

The Force Headquarters Group

Providing unique capabilities to the Marine Corps Total Force

by LtCol Joel Searls, USMCR

Marine Forces Reserve (MFR) is vital to the Marine Corps Total Force, augmenting and reinforcing the active component (AC) with trained units and individual Marines. The MFR is a ready operational reserve for employment across the full spectrum of global engagement. Force Headquarters Group (FHG) is a cornerstone as a major subordinate command (MSC) with unit formations representing 67 percent of MFR's annual activations, supporting more than 250 engagements through operations, activities, and investments. The FHG enhances operational readiness and responsiveness through its major subordinate elements with diverse information, irregular warfare, and mobilization capabilities.

Overview of FHG

The FHG's mission is to provide the Total Force with civil affairs, intelligence, communications, law and order capabilities, supporting arms liaison, military advising, and innovation. Additionally, FHG supports the activation and processing of reserve units, individual augmentees, and Individual Ready Reserve (IRR) Marines.

Major subordinate elements include: 1st Civil Affairs Group (CAG), 3rd CAG, and 4th CAG; Marine Corps Advisor Companies A (MCAC A) and B (MCAC B); 4th Law Enforcement Battalion (LEB); 3rd Air Naval Gunfire Liaison Company (ANGLICO), 4th ANGLICO, and 6th ANGLICO; Intelligence Support Battalion (ISB); and 6th Communication Battalion (Comm Bn). The FHG also includes the

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Information Detachment (Info Det), the Marine Innovation Unit (MIU), Marine Corps Individual Support Activity (MCIRSA), Deployment Processing Command/Reserve Support Unit-East (DPC/RSU-East), and DPC/RSU-West. Except for 6th Comm BN and ISB, these formations are unique to the total force and provide additive capabilities.

FHG Capabilities

All three CAGs have the same mission: to inform, influence, shape, and gain access to the cognitive civil environment through targeted and integrated civil reconnaissance and civil engagements to achieve MAGTF objectives. Led by O-6 commanders, the CAGs conduct civil-military operations (CMO) to create effects that support the maneuver commander's success. In fact, CMO is the core mission of CAG units with five pillars: Civil Information Management, Foreign Humanitarian Assistance, Foreign Assistance, Population and Resource Control, and Support to Civil Administration. The CAGs are organized into a headquarters element with three detachments, each having three CA teams. The CAGs integrate into the MAGTF to provide important guidance on handling civilian activities in an assigned area of operations. At Exercise BALIKATAN 25 (BK

25), 1st CAG will serve as headquarters of the Combined Joint Civil Military Operations Task Force and will conduct CMO activities to support theater and multi-national objectives alongside the Armed Forces of the Philippines.

The Marine Corps advisor companies (MCAC-A and MCAC-B) provide rotational forces and conduct security cooperation activities across the spectrum of conflict to enable partner-nation capabilities, while creating networks and access in support of Service and Joint Force requirements worldwide. The MCACs rely on highly experienced senior staff non-commissioned officers and officers representing all warfighting functions to advise, train, assist, and assess foreign security forces. The MCACs comprise six standing teams of twenty Marines each. The MCAC-A and MCAC-B are the only dedicated stand-alone foreign security force advisor units in the Marine Corps. Comprised of reserve Marines, MCACs leverage their civilian and military experiences, complementing the Joint Force and the whole-of-government approach. These foreign security force advisors have extensive active duty and overseas deployment experience. They advise at the tactical and operational levels, with each team aligned with a combatant command area of responsibility. The MCACs have conducted operations

in all combatant command theaters to include assessing and advising during dozens of named exercises. For the first time, an MCAC advisor team has been activated in general support of III MEF in the INDOPACOM area of responsibility and is currently training some of our partner-nation forces to enhance their warfighting skills.

