Decision Point Tactics: Intelligence Staffs' Best Practices

Introduction

From 25 October to 9 November 2018, the 3rd Armored Brigade Combat Team (ABCT), 4th Infantry Division, tested their skills at the National Training Center, Fort Irwin, California, by engaging in an intensive collective gunnery and decisive action train-up. The following two articles describe a series of best practices for intelligence preparation of the battlefield and information collection synchronization from 3rd ABCT's training before and during their rotation at the National Training Center.

Intelligence Preparation of the Battlefield in a Time-Constrained Environment

by Captain Jason R. Steimel

Overview

This article describes best practices for maneuver battalion intelligence officers when conducting intelligence preparation of the battlefield (IPB). These recommendations specifically support units conducting decision point tactics in decisive action training environments, but they also apply to all other formations. Although S-2s are responsible for depicting multiple threat courses of action (COAs) to drive the military decision-making process (MDMP), the S-2's main adversary is *time.* The pace of simultaneously planning and conducting operations often overwhelms an intelligence section's capacities. This article outlines three techniques to overcome this by—

- Training a deeper bench of analysts.
- Getting a jump-start to IPB in garrison.
- Incorporating planning standard operating procedures (SOPs).

U.S. Army photo by PFC Angel Sanchez, Operations Group, National Training Center

Soldiers assigned to 3rd Armored Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Fort Carson, CO, put detail into building a terrain model prior to a combined arms rehearsal during Decisive Action Rotation 19-02 at the National Training Center, Fort Irwin, CA, October 26, 2018.

Decision Point Tactics Explained

So what are decision point tactics? In 1997, two opposing force commanders at the National Training Center's 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment defined the term as "the art and science of employing available means at a specific point in space and/or time where the commander anticipates making a decision concerning a specific friendly COA. This decision is directly associated with threat force activity and/or the battlefield environment."[1]

The 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment continues to employ decision point tactics, and the 3rd Brigade, 4th Infantry Division, used this approach during rotation 19-02 from October to November 2018. For 3rd Brigade, anticipated decisive phases were prepared with at least two distinct and feasible branches—typically how to envelop an enemy force or whether to conduct a forward or reverse slope defense. The 3rd Armored Brigade Combat Team's commander used the information as a simple playbook from which to "call an audible."

U.S. Army photo by PFC Taylor McGinnis, Operations Group, National Training Center

U.S. Army Soldiers assigned to 10th Cavalry Regiment, 3rd Armored Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Fort Carson, CO, observe enemy forces from an observation point during Decisive Action Rotation 19-02 at the National Training Center, Fort Irwin, CA, October 28, 2018.

Build the Bench

S-2 officers in charge commonly conduct IPB with insufficient assistance from their section, a practice that is not sustainable in decisive action training environment scenarios. This is fundamentally an issue of trust, derived from inadequate training. "Building the S-2 bench" as far left of collective training events as possible will mitigate this problem.

Training analysts to conduct all steps of IPB is building the bench. This is necessary because of the reality that military intelligence leaders face—our new 35Fs (Intelligence Analyst) require significant on-the-job training to keep up with, and contribute to, the decisive action training environment. If analysts go into an operation untrained, leaders commonly relegate them to "arts and crafts" functions, such as copying acetate. This is a systemic issue. Lizard 40, the intelligence team's sergeant major at the National Training Center, regularly emphasizes the need for military intelligence Soldiers and noncommissioned officers to serve as analysts, not as tactical operations center support. This begins with their involvement in IPB and carries forward to current operations, when analysts must not only receive, analyze, and disseminate information but also make recommendations. Analysts cannot perform these duties without understanding the operational environment, threat COAs, and the Blue Force maneuver plan. And the S-2 cannot conduct IPB in a time-constrained environment without trained and engaged analysts.

Planning IPB training is the first step. There is no reset period following deployments and no allocation of time for individual skill training in a squadron headquarters and headquarters troop. However, it is critical to set aside garrison or field time in advance for this training in order to limit distractions. Successful planning is deliberate, not merely earmarked. This includes gathering training materials (maps, protractors, markers, acetate, and references); briefing tasks, conditions, and standards; and producing a training timeline. Using a standard IPB product shell facilitates the uniform instruction and completion of IPB steps by analysts. For example, the shell that the Military Intelligence Officer Transition Course instructor uses facilitates instruction as well as product completion. Another best practice is to employ the assistant S-2 and/or S-2 noncommissioned officer in charge as mentors for junior analysts to maximize understanding. S-2s can also use the Central Army Registry's comprehensive list of 35F individual and collective tasks to formalize training standards.

