



UNCLASSIFIED

UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS
15TH MARINE EXPEDITIONARY UNIT
UNIT 42530
FPO AP 96610-2530

IN REPLY REFER TO:

2000
S-3
25 Feb 13

From: Gunnery Sergeant Andrew Hodges, 15th MEU Foreign Area SNCO (FAS)
To: Head, International Affairs Branch, PL Division, HQMC
Via: Commanding Officer, 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit
Via: S-3 OIC, 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit

Subj: **AFTER ACTION REPORT ON FOREIGN AREA STAFF NON-COMMISSIONED
OFFICER (FAS) EFFORT IN SUPPORT OF MAREX IRON MAGIC 12**

Encl: (1) List of Iron Magic Participants
(2) FAS Activities

Executive Summary: As the 15 MEU FAS, I participated in the Central Command (CENTCOM) Theater Security Cooperation (TSC) effort in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Joint Exercise IRON MAGIC, from 06-22 December, 2012. Joint Exercise IRON MAGIC involved multiple bilateral military-to-military training evolutions. The exercise was designed to enhance the tactical proficiency of UAE Presidential Guard Marine Group (PGMG), the Khalifa Bin Zayed II Brigade (KB), and air, land, sea interoperability with U.S. armed forces. The training consisted of basic combat marksmanship and crew-served weapons training. Training progressed to joint and combined live-fire and maneuver operations as well as unit-level operations in urban terrain.

As the 15 MEU FAS, I augmented the Bravo Command Element (BCE) as the senior enlisted advisor (SEA) to the Executive Officer of the 15th MEU. As the SEA, I was responsible for accountability of all Command Element (CE) Marines, movement, training, and well-being.

Aboard the USS Green Bay, I supported the Major Subordinate Elements by providing UAE-focused Center for Advanced Culture Learning (CAOCL) country briefs and Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) language classes to Marines and Sailors in the Amphibious Ready Group (ARG).

During the Joint Exercise, I augmented the Marine Corps Training Mission (MCTM) with language and regional expertise as a representative of 15th MEU. I assisted at the Emirati's HQ Combat Operations Center (COC) where I performed coordination as a Liaison Officer (LNO). I supported the UAE HQ's staff, providing clarity regarding standard operating procedures (SOPs) in an effort to strengthen bilateral missions. I supported the Battalion Landing Team (BLT) with language translation; primarily Lima and Weapons Company, facilitating Arabic instructions, planning and coordination with the UAE military.

UNCLASSIFIED

Subj: **AFTER ACTION REPORT ON FOREIGN AREA STAFF NON-COMMISSIONED OFFICER (FAS) EFFORT IN SUPPORT OF MAREX IRON MAGIC 12**

This report highlights eight specific topics regarding the impact FAS Marines had on MEU engagement in this TSC event.

1. **Integration into Planning Process**

A. **Topic:** Bravo Command Element Integration

Discussion: Before cross-decking to the USS Green Bay to support TSC events, I was tasked to augment the BCE as the SEA to the 15th MEU XO (LtCol O'Neal). As the SEA, I was responsible for accountability of all Command Element (CE) Marines, movement, training, and well-being. As such, I insured the commander's intent was met by providing directed periods of instruction for training requirements, TSC events and liberty.

Recommendation: It is recommended that future FAS Marines make themselves indispensable in a variety of special staff assignments. Fostering the role of team player made me a greater asset to the MEU, and often put me in the right place at the right time, whether engaging LREC skill sets or SNCO presence to improve mission accomplishment. The fast pace of the MEU cycle presents the MEU staff with very little time to fully appreciate new capabilities until seen in action. FAS Marines build credibility in a variety of roles and should seek integration on the MEU staff where needed, as needed; e.g. S-3, ADVON, and special staff.

B. **Topic:** Cross Decking to USS Green Bay

Discussion: Upon acquiring all tools to coordinate with the ship's staff, I tailored and delivered CAOCL country briefs for Marines and Sailors. While aboard the USS Green Bay I prepared Marines and Sailors for TSC engagement in UAE by providing LREC products, language instruction and cultural familiarity. LREC training focused on PMESII/ASCOPE for the Maritime Reconnaissance Force (MRF), 3rd Battalion 5th Marines (3/5), and other Marine and Navy elements. Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) language class lasted for approximately seven days prior to Joint Exercise IM. Each Marine learned an average of 35 words and phrases directly relevant to their mission. Marines also learned how to count in Arabic to 100. The CE SgtMaj (SgtMaj Scott) reinforced the perception that information and delivery of these briefs validate the significance of the FAS program.

