Chapter Title: Introduction

Book Title: Alert and Ready
Book Subtitle: An Organizational Design Assessment of Marine Corps Intelligence
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Published by: RAND Corporation

Stable URL: https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7249/mg1108usmc.9

Introduction

Background

U.S. Marine Corps (USMC) intelligence is assigned mission responsibility for all USMC intelligence matters, with functions ranging from conducting intelligence collection to conducting analysis in support of operating forces in combat and deployed around the world. It also represents the Marine Corps in the U.S. Intelligence Community (IC) and supports the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) resource allocation processes. Particularly since 2001, the USMC intelligence enterprise has demonstrated agility in tailoring its organization to meet evolving expeditionary force demands. This has resulted in a number of ad hoc arrangements, practices, and organizational structures. USMC operations include distributed operations, irregular warfare, amphibious warfare, and joint and coalition warfare. These demands, combined with the increasingly rapid pace of technological change, have challenged the organizational capability of USMC intelligence to both meet the requirements of Fleet Marine Forces in the current operating environment and ensure effective participation in the broader IC, including compliance with various IC and DoD mandates.

There are multiple reasons to review the organizational structure and design of USMC intelligence. First, it has been more than 15 years since the 1994 Intelligence Plan (the so-called Van Riper Plan) was launched in response to perceived shortcomings exposed by the Gulf War. It is an open question how many of that era's issues were effectively addressed through the implementation of the 1994 plan; further challenges have emerged since then, and others may have been cre-

ated through the plan's implementation. Second, in addition to the changes wrought by the 1994 Intelligence Plan, a decade of sustained employment in Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) has led to changes in the workforce and structure of USMC intelligence. Since 2006, the USMC itself has grown from 175,000 to 202,000 marines, and the number of marines with intelligence military occupational specialties (MOSs) has more than doubled since 1994.[1] Continuous counterinsurgency (COIN) operations have changed tactical support structures, and technological innovations have provided new tools and capabilities. Third, the attacks of September 11, 2001, led to reform in the larger IC, with some impact on USMC intelligence, including changed relationships within the IC and the establishment of the USMC as the IC lead for cultural intelligence. Fourth, the information environment itself has changed substantially since 1994, with different sources of information becoming available and more prevalent, new information-gathering technologies being developed, and evolving needs for and means of disseminating information and intelligence among the operating forces. Finally, with OIF concluded and the end of OEF in the foreseeable future, a new era of austerity looms. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates has already launched initiatives to reduce defense spending over the next five years.[2] Rumors have also suggested that the USMC will draw down from its current end strength of 202,000; the 2011 report of the USMC Force Structure Review Group plans for a force of approximately 186,800 active-duty marines following the conclusion of operations in Afghanistan.[3] What does this mean for USMC intelligence going forward?

The USMC Director of Intelligence (DIRINT) asked the RAND National Defense Research Institute to examine ways of aligning the organizational structures of the USMC intelligence enterprise to

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[1] All Marines Memo 008/07, "Marine Corps End Strength Increase," February 7, 2007.

[2] Robert M. Gates, Secretary of Defense, "SECDEF Statement," Washington, D.C., August 9, 2010.

[3] Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, *Reshaping America's Expeditionary Force in Readiness: Report of the 2010 Marine Corps Force Structure Review Group*, Washington, D.C., March 14, 2011.

efficiently and effectively carry out current and future missions and functions.

Recent History of Marine Corps Intelligence

Since the end of the Cold War, USMC intelligence has undergone significant organizational change.[4] In the early 1990s, a drastically different strategic context and fiscal environment precipitated a broad rethinking of roles and missions in the armed forces, and the USMC was no exception. A sweeping review in 1994 led to a package of significant reforms known as the Intelligence Plan, or the Van Riper Plan, after the general who played a significant role in shaping it.[5] It identified deficiencies with regard to specific disciplinary competencies, training, professional development, and tactical intelligence. The plan included a reform program based on seven fundamental principles that enshrined a commitment to tactical intelligence and professionalizing the workforce. While it ushered in significant improvements in some areas, the plan did not meet expectations in others. Progress toward meeting Intelligence Plan objectives included a growth of 56 percent in intelligence manning between 1994 and 2006.[6] It also established a career track for intelligence marines and four new entry-level training tracks for officers, organized by intelligence discipline, and it also launched efforts to improve capabilities. Yet, in the years after the plan's adoption, writers in the *Marine Corps Gazette* continued to bemoan what they saw as continued weak links between intelligence and opera-

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[4] The recent history of the USMC intelligence enterprise is explored in greater detail in Appendix D.

