



U.S. Marine Corps

Visual Information and Excellence in Communication Awards

Guidance for Calendar Year 2024

Program administered by:

Communication Directorate
Headquarters, Marine Corps
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. About The Awards Program	3
Overview	3
Award Programs	3
II. Points Of Contact	3
III. Eligibility and Entry Criteria	4
Personnel Eligibility	4
Product Criteria	4
IV. Marine Corps-Specific Milestones	5
V. COMMSTRAT of the Year Awards	5
Of the Year Categories	5
Of the Year Entry Requirements	6
VI. Submission Guidelines	7
Overview	7
Guidance	8
Appendix A: VIEC Award Categories	8
Overview	8
Award Categories	9
Appendix B: VIEC Submission Workflow	10
I Marine Expeditionary Force	Error! Bookmark not defined.
II Marine Expeditionary Force	Error! Bookmark not defined.
III Marine Expeditionary Force	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Marine Corps Installations Command	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Marine Corps Recruiting Command	Error! Bookmark not defined.

I. ABOUT THE AWARDS PROGRAM

OVERVIEW

The Marine Corps VIEC Awards competition recognizes Communication Strategy and Operations (COMMSTRAT) units, officer and enlisted Marines and civilians whose leadership, writing, photography, videography, graphic design, and communication planning have demonstrated outstanding achievement in furthering the objectives of the Marine Corps and U.S. Department of Defense (DoD). The period of service eligible for consideration of these awards is 1 Jan 2024 through 31 Dec 2024 (CY 2024).

AWARD PROGRAMS

The VIEC Awards Program, in part, feeds into the Department of Defense Media Awards.

1. The **DoD Media Awards** are administered by the Defense Media Activity. There are nine categories in the 2024 DoD competition. The highest-level award is the Defense Communicator of the Year Award, which recognizes the individual who used his or her photography, writing, videography and other skills to communicate information and stories relevant to his or her unit. All Marine Corps first-place winners in the nine categories listed in the DoD SOP below (i.e.: Defense Communicator, Military Photographer, Civilian Photographer, Military Videographer, Civilian Videographer, Military Graphics Artist, Civilian Graphics Artist, Military Writer, and Civilian Writer of the Year) will be submitted by HQMC Communication Directorate (CD) to compete at the DoD-level. Individual submission for all categories will be executed through the Defense Visual Information Distribution Service (DVIDS) Awards Portal via the individual's local unit.

2. The **VIEC awards** will compete and be awarded at the Marine Corps-level in partnership with the United States Marine Corps Combat Correspondents Association (USMCCCA). Submission for all categories, except Communication Plan and the five COMMSTRAT of the Year awards, will be executed through the DVIDS Awards Portal under "Admin Tools." VIEC-specific category descriptions and submission requirements are found in Appendix A of this document. COMMSTRAT of the Year award categories and requirements are listed in section V of this document.

II. POINTS OF CONTACT

1. For questions about VIEC, unit leaders should call (703) 614-1494.
2. HQMC CD POCs:
 - a. CWO5 Wade Spradlin at wade.spradlin@usmc.mil or (703) 614-1494
 - b. GySgt Kassie McDole at kassie.mcdole@usmc.mil or (703) 614-1494.
3. DVIDS Awards Portal can be accessed at <https://v2cms.dvidshub.net/awards>.

****Do not reach out to the DoD Awards coordinator with questions or issues. Pass all queries through HQMC POC.***

III. ELIGIBILITY AND ENTRY CRITERIA

PERSONNEL ELIGIBILITY

1. Competition is open to 2ndLt through Capt and Private through Staff Sergeant active-duty/reserve Marines (enlisted/officer) and Government Service civilians assigned to COMMSTRAT Units/Sections. Marines must hold the PMOS of 45XX.
2. No individual may enter the competition directly.
 - a. Individuals will submit products to their unit into appropriate award categories and unit administrators designated on DVIDS will review for competition compliance in accordance with this, and the DOD SOP.
 - b. Unit administrators will use the "Select Winners" module in DVIDS to push acceptable entries for major command and/or branch-level judging.
 - c. Unit administrators are encouraged to use the "Score Entries" module, as that functionality is a helpful tool to create averages during the judging process.
 - d. If unit administrators do not use "select winners" module entries **WILL NOT** move to the next level of the competition (MAJCOM, Branch) and be available for judging at that level.
3. Marines/civilians assigned to "Stars and Stripes," combatant commands, defense agencies, DoD field activities (DMA, DPAA, etc.) and joint task forces shall submit their individual entries to the VIEC competition. They will not enter the Defense Media Merit Awards (DMMA) competition.
4. NAF personnel, local national employees, and government contractors are ineligible to compete.