Recommendation: Push LREC products to the lowest common denominator. Maximize cultural understanding among the "strategic Corporals" for maximum effectiveness in complex human terrain and foreign language environments. This cultural education prepared junior Marines to recognize the significance of bilateral relationships, and better understand the strengths and pride of foreign partners. Training highlighted commonalities and improved public diplomacy during TSC operations. Without FAS Marines, LREC information will not be effectively pushed to junior Marines, if at all. FAS Marines should

UNCLASSIFIED

Subj: **AFTER ACTION REPORT ON FOREIGN AREA STAFF NON-COMMISSIONED OFFICER (FAS) EFFORT IN SUPPORT OF MAREX IRON MAGIC 12**

support Mid-level Planning Conferences (MPC) and Final Planning Conferences (FPC) to facilitate understanding and coordination of TSC events. Ideally, at least one FAS Marine should be attached to the ADVON in order to ensure LREC coordination is made.

C. **Topic:** FAS employment during the TSC

Discussion: Upon arrival in UAE, I met with the MCTM. Soon after, I met the Emirate Marine Presidential Guard Camp Commandant (Maj Yousuf Al Kaabi). My Arabic language skills and cultural rapport were immediately used as an asset by both U.S. and UAE forces. Maj Yousuf requested I assist in linguistic support due to the lack of available interpreters. I assisted at the Emirati's HQ COC. Essentially, I made myself available to answer questions, identify U.S. Marine points of contact, and coordinate as an LNO. I provided the UAE staff with clarity and understanding about U.S. Marines Corps SOPs in an effort to strengthen bilateral missions.

I also supported several elements of the 15th MEU with LREC capabilities. I supported BLT 3/5 with language translation. FAS support greatly improved clarity, cohesion, rapport and camaraderie during the bilateral training. All efforts to support the BLT were well received.

BLT Commander (LtCol Griffin) and Operations Chief (MSgt Yellope) determined I could be better utilized during the training events in direct support to the units. Lima Company Commander (Capt Greco) requested FAS support. I translated weapons handling, BZO, and firing instructions. Weapons Company Commander requested FAS support. I supported Light Armored Reconnaissance (LAR) platoon with language translation while coordinating movement and scheme of maneuver between U.S. Light Armored Vehicles (LAV) and the UAE Boevaya Mashina Pehoty (BMPs). I also facilitated LAR communication with the UAE BMP platoon during Combined Arms Live Firing Exercise (CALFEX) movements. During Finishing Exercise (FINEX) practice and synchronization, I assisted the Emirati demolition team set up demolition throughout the Emirati's combat town.

During FINEX, the MEU XO (LtCol O'Neal) engaged me as a liaison for Emirati VIPs. I spent the majority of the FINEX using LREC skills to facilitate rapport and communication among MEU, ARG, and DAO leaders interacting with Emirati VIPs. Arabic language positively influenced relationships and diplomacy throughout the event. During a photo opportunity and brief discussion with the Commander of the Presidential Guard (Maj Gen Salem Ali Ghafli) and Senior Defense Official/Defense Attaché (Rear Admiral Gary W. Rosholt), Rear Admiral Rosholt requested FAS support on the MCTM in UAE. No further details were discussed, due to the limited time constraints.

Recommendation: FAS support in direct support of tactical forces was ideal, and meets the intent of the FAS program. Work in this capacity

UNCLASSIFIED

Subj: **AFTER ACTION REPORT ON FOREIGN AREA STAFF NON-COMMISSIONED OFFICER (FAS) EFFORT IN SUPPORT OF MAREX IRON MAGIC 12**

made a positive impact from the Private to the Major General level. FAS Marines should make an effort to contact key elements of the BLT prior to TSC events. Several command elements reinforced my early request to assist in planning and ADVON responsibilities. Early contact with the BLT operations officer and chief will assist in planning FAS support during TSC engagements. Potential exists for permanent FAS Marine positions under the DAO and MCTM.

2. Marine Corps Training Mission

A. **Topic:** Synchronization with MCTM.

Discussion: Capt Tim Praught was the senior advisor I had contact with during the bilateral training exercise. Upon discovering I spoke Arabic, Capt Praught invited me to a meeting with Major Yousuf, the UAE lead exercise officer and camp commandant for the UAE base (Al-Hamra). Other than myself, no other U.S. military members spoke Arabic. Capt Praught informed me that I could have been used during the ADVON phase of the exercise and I could have helped alleviate cultural misunderstandings. We discussed the need for more Arabic speakers, potential for future FAS employment with MCTM and FAS support during Joint Exercise IRON MAGIC. Major Yousuf was particularly excited to have a U.S. Marine who spoke Arabic to assist in coordination. No interpreters were available for the exercise. Major Yousuf requested that I work directly with his staff.

