

**Reclaiming Civil Affairs as a Strategic Asset:  
Identifying and Categorizing “Deep Expertise” for the Benefit of the Army**

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Having been primarily employed as a reactive, tactical force in the conflicts following the collapse of the Soviet Union, Civil Affairs must renew its focus on providing strategic civil-military capabilities up to the theater command level. These capabilities are provided mainly by those whose “deep skills” are acquired through civilian education and experience. While the Civil Affairs Corps established a new AOC in 2015, 38G/MG (Civil Affairs Military Government Specialist), the development and implementation has been structurally flawed and has lacked appropriate guidance and doctrine.

Commanders and civilian leaders have needed to engage civil authorities and populations strategically during virtually every conflict in the history of warfare. Providing combatant commanders high-level cultural and civilian technical specialties should be among the highest priorities of the CA Corps. Engaging the civil component requires “deep expertise”—the type most often gained from years at academic institutions and from industry experience. The United States Army Civil Affairs and Psychological Operations Command (Airborne), which provides nearly 76% of all DoD CA assets and is home to all but one of the ten Army CA brigades, also provides the preponderance of civilian-acquired deep expertise. In order to do so, CA institutional leaders should shift to a hybrid of the “train from within” and “recruit from outside” models—that is, there should be focus on lowering barriers to entry for exceptionally talented individuals, and increasing meaningful incentives to entry for high-skill reservists whose civilian occupations may make them less likely than other reservists to continue service.

The CA Corps must modify and adapt its implementation of the 38G program to lower the barriers of entry for high-skill specialists—both from outside and those already within the Regiment and the Army. The Army Reserve, in particular, must improve its ability to identify and categorize those with deep skills and allow them to serve strategic CA capabilities without unduly burdensome barriers to entry. Specifically, the branch proponent and Regiment should: 1) narrow the current 38G officer MOS to direct appointments and commissions of high-skill individuals without prior experience as army officers, 2) recharacterize functional specialists as branch immaterial assignments with a robust ASI program, and 3) provide more meaningful incentives to retain high-skill officers.

Improving the strategic capability of the USAR CA force would position the CA Corps and the Army to better provide the Joint Force’s strategic leadership the ability to identify and respond to civil sector threats in order to win without fighting and provide integrated deterrence within current and emerging geopolitical environments.