

## **Background.**

Attachés fill influential strategic-level positions within the country team of their respective embassies. Depending on the specific billet and country, they serve as the direct representative of the Secretary Of Defense (SECDEF); the Chairman, JCS; the commanders of geographic combatant commands; the Secretary Of The Navy (SECNAV); and the Commandant of the Marine Corps (CMC). A Marine officer serving as an Attaché may also serve as the Senior Defense Official/Defense Attaché (SDO/DATT) or the American Legation United States Naval Attaché (ALUSNA). Attaché duties vary by country, but all provide the Chief of Mission (COM) appropriate military information for consideration of politico-military situations and issues, administer security assistance activities per appropriate directives in the absence of a U.S. Government security assistance organization in the host country. The Attaché filling the SDO/DATT billet directs, controls, operates, and administers the Defense Attaché Office (DAO) to which assigned.

Deputy Commandant, Manpower and Reserve Affairs (DC M&RA), in conjunction with the Director of Intelligence (DIRINT) Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps (HQMC), convenes an annual board to select the most highly qualified personnel to serve within the Defense Attaché System (DAS), representing the Marine Corps and the Department of the Navy in embassies around the world. The board selects the most fully qualified officers and enlisted Marines from both the active and reserve components. The board considers all applicants who meet the strict eligibility criteria for service in the DAS. Languages, regional and cultural expertise, coupled with sustained superior performance, are indicators of future success and meet the precept criteria established by the Secretary of the Navy for assignment within the DAS. The selection board is comprised of representatives from across HQMC with the Commanding Officer, Marine Corps Intelligence Activity (MCIA) serving as president of the board.

Selection to the DAS does not incur any obligated service beyond that required to meet training and assignment timelines, normally ranging from 24 to 60 months.

## **DAS Training Information.**

Training at the Joint Military Attaché School (JMAS) is conducted over approximately 20 weeks at the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA), Washington, DC. Language training may be required for some billets and lasts between 24-62 weeks depending on language and proficiency level required. Training start dates are dependent upon the country to which selected. Marines who successfully complete the 10-12 months of training are then available for assignment abroad. All active duty Marines participating in DAS are under the administrative control of Commanding Officer, MCIA.

Reserve DAS program selectees will be transferred to the HQMC Intel IMA detachment (RUC 88831) NLT September. Attendance at the reserve JMAS course

is required and occurs over two weeks, commencing in December. HQMC Intel Department will process drill attendance sheets, orders requests, and other administrative requirements associated with this duty.

### **Application Eligibility.**

Applications will not be accepted from officers who have been issued orders or have been selected for another program (CCLEB, CPIB, TLS, TEST Pilot, SAW, international exchange, etc.).

Captains selected to Major may apply for billets coded for O-4 and Majors with at least 2 years' time-in-grade may apply for billets coded for O-5.

Applicants must be eligible for a TOP SECRET clearance with access to Sensitive Compartmented Information (TS/SCI). Applying to the Marine Attaché (MARA) board is not sufficient grounds for submission of a Single Scope Background Investigation (SSBI or T5) to determine TS/SCI eligibility.

Applicants currently serving in a CONUS tour must complete 24 months' time-on-station prior to the anticipated training start date for the assignment for which they are applying. Those serving in an OCONUS assignment, including Hawaii, must have completed at least 35 months of their 36 month tour prior to executing orders to JMAS. Aviators at HMX-1 must have completed 45 months in their assignment.

### **Application Process.**

Timeline: A MARADMIN announcing the board is typically released in March. The week-long board convenes in August, with the results published via MARADMIN following SECNAV approval. Applications are due to HQMC/Intel Division normally in late June for screening and preparation.

Applicants will submit applications through their chain of command, including an endorsement from the first general officer. "By direction" endorsements are acceptable.

A complete list of those countries available for each year's panel and guidance on preparing your application are posted on the Intelligence Department website. Applicants should list available billets in order of preference; however, applicants may be selected for any country based on the needs of the Marine Corps. An individual's specific education, language, regional or cultural expertise will take precedence over individual desires when slating selectees.

