

Marine Attaché Frequently Asked Questions:

1) Is this program open to individuals who do not have a RAO/FAO MOS?

A: Yes. The goal of the program is to select the best and most fully qualified Marines to serve in the Defense Attaché System. Though education, foreign language, and regional and cultural expertise increase a candidate's competitiveness, they are not requirements or guarantees of selection. The program is open to any active duty or reserve officer and any 02xx or 26xx active duty or reserve enlisted Marine with a TOP SECRET clearance with eligibility for access to Sensitive Compartmented Information (TS/SCI).

2) What is the mission of the Attaché and their duties and responsibilities? (DoD Directive 5105.75 and MCO 3821.2)

A: Though duties and responsibilities vary from diplomatic mission to mission, general duties include:

- Act as the Chief of Mission's (COM) principal military advisor on defense and national security issues
- Serve as the primary point of contact for all DoD matters involving the embassy or DoD elements assigned to or working from the embassy
- Present coordinated DoD views on defense matters to the COM
- Represent the Commandant of the Marine Corps and the Secretary of Defense to host-nation counterparts and foreign diplomats accredited to the host nation
- Serve as the principal embassy liaison with host-nation defense establishments
- Participate in national security and operational policy development and coordination
- Serve under the joint oversight and administrative management of the USD(P) and USD(I) through the Directors, Defense Security Cooperation Agency and Defense Intelligence Agency, in coordination with the Geographic Combatant Commander (GCC).

3) What are tour lengths and which postings can be accompanied and which ones are unaccompanied?

A: Tours lengths are normally 12 to 36 months with both accompanied and unaccompanied assignments. Generally, 12-18 month tours are dependent restricted but vary based on country specific requirements. MCO 3821.2 contains the full list of tour lengths, restricted tours, and language requirements.

4) The application package mentions DLAB and DLPT results. Is it a requirement that I take these tests before applying?

A: Yes, a Defense Language Aptitude Battery (DLAB) score is required. Proficient speakers, who have a current Defense Language Proficiency Test

(DLPT) score, are still required to have a DLAB score in order to submit an application. Selectees are slated based on requirements that may not align with current language proficiency.

5) Can I apply if I have been passed over for promotion?

A: Yes, selection criteria are best and fully qualified with specific consideration to education, language, regional, or cultural expertise. Those who have failed selection to the next higher grade may apply as their competitiveness for the MARA program will be measured against the other applicants. All applicants should consider how a MARA tour outside of their chosen career field may impact MOS-credibility on subsequent promotion boards.

6) How competitive is the application process?

A: Selection is highly competitive in order for the highest qualified candidates to represent the Department of Defense and the Marine Corps. Assignment to U.S. Embassies overseas is highly scrutinized due to their strategic importance. Additionally, the SECNAV personally reviews and approves all Marine Corps nominees to the DAS. The selection percentages for the FY14 and FY15 boards were 12% and 26% respectively.

7) Does Joint Military Attaché School require a PCS to Northern Virginia?

A: Yes, JMAS training is a minimum 20-week period that is a "duty under instruction" PCS. Some may attend JMAS in a TAD status depending on foreign language training requirements and timing.

8) Are applicants required to be married in order to be eligible for the program?

A: No, single Marines may apply.

9) What type of service obligation is incurred as part of this program?

A: There is no service obligation beyond the training and assignment requirements for each unique post. Normally, these timelines range 24 to 60 months, depending on the training requirements and the tour length. In general, voluntary early return to Service requests do not receive favorable endorsements. Timing and career progression are important when applying for the program. Applicants are encouraged to speak with a career counselor or monitor prior to applying.

10) Can a Lieutenant Colonel billet be filled by a Major?

A: Yes. A Major, depending on specific education, language, regional or cultural expertise, may fill a Lieutenant Colonel MARA billet. SDO/DATT billets, however, must be filled by the requisite rank. The same is true for

the enlisted billets. Staff Sergeants can fill Gunnery Sergeant billets and vice versa depending on specific circumstances. The "one up or one down" rule can apply for Staff Sergeant and Gunnery Sergeant billets. Corporals, however, cannot fill Sergeant billets.

11) Can a Major in-zone for promotion still apply for locations designated for an O-4?

A: Yes.

12) Can a Captain who is Major-select apply?

A: Yes.

13) Can a Major-select be considered for Attaché O-5 billets (specifically China and Taiwan)?

A: Yes, a Major-select can be considered for an O-5 billet, depending on the specific post, rank of the SDO/DATT billet, other Service representation at the post, and specific education, language, regional or cultural expertise.

14) Can an applicant turn down selection for Attaché orders due to location preference not being met? Are their consequences involved if he/she does so?

A: Applicants apply for the program and can be assigned to any country based on the needs of the DAS, the USMC and specific education, language, regional or cultural expertise. Selectees must decline via the first General Officer in the chain of command.

15) Once posted, where do school-age children go to school?

A: All American citizens that fall under Chief of Mission authority are provided education opportunities through the Embassy at local institutions or through a U.S. Embassy sponsored education program.

16) I'm finishing the requirements for TS/SCI; however, our Security Manager tells me that once complete it will take 6 months until I'm eligible for TS/SCI. Will this disqualify me for applying to the program or is this the norm?

A: A fully adjudicated TS/SCI clearance is required to apply for the program. It is imperative that personnel applying must already be TS/SCI eligible. The timeline from selection to posting is condensed to the point that there is no allowance for the adjudication of a TS/SCI clearance. Submission of an application for the program is not grounds for submitting an SSBI. Additionally, selectees for the program will be required to submit to a counterintelligence (CI) scope polygraph. These requirements cannot be waived.