Recommendation: Cultural rapport is equally important as language ability. Interpreter contract support is not reliable. FAS support was accomplished through this bi-lateral exercise with little opportunity to liaise with the U.S. Embassy. Early correspondence with MCTM staff in the planning process would benefit planning for LREC support; specifically with the MCTM team members working with the Emirati units. Coordination with MCTM during ADVON could increase military cooperation between U.S. and UAE forces. At least one FAS Marine should be attached to the ADVON in order to engage LREC coordination early and often.

3. Closing Ceremony

A. **Topic:** Social Gathering to Promote Public Diplomacy

Discussion: The final day of the exercise included a social gathering. The ceremony was attended by the MEU staff, UAE counterparts, and other participants. The ceremony culminated the TSC exercise and celebrated its success. Awards were presented to several key UAE and USMC staff members. I received an award from the Emiratis for support as a LNO and assistance in translation.

Recommendation: LREC skills in direct support of tactical bi-lateral security cooperation exercises provided unique capabilities. Among 2,200 Marines on a MEU and 40 Marines on the MCTM, I was the only

UNCLASSIFIED

Subj: **AFTER ACTION REPORT ON FOREIGN AREA STAFF NON-COMMISSIONED OFFICER (FAS) EFFORT IN SUPPORT OF MAREX IRON MAGIC 12**

Arabic speaker. A FAS will find distinct opportunities to positively influence and strengthen joint military relationships. Continue to employ FAS Marines in all TSC events.

4. LANGUAGE

A. **Topic:** Language Support to TSCs

Discussion: No interpreters were available for the bilateral training due to unforeseen, last-minute complications. Several Emirati officers spoke English, so I was not overburdened as the sole linguist. As a U.S. Marine who spoke Arabic, I was able to overcome several cultural boundaries that enhanced the 15 MEU's mission during the IM TSC.

Recommendation: Continue to send region-appropriate FAS Marines to support TSCs.

4. CAOCL

A. **Topic:** CAOCL Support for FAS/RAS

Discussion: CAOCL provided valuable country briefs, smart cards and language materials to prepare general purpose forces for missions overseas. As an Arabic-speaking FAS on the MEU, my LREC skills brought these materials to life for Marines of all ranks. In addition to CAOCL briefs I was able supply smart cards, and language material to all Major Subordinate Elements (MSE). CAOCL materials made my efforts more effective in reaching the broadest possible audience aboard USS Green Bay and USS Peleliu.

Recommendation: Continue to send FAS Marines to a weeklong "Train the Trainer" course for the intended countries MEUs are expected to go. Coordinate with the CAOCL representative to ensure continued support throughout the MEU cycle.

5. Additional Comments

A. **Topic:** Command Approval of the FAS Program

Discussion: The TSC has exceeded expectations for success. As a Middle East/North African (MENA) FAS, I used all LREC skills to support the MEU. During the exercise, all levels of command reinforced the message that the FAS program was a force multiplier. Particularly, the MEU XO, LtCol O'Neal, stated "the FAS program is a good capability to have on the MEU". Several MSE leaders mentioned they wish I had been in UAE earlier to assist, and how the FAS could have been employed during ADVON.

Recommendation: At least one FAS Marine should be considered to support TSCs, focusing on BLT support. Future FAS Marines could also

UNCLASSIFIED

Subj: **AFTER ACTION REPORT ON FOREIGN AREA STAFF NON-COMMISSIONED
OFFICER (FAS) EFFORT IN SUPPORT OF MAREX IRON MAGIC 12**

attach to the ADVON. One FAS makes a difference. Multiple FAS Marines could better support the MEUs in multiple locations, augmenting multiple MSEs, and providing LREC expertise in multiple regions.

In summary, the employment of FAS Marines during Joint Exercise IRON MAGIC was a success. Accomplishment of training and exercise objectives was noticeably improved. The Emiratis' experience was positive. 15th MEU reinforced strategic defense cooperation objectives by strengthening bilateral relationships between UAE and the United States.

A. J. HODGES

UNCLASSIFIED

Subj: **AFTER ACTION REPORT ON FOREIGN AREA STAFF NON-COMMISSIONED OFFICER (FAS) EFFORT IN SUPPORT OF MAREX IRON MAGIC 12**

Encl: (1)

FAS activities:

