teaming with other technical means within the MIG creates a SOF-like special reconnaissance capability at the tactical level (potentially operational level) in support of the GCE and the entire MAGTF. Deploying reconnaissance elements hybridized with other MEF and service-level capabilities will support local superiority and access operations allowing the GCE to enter and dominate the battlespace. The reorganization of Marine Reconnaissance is a necessary

step in enabling its access to the battlespace and therefore increasing the probability of mission success.

Decreasing the Barriers between other Force-level Intelligence/Information Capabilities

The first time many Reconnaissance Marines work with other members of the MCISRE or IRCs now resident in the MIG is during their compositing to a MAGTF. This generally happens during integration and interoperability training during for the MEU program's MRF. Upon compositing to the MEU the different unit members of the MRF possess varying degrees of physical fitness, specialized equipment familiarity, and SPIE capabilities. There is also a general misunderstanding of the capabilities and limitations inherent to each element due to unfamiliarity, classification levels, and limited interoperability training prior to compositing to the MEU. Although it is difficult to make additional time within a unit's overall training plan, the multi-disciplined teaming and the interoperability training to facilitate it must occur earlier. The reorganization of Marine Reconnaissance into the MEF's MIG decreases administrative barriers and creates training and acquisition efficiencies, cross-training opportunities, and is a forcing function towards a better integrated and ready force for the MAGTF.

The consolidation of all "like" units within the MIG aligns them under a single commander supporting unity of command and unity of effort. This also minimizes administrative burdens for the subordinate O-5 level commands allowing them to leverage or share each other's capabilities, supervisory skills, and facilities. In particular, the MIG would benefit from adding the Reconnaissance Battalion's resident high-risk training supervisory skills, formal school seats and preparation courses, and facilities (Boat Locker, Parachute Loft, and Dive Locker). The consolidation also creates efficiencies in the acquisition of specialized equipment which could be base-lined across many of the "like" units. This also benefits the detachments and liaisons from

service-level capabilities like the Marine Corps Information Operations Center (MCIOC) and the overall knowledge of service- and national-level reach-back capabilities like the Marine Cryptologic Support Element (National Security Agency's, USMC National to Tactical Integration) and Marine Forces Cyber Command.

There are also considerable functional area support efficiencies gained by the Marine Division, the MIG, and MIG subordinate elements. The reorganization of Marine Reconnaissance to OPCON/ADCON of the MEF's MIG alleviates inefficient and near constant Automated Message Handling System traffic from the MEUs/MEF to the Division for personnel or equipment the MEFs should possess organically (FORECON Company).[49] The COMREL change also reduces several administrative burdens from the division's staff that are more appropriately handled by an O-6-level staff and the MEF. This includes high-risk training approval, external-support requests (Aviation support, Naval support, etc.), and Uniformed Code of Military Justice requirements. The Reconnaissance Battalions would benefit from a single MCC to streamline manpower assignments, a single budget line (FORECON companies currently possess their own line of accounting), a robust staff to support a high-tempo and a broad METL, and closer alignment to the Expeditionary Operations Training Groups for further training efficiencies.

As the MIGs refine their concepts of support and explore the optimal task organization of MAGTF detachments, effective historical and current examples like USSOCOM's Marine DET ONE, MARSOC's Marine Raider Companies enabled by their Special Operations Capabilities Specialist program, and the MEU's MRF should inform their models.[50] The common thread in these units is the use of Marine Reconnaissance or a like force as their base unit. These formations have proven the effectiveness of multi-discipline teaming, integration, and shared specialized skills to

provide a TF commander with unique capabilities to access, collect on, and shape the OE for follow-on forces.

Mitigating Domain Gaps for the MAGTF/JTF Commander

Neither the current COMRELs of Reconnaissance formations nor the MIG's task organization is currently optimized to support the ground and amphibious collection requirements of MAGTF/JTF commanders. The organic MIG units possess limited capabilities to access denied or contested OEs to employ many of its IRCs or other technical means. Although the current MIG construct contains a RadBn and a Ground Sensor Platoon, these units often lack the specialized equipment, resident knowledge of specialized skills and tradecraft, the supervisory capabilities, and the facilities to enable their further development of ground reconnaissance skills and SPIE capabilities. These units also lack the capacity to conduct their primary missions and satisfy other reconnaissance-related operational requirements. As the Joint Force shifts focus away from counterinsurgency operations and focuses on peer competition, the MEF needs the integration of Reconnaissance and the sharing of resources to mitigate domain collection gaps in denied OEs.

