

Marine Cyber Official: 'Our Networks Are Resilient' in COVID-19 Environment



A U.S. Marine assess data during an exercise, Native Fury 20, in the United Arab Emirates on March 5. U.S. Marine Corps/Sgt. Alexis Flores

ARLINGTON, Va. – The U.S. Marine Corps' cyber networks are being defended and upgraded even as the COVID-19 pandemic forces ad hoc adaptation in their operation, a senior Marine Corps official said.

"Our networks are good, and they are operating at a good capacity and are resilient," said Gregg Kendrick, executive director of Marine Corps Forces Cyberspace Command, speaking April 17 in a webcast for Navy League's Sea-Air-Space 2020: Virtual Edition.

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"We're pleased with our effective efforts in our ability to support the force as it has gone to ad hoc telework or alternate work sites and maintain our capacity and, more importantly, our operational capability to support our warfighters and our commanders that are out there deployed in harm's way."

Kendrick said the Corps is monitoring its networks differently in the current environment.

"We do look at our virtual private networks and then we look at our physical and transport layer, our network stack from Layer 1 to Layer 4, so from that perspective we're focused on those types of metrics and really watching our latency," he

said.

“So, we are very focused on the security. Every decision we have made in regards to supporting the ad hoc telework option has really [been] focused. We’ve had a fundamental security look, and we’ve really looked at our modernization efforts to ensure that we are aware of any of the advanced persistent threats and/or capabilities that are out there to ensure that we have a good, resilient as well as available network.”

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Gregg Kendrick, Marine Corps Forces Cyberspace Command

Kendrick said his force is looking at “which applications are in use the most, which are stressed the most at the highest capacity, what exactly are our latent measures, ... and our overall bandwidth [including] by bandwidth region. Everything [security metrics] is funneled through our enterprise security desk so that we can rapidly pull metrics and shift resources as needed to support our Marine warfighters.”

He said Cyberspace Command is starting to see trends in the pandemic environment, “but we are definitely waiting for this to evolve and then we will be able to draw conclusions, but at the same time we don’t want to let a trend propagate to a point where we have to go into a different work cycle.”

“The bad guys are always looking at what we’re doing, and they are looking to do harm,” Kendrick said. “We protect our workforce. We secure, operate and defend the Marine Corps enterprise networks.”

Kendrick said that through the Corp’s new command-and-control network structure the service is bringing a “unity of command that provides a much clearer readiness picture of our network,

our resiliency picture, and then a better overall visualization of the data flow from the end points all the way to the data centers and then back out where they need to go.”

The executive director said the Corps is adopting Microsoft Office 365 to achieve a more efficient capability combined with a hybrid cloud architecture, aiming for higher velocity.

“In the end state the adversary gets a vote,” he said. “They move at speed unconstrained by rules of engagement or the laws of nation states. We need to implement the best infrastructure, the best applications, the best operational processes as efficiently as possible so that we can modernize, provide the best capability to the warfighter, at the same time ensuring security from adversary actions and resiliency across the networks.”