



U.S. Marine Corps

Visual Information and Excellence in Communication Awards Guidance for Calendar Year 2025

Program administered by:

Communication Directorate
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Visual Information and Excellence in Communication Awards

Calendar Year 2025

1. Purpose and Scope.

This standard operating procedure (SOP) establishes the policies, procedures, and criteria for the Visual Information and Excellence in Communication (VIEC) Awards Program for Calendar Year 2025. The purpose of the VIEC Awards is to:

- Recognize and celebrate outstanding achievements in Visual Information (VI) and communication products created by United States Marine Corps (USMC) Communication Strategy and Operations (COMMSTRAT) personnel.
- Promote excellence, innovation, and professionalism within the COMMSTRAT occupational field.
- Encourage the creation of high-quality content that effectively tells the Marine Corps story, supports strategic communication objectives, and informs target audiences.

This program encompasses individual and unit awards across various categories, including photography, videography, graphic design, and written communication. It applies to all eligible USMC COMMSTRAT personnel. It also applies to work produced and publicly released during the performance period of 1 January 2025 through 31 December 2025.

2. Points of Contact.

For questions or assistance regarding the VIEC Awards Program, please contact the following:

- **Master Sergeant Kassie McDole**
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Communication Directorate, HQMC
Email: kassie.mcdole@usmc.mil
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3. Eligibility and Entry Criteria.

This section outlines the requirements for both personnel and the VI products. Adherence to these criteria is mandatory for all submissions. **Non-compliance will result in disqualification.**

3.1. Personnel Eligibility.

Marines who do not meet Marine Corps standards and/or who have violated the UCMJ during the 2025 Calendar Year are **NOT** eligible to submit entries. The following are automatic disqualifiers:

- Failure to meet HT/WT requirements.
- Failure to meet PFT/CFT requirements.
- Failure to qualify on the rifle range (if required).
- Received an adverse Pg 11, 3005, 6105, Non-Judicial Punishment (NJP), Competency Review Board (CRB), court-martial conviction or any other official punitive documentation violating the UCMJ.
- Received an Adverse FITREP.

The following personnel are eligible to submit entries to the VIEC awards, provided the work was completed during the designated performance period while serving in a USMC COMMSTRAT capacity.

Submissions may include product-based entries submitted via the DVIDS awards portal and package-based submissions for the "Of the Year" categories.

NOTE: Eligibility is category specific. Each category has its own rank requirements as listed in the criteria. For example, a MSgt is not eligible to submit a product for the Video Story category but is eligible to compete for SNCO Of the Year. Contact POCs listed on Page 3 with any questions.

- **Enlisted Marines (E-1 through E-9)** regardless of MOS, are eligible for relevant individual and unit categories. **NOTE:** E-9s are only eligible to submit to relevant unit categories.
- **Officers (O-1 through O-6 and WO through CWO4):** regardless of MOS, are eligible for relevant individual and unit categories. **NOTE:** O-4 through O-6 and CWO4s are only eligible to submit to relevant unit categories.
- **Marines Separated During the Calendar Year:** Marines who received an Honorable Discharge from the Marine Corps during Calendar Year 2025 are eligible to submit work produced during their active-duty or reserve service in that Calendar Year. The parent unit leadership of the Marine may submit products on their behalf.
- **USMC Civilian Personnel:** (GS-1 through GS-12)
- Entrants must be U.S. government civilian employees. Those assigned to Stars & Stripes, contractors, and all non-appropriated fund (NAF) products and NAF personnel are ineligible.
- Government contract employees may not compete in any individual category; however, products produced with assistance of government contract employees are eligible for unit categories.

3.2. Product Criteria.

All submitted products must adhere to the following criteria. **Non-compliance will result in disqualification.**

- **Performance Period:** Products must have been created, approved for public release, and published to the Defense Visual Information Distribution Service (DVIDS) between 12:01 EST on 1 January 2025 and 23:59 EST on 31 December 2025.
- **Submission:** Marines **MUST** submit through the command they are a member of at the time of submission. Marines will **NOT** submit through more than one unit.
- **Compliance with DoW Standards:** All visual information products must adhere to the following versions of the DoD/DoW Visual Information Style Guide (VISG):
 - Products published between 12:01 EST on 1 January 2025 and 23:59 EST on 11 September 2025 must comply with the DoD VISG (dated September 2020).
 - Products published between 12:01 EST on 12 September 2025 and 23:59 EST on 31 December 2025 must comply with the new DoW VISG (dated 12 September 2025).
- Additionally, all products, regardless of their publication date, must comply with all relevant DoD Instructions (including DoDI 5040.07 and DoDI 5040.02) and MCO 5700.45.
- **Ethical Alterations:** Any alteration of official imagery intended to mislead or deceive is strictly prohibited and will result in immediate disqualification.
 - **Permitted:** Basic corrections of color, brightness, contrast, and judicious cropping that does not alter context are permitted without disclosure.
 - **Disclosure Required:** Manipulations beyond basic corrections must be labeled as a "photo illustration" in the credit line and described in a notice after the credit line (e.g., "This image was created in color and changed to black-and-white."). This includes High Dynamic Range (HDR) techniques, stitching panoramas, adding text/logos, or any other significant alteration.

NOTE: If an image was created in-camera as a black-and-white image, the image is permitted to be captioned as a photo and no disclosure is required. However, the submitter must provide proof of the raw photo, if queried.
 - **Prohibited:** The addition, removal, or changing of photographic details to misrepresent reality (e.g., removing people, altering rank insignia, changing backgrounds) is a prohibited alteration.
- **Metadata:** All products must contain accurate and complete metadata embedded in the file as required by the DoW VISG. This includes a valid Visual Information Record Identification Number (VIRIN), Defense Visual Information Activity Number (DVIAN), a complete caption, keywords, and full release instructions (release status, releasing authority's name, duty position, and contact information). All submitters and judges should ensure the product date captured matches the VIRIN and the date within the caption.
 - **NOTE:** DVIAN (Defense Visual Information Activity Number): A unique identifier assigned to each military unit for tracking visual information products. Your unit's DVIAN can be found on DVIDS under Admin – Unit Contacts – Find your unit – under unit information. For example, 2nd Marine Division's DVIAN is Z7052.

- **Copyright and Licensed Material:** Products containing copyrighted or licensed material (music, video, graphics, etc.) will be disqualified unless the caption includes a notice of its use, and the unit possesses verifiable written permission granting the DoW unlimited, perpetual use. A screenshot from a website is not adequate permission. A sentence is required after the credit line to provide notice of licensed material. Acceptable forms of verifiable written permission include:
 - A signed license agreement with the copyright holder.
 - A direct email from the copyright holder explicitly granting the DoW unlimited, perpetual use.
 - Commercial license certificate (like from AudioJungle, Artlist, etc.)
 - Public domain certification
 - **NOTE:** The use of Adobe Stock is covered under the Marine Corps Enterprise License for COMMSTRAT. If a unit deviates from this contract, they must provide one of the above-listed forms of verifiable written permission.

- **Hometown Information (Privacy Act Compliance):** Releasing a service member's hometown (city and state) requires their express written consent per DoD 5400.11-R, "DoD Privacy Program." Releasing the home state alone is permissible without written consent. Commands must be prepared to provide documentation of written consent if queried.