For reserve billets, applicants must be a member of 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).

Applications must contain the following information:

1. Basic application letter - this letter must be in standard naval format and include the following:

- (a) Defense Language Aptitude battery score: date, place tested
- (b) Defense Language Proficiency Test (DLPT) information:
  - (1) Language(s) and Dialect(s), if applicable
  - (2) Date, place tested
  - (3) DLPT type(s)
  - (4) DLPT score
- (c) General classification test score
- (d) Date of rank
- (e) Date current tour began
- (f) Overseas control date
- (g) Summary of military education specifically noting language, foreign area, and international relations training
- (h) Summary of civilian education specifically noting language, foreign area, and international relations studies
- (i) Summary of FAO or RAO oriented experience listing travel and/or military experience in foreign regions and detailing military duties involving interaction with foreign militaries or government representatives
- (j) A paragraph summarizing why applicant would be a successful MARA
- (k) Written verification from the command security manager or special security officer of a current (within 5 years) SSBI / T5 with a TS/SCI eligibility determination

(1) Contact numbers including primary, secondary, and tertiary telephone contact information in case the selection panel requires amplifying information during the screening process

2. Enclosures to basic letter:

(a) Enclosure One - one (8.5 x 11) full body photo of the service member in the service alpha uniform and one (8.5 x 11) full body family photo in business casual for family members and service alphas for service member.

(b) Enclosure Two - Standard form (SF) 886 Defense Attaché nomination biography worksheet. Leave the three blocks in the top right blank.

(c) Enclosure Three - NAVMED Forms 1300/1 for applicant and each dependent and NAVPERS 1300/16 (Rev. 11-09) for applicant alone as dependents are identified on page 3 (Part ii)

(d) Enclosure Four - SF 86 (Version 2016), questionnaire for national security positions for applicant

(e) Enclosure Five - SF 86 for spouse (if married); required even for unaccompanied tours

(f) Enclosure Six - certificate of suitability for overseas assignment

(g) Enclosure Seven - letters of recommendation that should include an assessment of the applicant's potential to act as a representative of the Commandant of the Marine Corps and the Secretary of the Navy. No more than 2.

Applications must arrive at HQ Marine Corps no later than 19 June.

Applications must be emailed to:

[mara.application@usmc.mil](mailto:mara.application@usmc.mil). For questions regarding the application process please call HQMC intelligence department at (703) 693-5421, or (571) 256-9301.

**References.**

Naval Correspondence Manual - SECNAVINST 5216.5

Defense Attaché System - MCO 3821.2

Department of Defense Operations at U.S. Embassies - DODD 5105.75

Defense Attache System - SECNAVINST 1300.16

### **Conduct of the Board.**

- The MARA selection board is a non-statutory board and is conducted in the same manner as similar boards (e.g., command screening boards). Accordingly, the MARA board:

- Is sequestered
- Is confidential with all members taking an oath of confidentiality

Receives the same briefs from M&RA as all other selection panels and boards

- Is extremely competitive
- FY21 Selection Rate was 30%
- Selects the most fully qualified officers
- In addition, the board will consider the following in its

deliberations:

- Foreign Area Officer/Regional Affairs Officer, Olmsted Scholar, foreign exchange officer, or similar experience
- Intelligence related assignment
- Security Assistance/Security Cooperation
- International/Strategic engagement (experience or academic)
- Foreign language proficiency and/or cultural experience

### **Challenges.**

Selection for Attaché requires, among other things, eligibility for a TS/SCI clearance. This requirement cannot be waived and application to the MARA board is not sufficient grounds for submission of an SSBI / T5.

The application package for consideration as a Marine Attaché requires a significant effort and investment in time. The applicant's attention to detail and desire to be a MARA may be reflected in the quality of the submission.

Each applicant must consider how a MARA tour will affect their progression within their chosen career field.

Sequential tours outside of the operating forces and in non-primary MOS billets may affect an officer's competitiveness for promotion. When considering an officer's qualification for selection to the Attaché Program, the board considers whether selection would be in the long-term best interest of the officer. Applicants must coordinate with their monitor prior to applying.