The joint force enjoys near-total air, sea, and space superiority and has for the last seventeen-plus years of conflict across the Greater Middle East. This freedom of maneuver across these domains coupled with the reliability of Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS) and satellite technologies has relegated ground reconnaissance to non-reconnaissance-related functions. For example, Recon Bns were used extensively as enhanced provisional infantry battalions and even battlespace owners in Operation OEF. There has also been a general risk aversion to the employment of Reconnaissance Marines in non-permissive areas due to the proliferation of technologies like adversarial direction-finding capabilities, thermal imaging devices, and overhead assets like commercial off-the-shelf

small UASs. The reliance on friendly UAS and overhead systems has driven preferential investment in the rapid acquisition of technologies like Group Five UASs over ground/amphibious reconnaissance modernization. Although the FOE is uncertain, it is safe to assume that peer competitors will attempt to mitigate the asymmetric advantage of our UASs and other overhead capabilities in the FOE. Limited contemporary bathymetric, hydrographic, and ground reconnaissance can be done through overhead means in permissive air and space domains but denied/contested domains will likely prevent near-real-time collection. The low-signature human aspect of ground and amphibious reconnaissance will likely remain the only all-weather denied environment accessible capability that cannot be disrupted by peer or near-pear competitors without the commitment of considerable counter-reconnaissance/access resources.

In a Marine Corps Gazette article titled *Manned and Unmanned Teaming: The Future of Marine Corps Reconnaissance Units*, LtCols Sean Barnes and Ladd W. Shepard (Ground Reconnaissance and Light Armored Reconnaissance (LAR) Officers respectively) describe the potential use of Reconnaissance Marines (and LAR) and unmanned technologies. They expand on the concept of Manned and Unmanned Teaming (MUM-T) and the creation of unmanned system operators within the reconnaissance community.[51] As both unmanned systems and software defined radio technologies rapidly evolve and their form factor's miniaturize, Marine Reconnaissance's ability to access the OE to emplace or employ exquisite technologies creates outsized impacts for the MAGTF/JTF. Marine Reconnaissance units are presently experimenting with MUM-T by using unmanned submersibles to support hydrographic reconnaissance with considerable success. Emerging technologies will allow reconnaissance teams to lower their signature in certain denied environments, employ technical means and effects, and collect real-time information to answer CCIRs.

The prioritization of investment in Marine Reconnaissance and MUM-T and their teaming with other IRCs hybridizes traditional reconnaissance means and mitigates domain gaps. Shared capabilities inherent to Reconnaissance formations creates outsized impacts by allowing both access and maneuver operations for the entire MAGTF. Whether witting or unwitting, a hybridized MIG detachment possessing the ability to infiltrate denied areas to either collect or employ IRCs or other exquisite technical means enables the follow-on echeloning of other MAGTF elements or the delivery of effects to complicate the adversary's calculus. This also returns an organic special operations-like capability to the MAGTF while providing considerable options to the supported GCC. Current manpower shortfalls and future budget uncertainties simply do not allow for the duplication of efforts at both the Recon Bns and FORECON companies.

Chapter 4 – Proposed Changes/Conclusion

"The need for immediate action must be complemented by prudent steps to mitigate risk. Partnering with SOF and developing and employing Marine Corps reconnaissance will help the MEB to assess and/or shape the operating environment and seize critical infrastructure, key terrain, and lodgments for expeditionary bases. This includes seizing littoral terrain and denying its use by the enemy for sanctuary or use as a base for A2/AD systems."[52]

Expeditionary Force 21 (4 March 2014)

Force Reconnaissance Battalion into the MEF's MIG

Modern Marine Corps and Naval history validates the need for Force-level Reconnaissance. It also proves that the placement of Reconnaissance units in an ISR formation such as an SRC or a SRIG results in better operational employment and support to the entire MAGTF. Contemporary examples of DET ONE, Marine Raider Companies, and the MEU's MRF demonstrate that the use of

SOF or SOF-like forces integrated with multi-discipline ISR and IRCs creates outsized impacts relative to size and cost of the force. The FOE may be uncertain, but it will likely require a similar Force-level Reconnaissance unit to support the current and future intelligence, information, and advance force demands of the MAGTF. The hope that USSOCOM will support the advanced force or intelligence/information requirements of the MAGTF or Naval TF is not a prudent solution.