- **Artificial Intelligence (AI) Disclosure Requirements:** Per DoDI 5400.19, VI created by or edited with generative AI must comply with the following:
 - **Caption Requirements** (after credit line):
 - Cite the use of generative AI.
 - Specify the purpose or extent of AI use (e.g., "Background removed using Adobe Photoshop generative AI" or "Graphic elements generated using Midjourney AI").
 - Include verification statement: "Reviewed and verified by [rank/name], [position] to ensure compliance with DoD policies and guidance."
 - Note any specific non-corrective modifications or enhancements.
 - Examples:
 - For AI-Generated content: This [image/graphic/text] was created using [AI tool name] and reviewed by [rank/name], [duty position] to ensure compliance with DoW policies.
 - For AI-Assisted Editing: This product was edited using AI-assisted tools ([tool name]) for [specific purpose: color correction/background removal/text enhancement]. Final product reviewed by [rank/name], [duty position].
For AI Enhancement: Portions of this content were enhanced using generative AI ([tool name]) for [specific modification]. All alterations verified by [rank/name], [duty position] for accuracy and compliance with DoDI 5040.02.

- **Exclusivity:** A single product (e.g., one photo, one video) may be entered in only **ONE** award category. For example, the same photo may **NOT** be submitted in both the Portrait and Photo Series categories. A product submitted to an individual VIEC category can **ALSO NOT** be part of a portfolio submission for a VIEC "Of the Year" award. **Additionally, submitters**

may submit only one product per category; however, they may submit to more than one category with different products if the rank and entry criteria are met.

4. Marine Corps-Specific Milestones.

This section outlines key dates and deadlines for the VIEC Awards Program for Calendar Year 2025. Adherence to these milestones is crucial for a timely and efficient awards cycle.

- **28 Dec:** Official release of CY2025 VIEC Awards Guidance SOP via MARADMIN.
 - **28 Dec:** Submission window opens via DVIDS Awards Portal.
 - **1 Jan:** Unit/MAJCOM-level judging period begins via DVIDS Awards Portal.
 - **21 Feb:** MAJCOM judging concludes via DVIDS Awards Portal (2359 EST). **No extensions will be granted.**
 - **21 Feb (2359 EST):** Submission deadline for “Of the Year” packages via email to CD, HQMC POCs listed on Page 3. **No extensions will be granted. Submitters are strongly encouraged to request a read receipt for their email submissions to confirm delivery.**
 - **23 Feb:** VIEC judging begins by CD, HQMC, and the United States Marine Corps Combat Correspondents Association (USMCCCA).
 - **~4 Apr:** VIEC Award winners announced via MARADMIN.
 - **~Aug:** VIEC Awards presented at the annual COMMSTRAT Training and Leadership Development Summit (date TBD) in coordination with the USMCCCA.
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5. Submission Guidelines.

This section provides detailed instructions for preparing and submitting entries to the VIEC Awards Program. Adherence to these guidelines is crucial to ensure proper processing and avoid disqualification.

5.1. Overview.

All entries for the VIEC Awards will be submitted via the Defense Visual Information Distribution Service (DVIDS) Awards Portal at <https://v2cms.dvidshub.net/awards/submit>. Submissions must be complete and adhere to all specified technical and content requirements by the designated deadline. Users are strongly encouraged to submit entries well in advance to allow time to resolve technical issues.

5.2. Guidance.

- **DVIDS Portal Navigation:**
 - Familiarize yourself with the DVIDS Awards Portal. Comprehensive user guides and tutorials are available on the portal.

- Report any technical issues encountered with the portal to the HQMC Communication Directorate POC immediately. While DVIDS is the primary submission platform, alternative submission methods may be explored and communicated if systemic issues arise that prevent widespread access.
- **DVIDS Portfolio:**
 - The portfolio is a fundamental tool for professional development and operational readiness. Its importance transcends any single program, including the VIEC Program, and it must be treated as a core component of a COMMSTRAT Marine's career.
 - Portfolios are "living documents" that will be managed with the same intensity as a Marine's training jacket or OMPF.
 - Development, maintenance, and periodic review of portfolios within a unit will show the strengths and weaknesses for leadership and technical growth.
 - Marines are responsible for continuous self-assessment, updating their portfolios after each imagery acquisition iteration, and reviewing them prior to every Visual Information Documentation (VIDOC) opportunity.
- **VIRINs:**
 - Adhere strictly to the specified file formats and naming conventions for each category, as detailed in Appendix A. Improper file formats or naming conventions may lead to disqualification.
- **Submission Limits:**
 - Each eligible Marine or civilian may submit **one (1) entry per award category**.
 - A single product **MAY NOT** be entered into more than one category.
 - Units may only submit three entries per category.
- **Replacing or Deleting Submissions:**
 - Instructions for replacing or deleting a submitted entry on the DVIDS portal will be provided within the portal's user guide. Users are responsible for ensuring their final submission is correct before the deadline.
- **Originality and Plagiarism:**
 - All submissions must be original work. Plagiarism in any form will result in immediate disqualification and potential disciplinary action.

6. VIEC DVIDS Award Portal Categories.

This appendix provides a comprehensive list of the Visual Information and Excellence in Communication (VIEC) Award categories for Calendar Year 2025. Each category includes a brief

description, specific criteria for evaluation, and technical submission requirements. Submitters are encouraged to review these details carefully to ensure their entries meet the competition's standards.

Civilian "Of the Year" Awards

- Categories for Civilian Communicator, Photographer, Videographer, Writer, and Graphic Designer "Of the Year" will mirror the portfolio requirements of their military counterparts.

6.1. DVIDS Award Categories.

Photography: Eligible for E-1 through E-6, including E-7s who were E-6s during the competition year.

1. News Photo (Individual Award)

- **Description:** A single photograph that captures a news event, incident, or activity of significant interest to internal or external audiences. Focus is on timeliness, impact, and journalistic integrity.
- **Criteria:** Scheduled or unscheduled news event featuring a military organization, employees, equipment, or family members.
 - Technical quality, journalistic content, emotional impact, composition, and adherence to ethical photojournalism standards.

2. Feature Photo (Individual Award)

- **Description:** A single photograph that illustrates an aspect of DoW life, culture, or training, often with a human-interest focus. It goes beyond breaking news to provide depth and insight.
- **Criteria:** Storytelling picture not news related, usually a situation that has strong human interest or a fresh view of a commonplace occurrence featuring a military organization, military equipment, employees or family members.
 - Creativity, originality, emotional resonance, composition, and technical excellence.

3. Portrait Photo (Individual Award)

- **Description:** A single photograph that captures the essence of an individual's character. Focus is on conveying personality, emotion, or role.
- **Criteria:** Subject must have a connection to the military. Only one person may be portrayed prominently (as the main subject) in the photo. Official photos are not allowed.

4. Sports Photo (Individual Award)

- **Description:** A single photograph capturing a moment in sports, physical training, or athletic competition within the DoW.

- **Criteria:** Photograph may include team competitions, practices, or sports as part of physical conditioning training. Action shots are encouraged. Team portraits are not permitted (group photos).