The 4th LEB's mission is to conduct policing and detention operations, and support security and mobility operations for a MEF and designated commanders. The 4th LEB is structured with a headquarters element and five companies. It is a motorized unit with light infantry direct-fire weapons, and has capabilities that include air base ground defense, route regulation, expeditionary forensic operations and crime scene analysis, riot control, non-lethal weapons, and personal security details. The unit conducts police advising and training and supports all phases of operations in the competition continuum. As the only deployable military police unit in the Marine Corps, the 4th LEB continues to conduct training with multiple entities and agencies to enhance its ability to provide policing, detention operations, and support to security and mobility operations. The battalion supports Global Force Management (GFM) missions, notably providing security for detainee operations in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. The 4th LEB is increasingly integrating with the active component and supporting the reserve component MAGTF elements by participating in multiple exercises such as Integrated Training Exercise iterations, NATIVE FURY, ARCTIC EDGE, NORTHERN STRIKE, and EAGER LION. In April 2025, Marines from 4th LEB will provide airfield perimeter security and criminal investigation support in the northern Luzon Province, Philippines, for BK 25.

The ANGLICO mission is to provide MAGTF commanders with a liaison capability to plan, coordinate, and employ multi-domain fires and effects across the competition continuum in support of joint and multinational forces. The ANGLICO Marines and sailors are trained in the coordination of fires and effects that include support-



Marines and airmen load snowmobiles and gear onto a KC-130J Super Hercules at an airfield in Kotzebue, AK. Marines with Detachment Delta Company, 4th Law Enforcement Battalion, Force Headquarters Group, Marine Forces Reserve, and Marine Aerial Refueler Transport Squadron 153, Marine Aircraft Group 24, 1st Marine Aircraft Wing, joined by airmen, loaded the aircraft for transport to Utqiagvik, AK, to continue this year's Alaskan Toys for Tots operation. (Photo by Sgt Ethan M. LeBlanc.)



Capt David Warrington II, an assistant team leader with 1st Civil Affairs Group, Force Headquarters Group, Marine Forces Reserve, interacts with simulated town locals during a civil engagement exercise at Red Beach Combat Town on Camp Pendleton, CA. The civil engagement exercise was conducted by 1st CAG and soldiers with 425th Civil Affairs Battalion, 358th Civil Affairs Brigade, to provide simulated local populace interaction and key leader engagement training to the exercise participants. (Photo by LCpl Mhecaela J. Watts.)

ing arms among the air, land, maritime, sea, and space domains, such as close air support, electronic attack, cannon and rocket artillery, and naval surface fire support. The ANGLICOs are organized to provide this liaison across the breadth of forces with a headquarters element and three brigade platoons (two in the active ANGLICOs). Capable of employing teams in scalable capabilities, ANGLICO can be tasked to support the planning, coordination, and execution of fires and effects from the company to division level, as well as special-purpose designed commands. Key skillsets include designations as air officers, Weapons and Tactics Instructors, Joint Terminal Attack Controllers, joint fires observers, and Naval Gunfire Liaison officers. While the reserve and active ANGLICOs partner closely and share the same core mission, there are distinctions. Reserve ANGLICOs were built in a larger structure, enabling the manning of four additional units of employment. Additionally, reserve ANGLICOs maintain a requirement for airborne operations. By providing teams qualified in Static Line Parachute Operations, reserve ANGLICOs ensure the capability to insert and operate with partners across the joint, allied, or partner-nation force construct. Reserve ANGLICOs have played a key part in GFM with units of employment and individual augmentees. Recent activations include MEU teams, INDOPACOM detachments, and participation in the III MEF stand-in-force mobilization. Active in global exercises, reserve ANGLICOs participate in dozens of major exercises each year, including multinational events such as AFRICAN LION, KATANA STRIKE, BALTOPs, and FREEDOM SHIELD.

Similar to active-duty intelligence battalions, ISB trains and employs Marines in all-source, imagery, geospatial, counterintelligence, human-intelligence, and sensor operations. The ISB is also a unique unit because many of the ISB Marines work as civilians in the intelligence community and bring a tremendous amount of experience from the national and tactical levels. The ISB's mission is to provide organized, trained, and equipped detachments of



Sgt Angela Scolari, a combat marksmanship coach assigned to 6th Air Naval Gunfire Liaison Company, Force Headquarters Group, Marine Forces Reserve, fires a rifle during an all-female marksmanship subject-matter expert exchange between U.S. Marines and Jordanian soldiers during INTREPID MAVEN 25.1 in Al-Quwayrah, Jordan. The second iteration of this exchange between U.S. and Jordanian female engagement teams was nested in INTREPID MAVEN 25.1 and represents a step forward in strengthening and promoting Women, Peace, and Security initiatives. (Photo by Sgt Angela Wilcox.)