USSOCOM has become a service-like force uniquely chartered to support global national-level requirements and its priorities and the priorities of its employment by the GCCs may not align with the MAGTF or Naval TF commander's requirements. USSOCOM's MARSOC, although originally promised to the MEUs, simply does not have the capacity to support MAGTF requirements in a large-scale conflict. The MEU has recovered its "SOC" designator in name only, but this is only attributable to the four-person Special Operations Forces Liaison Element ("SOFLE") embarked with the ARG/MEU. A modernized Reconnaissance force placed into the MIG and well-integrated with other ISR units and IRCs provides responsive support and mitigates the SOF capability gap. Scaling and deploying MIG detachments containing Reconnaissance units to the various MAGTFs allows the Marine Corps and Navy to maintain a ready and organic SOF-like capability on demand and forward deployed.

Therefore, the Marine Corps should reorganize a FORECON Battalion in each of its three MIGs. This course of action is suitable, feasible, acceptable, distinguishable, and complete and has no fiscal or manpower needs beyond the status quo division/MEF organization. "Fix Recon" initiatives and RAND studies have consistently advocated for the modernization and consolidation of Reconnaissance to gain efficiencies. The time is now to finally follow through on these recommendations and begin testing and evaluating new concepts across the range of military operations and conflict continuum.

Solution in an Unconstrained Environment, the MEF Information Brigade

The MIGs currently contain at least eight subordinate elements with a variety of functional responsibilities and must now coordinate intelligence and IRCs in addition to the MHG's historical support functions. Its subordinate unit diversity, size, and future METL (due in May of 2019) may prove to be beyond the capabilities of a single O-6 commander and his/her staff.[53] Elevating the MIGs to MEF Information Brigades (MIBs) commanded by a General Officer and subordinating two O-6 level commands, an Information Regiment (similar to LtCol Egan's 2013 proposal) and a MEF Support Group creates a better span of control, MAGTF combat-element parity, and better functional alignment. This concept allows the Information Regiment to focus on MEF-level information/intel requirements or task organize smaller MAGTF detachments for operational requirements like the MEU deployment program. The MEF Support Group can then focus solely on support and administrative requirements and task-organizing support detachments to compliment the Information Regiment's detachments (See Figure 4).

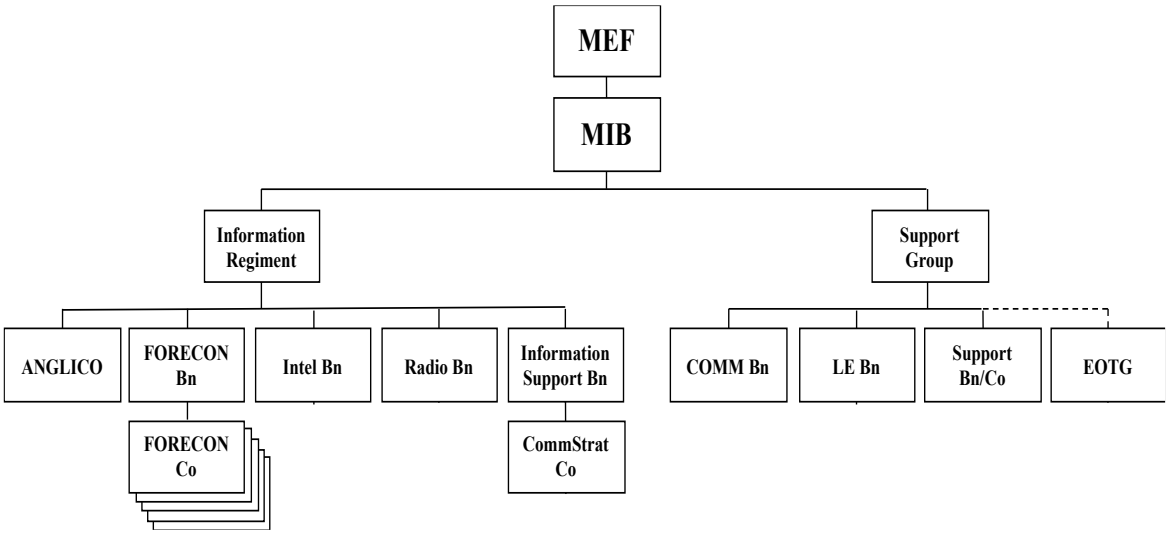

Figure 4: Proposed MEF Information Brigade (MIB)