5. Photo Series/Picture Story (Individual Award)

- **Description:** A collection of photographs that tell a cohesive story or illustrate a single event or theme. Each photo must stand alone but contribute to the overall narrative.
- **Criteria:** The series must consist of at least 7 and no more than 12 photos, depicting a military or military-related storyline or theme, such as a military operation, contingency, exercise or training event. Coverage must be pre-planned and deliberate, with photos captured over the course of the contest year acceptable. Photos may capture one aspect of a military operation or exercise or the entire event. Key is that the coverage aligns with a specific communication objective. Controlled and uncontrolled action photos are acceptable. A picture story is considered a photo series.

6. Marine Corps Photographer Of the Year (Individual Award): (E-1 through E-6) Civilian Photographer Of the Year (Individual Award): (GS-1 through GS-6)

- Submit entry as a portfolio within the DVIDS Awards interface module.
 - The purpose of the portfolio is to demonstrate one's ability to take photos in a variety of settings. Therefore, products from more than one operation or event earn higher scores.
- Entry must contain seven photo products each clearly labeled for the judges when submitting:
 - One news photo.
 - One feature photo.
 - One portrait.
 - Three photos of the candidate's choice.
 - One photo series consisting of at least seven, but no more than 12 photos.
 - Note: Create the photo series as a collection within DVIDS before adding the collection to the portfolio and attempting to enter the category.
 - Submit only one photo series.
 - Do not submit a composite layout.
 - Entry must contain 13 to 18 images in total.
- Other requirements:
 - Photo illustrations are not authorized.
 - Do not submit a photojournalism product as a candidate's choice.
 - Do not submit photos from a photojournalism product if it is part of the Defense Communicator Of the Year portfolio.
 - Do not submit the same photo more than once.
 - Do not enter the same photo from the photo series as a portrait, news photo, feature photo, or any candidate's choice photo.

- This rule does not prevent submission of a different photo from that same operation as a portrait, news photo, feature photo, or any candidate's choice photo.

Videography: Eligible for E-1 through E-6, including E-7s who were E-6s during the competition year.

1. B-roll (Individual Award)

- **Description:** A collection of unedited or lightly edited video clips filmed by a single individual, centered on a military-related theme. Footage is intended to be used by other outlets.
- **Criteria:** Product must focus on a single military-related theme and be filmed entirely by one individual. It should not include reporter standups, narration, or music bed. Natural sound is encouraged. An interview with a subject matter expert may be included; however, the interview may not be used throughout the sound bed. B-roll footage may also be used in a multimedia product, video story, or video series produced by the same individual.
 - Focuses on the quality of cinematography, variety of shots (long, medium, close), stability, and the overall usefulness of the footage as a resource for storytelling.

2. Video Story (Individual Award)

- **Description:** A complete, edited video package, that tells a news, feature, or personality-focused story with military relevance.
- **Criteria:** Entry must be between 2:00 and 5:00 minutes in length. Submitter must have filmed at least 51 percent of the footage with the remainder coming from any other non-copyrighted source. Submitter must have performed all the editing. Lower-thirds and an opening title are acceptable, and appropriate effects, fades or wipes are allowed. Natural sound, music and voice-over narration may be used. Reporter stand-ups are allowed but not required.

3. Editing (Individual Award)

- **Description:** Focuses exclusively on the editor's skill in post-production. It recognizes the ability to assemble footage (which may be sourced from others) into a compelling narrative using advanced editing techniques.
- **Criteria:** Designed to recognize the talents and achievements of the submitter 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. Footage may be sourced from the submitter's work or from others, with up to 100% of the entry potentially using military-generated archival stock footage. Up to 30 seconds of non-military historical/archival stock footage may be included, if critical to the story. 100% of the footage must have

been edited by the submitter. Natural sound, music, interviews with an 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.

4. **Multimedia Product (Individual Award)**

- **Description:** A single, cohesive story told using a combination of multiple media types.
- **Criteria:** Product must illustrate visual storytelling techniques across multiple digital mediums while telling a story with a military tie. It must use at least four media types, such as audio, video, photography, graphics, animation, or other visual tools. The product can be a feature, personality, or news journalism piece. Product must be a single story, produced and edited by one individual, with at least 51 percent of the content created by that individual. Product may include dramatization if:
 - It does not misrepresent the subject of the original footage.
 - It is clearly indicated that the dramatization is not an accurate representation of the actual event.
 - The caption indicates the product contains dramatization (see Enclosure 10 of DoD Instruction 5040.02 for specific requirements).

5. **Video Spot (Individual Award)**

- **Description:** A concise video designed for rapid consumption on digital platforms, optimized for news or social media (e.g. commercials). Focus on quick storytelling, strong visual impact, and effective messaging. This includes reels, short explainers, standups, or impactful vignettes.
- **Criteria:** The video must be 60 seconds or less in duration and created entirely by one individual (planned, filmed, and edited). Identify the target audience in the caption. Technical execution planning and audience targeting are key.

6. **Short-Form Video Production (Individual or Unit Award)**

- **Description:** Designed to provide a comprehensive look at a specific event, topic, or story. This category is for content that requires more time for in-depth narrative development than a brief social media clip but is more concise than a full-length documentary. It is suitable for detailed news packages, feature stories, interviews, or informational segments that explore a subject with significant detail and context.
- **Criteria:** Entry must be between 3:00 and 10:00 minutes in length. A DVIAN is required for unit entry, and all contributors must be listed in the Credit and Caption Line. One submission per unit.

7. **Long-Form Video Production (Individual or Unit Award)**

- **Description:** Designed to provide an in-depth, comprehensive video of a specific event, topic, or story. This category is for content that requires extensive narrative development and a more detailed, thorough examination than a short-form video production. This can include news packages, documentaries, or promotional videos.

- **Criteria:** Entry must be more than 10:00 minutes. A DVIAN is required for unit entry, and all contributors must be listed in the Credit and Caption Line. One submission per unit.

8. **Marine Corps Videographer Of the Year (Individual Award): (E-1 through E-6)** **Civilian Videographer Of the Year (Individual Award): (GS-1 through GS-6)**

- Entry must be the work of one individual.
- Submit entry as a collection within the DVIDS Awards interface module.
- Entry must contain four video products each clearly labeled for the judges when submitting:
 - One b-roll video.
 - One video story.
 - Two products of the candidate's choice, either a video story, multimedia product, video spot, or one video from a video series. A video designed exclusively for use on social media platforms may also be entered as a candidate's choice only if the video has been uploaded to DVIDS.
- Other requirements:
 - A b-roll video package may not be submitted as a candidate's choice; however, a portion of the b-roll may be used to create the candidate's choice products (e.g. video story, multimedia product... etc.).
 - Slates are not required.
 - Videos may contain closed captions, but they are not required.

Graphic Design: Eligible for E-1 through E-6, including E-7s who were E-6s during the competition year.

1. **Animation (Individual Award)**

- **Description:** An animated sequence or motion graphics piece designed to explain a concept, enhance a video, or provide visual information.
- **Criteria:** Product includes various media components that allow for animation, such as video production elements, digital displays, web animations, and infographics. Eligible formats include lower thirds, stingers, animated infographics, or standalone animated explainer videos. Any animation style is allowed, such as 2-D, 2.5-D, 3-D, or stop motion. Standard lower thirds (even if motion is present) do not qualify as animation. Must not use any copyrighted materials, such as movie clips, and sound bites or music without broadcast rights. Product may not contain copyrighted rigs, props, or characters.