PRODUCT CRITERIA

1. All content must have been acquired/created, produced, uploaded to DVIDS and released to the public by 31 Dec 2024 (2359).
2. **Content will contain proper embedded captions and metadata per the DOD SOP or the content will be disqualified.**
3. **Content with copyright and intellectual property infringement will automatically be disqualified unless expressly written permission is included in the caption from the originator. Licenses must be unit-purchased.**
4. Products entering the competition must be the work of personnel designed in paragraph A., section III. of this SOP.
5. Per the DoD Media Awards SOP, "No single product may be entered more than once." True for DoD Media Awards, but not true for the VIEC Awards. For the VIEC Awards program, individual products submitted in individual VIEC categories (e.g., Digital Art) can also be submitted in "of the Year" categories (e.g., MILGRAPH) as one of the submission requirements.
6. Non-appropriated fund (NAF) products are ineligible.

- 7. Products created by government contractor employees are not authorized to compete.
- 8. Products created by non-U.S. government employees, also known as local national employees, are not authorized to compete.
- 9. All disputes at the major command and branch levels will be decided by the Communication Directorate 45XX OCCFLD Support Branch Head.

IV. MARINE CORPS-SPECIFIC MILESTONES

2024

- Jan 1 Program year began
- Dec 1 Early bird entry submission window opens
- Dec 31 Program year ends and final day to upload/publish content on DVIDS for CY2024 award program consideration.

2025

- Jan 1 MAJCOM judging begins via DVIDS Awards Module
- Feb 11 MAJCOM judging concludes via DVIDS Awards Module (2359 EST)
- Feb 13 VIEC judging begins by HQMC CD
- Feb 28 HQMC CD submits 1st place VIEC winners to DMA for DoD-level competition
*only applicable to the 9 DMA “of the Year” categories
- ~March 19 VIEC Award winners announced via MARADMIN
- TBD VIEC Awards presented at the annual COMMSTRAT Training & leadership Development Summit (*date tentative*)

V. COMMSTRAT OF THE YEAR AWARDS

Submission for the five COMMSTRAT of the Year Awards (Marine, SNCO, VIO, Officer, and Unit) will be in accordance with the below guidance. Email award nomination package to HQMC POC’s.

OF THE YEAR CATEGORIES

1. **COMMSTRAT Marine of the Year.** The Communication Strategy and Operations Marine of the Year award recognizes the Marine who most displayed exceptional COMMSTRAT performance, leadership, and courage and who embodies the total Marine concept. Eligible to all E5’s and below with PMOS 4512, 4541, or 4571 (to include E6’s who were E5’s during the competition year).
2. **COMMSTRAT SNCO of the Year.** The Communication Strategy and Operations SNCO of the Year award recognizes the SNCO who most displayed exceptional COMMSTRAT performance, leadership, and courage and who embodies the total Marine concept. Eligible to all SNCOs with PMOS 4591.
3. **COMMSTRAT VIO of the Year.** The Communication Strategy and Operations Visual Information Officer (VIO) of the Year award recognizes the officer who most displayed exceptional technical COMMSTRAT performance, leadership, and courage and who embodies the total Marine concept. Open to Warrant Officers with PMOS 4503.

4. **COMMSTRAT Officer of the Year.** The Communication Strategy and Operations Officer of the Year award recognizes the officer who most displayed exceptional COMMSTRAT performance, leadership, and courage and who embodies the total Marine concept. Open to all officers 01-03 with PMOS 4502.

5. **COMMSTRAT Unit of the Year.** The Communication Strategy and Operations Unit of the Year award recognizes the unit that has demonstrated superior execution of the 45XX Occupational Field core competencies and provided outstanding, professional communication planning, counsel, training, operations, and products.

6. **Communication Plan of the Year.** The Communication Plan of the Year is awarded to the unit or individual who demonstrates excellence in all areas of communication planning.