The Information Regiment should add a consolidated FORECON Battalion and a new Information Support Battalion (ISB) consisting of MCIOC equities (Psychological Operations, Military Deception, Signature Management, Civil Affairs, Public Affairs, Civil Military Operations, and potentially Cyber Support Marines), and a CommStrat company. The Intel Bn, RadBn, and the ANGLICO would round out the Information Regiment's structure. The MEF Support Group would hold all other functions including the Comm Bn, LE Bn, MSB (or company), and the MEF's G-7 EOTG. This course of action would also allow the MCIOC to focus solely on information operations doctrine, formal IRC schools, and service-level reach-back support to deployed MIB detachments.

The inherent complexity of ISR and IRC capabilities and authorities often requires a career background or the possession of numerous subject-matter experts to achieve the effects the MAGTF commander desires. The breadth of knowledge needed to employ these capabilities and achieve the synergistic effects desired by the MAGTF commander should be a commander and staff function. The MEF would benefit from a General Officer and his/her staff to support its intelligence/information-related requirements and desired effects against the adversary or appropriate target audiences. The MIB, dependent on the size of the MAGTF and task organization selected for the mission, could provide an O-6 or O-5 level board-selected commander and a composited staff taken from within the formation to support MAGTF requirements. This would be on a shared rotational basis from the MIB's subordinate elements.

Force structure uncertainty and budget austerity will remain an issue for the Marine Corps and Joint Force, but unlike other higher density lower specialization units, MIG equities cannot be quickly mass produced. Creating and institutionalizing a MIB construct at each MEF will ensure that the Marine Corps remains relevant and possess the capabilities to access, fight,

and win in a contested peer-competition environment. This proposal may be beyond the Marine Corps' ability for adoption in Force 2025, but it requires further exploration for future force-structure models.