2. **Layout and Design (Individual Award)**

- **Description:** A standalone static graphic product, created to inform, educate, promote, or commemorate an event or topic.
- **Criteria:** Single- or two-page layouts created using elements from various sources. Examples include info charts, infographics, programs, flyers, certificates, CD covers,

cover art, and posters. All must be completed by the submitter, but elements can come from other sources. Entries are limited to two pages and may be extracted from a larger work published between 1 Jan 2025 and 31 Dec 2025. Layouts from interactive publications or interactive PDF documents are not allowed.

3. Digital Art (Individual Award)

- **Description:** An original artistic work created entirely by digital means. This is not an enhancement of a photograph but rather a piece created from a "digital canvas." Examples include digital paintings, vector art, and 3-D renderings.
- **Criteria:** A hand-drawn sketch may be used as the starting point, but any marks from the sketch must not be visible in the final product. Does not include animation, cartoons, comic strips, and still photographs enhanced by digital means.
 - The work demonstrates mastery of digital tools and techniques.

4. Identity Design (Individual Award)

- **Description:** An original work that creates a visual identity for a military entity, used in an official capacity. This category focuses on logos, crests, and other branding symbols.
- **Criteria:** Unit crests must have been registered with the appropriate office of heraldry prior to entry. Submitter must be prepared to provide proof of registration upon request. Design effectively represents the identity and mission of the unit or organization.
 - See MCO 5750.1H Manual for the Marine Corps Historical Program for specific requirements.

5. Photo Illustration (Individual Award)

- **Description:** A graphic design product that creatively combines photographic elements to create a unique visual narrative or concept. The focus is on creating an entirely new artistic piece, rather than simply enhancing or altering standard photographs. **Simple black and white conversions or double exposures of otherwise standard photographs are not considered photo illustrations for this category.**
- **Criteria:** Submission must be a single image or graphic created using one or more images, with all graphic production completed by the submitter. Final product must be properly identified as a photo illustration in the caption.

6. Marine Corps Graphic Designer Of the Year (Individual Award): (E-1 through E-6) Civilian Graphic Designer Of the Year (Individual Award): (GS-1 through GS-6)

- Entry must be the work of one individual.
- Submit entry as a collection within the DVIDS Awards interface module.
- Entry must consist of six graphic design products each clearly labeled for the judges when submitting:
 - One layout & design product.
 - One digital art product.
 - Four graphic design products of the candidate's choice.

- Other requirements:
 - Do not submit two-dimensional work created by free-hand methods using dry- or wet based methods, such as line art, sketches, watercolors and oil paintings, and work created using pencil, chalk and charcoal; pictures of displays; and fine art pieces.
 - Do not submit layouts from interactive publications or interactive PDF's.

Written Communication: Eligible for E-1 through E-6, and O-1 through O-3. This includes E-7s who were E-6s and O-4s who were O-3s during the competition year.

1. Information Story (Individual Award)

- **Description:** A news-style story that objectively reports on an event, activity, or policy.
- **Criteria:** The story must effectively convey information while answering the five W's (who, what, where, when, why) and H (how). It may be written in various formats, including the Inverted Pyramid, Kabob/Wall Street Journal Style, Hour/Martini Glass, and Question and Answer. News and sports stories are allowed.

2. Feature Story (Individual Award)

- **Description:** An in-depth story that explores a topic, person, or event with more detail and narrative flair than a news story. Often includes human interest elements.
- **Criteria:** Feature story must maintain a clear focus, supported and developed throughout the piece. Product may be a sports, human interest, personality or news feature.

3. Photojournalism (Individual Award)

- **Description:** A combined product that pairs a written story with a set of supporting photographs to provide in-depth, cohesive coverage of a single topic or event. This category judges the entrant's ability to excel as both a writer and a photographer, seamlessly integrating both mediums to create a powerful narrative.
- **Criteria:** Product includes a story and at least three, but no more than five photographs with embedded captions. Photos and story must be on the same topic and must be the work of one individual.
 - Each photograph must have a complete and accurate caption embedded in its metadata that answers the 5 W's (Who, What, When, Where, and Why).

4. Marine Corps Writer Of the Year (Individual Award): (E-1 through E-7 and O-1 through O-3) Civilian Writer Of the Year (Individual Award): (GS-1 through GS-12)

- Entry must be the work of one individual.
- Submit entry as a collection within the DVIDS Awards interface module.
- Entry must contain five products each clearly labeled for the judges when submitting:
 - One information story/Press Release

- One feature story
- Three stories of the candidate's choice
- Other requirements:
 - Products must be from separate events.
 - Do not submit a photojournalism product in its entirety. A story from a photojournalism product may be entered as a candidate's choice, but only if the entire photojournalism product (photos and story) is not entered into the Marine Corps Communicator Of the Year category.
 - Upload each story as a separate story in DVIDS.

5. **Marine Corps Communicator Of the Year (Individual Award): (E-1 through E-6)** **Civilian Communicator Of the Year (Individual Award): (GS-1 through GS-6)**

- Open to both military and civilian personnel if they meet eligibility criteria.
- Entry must be a portfolio profiling the work credited to one individual.
- Submit entry as a portfolio within the DVIDS Awards interface module.
- Entry will consist of five products each clearly labeled for the judges when submitting:
 - One print story (must be either a commentary, feature story, information story or one story of a series).
 - One video story
 - One photo (must be either a news photo, feature photo, portrait or one photo from a photo series).
 - Two products of the candidate's choice (must not be a photo series).
 - Only one of the candidate's choices may be a photojournalism product (3-5 photos and a story), but it must be on a topic or event different from the other products in the portfolio.
 - Only one photojournalism product may be entered as part of the portfolio.

7. **COMMSTRAT “Of the Year” Awards.**

The COMMSTRAT “Of the Year” awards recognize individual excellence and leadership within the different ranks of the occupational field. These awards highlight Marines and civilians who have demonstrated exceptional skill, dedication, and impact on Marine Corps and COMMSTRAT efforts throughout the 2025 Calendar Year.

7.1. **Command-endorsed COMMSTRAT “Of the Year” Categories.**

1. **COMMSTRAT Unit Of the Year (Unit Award):**

- **Description:** Recognizes a COMMSTRAT unit that has demonstrated overall excellence in supporting its command's communication objectives through outstanding visual information and public affairs products.

- **Criteria:** Breadth and quality of products across multiple disciplines, responsiveness to command needs, innovation in communication strategies, measurable impact on internal and external audiences, and contributions to the professional development of its Marines.
 - **Submission Limit:** One (1) entry per unit.
 - **Submission Requirements:** A comprehensive portfolio (PDF format, max 20 pages) showcasing a selection of the unit's best work (including links to DVIDS), a narrative outlining achievement, challenges overcome, and overall impact. Supporting documents may be included.
 - Summary of action (SOA) 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.
 - DVIDS "My Album" Unit Portfolio URL with no more than 20 pieces of content.
 - Content types and variety are highly encouraged to show breadth of production.
 - Album title name should identify category and unit name.
 - A link to the DVIDS unit page does NOT satisfy this requirement.
 - Attach any non-content (COMM Plans, production reports, etc.) to the package, as desired, as enclosures. Limit to eight enclosures.
 - 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.
 - Packages must be sent to the CD, HQMC POCs listed on Page 3. Packages received after the deadline will be disqualified.