17) Is it possible for reservists to apply for the Military Attaché positions?

A: Yes. The application process for reserve personnel is the same as their active duty counterparts. Reserve attaché program selectees will be transferred to the HQMC Intel Department IMA Detachment (RUC 88831) NLT September. Attendance at the reserve MARA course is required and will be conducted over two weeks, commencing in December. Drill attendance sheets, orders requests, and other administrative requirements associated with this duty will be processed by HQMC Intel Department.

For reserve billets, applicants must belong to the reserve component (SMCR, IMA, and IRR) or the active component with a transfer date to the USMCR before the end of the FY.

Reserve candidates must have had four satisfactory years of service (50 points minimum each year) during the last five years.

Reserve component applications must include a favorable endorsement from the applicant's command (IMA detachment or SMCR). IRR officers should obtain this endorsement from the Marine Corps Individual Reserve Support Activity (MCIRSA).

18) I am deployed. How do I complete the package? Can I send in an old photo?

A: You do not need to be in garrison to complete the package. Deployment photos are acceptable but every effort should be made to meet the Service Alpha requirement. An old photo will not be accepted. Completing a package in timely manner also depends on your ability to complete the medical screening requirements for every dependent and the security questionnaire for your spouse.

19) When are orders cut to report to Joint Military Attaché School?

A: It depends upon the billet and training requirements. Most orders for training will be executed within six months of the board results being announced and as funds become available.

20) Can my spouse be a citizen of another country?

A: Each situation is unique, depending on circumstances such as the spouse's country of origin or any relationships you and your spouse may have with people who are not U.S. citizens. Though marriage to a foreign spouse may not be a unique disqualifier, it must be considered as part of the initial adjudication process for determining eligibility for a TOP SECRET clearance with access to Sensitive Compartmented Information. If you have married or are planning to marry a foreign spouse since your last SSBI and have not reported it to your security manager or special security office, you need to

report the marriage as soon as possible. Additionally, DIA, as the DAS program manager, will also review your profile for a suitability determination for service within the DAS. For these reasons, each applicant must submit an updated SF-86 security questionnaire so that an informed security determination can be made.

21) What is the picture requirement?

A: DIA requires a standalone photo of you at least 3/4 length in Service Alphas. They also require a photo of your family, which should be 3/4 length and in business casual attire. Also, your OMPF photo needs to be updated as well. Whether married or single, attachés and their families will act as direct representatives of the U.S., the DoD, and their respective Services to the host country.

22) Am I disqualified if I have a dependent in The Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP)?

A: No. EFMP is designed to identify family members with special needs and to consider their needs during the assignment coordination process. EFMP is not an automatic disqualifier. There are several options available through the selection and slating processes that can be used to accommodate those applicants with EFMP needs who are otherwise qualified. Communication with the board is the best method of mitigating EFMP concerns. The bottom line, however, is that the member's EFMP situation must take precedence in the process.

23) Are Letters of Recommendation (LOR) required and how many can I submit?

A: LOR are not required, but all LORs will be read by the panel member briefing your package. The briefer will present all relevant materials extracted from your letters of recommendation. In most cases, the quality vice quantity of LORs will most effective.

24) Are there any gender restrictions to locations and billet? Are there any restricted to married Marines only?

A: There are no gender or marriage restrictions for any Attaché billet. Some postings, however, are dependent restricted based on the operational environment.

25) What are the normal tour lengths for the billets?

A: Tour lengths are normally 12, 24, or 36 months. Most assignments are accompanied assignments but 12 month tours are generally dependent restricted. If a Service member decides to go on assignment unaccompanied vice accompanied, the tour length is not curtailed from 24 or 36 months down to 12. Tour lengths are determined by DIA.

27) An applicant must have 2 years time in grade to apply for a billet at the next higher rank. Does that mean time in grade at the start of the board, the start of the respective fiscal year, or the training start date of the desired billet?

A: Applicants must meet the 2 year time in grade requirement by the board convening date.

28) I am a LtCol select. Can I be considered for O-4 billets or would I only be eligible for O-5 billets?

A: It is not uncommon for billet grade mismatches for MARA assignments (with exception of SDO/DATT), but every effort is made to place the selectee in the billets coded for his/her grade or selected grade.

29) As a Staff Non-Commissioned Officer (SNCO) showing interest and applying to the program, do I require a General Officer (GO) endorsement for my package?

A: Officers are the only members that require a GO endorsement. SNCOs only require an endorsement at the O-5 level.

30) Is the SF-86 (1995 version) good enough for me to submit with my package?

A: No, DIA does not accept the 1995 version nor do they accept EQiP submissions or 2010 versions of the SF-86. DIA only accepts the 2008 version of the SF-86. Additionally, the SF-86 must be submitted regardless of current clearance status.

31) If I am going to a location that does not require any language training, will my family be able to come with me?

A: If language training is not required, selectees will be issued TAD orders to attend JMAS. As a result, spouses do not normally accompany selectees who attend JMAS TAD. Should you desire, you can personally fund your spouse's attendance at JMAS. Normally, travel for spouses/family is only provided when PCS orders are issued.

32) Is my spouse required to attend JMAS with me?

A: At the end of JMAS, there is a small portion of training designed for spouses which will be funded by DIA. This training, however, is desired and not required.