- a) Dec 6-8, Offload. Met Capt Tim Praught, USMC Presidential Guard Training Team (MCTM) and Mark Keily PG Marines Training Advisor. Introduced to Maj Yousuf Al Kaabi (Al Hamra Base Commander) and PG Marines Group HQ staff. Integrated with PG Marines staff. Assisted with MCTM staff in an advisory role, supporting training with Lima Company 3/5 and the PG Marines. Participated in KLE with Emirati Officer's at officer chow hall.
- b) Dec 9-12, supported small unit integration training. Supported Lima Company with Arabic instruction during weapons handling, BZO, and firing. Assisted in coordination movement and scheme of maneuver between LAV and the BMP.
- c) Dec 13-15, during the combined arms training portion of the exercise, I supported LAV and BMP bilateral coordination.
- d) Dec 16, Combined Armed Live Fire Exercise (CALFEX). Supported LAVs during CALFEX and ensured all levels of communication between bilateral forces were successful.
- e) Dec 17-18, during the FINEX planning and rehearsal, I supported MOUT training at Al Hamra Combat Town. I also coordinated with UEA EOD and U.S. engineers to emplace explosives for simulated attack on the combat town.
- f) Dec 19, FINEX AL-Hamra, engaged the UAE VIPs and assisted with questions and relationship building during FINEX. Spoke with MajGen Salem Ali Ghafli (Commander of the Presidential Guard) and Rear Admiral Gary W. Rosholt (Senior Defense Official/Defense Attaché to UAE). During a brief conversation with Gen Salem and Admiral Rosholt, while taking a photo together; Admiral Rosholt requested I come work in UAE, due to my language capability.
- g) Dec 20, social gathering. Awards were presented to key players. I was presented with an award from by the Emirati counterparts for my efforts as a LNO. Additionally, the LAR Platoon Commander discussed submitting me for an award for the support I provided.

UNCLASSIFIED

Subj: **AFTER ACTION REPORT ON FOREIGN AREA STAFF NON-COMMISSIONED
OFFICER (FAS) EFFORT IN SUPPORT OF MAREX IRON MAGIC 12**

- h) Dec 21-22, backload. During the last night, I was invited to dinner with members of the Emirati defense. Later, I was invited to drink tea with the medical officer's (Originally from Jordan).

UNCLASSIFIED

Subj: **AFTER ACTION REPORT ON FOREIGN AREA STAFF NON-COMMISSIONED
OFFICER (FAS) EFFORT IN SUPPORT OF MAREX IRON MAGIC 12**

Encl: (2)

Points of Contact:

15th MEU BCE Commander/XO: LtCol John O'Neal / john.oneal@peleliu.usmc.mil
15th MEU OPSO: LtCol William Wischmeyer
william.d.wischmeyer@peleliu.usmc.mil
15th MEU 3/5 Battalion Commander: LtCol Christeon C. Griffin /
christeon.griffin@green-bay.usmc.mil
15th MEU OIC: Major Christopher Blalock /
christopher.blalock@peleliu.usmc.mil
15th MEU SgtMaj: SgtMaj John Scott /
john.scott@peleliu.usmc.mil
15th MEU BLT SgtMaj: SgtMaj Douglas Yagel /
christeon.griffin@green-bay.usmc.mil
15th MEU BLT OPSO: Maj Mathew W. Peterson /
matthew.peterson@green-bay.usmc.mil
15th MEU OPS Chief: MGySgt Thomas Vigil /
tommy.vigil@peleliu.usmc.mil
15th MEU BLT OPS Chief: MSgt Andrew Yellope /
andrew.yellope@green-bay.usmc.mil
15th MEU INDIA XO: Capt Bradley Fromm /
bradley.fromm@green-bay.usmc.mil
15th MEU Bravo B PLT Cmdr: 1stLt Bradford Parr
15th MEU LIMA CO: Capt Jerome Greco / jerome.greco@green-bay.usmc.mil
15th MEU LIMA Co GySgt: GySgt Brian Stanley /
brian.c.stanley@green-bay.usmc.mil
15th MEU LIMA Co XO: 1stLt Daric Kleppe /
daric.kleppe@green-bay.usmc.mil
15th MEU CAAT II Co GySgt: Gerald Furnari /
gerald.furnari@green-bay.usmc.mil
15th MEU WP CO: Capt Jonathan Landers /
jonathan.landiers@rushmore.usmc.mil
15th MEU LAR PLT Cmdr: 1stLt Joshua Abraham /
joshua.abraham@rushmore.usmc.mil
15th MEU BLT OPS XO: Capt Travis Hord / Travis.hord@peleliu.usmc.mil
15th MEU S-4 XO: Capt Eric Taylor / eric.taylor@peleliu.usmc.mil
15th MEU OPS XO: Maj Scott Huesing / scott.huesing@peleliu.usmc.mil
15th MEU CMO: Maj Zaher Bouza / zaherbouza@gmail.com
PG Marine Corps Training Mission UAE: Capt Tim Praught
timbopraught@hotmail.com

Other participants:

Mark Keily (Civilian PG MARINES TRAINING ADVISOR)
Col Yousuf Al Kaabi (PG MARINES GROUP HQ)
Col Ali Altenaji (Commander PG Marines)
Civilian James Wilton (PG MARINES OPERATIONS ADVISOR)

UNCLASSIFIED