2. **Command Communication Strategy Of the Year (Individual or Unit Award) *New Category***

- **Description:** Recognizes a COMMSTRAT unit that has demonstrated overall excellence in supporting theater-level strategies or campaign plans through the planning and integration of inform activities and implementation of communication theory.
- **Criteria:** Breadth and quality of products across the following planning pillars: narrative development, audience segmentation, communication approach and objectives, means of dissemination or communication tactics, and assessment methodologies.
 - **Submission Limit:** One (1) entry per unit.
 - **Submission Requirements:** A comprehensive portfolio (PDF format) showcasing the completed communication strategy (including links to DVIDS if applicable), a narrative outlining achievement, challenges overcome, and overall impact. Supporting documents may be included.

- A standard nomination endorsement letter signed by the unit commander or first general officer in the chain of command.
- The Communication Strategy must outline and describe its nesting to higher headquarters strategies or theater strategies and campaign plans. The strategy should be a broad-scope document that describes a narrative, reasons and goals for communicating, identifies audiences, and establishes themes, lines of effort and desired effects of communication efforts IAW JP 3-61. Include a list of all contributing Marines to the development of the strategy.
- If applicable, DVIDS “My Album” Unit Portfolio URL with no more than 20 pieces of content. The album title name should identify category and unit name. A link to the DVIDS unit page does NOT satisfy this requirement.
- 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.
- Packages must be sent to the CD, HQMC POCs listed on Page 3. Packages received after the deadline will be disqualified.

3. **Communication Plan Of the Year (Individual or Unit Award):**

- **Description:** An internal document used to plan the dissemination of information on a specific issue or topic, unify messaging for commanders and representatives, and ensure consistent communication. These plans align with military operations, outlining key themes, managing information flow, and guiding media relations to release timely, accurate information and shape public perception.
- **Criteria:** Breadth and quality of the product across multiple disciplines, alignment to command mission objectives, innovation in communication tactics, and demonstrable impact on internal and external audiences.
 - **Submission Limit:** One (1) entry per unit.
 - **Submission Requirements:**
 - A standard nomination endorsement letter signed by the first O6 in the chain of command.
 - 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.
 - List all Marines who contributed to the development of the Communication Plan.
 - Entire package must be saved and consolidated into one file (including enclosures) and must be scanned in sequence listed above.

- Submit via email to the CD, HQMC POCs listed on Page 3. Packages not received by the deadline will be **disqualified**.

4. **Visual Information Plan Of the Year (Individual or Unit Award): *New Category***

- **Description:** A strategic document that guides the production and dissemination of photo, video, graphic and written content to build understanding and trust with internal and external audiences. It outlines how the command will use visual products to support specific mission objectives, manage its reputation, document events, and provide information for operations, ensuring visual products meet the commander's communication objectives.
- **Criteria:** The plan is built around the overall communication strategy, with the specific goal of using visual information to achieve key objectives, such as enhancing public understanding of Marine Corps readiness or documenting an operational event.
 - **Submission Limit:** One (1) entry per unit.
 - **Submission Requirements:**
 - A standard nomination endorsement letter signed by the COMMSTRAT director.
 - The plan identifies target audiences, both internal (e.g., Marines, families) and external (e.g., public, media, coalition partners), and tailors visual content to meet their specific information needs.
 - The plan directs the creation of various visual products, including photo, video, graphics, and written products.
 - It includes plans for managing the necessary equipment, such as the Visual Information Acquisition System (VIAS) kits.
 - The plan specifies how visual products will be distributed (e.g., via DVIDS, SharePoint, social media) and how they will be archived to meet records management requirements.
 - The plan may include methods for evaluating the effectiveness of visual information products in meeting communication objectives.
 - Entire package must be saved and consolidated into one file (including enclosures) and must be scanned in sequence listed above.
 - Submit via email to the CD, HQMC POCs listed on Page 3. Packages not received by the deadline will be disqualified.

5. **COMMSTRAT Officer Of the Year (Individual Award) (O-1 through O-4):** The COMMSTRAT Officer Of the Year award recognizes the officer who demonstrated exceptional performance, leadership, and courage and who embodies the whole Marine concept. Open to officers with PMOS 4502 (to include O-5s who were O-4s for most of the competition year).

6. **Visual Information Officer Of the Year (Individual Award) (WO through CWO3):** The COMMSTRAT VIO Of the Year award recognizes the officer who demonstrated exceptional technical COMMSTRAT performance, leadership, and courage and who embodies the whole Marine concept. Open to Warrant Officers with PMOS 4503 (to include CWO4s who were CWO3s for most of the competition year).

7. **COMMSTRAT SNCO Of the Year (Individual Award) (E-6 through E-8):** The COMMSTRAT SNCO Of the Year award recognizes the SNCO who demonstrated exceptional COMMSTRAT performance, leadership, and courage and who embodies the whole Marine concept. Open to SNCOs with PMOS 4591 (to include E-9s who were E-8s for most of the competition year).
8. **COMMSTRAT Marine Of the Year (Individual Award) (E-1 through E-5):** The COMMSTRAT Marine Of the Year award recognizes the Marine who demonstrated exceptional COMMSTRAT performance, leadership, and courage and who embodies the whole Marine concept. Open to all Marines with PMOS 4512, 4541, or 4571 (to include E-6s who were E-5s for most of the competition year).

7.2. Command-endorsed COMMSTRAT “Of the Year” Submission Requirements.

Submissions for Command-endorsed COMMSTRAT "Of the Year" categories require a comprehensive portfolio that showcases the nominee's breadth of work and impact.

