

# Marine Forces Reserve in Transition

By JOHN W. BERGMAN

**T**he last 5 years have demonstrated that the Marine Corps Reserve is a full partner in the Total Force Marine Corps.

Marine Forces Reserve remains committed to the rapid and efficient activation of combat-ready ground, air, and logistics units, as well as individuals, to augment and reinforce the Active Component in the war on terror. Marine Corps Reserve units, Individual Ready Reserve Marines, and Individual Mobilization Augmentees fill critical requirements in our nation's defense and have deployed to countries such as Afghanistan, Djibouti, the Georgian Republic, Iraq, and Kuwait to support all aspects of the war on terror. At home, our Reserve Marines are prepositioned throughout the country, ready to assist with civil-military missions.

As tactics and equipment evolve, our readiness for future challenges must be maintained. Reserve ground combat units, aviation squadrons, and combat service support elements are able to integrate with their Active Component comrades in any Marine air ground task force environment because they are held to identical training standards. Marine Reserve units train to the same uncompromising warfighting standards as our Active Component forces, complementing, augmenting, and reinforcing them as needed. This training ensures that these combat capable units undergo a seamless transition to the gaining force commander. Moreover, a strong inspector-instructor system and a demanding mobilization and operational readiness deployment test program ensure that Reserve units achieve a high level of pre-mobilization readiness.

We have seen historic and tragic events that have impacted our country and Marine Forces Reserve in ways that will reverberate

for years to come. When Hurricanes Katrina and Rita battered the Gulf Coast, for instance, Marine Forces Reserve found itself in the unusual position of being a part of both the evacuation and the relief efforts. Because of these storms, Marine Forces Reserve Headquarters was forced to evacuate the New Orleans area and set up temporary command cells in Texas and Georgia. From these locations we managed the mobilization and deployment of units to the affected areas to support relief efforts. Some Reservists were serving in their own devastated communities. After what amounted to nearly a 3-month deployment, the headquarters elements returned to New Orleans and resumed normal operations.

As a rule, the Selected Marine Corps Reserve, with its force structure complementing the Active operating force in its traditional "augment and reinforce" mission, has served the Nation well. Our Reserve rests on that mission and is keen to do its part in times of peril. However, we are conscious of how changes in key drivers—such as the Quadrennial Defense Review, the Marine Corps' own Capabilities Assessment Group, recent operational employment patterns, and Service expectations of the Reserve—are bound to demand adjustments in Reserve missions and roles.

## Total Force in Action

Reserve Marines understand the price of protecting our constitutional freedoms. Even though some have paid the ultimate price in Operations *Enduring Freedom* and *Iraqi Freedom*, others continue to step forward and volunteer to serve. The Marine Reserve remains strong and constant due to the committed Marines in its ranks, high recruiting and retention rates, and the ever-increasing benefits that Reserve Marines and their families enjoy.

The Marine Corps adheres to a Total Force construct, which standardizes and integrates an Active Component of 175,000 and a Reserve Component of 39,600. Today's

U.S. Marine Corps Reserve (Ruben D. Maestre)

U.S. Marine Corps Reserve (Samantha L. Jones)



Background photo: Marine Reservists assigned to II MEF prepare for convoy operation in Iraq

Inset photos top to bottom: 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Logistics Group providing support to joint Servicemembers in Iraq; LtGen John Bergman, USMCR, and MajGen Douglas O'Dell, USMC, discuss Gulf Coast relief operations; Navy corpsman for Marine Corps Reserve scout sniper platoon taking marksmanship training



U.S. Marine Corps Reserve (Frans E. Labranche)



U.S. Marine Corps Reserve (Randy Bernard)

Lieutenant General John W. Bergman, USMCR, is Commander, Marine Forces Reserve.

Reserve is comprised of 32,380 Marines in selected drilling units from across America, over 7,200 augmentees, and nearly 58,000 Ready Reserve Marines, who provide a pool of individual capabilities that can be drawn on to augment the selected or Active Component.

As of May 2006, over 6,700 Reserve Marines have been activated in support of Operations *Enduring Freedom* and *Iraqi Freedom* as well as Horn of Africa operations. Of these Reservists, 5,100 were serving in combat-proven ground, aviation, and service support units led by Reserve officers and noncommissioned officers. The remaining 1,600+ were serving as augmentees in support of combatant commanders, the Joint Staff, and the Marine Corps. Since September 11, 2001, the Corps has activated over 39,000 Reserve Marines and 97 percent of all Reserve units.

Recent examples of the augmenting and reinforcing capability of the Reserve abound:

- Two Reserve infantry battalions (2<sup>d</sup> Battalion, 23<sup>d</sup> Marines of Encino, California, and 2<sup>d</sup> Battalion, 25<sup>th</sup> Marines from Garden City, New York) were promptly mobilized to support defense of the homeland in the immediate aftermath of the 9/11 attacks.

- In 2003, these same Marines, plus two additional units (3<sup>d</sup> Battalion, 23<sup>d</sup> Marines of New Orleans, Louisiana, and 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 24<sup>th</sup> Marines of Detroit, Michigan), shifted to major combat operations and participated in the drive to Baghdad.

