

Full Excerpt: Outmanned, never Outmatched.

A conversation with Colonel Ires Unadin Tavath, UHF Marine Corps (Ret.), on the structure, philosophy, and purpose of the integrated fighting force.

Interview led by Senior UHF Correspondent Sela Mourné.

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Mourné: You spent fifty-one years in the Corps before retiring.

In that time, you served alongside every branch of the UHF military—and the civilian side of things—in some capacity. For readers who might not have a military background—how would you describe the Marine Corps to someone who's never encountered it up close?

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Tavath: “The short version? The Marines are the sharpest instrument the UHF has ever built.

And I say that not to dismiss the other branches—the Navy, the Armored Division, the Civilian Auxiliaries, all of them do *critical* work and I have enormous respect for the people in them—but the Marines exist in a category of their own, and the reason for that is *Integration*.

Every single Marine is Integrated. Every single one.

That's not some kind of recruiting slogan, but the structural *foundation* the entire branch is built on.

From the moment a Recruit steps onto a training ship, they have access to the Allbright System, Abilities, Attributes that grow with them, and a Deep Dive Simulation environment that allows them to accumulate *thousands* of hours of effective combat experience before they ever set foot on a real Battlefield.

The other branches don't have that.

They *can't* have that—there simply aren't enough Integrated individuals in the UHF to fully staff a Navy fleet and an Armored Division and a Marine Corps all at once.

The numbers simply do not work. So the other branches supplement heavily with Unintegrated personnel, which they do *very* effectively and *very* professionally, mind you.

But it ultimately means there is a fundamental ceiling on what those personnel can *become*.

The Marines don't have that ceiling.

A Marine who survives long enough becomes something that cannot ever possibly be replicated by any other means.”

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Mourne: That gap between Integrated and Unintegrated combatants—how significant is it in practical terms, on an actual Battlefield? Are we talking two to one? Three to one?

Tavath: “Significant enough that the UHF treats Integration status as a strategic resource.

A single seasoned, fully developed Marine operating at their Tier is not a one-for-one, two-for-one, or any other number replacement for an Unintegrated soldier or anything like that.

A simple comparison like that doesn't really hold.

You're talking about a person who can physically improve their own Attributes through experience and deliberate investment, who has access to Abilities that functionally rewrite what a human body is capable of and often times break the laws of physics as we know them, who has spent the equivalent of *years* inside a simulation environment learning to operate in conditions most people will never survive long enough to encounter even once...

As such, there is no real number of Unintegrated soldiers that could ever truly replace a fully trained Marine—and even inside the Marines, there is a massive variance between each individual one. So what might be a somewhat viable comparison for one of them, might be completely ridiculous for another.

Yet, in order not to skirt the question's intent, let me put it like this:

We consider a Marine to be at the bottom of the UHF-internal boards, when simulations show that they would be incapable of handling at least a five-to-one encounter with Unintegrated personnel.

That's the absolutely baseline *minimum* level of aptitude we expect from our Marines.

That fundamental gap, however, is why the Corps is the first wave of *everything*.

First to land on a contested planet.

First through a breach in an enemy ship.

First to engage an enemy armored company.

The Marines don't go first because command doesn't value their lives, of course—they go first because they are the *only ones* who can absorb that contact and have a chance of still functioning on the other side of it.

That's the difference all this training, and especially *Integration*, buys you.”

Mourne: “The training structure is something people outside the military often don't have a clear picture of.

Could you walk us through how a Marine's first year actually looks, in terms of who's involved?"

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Tavath: "It's a lot more collaborative than most people likely realize, and that fact surprises them when they hear it.

The common image of Marine training is Marines training Marines—some grizzled veteran in front of a room full of Recruits, teaching them how to shoot and move and survive.

And that's part of it, of course. But only *part*.

From fairly early in the training cycle, liaisons from *all* other branches come aboard the training ships and contribute directly:

The Navy sends personnel to cover Zero-G operations, ship-to-ship combat dynamics, boarding actions—the specific mechanics of fighting in an environment that has no floor and no consistent orientation, where your weapon's recoil will move you as much as it moves your target, where a breach in the hull is simultaneously your entry point and a potential death sentence if you're not positioned correctly.

These are not things a ground-combat instructor can teach from theory or from the limited experience that they might have had over their careers with these things.

You need someone who has *actually* run a hundred-hundred boarding actions, who has navigated the inside of every enemy vessel under the stars, to make *any* of that land in a way that's actually *useful*.

The Armored Division sends their own people as well, of course.

How to work alongside heavy machinery in an active engagement—because a Marine who panics around a column of AD vehicles or gets pushed over by the shockwaves their guns create, is a liability to the very assets they're supposed to be protecting.

How to identify weak points in enemy vehicles quickly, because a Marine who can disable an enemy walker from the outside saves the AD an engagement that might otherwise cost them something much harder to replace.

How to position infantry relative to armor so that each one covers what the other can't.

That relationship in the field, between ground troops and heavy machinery, is something you have to teach and practice *before* you need it or it falls apart at the worst possible moment—trust me on this.

We've had quite a number of incidents over my years, where a new machinery of the AD had been brought to bear on a Battlefield and a good number of our Marines had simply been caught unawares as their training hadn't caught up with the new developments yet—it's always ugly.

Now the one thing that will likely surprise most people, is that even the Civilian Auxiliaries send instructors as well.