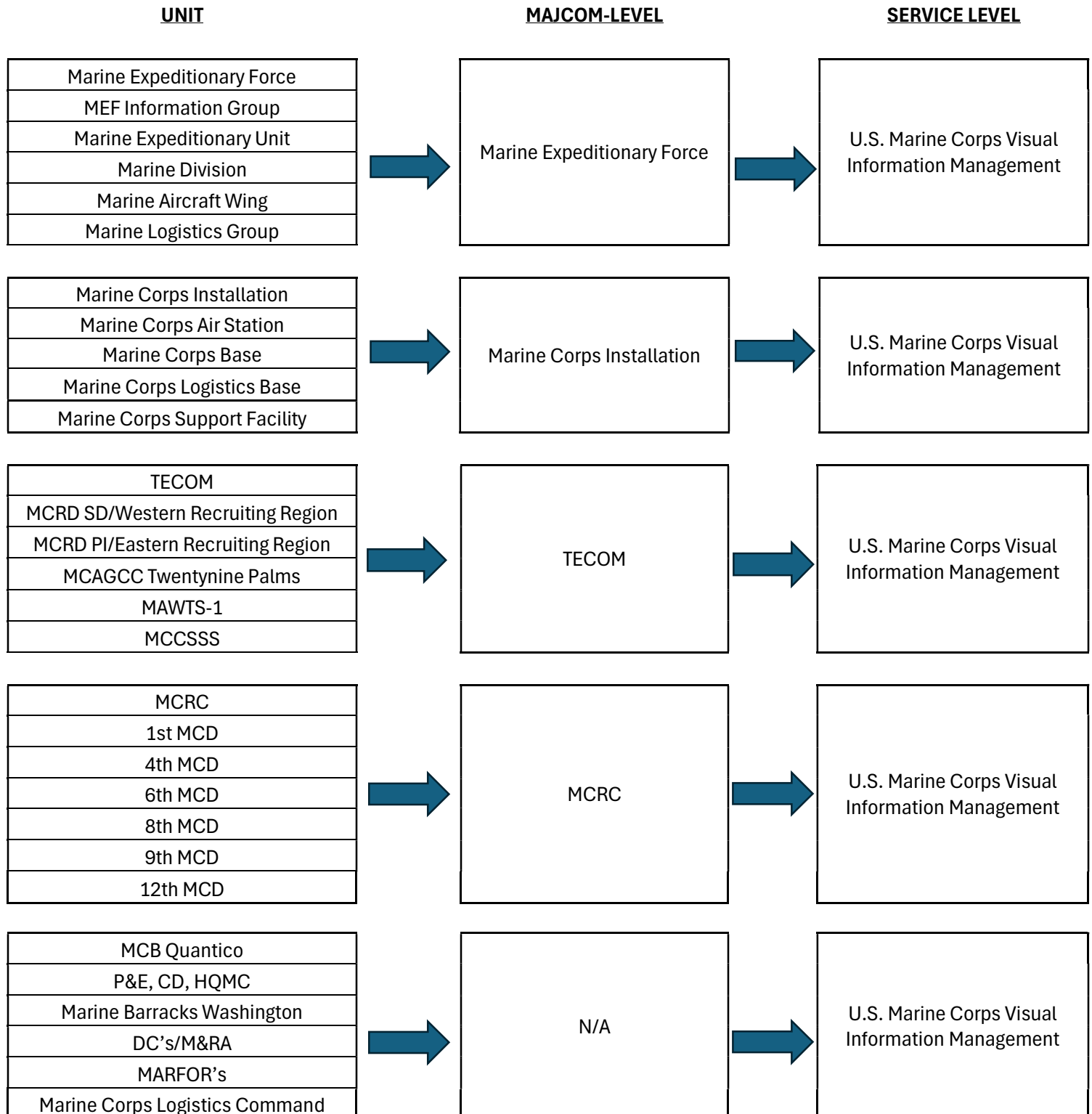
NOTE: Command-endorsed COMMSTRAT “Of the Year” packages do **NOT** need to be routed through the MAJCOM. Packages should be sent directly from the unit to the POCs listed on Page 3.

Specific requirements include:

- Each unit may submit only one Marine or one unit per category
- 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.
- Letters of Recommendation: A minimum of two, and no more than three, letters of recommendation from superiors or peers attesting to the nominee's leadership, professionalism, and contributions to the COMMSTRAT field.
- A biography limited to two pages.
- Awards/BIR/BTR/Education/Pg 11/OMPF/JEPES, or FITREPs from CY 2025.
 - **NOTE:** COMMSTRAT Officer, VIO, SNCO, and Marine Of the Year **MUST** have a 1st Class PFT/CFT to be nominated.
- DVIDS “My Album” Portfolio URL with no more than 15 pieces of content (optional for Officers/VIOs/SNCOs). A curated collection of the nominee's best work produced during Calendar Year 2025. Album title name should identify category and Marine name.
- Attach any non-content (COMM Plans, VI Plans, award citations, etc.) to the package, as enclosures. Limit to five enclosures.
- Entire package must be saved and consolidated into one PDF 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.
- Packages must be sent to the POCs listed on Page 3 before the deadline.
- Packages that are missing any of the required items or are not received by the deadline will be disqualified.

8. VIEC Submission Workflow.

This section outlines the step-by-step workflow for submitting entries to the VIEC Awards Program. All units are responsible for adhering to this workflow to ensure proper processing of nominations.



8.1. Unit-Level Preparation and Review.

- **Review Process:** Unit-level review should ensure entries follow the criteria and policy listed above and identify the strongest entries for forwarding to the MAJCOM-level.
- **DVIDS Endorsement:** Unit-level administrators will use the DVIDS portal to officially endorse and forward their winning entries to the MAJCOM-level for final judging. Units must ensure only their top three entries are submitted to the MAJCOM-level by their submission deadline.

8.2. MAJCOM-Level Review and Endorsement.

- **Review Process:** Each Major Command (MAJCOM) will establish a review board to evaluate submissions originating from their subordinate units. MAJCOMs must include, at minimum, one Officer, VIO, or SNCO from each subordinate unit for MAJCOM-level judging. This review ensures compliance with fairness and identifies the strongest entries for forwarding to CD, HQMC.
- **DVIDS Endorsement:** MAJCOM unit administrators will use the DVIDS portal to officially endorse and forward selected entries to CD, HQMC for final judging. MAJCOMs must ensure only their top three entries are submitted to CD, HQMC by the submission deadline.

8.3. CD, HQMC Final Judging and Adjudication.

- **Final Judging:** CD, HQMC, in cooperation with the USMCCCA, will convene a panel of qualified judges to evaluate all MAJCOM-endorsed entries. There will be no less than three and not more than seven judges per category. (Refer to Section 9 for Judging Process details.)
- **Adjudication:** Winners will be selected based on cumulative scores and adherence to all criteria.
- **Notification:** Official notification to winners will be disseminated following the adjudication process via MARADMIN. (Refer to Section 10 for notification details.)

9. Judging Process and Criteria.

The VIEC Awards judging process is designed to be fair, transparent, and consistent, ensuring that the highest quality visual information and communication products are recognized.

9.1. Judging Panel Composition.

- **Qualified Personnel:** Judging panels at all levels (Unit, MAJCOM, HQMC) will consist of experienced COMMSTRAT Officers, VIOs, and SNCOs, or Civilian equivalents, who possess expertise relevant to the categories they are judging. Qualified NCOs are authorized to sit on the judges panel at the unit and MAJCOM-level.
- **Diversity:** Panels will strive for diversity in rank, MOS, and background to provide a broad range of perspectives.

- **Conflict of Interest:** Judges will recuse themselves from evaluating any submission where a conflict of interest may exist (e.g., direct leadership, close personal relationship with submitter, direct involvement in product creation). For individual award categories, judges will mitigate unconscious bias and ensure a focus solely on the quality of the work.

9.2. Standardized Judging Methodology.

Purpose: This set of standardized scoring matrices is mandatory for use at all judging levels. Its purpose is to ensure a fair and consistent evaluation process tailored to each specific discipline, based on a total of 50 possible points. The final score is the average of all judges' scores. **(See 9.3 for rubrics)**

Note on Disqualification: These rubrics are applied only to entries that pass the initial policy review. Entries with critical violations (e.g., copyright infringement, prohibited alterations, Privacy Act violations) will be disqualified prior to scoring.