OF THE YEAR ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

**All templates can be found within the COMMSTRAT Teams channel*

1. COMMSTRAT Marine, SNCO, VIO, and Officer of the Year categories

- a. Each unit may only submit (1) Marine per category.
- b. Summary of action (SOA) nomination letter will be no more than two pages and will highlight achievements endorsed by the unit COMMSTRAT Director and first O6-level commander or chief of staff. Standard endorsement letters must be included.
- c. A Biography limited to two pages.
- d. Data Sheet.
- e. DVIDS "My Album" Portfolio URL with no more than 15 pieces of content (optional for SNCO/VIO/Officer). Album title name should identify category and Marine name.
- f. Attach any non-content (COMM Plans, award citations) to the package, as desired, as enclosures. Limit to five enclosures.
- g. Entire package must be saved and consolidated into one file (including enclosures), and must be scanned in sequence listed above. Enclosures must be identified and addressed in the write up, per Naval Correspondence Manual.
- h. Packages missing any of the requirements above, 1.a-1.g, will be disqualified.

2. Entry requirements for COMMSTRAT Unit of the Year category

- a. Summary of action nomination letter will be no more than four pages. SOA must be signed by the unit COMMSTRAT Director and endorsed by the first O6-level or higher commander or chief of staff through a standard endorsement letter. The SOA letter must include achievements worthy

of award and must include individual paragraphs on how the unit accomplished each of the COMMSTRAT Marine Corps Tasks.

- b. DVIDS “My Album” Unit Portfolio URL with no more than 20 pieces of content
 - i. Content types and variety are highly encouraged to show breadth of production.
 - ii. Album title name should identify category and unit name.
 - iii. A link to the DVIDS unit page does **NOT** satisfy this requirement.

c. Attach any non-content (COMM Plans, production reports, etc.) to the package, as desired, as enclosures. Limit to eight enclosures.

d. Entire package must be saved and consolidated into one file (including enclosures), and must be scanned in sequence listed above in 2.b.i. Enclosures must be identified and addressed in the write up, per Naval Correspondence Manual.

3. Entry requirements for Communication Plan of the Year

a. A standard nomination endorsement letter signed by the first O6-commander or chief of staff is required. If submitting the communication plan as a unit award, the endorsement must come from a non-COMMSTRAT officer. An O6 AC/S COMMSTRAT director may sign the endorsement if the plan is submitted as an individual award.

b. Submit via email to HQMC_45XX_Proponent@usmc.mil.

c. Communication Plan must outline and describe the Research, Plan, Implementation, and Evaluation (RPIE) process. Sections must include a problem or opportunity statement; the research conducted to understand the problem/opportunity, the specific public identified, and the knowledge, attitude, or behavior change that was sought; communication tactics planned and implemented; measures of performance (MOPs) and measures of effectiveness (MOEs); and an evaluation of the results. Include a list of all contributing Marines to the development of the Communication Plan.

d. Must include URLs of produced content, media engagements, social media posts, printed products, etc.

e. Entire package must be saved and consolidated into one file (including enclosures) and must be scanned in sequence listed above.

VI. SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

OVERVIEW

Due to awards system updates, and review and judging constraints, the VIEC submission process has changed. A tiered concept of “Major Commands” and submission limits has been established to select the most qualified products and personnel more effectively. New submission procedures are defined below:

GUIDANCE

1. Some units have been reorganized into five major commands while others, due to their unique size and command will remain directly aligned to the branch. In most cases, the reorganization reflects standard service chain of command/authority. For the purposes of the awards Marine Corps Recruit Depots will submit to the Marine Corps Installations Command major command. **See Appendix B for a detailed submission hierarchy and workflow.**

2. The five Major Commands are:

- a. I Marine Expeditionary Force
- b. II Marine Expeditionary Force
- c. III Marine Expeditionary Force
- d. Marine Corps Installations Command
- e. Marine Corps Recruiting Command

3. Units will conduct unit-level scoring and voting within the DVIDS awards portal in order to submit the most qualified media products to the major command or branch level.

4. Units submitting to major commands will select 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place winners to move the products to the next level. Units will only submit three entries per category to the major command level.

5. Any unit not directly subordinate to the five major commands (*see Appendix B*) will submit directly to the branch level. These units will select 1st place winners only, and are only authorized to submit one entry per category per unit, due to their combined organizational structure not exceeding that of the largest major command.