- The 25<sup>th</sup> Marine Regiment further supported Marine Corps global requirements when their First Battalion (out of Worcester, Massachusetts) deployed to Okinawa, Japan.

- Marines of Detachment A of the 4<sup>th</sup> Assault Amphibian Battalion fought in Iraq in 2003, then used their unique amphibious lift capabilities to rescue fellow citizens in Gulfport, Mississippi, hours after Katrina made landfall in 2005.

- Members of Marine Light Attack Helicopter Squadron 773 from Marietta, Georgia, conducted immediate rescue, relief, and reconnaissance in New Orleans after Katrina ravaged that city.

- Civil affairs teams from 3<sup>d</sup> (Camp Pendleton, California) and 4<sup>th</sup> (Washington, DC) Civil Affairs Groups, along with 5<sup>th</sup> (Baltimore, Maryland) and 6<sup>th</sup> (drawn from 30 states) provisional Civil Affairs Groups, have deployed to Afghanistan and Iraq since 2003 and have served with distinction and valor.

The capacity of Reserves to augment and reinforce the Active force in such operations, and to provide unique capabilities such as civil affairs, reinforces the utility, flexibility, and strength of the Total Force Marine Corps.

### Sustainment

Given that 97 percent of Reserve units have been activated since 2001, how can Marine Forces Reserve ensure continued sourcing of units in support of the Long War? Even though we have activated most units, we are constantly bringing new Marines into the Reserve at a rate of 20 to 25 percent per year. This, along with dedicated Citizen Marines who continue to volunteer, provides continued capability to augment and reinforce the Active Component.

An important source of Reserve Marines is those who transition from the Active to the Reserve Component. While we currently do not see a downward trend in recruitment of these Marines, it is important that we keep this valuable pipeline open. To that end, a recent innovation is the Mobilization Deferment Program, available to both enlisted Marines and officers. Under this program, Marines transitioning to the Reserve Component are eligible for an involuntary mobilization deferment upon their affiliation with a selected unit. To be eligible, Marines must have completed a deployment in support of *Enduring Freedom* or *Iraqi Freedom* in the 12 months prior to their end of Active service. The deferment is good for 24 months from their service end. This program should alleviate the apprehension those Marines might have about involuntary mobilization, providing a powerful incentive to “stay Marine.”

### Transformation

Since the war on terror began, it has become necessary for the Marine Corps Reserve to increase support for operations against the backdrop of a rapidly changing world environment accented by asymmetrical warfare and continuing hostilities.

In 2004, the Corps conducted an extensive Total Force Structure Review (conducted by the Force Structure Review Group) recommending approximately 15,000 structural changes to improve the Marine Corps Total Force ability to meet the long-term needs of the war on terror and the emerging requirements of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This effort consisted of end strength and structure-neutral offsets to rebalance the Total Force with increases in capabilities for high-demand needs coming

from military-to-civilian conversions and the disestablishment or reorganization of units with capabilities in low demand.

One recommendation of the review group was to assign a secondary civil-military operations (CMO) mission to the Corps’ artillery regiments and battalions. This should serve to provide a CMO focal point within each division, which was previously a mission of the Civil Affairs Groups. According to General Michael Hagee, Commandant of the Marine Corps, “While we recognize that every Marine unit must be able to conduct CMO, the Marine Corps requires a designated unit that is staffed and trained to lead CMO in the division’s battlespace.”

This statement illustrates the Corps’ overall effort to adapt techniques, tactics, and procedures to respond in irregular wars in urban environments against asymmetric enemies. For Marine Forces Reserve, this new CMO mission for artillery units allows even greater interoperability between force- and division-level units. Two standing Civil Affairs Groups will each be responsible for supporting two artillery regiments. When this program reaches operational capability, we will have exponentially increased our ability to conduct CMO across the battlefield and given the ground commander a ready pool of in-house CMO warriors to accomplish his mission.

As new warfighting requirements have emerged, we have adapted our capabilities with an eye toward reinforcing these high-demand, low-density units in the Marine Corps Reserve. Examples include the former 8<sup>th</sup> Tank Battalion in Rochester, New York, transitioning to become the core of a new Anti-Terrorism Battalion, and an Intelligence Support Battalion in Mobile, Alabama, being transformed to consolidate Reserve intelligence assets.

Most recently, changes under the Marine Aviation Transition Strategy have identified realignments within 4<sup>th</sup> Marine Aircraft Wing. Marine Fighter Attack Squadron 134 in Miramar, California, will be deactivated, with that unit’s structure going to establish two Tactical Air Command Center detachments (one for each coast). These detachments will enhance the capabilities of the 2<sup>d</sup> and 3<sup>d</sup> Marine Aircraft Wings.

In a further nod toward transformation and realignment, we recently deactivated both the I and II Marine Augmentation Command Elements. Their structure was realigned to augmentation detachments that better support

both I and II Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF). This arrangement better serves the customer (the MEF) by giving him ownership of his individual augmentees. That differs from the previous construct in that the MEF was forced to mobilize an entire unit (the Marine Augmentation Command Element or parts thereof) to obtain staffing for surge operations. The new system gives the MEF commander more flexibility in determining his needs, then mobilizing individuals to meet those needs.

