



By: Alex Morrow and Michael Dompierre

“To find, know, and never lose the enemy” - Military Intelligence Creed

At the outset of the Army’s return to Decisive Action and Unified Land Operations, National Training Center (NTC) Command Sgt Major Lance P. Lehr identified that a decade of combat in Iraq and Afghanistan had left us “very good at COIN operations... going into a mature theater where we have all of our enablers and all of our sustainment [in place].” As a consequence, he admitted that “we got a little rusty on the combined-arms maneuver - going out and fighting the near-peer competitor with tanks and Bradleys and artillery.” This assessment has been echoed by countless leaders at every echelon in the years since, and is just as applicable to our intelligence enablers and assets as it is to our maneuver forces. On the analytical side, Major David Johnston, who served as the BCT S2 for 3ABCT, 3rd Infantry Division, noted after the first NTC DA rotation back in 2012 that “It quickly became apparent that our skill and methodology for accurately templating a near-peer conventional force had deteriorated.” Similarly, on the enabler side, when BG Jeffrey Broadwater served as the commander of 2/I ID, he identified a shortfall in effective dissemination of intelligence, commenting that “The details, or in this case lack thereof, of

how information moves from sensor to shooter became critical in the fast paced environment of offensive operations.”

The Army’s Intelligence Warfighting Function (IWFF) has been aware of these problems for years now, but progress towards solving them has come slowly, challenging the entrenched and hard-earned experience of Iraq and Afghanistan. The primary mission of military intelligence in the United States Army is to provide timely, relevant, accurate, and synchronized intelligence to tactical, operational and strategic-level commanders. To accomplish this mission in a Decisive Action environment requires teams of intelligence Soldiers and leaders that are prepared to cope with a complex and fast paced battlefield.

To understand the challenges and pitfalls of conducting effective intelligence in Decisive Action, it is important to first discuss the key roles of the IWFF in this unique operating environment. Compared to COIN, Military Source Operations (MSO) and pattern/network analysis are far less critical in the face of a highly kinetic, rapid operational tempo. Instead, intelligence leaders must shift the focus from these comfort zones towards more relevant conventional tasks of understanding and tracking enemy maneuver, providing rapid and detailed terrain and enemy analysis to maneuver elements, processing frequently overwhelming and contradictory reporting from a confusing battlefield, and filtering the available information to answer the commander’s Priority Intelligence Requirements (PIR). These are the core competencies of the Army’s intelligence professionals, and they have suffered significant atrophy over the last decade of counterinsurgency and FOB-centric warfare.

Several pitfalls now plague the intelligence elements within Brigade Combat Teams. Analysts, especially junior Soldiers, lack the required knowledge to be effective in this new, more demanding operational tempo. This is partly a result of their AIT not fully embracing DATE-based training, but largely due to a lack of seriously demanding home station intelligence training prior to brigade level collective exercises. Leaders are too comfortable in the COIN environment, and exaggerate the focus on the Wide Area Security portion of the mission. We are creatures of habit, and years of combating IED and criminal networks has left its mark. Intelligence shops are limited in the amount and caliber of immersive, scenario-based training they are able to conduct based on the difficulty of developing effective training scenarios. Simulated exercises are an effective solution to this, but are prohibitively difficult to arrange at echelons lower than brigade. This leaves battalion S2 sections, along with the brigade S2, spending much of the training cycle focused on either individual Soldier, classroom based training, or on garrison tasks with little relevance to their analytical mission. Battlefield intelligence assets, while technically proficient in

employing their systems, lack the experience navigating their command and support relationships to effectively support and inform both their battalion and brigade level customers. Similar to the S2 sections, these assets spend much of the training cycle on individual training, and when they are integrated into maneuver training their responsibilities to answer to the brigade are rarely exercised, as the scenarios are focused on lower echelons. This leaves both the collection asset and the supported battalion with the impression that they work only with each other, making the General Support-Reinforcing relationship difficult during larger collective exercises. This last weakness ultimately results in a breakdown of information flow between the sensors and the brigade intelligence section. Brigadier General Broadwater's observation about the importance of knowing "how information moves from sensor to shooter" highlights the importance of training this relationship, which will surely be a focus at NTC while he is commanding.

With these problems in mind, the question becomes: how do we as intelligence professionals ensure we are as prepared as possible to effectively support our maneuver forces in a Decisive Action environment? First and foremost, we must ensure that every analyst has enough baseline knowledge to be effective in the stressful and fast paced environment of a DA fight. This includes basic analytical tasks, knowledge of enemy weapon systems, capabilities, and tactics, and ideally a working knowledge of the specific culture and worldview of potential adversaries. *The Applied Critical Thinking Handbook 7.0* (Formerly the *Red Team Handbook*), as published by the University of Foreign Military and Cultural Studies discusses "cognitive autopilot" and how many staff members are "blind to the ability to see the world through the eyes of another national...group." Decisive Action critical thinking, especially for regionally aligned forces, demands a solid understanding of enemy thinking and motives. This requires significant study, discussion, and testing, for which time must be made around the many administrative demands placed on S2 sections.