tactical intelligence Marines capable of executing all-source intelligence operations in support of all-domain missions and diverse commands. The ISB's structure includes a Headquarters Company, a Battlespace Surveillance Company, two Counterintelligence and Human Intelligence Companies (A and B), a Direct Support Company, and an Operations Company. Intelligence Support Battalion provides approximately 35 forward-deployed Marines annually on activations, conducting multidisciplinary all-source intelligence operations supporting Special Operations Command and Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa missions. The ISB also deploys 100 Marines annually to support 25 named exercises, spanning every geographic combatant command. Lastly, ISB trains and dispatches nearly 70 Marines annually on Active-Duty Operational Support orders, typically for 365 days, supporting nearly 20 organizations across the intelligence community and DOD.

The 6th Comm Bn provides key technical and operational support for communications. Its mission is to establish, maintain, and defend communica-

tions networks and services simultaneously for MAGTF command elements, Marine component headquarters, and or combined and joint task force headquarters to facilitate the commander's ability to command and control forces. The unit supports expeditionary operations with data systems services, communication transport architecture, narrow-band communications, communications control, network communications, and defensive cyber operations (DCO)-internal defensive measures. Many of the Marines in the DCO companies are a unique asset as they conduct cybersecurity in their civilian careers. The 6th Comm Bn regularly deploys deployable joint command and control to support Joint Force maritime component commanders or Joint Task Forces. The unit deploys its DCO companies to Marine Forces, South to teach cyber security courses at exercises like TRADEWINDS, RESOLUTE SENTINEL, and UNITAS.

The Information Detachment (Info Det) is a new capability developed to synchronize information capabilities, through planning and execution, to generate effects in the operating

environment. Currently manned by 12 senior officers and enlisted, the Info Det will grow to 53 by the end of fiscal year (FY) 27. The detachment commander is a post-command colonel. Most members of the detachment have multiple related information MOSs. The Info Det is experimenting with ways to improve the synchronization of information capabilities and activities to provide the operating forces with effects that enhance their objectives. The Info Det can be employed in support of the MEFs and their information coordination centers, but may be most beneficial serving at the next higher echelon, where there are increased authorities to plan and execute information capabilities. They can serve as a robust connective tissue for the MAGTF at the JTF, JFMCC, or Theater levels, depending on the situation. The Info Det personnel can conduct information operations planning for the Joint Force while advocating for the MAGTF, help synchronize effects with adjacent commands, and overall support the MAGTF commander's scheme of maneuver. This year, Info Det Marines will support BK25 and UNITAS 2025.

Established in March 2022, the MIU leverages the unique talents of the reserve to accelerate the adoption of advanced capabilities and transform the Naval Services' capacity for technology employment. At MIU, 330 members of the Selected Marine Corps Reserve act as the Corps' in-house consultancy, employing their private-sector experience to solutions for the total force. The MIU possesses high-demand, low-density skillsets in technology, industry, education, government, and finance, combined with a thorough understanding of Marine Corps culture, challenges, and operating procedures. These Marines work with units across the Corps to identify key problems and develop solutions that are timely, cost-effective, and self-sustainable. The MIU Marines apply their skills to a wide-ranging problem set based on senior leader priorities. They particularly focus on opportunities in capability development, contested logistics, Command, Control, Computers, Communications, Combat Systems, Intel-

ligence, Surveillance, Reconnaissance, and Targeting, data management, talent management, and support classified capabilities. The MIU also maintains a network of liaison officers across the defense innovation ecosystem—including the Defense Innovation Unit, the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency, and the Office of Naval Research—where they are positioned to capitalize on the defense innovation initiatives taking place at those organizations. The MIU provides dedicated multi-functional teams to support high-impact projects across the Corps, particularly through partnerships with MFR, Marine Corps Forces Pacific, the Marine Corps Software Factory, and other units. Having achieved full operational capability in August 2023, MIU continues to mature its operating model to best align with the priorities and requirements of the Corps.