6. Each major command will conduct scoring and voting within the DVIDS awards portal in order to submit the most qualified media products from all submitting units to the branch level. Major commands must select 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place winners to move the products to the next level. Major commands will only submit three entries per category to the major branch level.

7. The five major commands are responsible for establishing a process for conducting regionally based voting in order to submit the most qualified media products to the branch level. If products do not reach the branch level by the required milestone, they will not be judged.

8. All COMMSTRAT of the Year awards and Communication Plan of the year entries will continue to be submitted directly to the branch level from individual units per the guidance found in this SOP.

APPENDIX A: VIEC AWARD CATEGORIES

OVERVIEW

The VIEC categories mirror the DoD Media Awards with some variations as indicated below. All submissions must follow rules found within the DMA SOP located here: DVIDS (dvidshub.net). The

category descriptions and requirements are listed in the DoD SOP. The following personnel are eligible for the VIEC award categories: Private through Staff Sergeant active-duty and reserve Enlisted Marines, as well as Government Service civilians of equivalent grade.

AWARD CATEGORIES

Submission into the below categories are through the DVIDS Awards Portal.

**Indicates that the category feeds into the DMAs for competition against other services.*

Communication

1. **Marine Corps Communicator of the Year***

Graphic Design

1. **Digital Art** (*individual award*)
2. **Identity Design** (*individual award*)
3. **Layout and Design** (*individual award*)
4. **Animation** (*individual award*)
5. **Photo Illustration** (*individual award*)
6. ***Marine Corps Civilian Graphic Designer of the Year** (*individual award*)
7. ***Marine Corps Graphic Designer of the Year** (*individual award*)

Photography

1. **Photo Series** (*individual award*)
2. **News Photo** (*individual award*). News imagery should conform to elements of news including but not limited to; immediacy, proximity, prominence, oddity, conflict, suspense, emotion, and consequence.
3. **Feature Photo** (*individual award*)
4. **Portrait** (*individual award*)
5. **Sports Photography** (*individual award*)
6. ***Civilian Photographer of the Year** (*individual award*)
7. ***Military Photographer of the Year** (*individual award*)
8. **Photojournalism** (*See requirements listed in Print Categories section below*)

Videography

1. **Short-form Production Video** (*unit award*). Entry must be more than 3:00 minutes but less than 10:00 minutes. DVIAN is required for unit entry. All contributors should be listed in the Credit and Caption Line for unit entry. One submission per unit. Category found under Submit Products>Team.
2. **Long-form Production Video** (*unit award*). Entry must be more than 10:00 minutes. DVIAN is required for unit entry. All contributors should be listed in the Credit and Caption Line for unit entry. One submission per unit. Category found under Submit Products>Team.
3. **B-roll Videography** (*individual award*)

4. **Multimedia Product** (*individual award*). Note: Video intro and outro graphics or lower thirds DO NOT count as animation for this category.
5. **Video Story** (*individual award*)
6. **Video Spot** (*individual award*)
7. **Editing** (*individual award*) The Editing category is designed to recognize the talents and achievements of the entrant in editing a clip depicting any aspect of the military mission. Post-production techniques such as narration, interviews, music, dissolves, wipes, split screens, slow motion, color grading, and computer graphic displays are encouraged in this category. Footage used for this clip may or may not be the work of the individual submitting the entry. Up to 100% of the entry may be military-generated archival stock footage. Up to 30 seconds of the clip may be non-military historical/archival stock footage, if critical to the story. At least 75% of the footage must have been edited by the entrant. Natural sound, music, interviews with identified participant for voice-over, and narration may be used. Music videos are allowed. There will be no reporter stand-ups. Entry must not exceed 4 minutes.
8. ***Marine Corps Civilian Videographer of the Year** (*individual award*)
9. ***Marine Corps Videographer of the Year** (*individual award*)

Print

1. **Information Story** (*individual award*)
2. **Feature Story** (*individual award*)
3. **Photojournalism** (*individual award*)
4. ***Marine Corps Civilian Writer of the Year** (*individual award*)
5. ***Marine Corps Writer of the Year** (*individual award*)

APPENDIX B: VIEC SUBMISSION WORKFLOW

All Units are based on current unit listings within the DVIDS "Unit Contacts" portal. This list is current as of 1/15/2025. If your unit falls within one of the major commands and is not listed here, contact awards coordinators listed in this SOP for assistance prior to submitting any awards.