- **Mandatory Rubric:** A standardized scoring matrix/rubric will be used at all judging levels (Unit, MAJCOM, HQMC) to ensure consistency and fairness in evaluation. This rubric will clearly define scoring parameters for each criterion within each category.
- **Key Judging Criteria:** Judges will evaluate entries based on, but not limited to, the following overarching criteria:
 - **Impact and Effectiveness:** How effectively does the product achieve an impact? Does the product evoke a strong message?
 - **Content and Message Clarity:** Is the message clear, concise, and easily understood by the target audience? Is the information accurate?
 - **Creativity and Originality:** Does the product demonstrate innovative approaches, unique perspectives, or compelling storytelling?
 - **Technical Excellence:** Is the product technically sound (e.g., photography composition, video editing, graphic design execution, writing grammar/style)?
 - **Adherence to Standards:** Does the product comply with DoW instructions, policies, MCOs, ethical standards, and legal requirements?

9.3. Scoring Rubrics.

Photography Judging Rubric						
Criterion	Max Points	Excellent (8-10 Points)	Above Average (6-7 Points)	Average (5 Points)	Below Average (3-4 Points)	Poor (1-2 Points)
Professional Excellence	40%	The image is technically flawless: perfect focus, exposure, and white balance. Composition is strong, using elements like rule of thirds, leading lines, or framing effectively.	The image is technically very strong but may have a minor, non-distracting flaw (e.g., slightly soft focus on a background element).	The image is functional but has noticeable technical flaws (e.g., soft focus, slightly over/underexposed, distracting background).	The image suffers from multiple technical flaws that are distracting and diminish its professional quality.	The image has significant technical flaws (e.g., out of focus, motion blur, severe exposure issues) that make it unusable.
Communication Impact	35%	The image powerfully conveys a clear message or evokes a strong emotion. It captures a decisive and impactful moment. The image tells a compelling story on its own.	The image has a clear subject and purpose, but the moment captured, or emotion evoked is not as powerful as it could be.	The image has a subject, but its message or purpose is weak or only loosely connected to a communication goal. The image captures an event but lacks a strong narrative element.	The image's subject or purpose is confusing. It's unclear what message the image is intended to send. The image is a simple snapshot with no storytelling quality.	The image has no discernible message or strategic purpose.
Originality/ Military Relevance	15%	The image uses a unique perspective, angle, or creative technique that makes it stand out. It avoids clichés and presents a fresh view of the subject. Direct military relevance.	The image shows a creative attempt (e.g., interesting angle), but it doesn't fully elevate the image beyond a standard shot. Above Average military relevance.	The image is technically competent but standard and predictable (e.g., a straight-on, eye-level shot). Average military relevance.	The image is uninspired and appears to have been taken with little creative thought. Below average military relevance.	The image is a cliché (e.g., grip-and-grin) with no artistic merit. No military relevance.
Caption/ Description	10%	The caption is complete, accurate, and answers all 5 Ws (Who, What, When, Where, Why), adding essential context. The product demonstrates flawless compliance. All metadata is complete and accurate (VIRIN, caption, release authority, keywords). Any required disclosure is present.	The image tells a story, but it might be slightly unclear without a heavy reliance on the caption. The caption is mostly complete. All critical metadata is present and correct, though a non-essential field might be incomplete, or a minor typo exists in the keywords.	The caption is present but may be missing key information (some of the 5 Ws). The product has minor compliance issues that would deduct points (e.g., incorrect VIRIN sequence number).	The caption is minimal or missing multiple Ws. The product has multiple minor compliance errors, showing a lack of attention to detail.	The content is confusing or misleading. The caption is inaccurate or nonexistent. The product has significant compliance issues bordering on disqualification (e.g., missing release authority, undisclosed alterations).
Total	100%					

Videography Judging Rubric

Criterion	Max Points	Excellent (8-10 Points)	Above Average (6-7 Points)	Average (5 Points)	Below Average (3-4 Points)	Poor (1-2 Points)
Professional Excellence	40%	The video is technically flawless: shots are stable and well-composed; audio is crystal clear (no wind, clear interviews); editing is seamless; and color/exposure are consistent.	The video is technically very strong, with only minor, non-distracting flaws (e.g., a single jump cut, a slight audio pop).	The video is functional but has noticeable technical flaws (e.g., some shaky shots, inconsistent audio levels, obvious editing mistakes).	The video suffers from multiple technical flaws that are distracting and diminish its professional quality.	The video has significant technical flaws (e.g., shaky cam, inaudible audio, poor exposure) that make it difficult to watch.
Communication Impact	35%	The video has a clear, compelling, and logical narrative arc (beginning, middle, end). The pacing is masterful, and the story is easy to follow and engaging throughout. The video powerfully achieves its intended purpose (to inform, influence, or entertain, etc.) and is tailored to its target audience and platform.	The story is clear and well-structured, but the pacing may occasionally drag or feel rushed in certain parts. The video has a clear purpose and message, but it may not be as compelling or impactful as it could have been.	The story is mostly present but may lack a clear focus or a strong narrative structure. It feels more like a collection of clips than a cohesive story. The video's purpose is present, but its execution is weak. The message may be confusing or fail to resonate.	The narrative is confusing, disjointed, and difficult to follow. The video's purpose is unclear, and it fails to engage or inform the intended audience effectively.	The content is inaccurate, disorganized, or lacks a story altogether. The video has no discernible message or strategic purpose.
Originality/ Military Relevance	15%	The video uses innovative storytelling techniques, creative shots, and unique editing to present the subject in a fresh and memorable way. Direct military relevance.	The video includes creative elements, but they may not be fully integrated or as effective as they could be. Above average military relevance.	The video is competently produced but follows a standard, formulaic template (e.g., standard news package format). Average Military Relevance.	The video is predictable and uninspired, showing little creative effort in its shots, editing, or story. Below average military relevance.	The video is a cliché and shows no originality. No military relevance.
Caption/ Description	10%	The product demonstrates flawless compliance. All metadata is complete and accurate. Any use of licensed music or dramatization is properly disclosed in the caption per DoD/DoW guidance.	All critical metadata is present and correct, and critical disclosures (like for copyrighted music) are made, though a minor detail may be missing.	The product has minor compliance issues that would deduct points (e.g., incorrect VIRIN sequence number).	The product has multiple minor compliance errors, showing a lack of attention to detail.	The product has significant compliance issues bordering on disqualification (e.g., missing release authority, no disclosure for licensed music).
Total	100%					

