

Commandant Sees Bigger Role for Marine Raiders in Great Power Competition



Marine Raiders rehearse advanced military free fall jumps at Camp Lejeune, N.C., Sept. 1, 2021. Military free fall sustainment training is necessary for a Marine special operations team to stay proficient and ready at all times for future operations. *U.S. MARINE CORPS / Cpl. Ethan Green*

ARLINGTON, Va. – Like the rest of U.S. Special Operations Command, Marine Raiders will have a bigger role to play in the military's competition with a rising China and resurgent Russia, the Marine Corps commandant says.

After 20 years with a heavy focus on counter insurgency and counter terrorism in Iraq, Afghanistan and other flashpoints around the globe, "I do see a bigger role for them and probably an adjusted role," Gen. David Berger said Feb. 8 at

the National Defense Industrial Association's virtual Expeditionary Warfare Conference.

"Now, how do we use special operations forces in great power competition?" Berger said, adding he thought Marine Special Operations Command would follow a similar path as the rest of the Marine Corps in the near future, "Back to naval roots. How does it support the naval expeditionary forces forward?"

Among their roles, Marine Raider units train, advise and assist friendly host nation forces, including naval and maritime military and paramilitary forces. The aim is to help local forces support their governments' internal security and stability, counter subversion and reduce the risk of violence from internal and external threats, according to the MARSOC website.

"Their great value," Berger said "is their persistent presence forward" as well as their deeper cultural understanding and language skills in the places they operate. "Conventional forces don't normally have any of that. They also don't have the finer, nuanced, higher level skills that MARSOC Marines have, and I'm not talking about kicking down a door," he said.

Instead, he meant Raiders' skills in collecting information and intelligence in a discreet manner while deployed far forward. "If you married that up with a higher performing infantry battalion or conventional force, you will have the best of all worlds," he said.

In late January, Marines from the 3rd Marine Raider Battalion worked with the 8th Marine Regiment's 1st Battalion on close-quarters battle training, including hallway and stairwell clearing procedures and sensitive site exploitation. The three-day training session at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, sought to improve cooperation among the conventional Fleet Marine Force and Special Operations Forces.

Going forward, Berger believed MARSOC, like the entire Corps, would have to adjust their focus from 90% counterinsurgency and counter terrorism to “a much better balance of integrated deterrence, campaigning, crisis response, in other words, meeting us somewhere in the littorals, where the Corps’ skillset strength is.”