

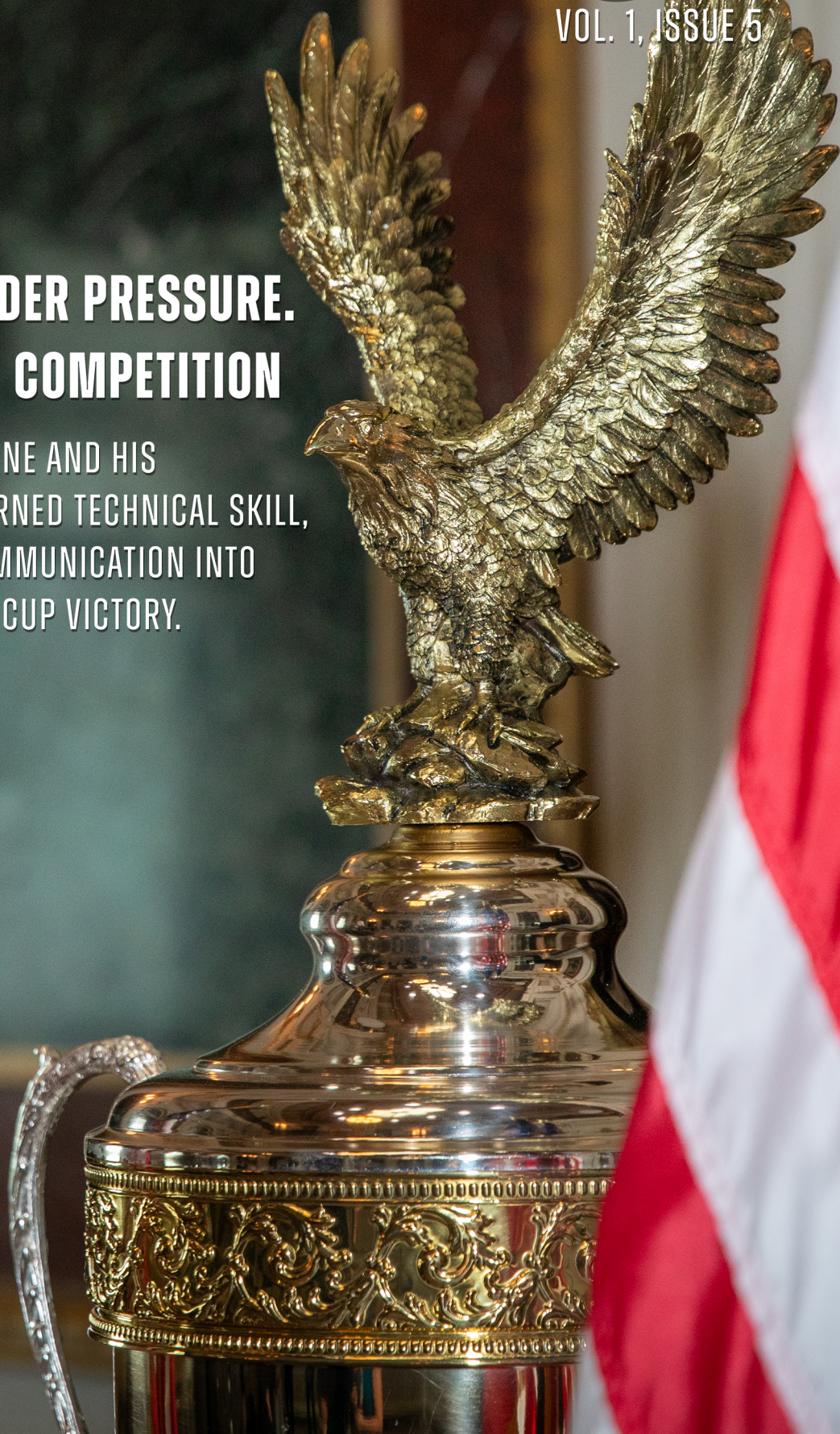
SYNAPSE

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TESTED UNDER PRESSURE. PROVEN IN COMPETITION

HOW ONE MARINE AND HIS
JOINT TEAM TURNED TECHNICAL SKILL,
TRUST AND COMMUNICATION INTO
A PRESIDENT'S CUP VICTORY.

AUGUST 2026



PRESIDENT'S CUP VICTORY

WASHINGTON — U.S. Marine Corps Maj. James C. Russell, commander of 700 CST, U.S. Marine Corps Forces Cyberspace Command, joined his teammates at a White House reception July 16, 2026, recognizing their first-place finish in the seventh annual President's Cup Cybersecurity Competition.

The Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency hosts the annual competition to identify and recognize cybersecurity talent across the federal workforce. Russell competed in the team track, which challenged participants to solve offensive and defensive cyber problems through two virtual rounds and an in-person final.

Russell joined ENOENTHUSIASM as the newest member of a team whose other members had competed together during the previous three President's Cups. The team brought together operators, developers, data scientists and personnel with offensive and defensive cyber experience.

ENOENTHUSIASM finished fourth in the opening round. The result exposed weaknesses in the team's time management and problem assignment, giving the members specific areas to refine as they advanced.

The final challenge of the opening round tested their ability to adjust. After completing their individual problems at nearly the same time, the members converged on the sixth challenge and initially struggled to coordinate their efforts.

"It was a little tense at first, as we handed roles to the best people and tried to communicate," Russell said. "After a few minutes it really started to come together, and the reaction when we solved it was electric."

The experience helped the members better understand how to combine their technical strengths when a challenge required a team effort. They carried those lessons into the second round and earned a place in the final.

Russell said communication and trust proved as important as technical proficiency throughout the competition.

"Communication was key, in the right dosage," Russell said. "Over communicate and people lose focus. Under communicate and you waste time."

That balance helped the members share information without disrupting those still working through other challenges.

The final remained close. Competition officials turned off the live leaderboard during the last few hours, leaving teams without information about their standings. Immediately before the leaderboard disappeared, ENOENTHUSIASM had taken the lead by only a few points.

**"AT THAT POINT, WE KNEW WE
REALLY HAD A SHOT..."**

- Maj. James C. Russell

The team continued working without knowing whether another group had overtaken it. CISA later named ENOENTHUSIASM the winner of the team track.

Although the competition presented more controlled problems than cyber professionals typically encounter during operations, Russell said the pressure and uncertainty provided valuable training.

"We constantly train in high-stress environments so that we perform when it counts," Russell said. "While the challenges are always much neater than what you find in the real world, the time limits, confusion and stress are all real."

The competition required the team to make decisions under strict time constraints, adapt when an approach failed and continue working through uncertainty.

Russell said the technical nature of the competition minimized many of the differences between the Soldiers and Marine. Outside of interservice jokes and different terminology, the members focused on applying their individual experience toward the same objective.

“We went up against some incredible competitors, across multiple fields,” Russell said.

“THE COMPETITION REALLY HIGHLIGHTED JUST HOW MUCH TALENT, INNOVATION, AND PASSION EXISTS IN THE FEDERAL CYBER WORKFORCE.”

- Maj. James C. Russell

Russell served as the only Marine on the team, while Army personnel made up the rest of the team. He viewed the victory as one example of the cyber talent resident within 700 CST, U.S. Marine Corps Forces Cyberspace Command and the Marine Corps.

The White House reception recognized the team’s collective performance and placed Russell alongside his Army teammates as the group’s Marine representative.

Russell viewed the victory as a reflection of the cyber talent within 700 CST, U.S. Marine Corps Forces Cyberspace Command and the Marine Corps. He encouraged Marines to seek opportunities that challenge their skills and connect them with professionals outside their normal organizations.

“Make connections, participate in new events and have fun,” Russell said. “This was a ton of fun, and I’m just thankful for the experience and relationships I’ve built through it.”

Russell’s achievement reflects the technical proficiency and initiative Marines bring to the joint cyber force.

By testing their skills, building relationships and applying lessons learned across organizational boundaries, Marines strengthen the command’s ability to conduct cyberspace operations and support the joint force.



AROUND THE HORN



U.S. Marine Corps Lt. Col. Stephen Brower, the executive officer of Marine Corps Cyberspace Warfare Group, and his daughter spectate a simulated cyber-attack presentation during Family Day at MCCYWG, Undisclosed Location, July 10, 2026. Family Day at MCCYWG educates Marines' family members on the roles and impacts of their Marines while strengthening morale and unit cohesion. (U.S. Marine Corps photo by Sgt. Isaiah W. Smith)

**LATERAL MOVES TO 1702 CYBERSPACE
WARFARE OFFICER, 1706 MARITIME
SPACE OFFICER, AND 1707 INFLUENCE
OFFICER BOARD RESULTS**

MARINE CORPS CYBER GAMES WINNERS