The MCIRSA is a strategic capability for the Total Force because it facilitates the mobilization and accountability of approximately 50,000 Marines in the Individual Ready Reserve (IRR) and their specialized training and capability in time of war or national emergency. The IRR Marines, those Marines who are complete with their active-duty obligation but still have time on contract, are the focus of the mission. The MCIRSA continuously engages with Marines in the IRR to ensure the availability for activation in support of Service requirements. The MCIRSA conducts musters year-round throughout the United States to maintain physical contact with the IRR population, provide opportunities to reaffiliate with a component of the Marine Corps or other local job opportunities. It also provides health screenings and reconnects with Marines, as well as mobilization exercises at specified geographic locations and administrative support as needed.

Both DPC/RSU-East (Camp Lejeune) and DPC/RSU-West (Camp Pendleton) conduct the same mission, which is to process Joint and Service Individual Augmentees, DOD civilians, and DOD contractors to meet GFM rotational and major contingency requirements and to provide support to reserve

units for GFM requirements. As part of its mission, the units also do activation processing for IRR Marines during an authorized mobilization for a declared National Emergency, providing combat capability to the Total Force. Their three lines of effort are deployment, redeployment, and non-activated reserve support. For the first two lines of effort, Individual Augmentees, DOD civilians and contractors, and reserve units at intermediate support are the focus. The third involves annual training, billeting, transportation coordination, range training, scheduling, and AC integration support. In FY24, the DPC/RSU-West processed 7,224 personnel, and DPC/RSU-East processed 7,592 personnel for a combined total of 14,816. The DPC/RSUs can facilitate reserve training aboard local Marine Corps installations, including range scheduling, transportation, and billeting. In FY25, DPC/RSU-W provided medical, administrative, and logistical support to 2/23 Mar's 960 Marines during their pre-mobilization annual training, in support of III MEF's requirements. The DPC/RSU-East recently supported pre-activation annual training for DJC2 25.2, a Special Operations Capable Forward Intel Det, 22 MEU CA Team, and reserve support to the 4th Medical Battalion and Combat Logistics Battalion 451.

Establishing a 4th MIG

The FHG must optimize its resources and capabilities to provide maximum benefit to the MAGTF. The 4th MIG would mirror the active component MEFs with similar information capabilities. The mission for the proposed unit is like its active-duty counterparts; generate forces to assure command and control; conduct intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance and counter-intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance operations; integrate effects to create and exploit an information advantage; enable combined, joint, and naval maneuver; and prevent adversary freedom of action. It will organize and train to support MEFs, combatant commander exercises, and GFM activations.

The three primary drivers for the 4th MIG concept are: improved command

and control within FHG, maintaining pace with the capabilities, training, and employment of the Total Force, and increased reserve structure to retain talent in critical skillsets. The FHG currently has a flat organization with fifteen subordinate units led by O-6 and O-5 commanders. By realigning the O-5 commands (ISB, 6th COMM, ANGLICOs, and 4th LEB) under 4th MIG, it will reduce the FHG's direct reports with a MIG that closely mirrors the active-component structure. Additionally, the FHG Info Det will transition to serve as the 4th MIG's Information Coordination Center upon activation (targeted for FY28). The 4th MIG would be led by a board selected active colonel and a reserve colonel senior reserve advisor, following the reserve regimental model established in other MFR commands. Second, staying current with the active MIGs is a key

requirement to ensure the readiness of current capabilities. The proposed staffing of an AC commanding officer from the same MIG community will maximize advocacy and engagement while maintaining close contact with peer units across the spectrum of operations.

Finally, the new command will increase the number of reserve billets for high-demand, low-density career fields, such as Cyber, Intelligence, Electronic Warfare, Space, Military Deception, and Psychological Operations. Creating this structure in the 4th MIG would allow AC Marines to have a landing spot in the reserve after they depart active duty, contributing to overall permeability within the force.

The FHG will increasingly support the Nation's efforts in great-power competition through information advantage, the Joint Force's integration of all

domain effects, and the Marine Corps stand-in force with unique capabilities in information and irregular warfare. The FHG units contain many key occupational fields and specialized skill sets that will add value to the total force for the foreseeable future. The FHG will continue to press forward into advancing warfare capabilities, military technology, and utilizing reserve Marines to better support the fight and win the Marine Corps' battles.

