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From: Commandant of the Marine Corps (PL)
To: Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness,
Department of Defense

Subj: FY12 ANNUAL REPORT ON THE FOREIGN AREA OFFICER PROGRAM

Ref: (a) DoD Directive 1315.17 Military Department Foreign Area
Officer (FAO) Programs
(b) DoD Instruction 1315.20 Management of Department of Defense
(DoD) Foreign Area Officer (FAO) Programs
(c) ASD(R&FM) Memo dtd 13 Nov 12

Encl: (1) FY12 Annual Report - USMC Foreign Area Officer (FAO) Program

1. Per the references, this report detailing the status of the USMC Foreign Area Officer Program for FY12 is provided in the enclosure.

2. Executive Summary. In his October 2010 planning guidance to the Marine Corps, General James F. Amos, the Commandant of the Marine Corps (CMC), specifically identified the FAO program for expansion and increased integration into Marine Corps institutions. As a result of the ongoing implementation of this guidance, FY12 has been a watershed year for the Marine Corps FAO program. The program made great strides in refining and expanding all aspects of selection, training, utilization, and sustainment. A related initiative has begun to educate, assign, and effectively employ seasoned senior enlisted Marines to perform FAO-like functions at the tactical and operational level. The selection process for officers continues to screen the entire population of Marines eligible for Permanent Change of Station (PCS) orders, providing the largest possible pool from which to select the best qualified officers. FAO promotion statistics in FY12 are significantly above the service average, and command selection statistics are on par with the service average. These indicators demonstrate that FAOs are competitive with their non-FAO peers. Currently, 27 Marine FAOs are serving in command billets at the O-5 and O-6 levels, with 11 selected to take command next year. Additionally, utilization rates for FAOs serving in FAO billets are steadily increasing even as the number of FAO billets increased 27%. The operating forces have utilized FAOs in theater security cooperation exercises, foreign military sales cases, and in support of senior leader visits. Increased opportunities for foreign language and regional skill sustainment are more prevalent and accessible. In consonance with guidance from the CMC, the Marine Corps continues to find new and more effective ways to infuse the operating forces with the Language, Regional Expertise and Culture (LREC) skills of the FAO community.

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a. Accessions. Accessions continue to outpace the staffing requirement for FAOs, which creates a robust cadre of qualified FAOs for assignment. The Marine Corps held its second Commandant's Career Level Education Board (CCLEB) and Commandant's Professional Intermediate-Level Education Board (CPIB) to select the best qualified company and field grade officers for Professional Military Education programs. This process results in the accession of the highest qualified officers into the study track program, with a ratio of qualified applicants per school seat greater than thirty-to-one. Enthusiasm among eligible Marines to compete for the FAO program remains high. Additionally, the experience track panel accepted 33 applicants whose credentials met the DoDI requirements for immediate designation as FAOs.

b. Promotions. This report covers FY13 promotion selection. 26 of 32 FAOs were selected for promotion to O-5 (82.1%) compared to service promotion rate (70.2%). 11 of 21 FAOs were selected for promotion to O-6 (52.4%) compared to service promotion rate (48.8%).

c. Utilization Rates. The Marine Corps International Affairs Program (IAP) has aggressively expanded the number of billets coded for FAO assignment. In coordination with Marine Forces Component Commands, Geographic Combatant Commands and the Joint Staff, the number of billets coded for FAOs was increased from 124 to 158. FAO utilization rates also increased from 82.2% (FY11) to 82.9% (FY12). The dominant factor accountable for continued success has been the close coordination between the FAO Program Manager and the Officer Assignments Branch of Manpower and Reserve Affairs. With the implementation of the annual FAO utilization slating panel, FAO utilization rates are forecast to continue to increase in the coming years. Additionally, the USMC Service Campaign Plan 2012-2020, signed in April 2012 prescribes a coordinated effort to assign FAOs to regionally-aligned operational units when they are not serving in designated FAO-coded billets. This allows the operating forces to leverage the skill sets of FAOs when assigned within their Primary Military Occupational Specialty (PMOS), and engages Language, Regional Expertise and Cultural (LREC) professionals in operational planning and execution.

d. Skill Sustainment. The USMC FAO program has established new and innovative avenues to help maintain vital language and regional expertise for officers when they are not serving in FAO billets.

(1) 45 FAOs participated in the skill sustainment program to maintain and improve language proficiency through a combination of immersion travel, tutoring, and study at language schools in FY12. Funding for this initiative came from the Defense Language National Security and Education Office (DLNSEO) and Intelligence Department, HQMC.

(2) 15 FAOs participated in five iterations of the Joint FAO Program (Phase II) in FY12. This DoD-supported initiative supports

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skills-sustainment training for senior FAOs. Marine applications for each iteration continue to increase.

3. In direct response to CMC's guidance to increase the capacity of the FAO program, the Marine Corps initiated a program in FY12 to develop LREC professionals among senior enlisted ranks. Nine Marines began a 12-month education and training program in February 2011, which includes six months of classes at the Naval Postgraduate School, three months immersion language study and three months of regional travel. The Foreign Area Staff Non-Commissioned Officer (FAS) program includes a condensed version of FAO training with the intent of immediately applying LREC skills in tactical units such as Marine Expeditionary Units (MEUs), rotational forces, Marine Special Operations Command (MARSOC) and Marine Corps Security Cooperation Group (MCSCG). This Beta Test continues today. Four FAS Marines are currently deployed with MEUs; five will complete their training and report to their units by April.

4. In summary, 2012 saw significant improvements in the already excellent Marine Corps FAO program. The CMC has singled out the program as a key to future success. The Commandant directed in his Planning Guidance an increase in "opportunities for Marines to serve in FAO/RAO assignments." By selecting the most competitive Marines and subsequently managing their assignments and career progression, the Marine Corps will continue to develop LREC professionals who are fully prepared to meet the significant challenges that our Nation will face throughout the international community.

5. The Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps point of contact for the Foreign Area Officer Program is Maj J. F. Brown, PLU-8, (703)692-4365 or jonathan.f.brown@usmc.mil.



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