Graphic Design Judging Rubric

Criterion	Max Points	Excellent (8-10 Points)	Above Average (6-7 Points)	Average (5 Points)	Below Average (3-4 Points)	Poor (1-2 Points)
Professional Excellence	40%	The technical execution is flawless. It demonstrates mastery of color theory, typography, composition, and balance. Lines are clean, and the product is free of artifacts or resolution issues.	The design is technically very strong, with only minor, non-distracting flaws (e.g., a slight misalignment, a minor kerning issue).	The design is functional but has noticeable technical flaws (e.g., poor font choices, clashing colors, pixelation).	The design suffers from multiple technical flaws that are distracting and look unprofessional.	The design has significant technical flaws that make it appear amateurish and unfinished.
Communication Impact	35%	The graphic instantly communicates a clear, powerful message. It is highly effective at grabbing attention, informing the audience, or achieving its intended purpose. The information hierarchy is perfect, guiding the viewer's eye logically through the content. The message is well-organized, concise, and easy to understand immediately.	The graphic communicates its message, but it may require some effort from the viewer to understand or it lacks a strong, immediate impact. The information is organized and understandable, but the flow or hierarchy could be improved for better readability.	The graphic has a purpose, but the message is muddled or weakly executed. It may be cluttered or visually uninteresting. The information is mostly present, but the layout is somewhat cluttered or lacks a clear visual hierarchy.	The graphic's purpose is unclear, and the information presented is confusing or poorly organized. The layout is confusing and disorganized, making it difficult for the viewer to follow the information.	The graphic fails to communicate any clear message or purpose. The content is disorganized, inaccurate, or nonexistent.
Originality/ Military Relevance	15%	The design concept is highly original, clever, and memorable. It uses visual metaphors or a unique style to stand out. Direct military relevance.	The design shows a spark of creativity, but the overall concept may feel familiar or not fully developed. Above average military relevance.	The design is functional and clean but relies on common templates, stock elements, or a standard, uninspired layout. Average military relevance.	The design is generic and appears to have been created with minimal creative effort or thought. Below average military relevance.	The design is a direct copy of another work or uses clichés in an unoriginal way. No military relevance.
Caption/ Description	10%	The product demonstrates flawless compliance. All metadata is complete and accurate. Required disclosures (e.g., "photo illustration," "identity design" registration) are present where applicable.	All critical metadata is present and correct, and necessary disclosures are made, though a minor detail may be missing.	The product has minor compliance issues that would deduct points (e.g., incorrect VIRIN sequence number).	The product has multiple minor compliance errors, showing a lack of attention to detail.	The product has significant compliance issues bordering on disqualification (e.g., missing release authority, no disclosure for a photo illustration).
Total	100%					

Written Communication Products Judging Rubric

Criterion	Max Points	Excellent (8-10 Points)	Above Average (6-7 Points)	Average (5 Points)	Below Average (3-4 Points)	Poor (1-2 Points)
Professional Excellence	40%	The story is technically flawless, with impeccable grammar, spelling, and punctuation. It strictly adheres to AP Style and DoW guidance. The writing is clear, concise, and uses active voice.	The story is very well-written, with only one or two minor, non-distracting grammatical or AP Style errors.	The story is readable but contains noticeable errors in grammar, spelling, or AP Style that detract from its professionalism.	The story suffers from multiple grammatical or stylistic errors that are distracting and impede understanding.	The story has significant and frequent errors that make it difficult to read and understand.
Communication Impact	35%	The story effectively achieves its purpose (to inform, explain, persuade, etc.) with a clear and compelling message for its intended audience. The story is exceptionally well-structured (e.g., strong lead, logical flow), thoroughly researched with strong quotes/sources, and provides deep insight into the topic. It fully answers the 5 Ws.	The story has a clear purpose, but the message is not as strong or as impactful as it could have been. The story is well-organized and accurate, but it may lack the depth, compelling quotes, or narrative drive to be truly excellent.	The story's purpose is present, but its focus is weak, and the overall message may be confusing to the reader. The story is mostly accurate but may be poorly structured or lack sufficient research and context. Some of the 5 Ws may be missing.	The story's purpose is unclear, and it fails to engage or adequately inform the reader. The story is confusing, disjointed, and difficult to follow. It reads like a list of facts rather than a narrative.	The story has no discernible message or strategic purpose. The content is inaccurate, poorly organized, or lacks a coherent narrative.
Originality/ Military Relevance	15%	The story demonstrates a unique angle, an engaging and distinctive voice, and uses vivid language to tell the story in a memorable way. Direct military relevance.	The story shows creative effort in its angle or language but doesn't fully break away from a standard reporting style. Above average military relevance.	The story is competently written but follows a standard news or feature format without a unique voice or perspective. Average military relevance.	The story is dry, formulaic, and shows little creative effort in its writing style or approach. Below average military relevance.	The writing is cliché and uninspired. No military relevance.
Caption/ Description	10%	The product demonstrates flawless compliance. It is uploaded to DVIDS correctly as a news story (not a PDF). All metadata is complete and accurate.	All critical metadata is present and correct, and the submission format is correct, though a non-essential field might be incomplete.	The product has minor compliance issues that would deduct points (e.g., incorrect VIRIN sequence number).	The product has multiple minor compliance errors, showing a lack of attention to detail.	The product has significant compliance issues bordering on disqualification (e.g., missing release authority, submitted as a PDF instead of a story).
Total	100%					

10. Notification and Recognition.

This section outlines the process for notifying award recipients and the methods by which their achievements will be recognized.

10.1. Public Announcement and Recognition.

- **Official Announcement:** Winners will be officially announced via MARADMIN.
- **Awards Presentation:** A formal awards presentation ceremony will be held at a date TBD to publicly honor the recipients.
- **Recognition of Achievement:**
 - **Certificates and Plaques:** Award winners will receive certificates and/or plaques commensurate with the prestige of the VIEC Awards from CD, HQMC, and the USMCCCA.
 - **Promotional Opportunities:** Commands are encouraged to formally recognize winners by incorporating achievements into JEPES and FITREPs and through other appropriate command-level programs. The responsibility for preparing and submitting personal awards for VIEC winners rests with the winner's parent command; CD, HQMC will not facilitate this action.

11. Program Review and Improvement.

The VIEC Awards Program is committed to continuous improvement to ensure it remains relevant, fair, and effectively promotes excellence across the Marine Corps.

11.1. Annual After-Action Review (AAR).

- **Purpose:** A formal AAR of the VIEC Awards Program will be conducted annually, immediately following each awards cycle. The AAR will identify successes, challenges, lessons learned, and areas for improvement.
- **Participants:** Key stakeholders, including representatives from CD, MAJCOMs, units, and submitters. A selection of submitters and judges will be invited to participate in CD's AAR process.
- **Focus Areas:** The AAR will review all aspects of the program, including:
 - Clarity and effectiveness of guidance (SOP and MARADMINs).
 - User-friendliness and functionality of the DVIDS Awards Portal.
 - Fairness and consistency of the judging process.
 - Relevance and impact of award categories.
 - Timeliness of milestones and notifications.
 - Effectiveness of recognition efforts.

11.2. Feedback Mechanism.

- **Feedback for Submissions:** To foster continuous improvement, CD, HQMC aims to provide constructive feedback to all submitters, detailing strengths and areas for improvement in their entries. This feedback will be delivered via email, Teams, or through the DVIDS portal after the awards cycle concludes. For disqualified entries, specific reasons for disqualification will be provided via the DVIDS awards portal.
- **Continuous Feedback:** “An ongoing feedback mechanism, via an online survey link, will be maintained throughout the year to allow Marines to submit suggestions, concerns, or observations regarding the VIEC Awards Program to the POCs listed on Page 3.
- **Survey Dissemination:** A formal feedback survey will be distributed to all participants (submitters and judges) at the conclusion of each awards cycle to gather structured input for the AAR.

11.3. Implementation of Improvements.

- Recommendations and actionable insights derived from the AAR and continuous feedback will be thoroughly reviewed by CD, HQMC.
- Approved improvements will be incorporated into subsequent versions of the VIEC Awards Guidance SOP and implemented in future awards cycles to enhance the overall quality and impact of the program.