Next, we must develop and execute realistic and stressful training for our analysts, validating them in the same way that equivalent maneuver forces are tested. This means moving beyond classroom-based training and putting in the effort required to develop robust intelligence scenarios. Looking beyond the S2 shops, it is critical that maneuver leaders understand the capabilities of their intelligence enabler assets and how best to employ them. 1st Brigade, 4th Infantry Division has placed significant emphasis on developing these supporting relationships during the current training cycle, from enabler LPDs to ensuring enabler integration in every training event from Platoon STX onwards.

The best way to ensure enabler integration will go smoothly is to practice it in a field environment, but junior intelligence leaders must ensure that emphasis is placed on training their Soldiers during these training events, rather than simply having them be present for

maneuver training. Providing effective scripting and scenarios also demonstrates to the supported maneuver elements what kind of situations these assets are effective in, and helps them develop TTPs for employing them effectively. Finally, information flow must be planned, briefed, and rehearsed as early as possible in the training cycle. This requires more than a TOCEX to be validated: reports from maneuver units and collection assets (who hopefully have a strong understanding of the PIR) drive this process, and it has to start with them. Perhaps most importantly, every element on the battlefield (not just intelligence assets) must clearly understand the PIR and what, how, and when to report. Flexing these communications during training is the only way to ensure that the brigade's leadership will have a clear picture of the battlefield.

Ultimately, tackling the challenges of Decisive Action is just part of a broader challenge of professionalizing Army intelligence. Senior leaders in the MI Corps must ask whether we are truly holding our intelligence professionals to a rigorous standard of formal qualification. While the MI Gunnery program being developed across the MI Corps as we speak is a promising start to the standardization of analytical training for 35Fs (Intelligence Analysts), the MI Corps needs to re-visit certification of analysts using a standardized program of instruction on a recurring basis. Just as 35Ps (Cryptologic Linguists - SIGINT Collectors) must attend annual language training to remain certified in their MOS and 35Ts (Intelligence System Maintainers) must take technical exams to demonstrate to the Army that they are still able to do their jobs, there should be no exception for 35Fs and 35Ds (All Source Intelligence Officers).

A more formalized, rigorous program of home station training and certification for intelligence sections is critical to being effective in a Decisive Action environment. A program for training all source intelligence analysts with a Decisive Action mission should address several primary objectives: First, all 35Fs and 35Ds must complete a *Fundamentals of Army Intelligence Analysis Course* featuring orientation on intelligence tradecraft fundamentals, report writing, and research databases for IPB product facilitation under time-constrained conditions in the DA environment. Second, Annex B and Annex L product production within the MDMP process must be addressed. A primary focus here must be implementing "Staff Integrated IPB" in which the S2 turns to other staff sections for their relevant expertise in assessing enemy maneuver, fires, sustainment, etc. While current coursework in 35F AIT and 35D BOLC put heavy emphasis on Annex B specific outputs, the enormous challenge of Decisive Action information collection planning is largely omitted. Finally, rehearsals must be dedicated to TTPs and best practices for maintaining the intelligence common operating picture within a tactical operations center. This gives junior analysts and young MI officers a taste of just how fast-paced the DA environment is and how

quickly the BN or BCT CDR need assessments which will influence their decision-making.

Anyone who has spent time in a Battalion or Brigade Tactical Command Post (TAC) knows that you are constantly inundated with piecemeal (and often conflicting) reporting from subordinate maneuver elements. The pace is marginally slower at the Tactical Operations Center (TOC), but the scope of the information you have to process is therefore larger. Making the previously mentioned adjustments to how we train our analysts and collectors will ensure that we have an intelligence team that is comfortable with uncertainty and confident in their skillset, which is critical to adapting and keeping up with the pace of Decisive Action operations. Our intelligence professionals are responsible for ensuring that we understand the enemy, both prior to an engagement and on the battlefield. Having the knowledge to keep up with the confusion of a fast-paced, kinetic DA fight will allow our maneuver leaders to better understand, and ultimately defeat the enemy. Proficiency on digital systems, while critical, is only one piece of being an effective analyst. More importantly, analysts that can recognize enemy formations and schemes of maneuver based on patchwork reporting enable their unit to see through the fog of war and determine the enemy course of action. Similarly, while technical and tactical proficiency is vital for an intelligence collector, regardless of specific discipline, being able to provide clear, concise reporting to both the immediate maneuver leader as well as S2 shops at higher echelons ensures that the relevant information makes it from the sensor to the shooter, and that the commander has the best possible picture of the enemy. Successful intelligence in a Decisive Action environment, similar to successful maneuver, demands that we train our core competencies and lines of communication in a time constrained environment.

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