Marine Expeditionary Brigade: The Information Task Group

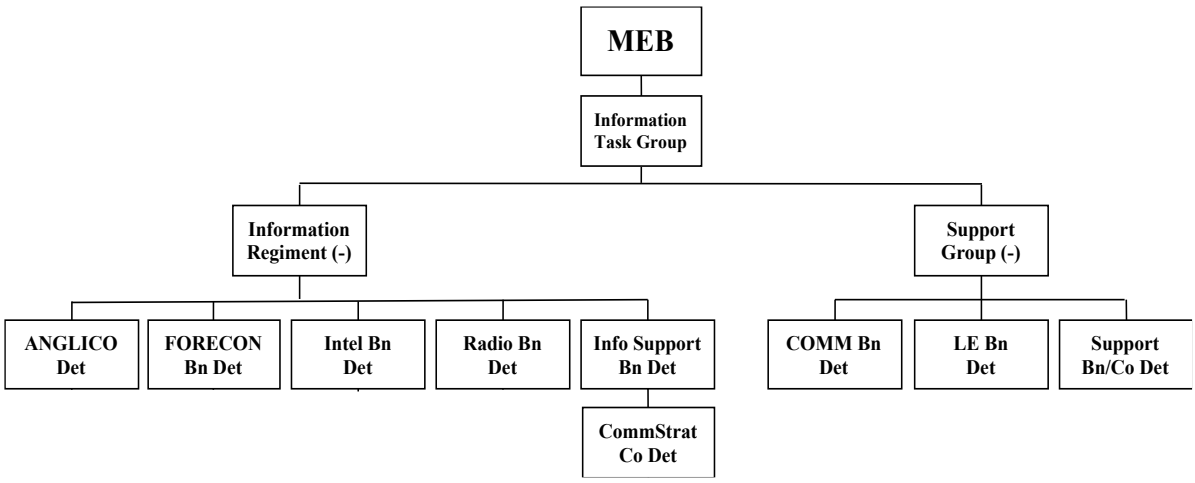

Figure 5: Proposed MEB Information Task Group

If Marine Expeditionary Brigades (MEB) sized MAGTF operational or training requirements emerge, an Information Regiment would task organize an Information Task Group to support it (See Figure 5). The Regiment's or Support Group's O-6-level command would composite a purpose-built staff and each subordinate Battalion/Company would contribute an appropriate sized formation. The FORECON Battalion and/or its subordinate companies would serve as the base unit and would be available to the other MAGTF combat-elements and/or the Marine Component of a JTF as needed. This construct, with minimal changes, is within the present capabilities of the MIG's current task organization and regardless of budget uncertainty is supportable with Marine Corps Force 2025's planned structure.

Marine Expeditionary Unit and Special Purpose MAGTF: The Information Task Unit

Similar to the MEB support construct, an Information Task Unit would composite to support the MEU or a Special Purpose MAGTF. The Information Task Unit would be similar to the current MEU deployment program's Maritime Raid Force with the addition of MIG IRCs, however it would receive an O-5 or O-4 level command and staff task organized to support the MAGTFs anticipated mission requirements (See Figure 6). A FORECON Company would serve as its base unit. Again, this construct is within the current capabilities of the MIG and MEFs.

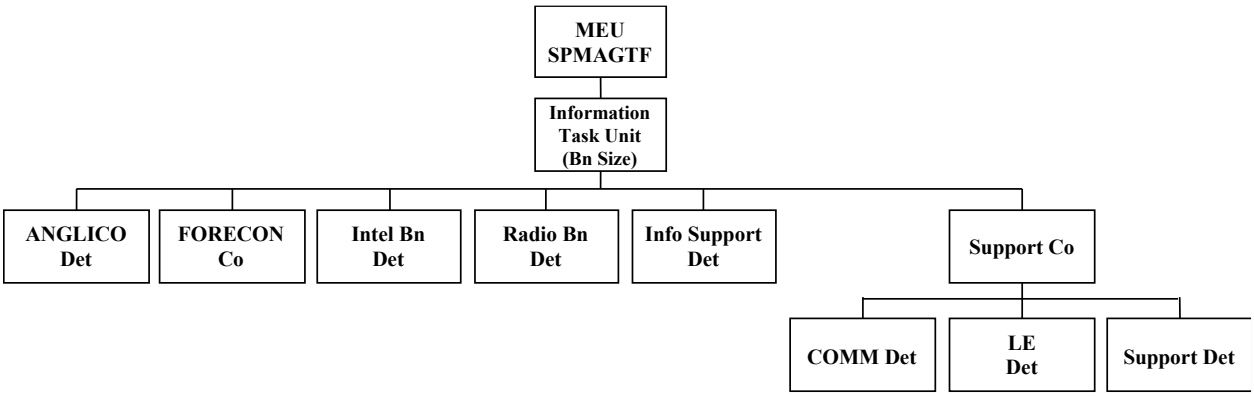

Figure 6: MEU/SPMAGTF Information Task Unit

Reconnaissance Modernization and Development of a Community of Practice

Returning the "SOC" designator to the MEU must be more than just the SOFLE. If Reconnaissance units are to truly fill the SOF capability gap in the MAGTF and be interoperable with SOF they must modernize their mission profiles and equipment and integrate better with the MCISRE and IRCs. Currently Reconnaissance units struggle to acquire emerging SOF technologies and equipment that facilitates SOF-like mission profiles and interoperability. The Marine Corps cannot expect Marine Reconnaissance to conduct SOF-like missions or be interoperable with SOF without the appropriate equipment and training. The Marine Corps must

pursue funding streams and acquisition models similar to USSOCOM's Major Force Program-11 which allows SOF to rapidly acquire SOF-peculiar equipment and training. It must also leverage the MCISRE's Tactical Exploitation of National Capabilities (TENCAP) for Reconnaissance-related material solutions. Other MCISRE formations like the RadBns have access to national-level capabilities because of this relationship which allows them to remain operationally relevant. Finally, Marine Reconnaissance requires a formal community of practice to base-line its formations and capabilities across the MEFs. Regardless of its advocacy within HQMC, there must be a consensus on how reconnaissance is organized, trained, and equipped to ensure cross-Reconnaissance Battalion, MAGTF, and SOF interoperability in the event of a large-scale conflict.

