***\*Updated January 2025\****

**Background**

Marine Attachés (MARA) fill influential strategic- and operational-level positions within the country team of their respective U.S. diplomatic missions. Depending on the post, they serve as the direct representative of the SECDEF; the SECNAV; CJCS; the Combatant Commanders; and the Commandant of the Marine Corps. 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 and diplomatic mission, but all attachés provide the Chief of Mission (COM) appropriate military information for consideration of political-military situations and issues; they may also administer security assistance activities in the absence of a U.S. Government security assistance organization in the host nation. Attachés serving as SDO/DATT direct, control, operate, and administer both the Defense Attaché Office (DAO) and the Security Cooperation Office (SCO) within the diplomatic mission.

DC M&RA, in conjunction with the DIRINT and his staff, convenes the annual board to select the best and most highly qualified personnel to serve within the Defense Attaché Service (DAS), representing the Marine Corps, the Department of the Navy, and the Department of Defense in diplomatic missions around the world. This board selects the best and most highly qualified officers and enlisted Marines from both the active and reserve components who meet the strict eligibility criteria for service in the DAS. Language, regional and cultural expertise, coupled with sustained superior performance, are the best indicators of future success, and meet the precept criteria established by SECNAV for assignment within the DAS. The selection board is comprised of representatives from across HQMC with the Commanding Officer, Marine Corps Intelligence Activity (MCIA) typically serving as board president.

Selection to the DAS does not incur any obligated service beyond that required to meet training and assignment timelines.

**DAS Training Information**

Training at the Joint Military Attaché School (JMAS) is conducted over approximately 13 weeks at the Defense Intelligence Agency in Washington DC. Language training may be required for some billets and lasts between 24 to 62 weeks depending on the language and proficiency level. Training dates depend upon the country to which selected and assigned. All active-duty Marines participating in the DAS are under the administrative control of Commanding Officer, MCIA.

Reserve DAS program selectees will train at the reserve JMAS course for two weeks. DC I RLO 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 selected for another program, e.g., CCLEB, CPIB, TLS, Test Pilot, SAW, PEP, etc. Applicants must be eligible for a TOP SECRET clearance with access to Sensitive Compartmented Information (TS/SCI). Applying to the MARA board is not sufficient grounds for submission of a Single Scope Background Investigation (SSBI) to determine TS/SCI eligibility.

*\*Active-Duty applicants must meet the grade criterion (or be selected for promotion to that grade) of the associated duty for which they are applying and must possess the career timing to serve a full tour of duty in the grade of the billet for which they are applying. Marines in-zone for promotion to the next higher grade at the time of application must be willing to opt-out of consideration for promotion for one year if selected to fill a MARA billet and acknowledge that in their application. Applicants who do not meet these grade requirements must request a waiver via their PMOS monitor which will be reviewed and approved or denied by MMOA prior to screening.*

*\*Dual Active-Duty applicants must have concurrence from both monitors and be willing to forego collocation if selected. This should be annotated in the MARA application.*

**Application Process**

The MARADMIN selection board announcement is typically released in the winter. Applications are due to HQMC (DC I/IID or Intel Division) by 31 March for screening and preparation for the board in May. Selection results are published via MARADMIN in the by the fall, following SECNAV approval.

Applicants will submit applications through their chain of command, including a command O-6 endorsement.

A complete list of the countries available for each year’s panel, along with guidance on preparing your application, are posted in the annual solicitation MARADMIN and on the HQMC Intel Division MARA 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 language, regional, educational, 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, IRR) or the Active component with a transfer date to the USMCR before the end of the Fiscal Year (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 det or SMCR). IRR officers should obtain this endorsement from the Marine Corps Individual Reserve Support Activity (MCIRSA).

**\*\*To accommodate the expediated timeline this year, a full medical screening is not required until after selection. See more under the “Package Checklist.”**

**MARA APPLICATION PACKAGE CHECKLIST**

\*See website for all updates\*

**DUE DATE TO HQMC INTELLIGENCE DIVISION: NLT 31 MAR 2025**

**INCOMPLETE OR LATE PACKAGES WILL NOT BE CONSIDERED**

Review all package documents located on the HQMC DC I IID MARA website: https://www.intelligence.marines.mil/OCC-Field-Foreign-Language/Defense-Attache-Program/

All requirements must be completed by **ALL** applicants unless specifically stated differently next to each requirement. Adjust enclosure numbers as needed per letter format on website. For example, if you do not require a spouse certificate of naturalization then remove it from the enclosure list.

