

Into the Grey Zone: Integration of Civil Affairs & Information Operations with Embassies

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Grey Zones pose a unique security conundrum for the United States due to the absence of a state of war but the presence of persistent unrest that often does not meet the threshold of declared conflict. The Marine Corps cannot expect to cope with this complexity as a service; instead it must create joint, interorganizational, and multinational (JIM) partnerships as keys to influencing the information environment and creating long-term success. Sun Tzu states “to subdue the enemy without fighting is the acme of skill.” This holds true especially in Grey Zones and introduces an opportunity for Information Operations (IO) and Civil Affairs (CA) to take a leading role there.

This paper presents contemporary aggression as a relevant example of a Grey Zone and then identifies three interrelated methods for Marine Corps IO and CA to integrate within the JIM construct:

- 1) Integrate Marine Corps IO and CA into U.S. Embassies to gain physical and institutional proximity to our partners and competitors alike.
- 2) Institute creative talent management solutions to staff the resultant embassy billets by leveraging Marine Corps Active Component (AC) and Reserve Component (RC) IO and CA Marines. This effort also addresses a priority of the Commandant of the Marine Corps to integrate RC units into the AC force.
- 3) Increase the influence of Marine Corps forces beyond the use or the threat of the use of force by integrating IO and CA forces with multinational civil authorities. Closing gaps between the Marine Corps and JIM partners will reduce bureaucratic friction and create opportunities for Marines in areas not traditionally accessible.

Embassies are a ready-made task-organized center which excel at synchronizing joint and interagency efforts as well as coordinating U.S. efforts with international partners. Marine Corps integration with embassies can capitalize on their physical proximity to Grey Zones in a way that conventional military forces cannot. Employing CA teams in embassies as part of the country team will create opportunities and build networks at the multinational level.

The substantive information for this paper is derived from myriad sources including joint publications, professional journals, articles, and Marine Corps concepts. The authors of this paper believe embassies to be the central hub by which IO and CA can produce the greatest effect in Grey Zones, whether maritime or land-based. Based on the paper’s theme, the authors are not proposing changes to Marine Corps CA doctrine, but rather a synchronization and redistribution of efforts to achieve future US objectives in Grey Zones.