A Formal DOTMLPF Analysis Needed

Although beyond the scope of this paper, a formal DOTMLPF analysis is necessary to fully optimize this reorganization. However, testing and evaluating Information Detachments with integrated Reconnaissance formations for MEB-sized MAGTFs and below in MAGTF exercises or operational requirements can happen now and will inform future force considerations. The development of this capability should not replace the preeminence of the GCE, but instead should be used to complement it. As stated earlier, there are considerable advantages in the integration of "like" capabilities. Many arguments can be made that the consolidation of these capabilities at the MEF-level takes capabilities away from the GCE, stove-pipes information, and creates GCE information unit employment knowledge gaps, but these concerns cannot be mitigated without experimentation to prove or disprove them.

Conclusion

The *NDS* identifies a line of effort to "Build a more Lethal Force" with a desired endstate for the Joint Force to "possesses decisive advantages for any likely conflict, while remaining proficient across the entire spectrum of conflict."[54] It further describes the need to "[develop] operational concepts to sharpen our competitive advantages and enhance our lethality."[55] The Marine Corps currently possesses the most lethal, technologically advanced, and operationally flexible MAGTF in its history. However, it must look inward to determine if it is fully optimizing its current organization and its investment into its newest warfighting function to maximize its lethality across the spectrum of conflict.[56] Excluding Marine Reconnaissance (the only company/battalion-level ISR related formation excluded) from the MIG and not fully developing the MIGs to combat-element parity is a sure way to repeat the demise of the last ISR formation, the SRIG.

The SRC and SRIG's history suggests that a Force-level reconnaissance unit integrated into and commanded by an ISR formation yields the best operational employment. It is time to complete General Krulak's "Fix Recon" initiative and modernize the Marine Corps' Reconnaissance community. It is also time to expand the testing and evaluation of MUM-T within Reconnaissance formations and force the integration of Reconnaissance with other intelligence and information capabilities within the MIG. As DC I and the MIGs refine the MIG's concept of employment, the Marine Corps should prepare to posture the force to expand and functionally align the MIG's subordinate elements into an appropriate task-organization capable of executing ISR and IRCs and providing support to the MEF. Only through rapid integration of Reconnaissance and optimization of the MIG's utility will the Marine Corps truly maximize its lethality and be prepared to fight and win in a current peer/near-peer or FOE conflict.

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[15]Michael Lee Lanning and Ray W. Stubbe, *Inside Force Recon*, (Lanham, MD: Stackpole Books, 2017), 19.

[16]Ray W. Stubbe, AARUGHA!, 52.

[17]Lanning and Stubbe, Inside Force Recon, 21.

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[19]Ray W. Stubbe, AARUGHA!, 60-62.

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[21]Ray W. Stubbe, AARUGHA!, 66.

[22]Lanning and Stubbe, Inside Force Recon, 22.

[23]Ray W. Stubbe, AARUGHA!, 81.

[24] Ray W. Stubbe, AARUGHA!, 89.

[25]Ray W. Stubbe, AARUGHA!, 126-128.

[26]Lanning and Stubbe, Inside Force Recon, 41.

[27]Lanning and Stubbe, Inside Force Recon, 41.

[28]Lanning and Stubbe, Inside Force Recon, 41.

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[30]Lanning and Stubbe, Inside Force Recon, 127.

[31]Col Bruce F. Meyers (USMC Ret), *Fortune Favors the Brave – The Story of First Force Recon* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2000), 166.

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[33]Col Bruce F. Meyers (USMC Ret), Fortune Favors the Brave, 244.

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[49]The Automated Message Handling System (AMHS) processes, stores, and disseminates formal messages traffic and is commonly used to coordinate actions across the DOD.

[50]Special Operations Capability Specialists (SOCS) are Marines who provide combat support expertise in intelligence, fire support, communications, and canine operations as part of the Marine Raiders. SOCS are assigned to billets at the team, company, and battalion levels. https://marsoc.com/socs-details.

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