Marine Attaché Application Letter (see format on website – use appropriate letter format: active or reserve version based on your component). **Remember that applicants may be selected for countries outside of their preference list based on the needs of the Marine Corps/DAS.**

Standard O6 Command Endorsement on standard naval format (Reservist candidates will instead include endorsement from either the applicant’s command, IMA Unit, SMCR, or MCIRSA – depending on current status)

Correspondence from PMOS monitor confirming eligibility (active duty only)

Letters of Recommendation\* (optional\* w/ a maximum of two)

Certificate of TS/SCI Clearance from SSO on unit letterhead – include date of adjudication. **NOTE: ALL ACTIVE APPLICANTS MUST POSSESS A TS/SCI ELIGIBILITY TO APPLY. Reservists without TS/SCI eligibility will be submitted for TS/SCI eligibility following selection. Reservists MUST obtain favorable TS/SCI adjudication prior to transfer to the IMA.**

Declining Selection and Commitment to Serve Minimum Full Tour memorandum – must be signed

Attaché Biography (DIA Form 886) – Leave country/nomination information blank.

SF 86 of Attaché Candidate. If you have a current Single Scope Background Investigation (SSBI) and are currently SCI eligible, please submit your most recent E-QIP file along with form SF-86C (Certification and Update form).

SF 86 of Spouse. Applicants must submit a complete SF-86 for any accompanying spouse (active duty only)

Spouse certificate of naturalization (if applicable)

Certificate of Suitability for Overseas Assignment (updated) - ***It is imperative applicants disclose ongoing conditions to be ensure the applicant and family members needs’ can be met. If selected, applicants must complete a 1300/1 and 1300/16 within 90 days of acceptance.***

RQS (reserve only)

Enlisted Marines applying will additionally submit their application via the Special Duty Assignment Miscellaneous RELM in the TFRS via the normal RELM routing chain to CMC (MMEA-25). This **must** be routed prior to the application deadline.

\*\* All files must be separate PDFs

Each file will be formatted as follows: EDIPI\_LASTNAME\_FIRSTNAME\_MI\_RANK\_ACTIVE (or RESERVE)\_MOS\_ENCLOSURENUMBER\_DOCUMENTNAME. For example, “1234567890\_SMITH\_JOHN\_A\_CAPT\_RESERVE\_0202\_ ENCL1\_O6COMMANDENDORSEMENT”

Please ensure all applicable documents listed above are included in your package. Packages must be submitted NLT 31 MAR 2025. Incorrect or late packages will **NOT** be accepted.

**Submission guidance:**

Utilize the following website (DoDSAFE) to submit documents to mara\_application@usmc.mil: ([*https://safe.apps.mil/*](https://safe.apps.mil/)*)*

Instructions for utilizing DoDSAFE:

1. When logging into the site you will get a pop-up “Select a Certificate” window, click on “More Choices” just above the “OK” button first; select your “Signature” certificate and click “OK”. This will allow you to upload your documents.
2. If you are unable to access SAFE, please email the entire attaché package (with separate files) to: **mara\_application@usmc.mil**

**MARA Program Management will confirm receipt of your package via email within one week. Due to the volume of applications, if you do not receive a confirmation email after one week then please contact HQMC Intelligence Division MARA Program Management at 703-693-5421 or mara\_application@usmc.mil to ensure receipt of package.**

The selection board is held in May. **Results from the board will not be discussed with applicants.** The official selection MARADMIN will be posted by Fall 2025. **Declinations may prevent application to future MARA selection boards.**

**Additional FAQs:**

**1) Is this program open to any MOS or individuals who are not FAOs/RAOs?**

Yes. The goal of the program is to select the best and most highly qualified Marines to serve in the Defense Attaché System. Though regional education, foreign language, and regional/cultural expertise increase a candidate’s competitiveness, they are neither requirements nor guarantees of selection.