[5] Paul K. Van Riper, "Observations During Desert Storm," *Marine Corps Gazette*, Vol. 75, No. 6, June 1991; All Marines Memo 100/95, "Program to Improve Marine Corps Intelligence," March 24, 1995.

[6] U.S. Marine Corps Intelligence Department, "'202K' Build Out for Marine Corps Intelligence," Washington, D.C., undated.

tions, problems with intelligence training, and a persistent "crisis of credibility" for intelligence personnel.[7]

The past two decades have also seen institutional change, both at the national and USMC intelligence levels. National-level changes included the establishment of the Office of the Director of National Intelligence in 2005 as part of broader efforts to improve coordination and integration of intelligence activities. There have been significant institutional changes in the USMC as well. In 1999, it established three intelligence battalions, one to support each MEF.[8] The next year, the Commandant established the Intelligence Department (I-Dept), raising intelligence from its previous position as a division within command, control, communication, computers, and intelligence.[9] In 2001, USMC headquarters raised the profile of the U.S. Marine Corps Intelligence Activity (MCIA) by changing it from a field activity into a command. The change to MCIA, and an expansion of its capabilities, reflected an emphasis on providing better tactical support to operators—as had been envisioned by the Intelligence Plan.[10]

For almost a decade, USMC intelligence has been an organization at war. This has posed significant challenges, but it has also offered unique opportunities. USMC responsibilities have included conventional "forced-entry" operations, counterterrorism, and COIN operations. To meet these challenges, the Secretary of Defense approved an expansion of USMC end strength to 202,000.[11] The USMC has also pursued innovative approaches to the organization of intelligence resources, such as the widely discussed distribution of intelligence below the battalion level. Recent operations have highlighted the need to bolster key areas of expertise, especially in the selec-

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[7] E. Ennis Michael, "The Future of Intelligence," *Marine Corps Gazette*, Vol. 83, No. 10, October 1999, p. 46.

[8] R. Liebl Vernie, "The Intelligence Plan: An Update," *Marine Corps Gazette*, Vol. 85, No. 1, January 2001, p. 54.

[9] Michael, 1999, p. 46.

[10] Vernie, 2001, p. 54.

[11] F. G. Hoffman, "The Corps' Expansion," *Marine Corps Gazette*, Vol. 91, No. 6, June 2007, p. 42.

tion and training of intelligence analysts and midcareer personnel. Moreover, deciding how to capture lessons learned to retain hard-won capabilities to meet challenges beyond current operations will be a central concern for USMC intelligence as it organizes for the future. See Appendix D for a recent history.

Organization of This Monograph

Chapter Two outlines the approach that the research team used for its assessment. Chapter Three documents the current organization and manpower of the USMC intelligence enterprise. Chapter Four reviews the relevant literature on organizational design. Chapter Five uses USMC documentation as the basis for a statement of strategic intent in the form of objectives for USMC intelligence. Chapter Six outlines the issues that surfaced in the semistructured interviews that the research team conducted with a range of USMC personnel and civilians. Chapter Seven discusses organizational structure issues and makes recommendations, while Chapter Eight discusses the resolution of the issues identified in Chapter Six. Chapter Nine provides conclusions and overall recommendations. The six appendixes summarize the organizational literature reviewed for this study, the organization of Army intelligence capabilities as a point of comparison, the interview topics and questions, a recent history of USMC intelligence, current strategic guidance, and additional details about the assessment of organizational alternatives, the results of which were presented in Chapter Seven.