But think about what a Marine on the ground *actually* needs to understand to operate effectively. And not just effectively in a “how to shoot a gun” kind of way.

Logistics networks—how supplies move through a contested area and where they’re most vulnerable.

Infrastructure—what a power relay looks like, how to identify whether a building’s structural integrity has been compromised by bombardment before you put a squad inside it, what civilian communication systems look like when they’ve been repurposed for military use by an occupying force.

Medical triage under field conditions, with no facilities and limited supplies and decisions that need to be made in seconds.

These aren’t glamorous subjects or subjects that will come up in the highlight reels—but they *also* save lives with remarkable consistency, and the Civilian Auxiliaries have been living, practising and teaching them longer than the Marine Corps has even existed.”

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Mourne: “That’s a significant investment from branches that aren’t the Marines.

What do they get out of it?”

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Tavath: “More than people tend to credit them for, honestly, even if the exchange does ultimately favor the Corps on paper.

For the Navy, the Marines staff the ships they train on.

That’s not as small a thing as it might sound—running a vessel of the size that the UHF does, requires personnel, and a Marine who understands shipboard operations is genuinely useful to the Navy, not just as a warm body filling a post—which any Unintegrated person could do—but as someone who can respond to a shipboard emergency, who understands the environment they’re operating in, who doesn’t need to be managed the way a pure ground-combat specialist would.

The most obvious examples are twofold, one of which I’ve mentioned earlier:

When the Navy runs a boarding action, the Marines are the ones going through the breach.

The other, and arguably even more important one, is that the ship-bound Marines are also the ones dealing with any Void breaches—and those are a guarantee.

If you want your ships to arrive on the other side of whatever corridor you're taking, you need several compliments of Marines on every vessel, or your intentional break points within the Disruptor Fields will reap through your Unintegrated personnel like nothing.

Every Marine stationed for such purposes is worth more Unintegrated Navy personnel than can really be put into words, as Unintegrated individuals simply do not have the fighting capabilities to contend with bona-fide Void Daemons clambering to eat their very Souls.

The AD benefits similarly, if not directly as obvious.

A Marine squad moving alongside an armored column and actively engaging enemy infantry and light vehicles is not a simple courtesy to the AD—it's what allows those vehicles to operate *at all* in certain environments.

Heavy machinery is enormously powerful and deeply vulnerable to the right kind of close-range infantry pressure. The Marines remove that vulnerability.

Urban environments come to mind immediately, which are often a literal meatgrinder without the presence of several Marine squads to support the AD's machinery.

In return, the AD provides fire support, breaching capability, and the kind of sustained heavy engagement that Marine infantry cannot maintain indefinitely.

For the Civilian side of things, the Marines provide the most important thing of all: Keeping the war far, far away from the population centers.

Without the Marines, every city would become a Battlefield in a matter of hours upon the enemy landing on the planet. Without the Marines, every planet along the frontlines would be a ghost town in a matter of days or weeks at most.

It ultimately works because each branch covers the other's weaknesses, and the Marines' training with Navy, AD and Civilian Auxiliaries personnel is what makes that coordination *functional* rather than merely a theoretical construct."

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Mourne: "There's a phrase that gets attached to the Marine Corps fairly often.

"Always outmanned, never outmatched."

Where does that come from? What does it mean, in your eyes?"

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Tavath: "Honestly, I'm not sure anyone knows the precise origin at this point.

It's been around long enough that it's just part of the Corps' identity by now—and has been for as long as I can even remember.

But, ultimately, the reason it persists like this is because it's fundamentally *accurate*.

The UHF does not have enough Integrated personnel to match the Stellar Republic or the Celestial Dominion in raw numbers—not on the ground, not in space, not *anywhere*.

Their combined fighting forces, featuring both Integrated and Unintegrated soldiers en-masse, is simply not something that the UHF can match.

That is simply the reality of the war.

We are *always* going to be outnumbered in some context, on some front, in some engagement.

That's not a failure of logistics or planning, but the galactic scale of the conflict we're fighting.

What the Marine Corps represents is the UHF's answer to the problem of “How can we catch up to every other Faction in this conflict, when we’ve started centuries behind?”

You cannot win a numbers war with numbers you don't have.

So, you build something that doesn't *need* numerical parity to win.

You take every Integrated individual you can find, you put them through the most comprehensive training framework ever devised, you give them the combined expertise of *every* branch of your military and civilian apparatus that you have, and you build something that the other side simply *cannot* replicate at any volume.

Because that same advantage—numerical superiority—is what would break them, if they ever tried to emulate us. If they tried the same level of education and training for their vastly larger contingents of soldiers, their entire Faction would collapse under the weight of it.

A fully trained Marine—fully trained, fully developed, operating at their Tier with their squad around them—is not merely a soldier. Not in the conventional sense of the word.

They are, instead, an asset that *every* branch of the UHF *benefits* from, every offensive and defensive action *depends* on, and that the opposing Factions have been trying and failing to counter for as long as this war has been running.

So... Outmanned, yes.

Consistently. Structurally. By the very design of the conflict we are fighting itself.

But *never* outmatched.

That's the Marine Corps.

That's what it is and what it's always been.”

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[Excerpt from "*Always Outmanned. Never Outmatched.*" — *The UHF Galactic Standard*, Issue 1,204, PFC 931]