**2) What is the mission of the Attaché and their duties and responsibilities? (DoD Directive 5105.75, MCO 3821.2)**

Though duties and responsibilities vary depending on one’s posting, they will generally include the following:

* Act as the Chief of Mission’s (COM) principal military advisor on defense and national security issues
* Serve as the primary point of contact for all DoD matters involving the embassy or DoD elements assigned to or working from the embassy
* Present coordinated DoD views on defense matters to the COM
* Represent the Commandant of the Marine Corps, the Secretary of the Navy, and the Secretary of Defense to host nation personnel and organizations
* Serve as the principal embassy liaison with host nation defense establishments
* Participate in national security/operational policy development and coordination
* Serve under the joint oversight and administrative management of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy (USD(P)) and the Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence and Security (USD(I&S)) through the Director, Defense Security Cooperation Agency and Director, Defense Intelligence Agency, in coordination with the Geographic Combatant Commander

**3) What are tour lengths? Which postings are accompanied and which are unaccompanied?**

Tour lengths are determined by DIA and the DAS, normally lasting from 12 to 36 months with both accompanied and unaccompanied assignments. Generally, 12-month tours are dependent restricted and unaccompanied, but vary based on country specific requirements. The annual solicitation MARADMIN and HQMC DC I IID website contain the full list of tour lengths, restricted tours, and respective language requirements.

**4) The application package mentions DLAB and DLPT results. Is it a requirement that I take these tests before applying?**

Yes, a Defense Language Aptitude Battery (DLAB) score is required. Foreign language proficient speakers possessing a current Defense Language Proficiency Test (DLPT) score are still required to have a DLAB score in order to submit an application. Selectees are slated based on requirements that may not align with the applicant’s current respective foreign language proficiency.

**5) Can I apply if I have been passed over for promotion?**

Active-Duty Captains and Majors in the Above-Zone (AZ) are not eligible to apply to the program. Lieutenant Colonel’s in the AZ will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

**6) How competitive is the application process?**

Selection is highly competitive in order for the best and most highly qualified candidates to represent the Department of Defense, the Department of the Navy, and the U.S. Marine Corps. Assignment to U.S. diplomatic missions overseas is closely scrutinized due to their strategic importance. The SECNAV personally reviews and approves all USMC nominees to the DAS, and the FY21 board selection percentages was approximately 30 percent.

**7) Does Joint Military Attaché School require a PCS move to the National Capital Region?**

Yes, JMAS training is a minimum 14-week period that is a “duty under instruction” PCS. Some students may attend JMAS in a TAD status depending on foreign language training requirements and timing.

**8) Are applicants required to be married in order to be eligible for the program?**

No, single Marines may also apply for the program.

**9) What type of service obligation is incurred as part of the program?**

There is no service obligation beyond training and assignment requirements for each unique post. Normally, timelines range from at least 24 to possibly 60 months, depending on training requirements and tour length. In general, voluntary “early return to Service” requests will not likely receive favorable consideration and endorsement. Timing and career progression are important when applying for the program. Applicants are encouraged to speak with a career counselor and their monitor prior to applying.

**10) Can advertised MARA assignments be filled by Marines of lower rank than advertised (i.e., “one up or one down”)?**

Yes, on a case-by-case basis. Depending on specific education, language, regional or cultural expertise, MARA positions may be filled by higher or lower ranks; the same is true for enlisted billets. However, (1) Corporals cannot fill Sergeant billets, and (2) SDO/DATT and OPSCO billets must be filled by the required rank, currently all LtCols and MSgts, respectively.

**11) Can an applicant turn down selection for attaché orders due to their location preference not being met? Are there consequences if he/she does so?**

Applicants apply for the program and can be assigned to any country based on the needs of the DAS, the USMC, and specific education, language, regional or cultural expertise. If selectees decline their selection, they must do so within two weeks of the MARADMIN’s release, and an alternate selectee will be contacted to fill the requirement. **Applicants who decline selection may not be able to apply to future MARA boards.**

**12) Once posted, where do school-age children go to school?**

All American citizens that fall under COM authority are provided education opportunities through the Embassy at local institutions or through a U.S. Embassy sponsored education program.

