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From: Director, Strategy and Plans Division
To: Marine Foreign Area Officers
Marine Regional Affairs Officers
Marine Foreign Area Staff Non-Commissioned Officers

Subj: International Affairs Operating Guidance

Ref: (a) A Concept for Stand In Forces, December 2021
(b) DoDI 1315.20 "Management of the DoD Foreign Area Officer Program"

1. Marine Foreign Area Officers (FAO), Regional Affairs Officers (RAO), and Foreign Area Staff Non-Commissioned Officers (FAS) will leverage their specialized skills and regional expertise to maintain confidence in U.S. security guarantees and enable stand in force (SIF) operations. Per reference (a), international partnerships are essential to SIF operations at every level and these relationships depend on allies' and partners' confidence in U.S. security commitments.

2. Reference (b) defines FAOs as "joint force strategic effects operators who advance U.S. military objectives in foreign theaters." Reference (b) also designates FAOs as the primary candidates to serve as DoD, joint, and military department representatives to foreign militaries, U.S. Embassies, and in other foreign settings. Marine FAOs will employ their specialized skills and expertise to enable strategic cooperation across the air, land, sea, space, and cyberspace domains. Likewise, RAO and FAS Marines will utilize their specialized education and training across operational domains at the strategic, operational, and tactical levels to maximize cohesion with allied and partner forces.

3. As the Marine Corps dedicated international affairs professionals, FAOs, RAOs, and FASs will serve as regional desk officers, operational planners, security cooperation professionals, advisors, and attachés who facilitate coordination and mutual support between U.S., allied, and partner forces. They will operate at the forefront of Marine, joint, and interagency engagements with allies and partners around the globe.

4. FAOs, RAOs, and FASs will play a key role in establishing and maintaining the low-signature maritime defense central to the SIF concept. They will advise and support commanders at every echelon in navigating complex geopolitical and human terrain to maintain a durable asymmetric advantage over adversaries and competitors. The nature of U.S. interactions with regional allied and partner forces, governments, and populations will directly influence their support for a U.S. security presence and SIF operations. This support will be critical to obtaining regional access, overflight, logistics, and communications support within the region.

5. Relationships remain a key element in forging and strengthening critical international partnerships. As the Marine Corps and joint force confront new threats, Marine FAOs, RAOs, and FAS' will maintain the strategic initiative to build confidence in U.S. security guarantees and set conditions for success in the current and future geopolitical operating environment.


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