In another example of transformation, the 4<sup>th</sup> Marine Logistics Group has led the way within the Total Force Marine Corps in developing the Marine Logistics Command concept. The group is a tactical-level logistic capability organized along functional combat service support lines. At times, due to the expeditionary nature and quick deployment of forces into a theater, there may be an absence of operational logistic support at the theater level. When that occurs, the logistics command can provide an initial operational or theater level of logistics. Operational logistics links tactical requirements with strategic capabilities to accomplish operational objectives.

A noteworthy addition to the role of Reserve forces is the designation of the Commander of Marine Forces Reserve as Commander, Marine Forces North, which is the Corps component responsible for supporting U.S. Northern Command. Among the duties of this commander and his staff are antiterrorism programs and force protection responsibilities for Marine Corps installations. Marine Forces North also commands, supports, coordinates, and provides advice on the employment of

our Reservists to their communities provide an invaluable perspective and sensitivity to the concerns of officials at the state and local level and pay great dividends in times of crisis response at home, as we saw during the hurricane response along the Gulf Coast in 2005. By combining the duties of Marine Forces Reserve and Marine Forces North in one commander and staff, we have achieved a reasonable balance in the efficient and effective use of headquarters personnel, while dramatically increasing the Corps' ability to support U.S. Northern Command.

### Quality of Life

Marine Forces Reserve recognizes the strategic role families play in mission readiness, particularly in mobilization preparedness. We help families to prepare for day-to-day military life and the deployment cycle by providing educational opportunities at unit family days, predeployment briefs, returns and reunions, postdeployment briefs, and through programs such as the Key Volunteer Network (KVN) and Lifestyle Insights, Networking, Knowledge, and Skills (LINKS).

At each Reserve training center, the KVN program ties together the command and family members, providing the family with official communication, information, and referrals. The Key Volunteers, many the parents of young, unmarried Marines, educate families on the military lifestyle and benefits and enhance the sense of community within the unit. The LINKS program is a spouse-to-spouse orientation service that acquaints family members with the military lifestyle and the Corps, including the challenges resulting from deployments. Online and CD-ROM versions of LINKS make this tool accessible to families of Reservists not located near Marine Corps installations.

Military One Source is another tool that provides Marines and their families with around-the-clock information and referral service for subjects such as parenting, childcare, education, finances, elder care, health, wellness, deployment, crisis support, and relocation via toll-free telephone and Internet access.

The Corps' commitment to take care of its own includes not only families but also a Marine's transition from honorable service back to civilian life. Initiated in 2002, the Marine for Life program supports the 27,000 troops transitioning out of Active service

each year. The program was conceived by former Commandant of the Marine Corps General James L. Jones and is manned by Reserve Marines. For the more than 100 Hometown Link Reserve Marines in 80 cities, "Once a Marine, always a Marine" is more than a slogan—it is a way of life. These hometown links provide sponsorship for transitioning Marines that includes assistance with employment, education, housing, childcare, veteran's benefits, and other support services, all with an eye toward ensuring a smooth adjustment to civilian life. To provide this support, the Marine for Life program taps into a network of former Marines and Marine-friendly businesses, organizations, and individuals willing to lend a hand to a Marine who has served honorably. Career retention specialists and transitional recruiters help Marines by getting the word out about the program. Currently, 8,000 individuals log onto the Web-based electronic network for assistance each month ([www.m4l.usmc.mil](http://www.m4l.usmc.mil)). The program currently enjoys participation by some 6,100 registered employers and 1,600 registered mentors.

More recently, the program has expanded to provide information, advocacy, and support for injured Marines and their families. Assistance is available to help these individuals navigate the process from time of injury through either return to duty or transition to the Veteran's Administration. Currently, some 330 Marines with disability ratings greater than 10 percent are using the program to research disability benefits, charitable organizations, and adaptive technologies applicable to their injuries.

The Marine Corps Reserve continues to be a vital part of the Marine Corps Total Force concept. Reserve Marines are fully dedicated to serving and protecting the Nation now and in the future. They have been engaged in the Long War far longer than many expected and have performed admirably. Their continuing courage, commitment, and dedication to war-fighting excellence, while maintaining close ties to their communities, truly set them apart as Citizen Soldiers. They recognize a crucial mission and realize that the American people will continue to expect the most from them while continuing to support them. Marine Forces Reserve will remain a viable part of the well-equipped, well-led, and well-trained Total Force of professionals and warriors that the Nation has come to rely on. **JFQ**

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Marine Corps forces when attached to U.S. Northern Command within the latter's area of responsibility in order to conduct homeland defense operations and support civilian authorities. Hurricane Katrina highlighted the efforts of Marine Forces North to integrate both Active and Reserve forces in relief operations.

Dual-hatting the commander and staff also leverages one of the great strengths of the Reserve: its close contact with communities all across the United States. The ties that bind