**13) I'm finishing the requirements for TS/SCI; however, our Security Manager tells me that once complete it will take 6 months until I'm eligible for TS/SCI. Will this disqualify me for applying to the program or is this the norm?**

Yes, for the most part. A fully adjudicated TS/SCI clearance is required to apply for this program, and it is imperative that personnel applying must already be TS/SCI eligible. The timeline from selection to posting is condensed to the point that there is no further time allotted for TS/SCI clearance adjudication. Applying for this program is not grounds for submitting an SSBI. Additionally, program selectees will be required to submit to a counterintelligence scope polygraph, a requirement that will not be waived.

**14) Is it possible for reservists to apply for attaché positions?**

Yes. Please review the most recent MARADMIN and Package Checklist for the nuances between Active and Reserve applications. Reserve attaché program selectees will attend the reserve MARA course conducted over two weeks. Drill attendance sheets, orders requests, and other administrative requirements associated with this duty will be processed by their respective assigned IMA Detachment.

For reserve billets, applicants must belong to the reserve component (SMCR, IMA, IRR) or the active component with a transfer date to the USMCR before the end of that respective FY. Reserve candidates must have had four satisfactory years of service (50 points minimum each year) during the previous five years. Reserve component applications must include 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).

**15) When are orders cut to report to Joint Military Attaché School?**

This depends upon the billet and its associated training requirements. Consult the most recent MARADMIN for up-to-date requirements.

**16) Can my spouse be a citizen of another country?**

Your spouse must be a naturalized U.S. citizen to apply. However, Reservists with spouses who are not naturalized U.S. citizens are eligible to serve in the Reserve Attache Program (so long as spouse’s citizenship does not conflict with the eventual country of assignment).

**17) Am I disqualified if I have a dependent in The Exceptional Family Member Program?**

No. EFMP is designed to identify family members with special needs and consider their needs during the assignment coordination process. EFMP is not an automatic disqualifier. There are several options available through the selection and slating processes that can be used to accommodate those applicants with EFMP needs who are otherwise fully qualified. Communication with the board is the best method by which applicants can mitigate EFMP concerns. Bottom line: the member’s EFMP situation must take precedence in the process.

**18) Are Letters of Recommendation (LOR) required? How many may I submit?**

LORs are optional but highly recommended. We recommend at least one and not more than two.

**19) Are there any gender restrictions for locations and billet?**

No.

**20) As a SNCO applying to the program, do I require command endorsement for my package?**

Yes, all applicants require an O-6 command endorsement.

**21) Is the SF-86 (1995 version) good enough for me to submit with my package?**

No, DIA does not accept the 1995 version, EQiP submissions, or 2010 versions of the SF-86. DIA only accepts the 2016 version of the SF-86. Additionally, the SF-86 must be submitted regardless of current clearance status for you and your spouse.

**22) Is my spouse required to attend JMAS?**

No, your spouse is not required to attend JMAS. The Spouses Training Course is, however, desired and strongly recommended for them.

**References**

Naval Correspondence Manual – SECNAVINST 5216.5

Defense Attaché Service – MCO 3821.2

DoD Operations at U.S. Embassies – DoDD 5205.75

Defense Attaché System - SECNAVINST 1300.16

**Conduct of the Board**

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

1. Is sequestered
2. Is confidential with all members taking an oath of confidentiality
3. Receives the same briefs from M&RA as all other selection panels and boards
4. Is extremely competitive - FY21 Selection Rate was 30 percent
5. Selects the best and most highly qualified officers
6. In addition to sustained career performance, the board will consider the following in its deliberations:
   1. International experience: Foreign Area Officer/Regional Affairs Officer, Olmsted Scholar, foreign exchange officer, or similar experience
   2. Intelligence-related assignments
   3. Security Assistance/Security Cooperation
   4. International/Strategic engagement (experience or academic)
   5. Foreign language proficiency and/or cultural experience
   6. Interagency experience

**Challenges**

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

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

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 Marine 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.**