Training analysts for decisive action training environment scenarios requires an emphasis on IPB step 3 (evaluate the threat) and step 4 (determine threat COAs) because of the scenarios' complexity. The process should start with a typical opposing force order of battle (*National Training Center Red Book*) and doctrinal templates from TC 7-100.2, *Opposing Force Tactics*. Next, is to enable analysts to learn the key differences between a maneuver and an area defense, or integrated versus dispersed attacks, by having them

complete their own doctrinal templates using a standard threat composition. This maximizes analysts' learning styles because written and oral instruction augments the kinesthetic of creating a template on acetate. This will allow analysts to subsequently build complete situational templates over terrain, better understand the relationships between warfighting functions, and later recognize COAs during current operations.

Following this training, an S-2 section should be deep enough to complete two situational templates simultaneously in a deployed environment. This allows the collection manager to overlay them quickly to produce the event template.

Garrison Jump Start

Another method to maximize mission analysis planning is to lean forward as much as possible, or simply put, to complete IPB steps 1 through 3 before leaving home station. This technique is feasible from defining the area of interest in step 1 (define the operational environment) to finalizing doctrinal templates with high-value target list and threat capabilities by warfighting function in step 3. Typically, the only significant gap is an accurate weather analysis from step 2 (describe environmental effects on operations). Historical climatological data and current lunar data can provide a foundation to augment a section's analysis of civil considerations and terrain effects for this step.

Evaluate the Weather Effects on Military Operations

"The G-2/S-2 coordinates with the Air Force staff weather officer to provide weather effects to support operations. The following work aids assist in analyzing and describing weather effects on operations:

- Weather forecast charts are guides for determining the weather information needed for planning and operations.
- Light and illumination data tables are guides for determining the light and illumination data needed for planning and operations.
- Weather effects matrices are guides for determining the weather effects on personnel, weapons, and equipment needed for planning and operations."[2]

Conducting the bulk of IPB in garrison not only extends the amount of time a section has to complete it, but also allows a more efficient environment to research and compile products. This includes reliable internet and a litany of office resources. It provides a stable location without daily tactical operations center jumps and austere conditions. Additionally, being at home station affords greater access to higher headquarters intelligence enterprises for requests for information and collaboration. Once deployed, the brigade combat team's S-2 section may not be collocated with, or be within any reasonable distance to, a battalion or squadron headquarters tactical assembly area. Typically, communications infrastructure and unit synchronization both suffer the most during the start of any field operation. This directly threatens the timely completion of initial mission analysis and the rest of the MDMP, further underscoring the need to deploy as prepared as possible.

Reverse IPB

Army doctrine previously described reverse IPB as—

- "How the presence and actions of U.S. forces will affect threat/adversary operations."[3]
- A technique the staff can use to aid in determining the enemy's objectives.[4]
- • Reverse IPB recognizes and takes into account "the enemy's assessment of U.S. forces operating in the [area of operation] AO…This subtle, critical and often missed sub-step ensures that a much more realistic enemy COA sketch and statement is produced during mission analysis [MA]. This will logically carry forward to the later steps of MDMP, most importantly the wargame. Conducting reverse IPB during MA ensures that U.S. forces build in the enemy's initial reactions/counter-reactions, and it produces a much more logical and realistic enemy in the wargame. It also enables better results for U.S. forces on the battlefield."[5]

In order to promote clarity and avoid confusion between IPB and wargaming, the latest version of ATP 2-01.3, *Intelligene Preparation of the Battlefield,* does not include reverse IPB.

There is more to conducting IPB steps 1 through 3 in garrison. One often-touted but underutilized technique is reverse IPB, i.e., "how the presence and actions of U.S. forces affect threat/adversary operations."[6] Once in the field, this practice typically falls apart because of the hectic nature of establishing operations and the frenetic pace of a brigade combat team's planning. In garrison, however, warfighting function representatives have more time and space to collaborate. When directed, typically by the executive officer or S-2, it is possible to capture how and where all corresponding enemy systems, from logistics to electronic warfare, may operate.

Another good tactics, techniques, and procedures is to publish and disseminate an unclassified IPB reference that leaders can read before deploying to gain a foundational knowledge of the operational environment. The format of this smart book should be convenient for leaders to deploy with; it should fit in a cargo pocket for later use in mission planning. If distributed before the mission analysis briefing, leaders will have a better grasp of the terrain, the climate, civil considerations, and the enemy, and be able to ask questions and drive further planning. Once in theater, the

book serves as an enduring reference down to the platoon or section level for junior leaders. Some especially useful additions include—

- Illumination tables.
- Key terrain imagery.
- Likely weather impacts to systems and system-acceptable operating ranges (wind speeds for unmanned aircraft system flight versus launch/recovery).
- Red-light readable gridded reference graphics.
- Conventional and unconventional force orders of battle.
- Threat vehicle identification.
- Weapon range charts.

Critical to seeing this product come to fruition is securing funding for printing. The Defense Logistics Agency or similar garrison facilities will make a high quality, durable product that lasts through the operation or deployment, but the funding and printing process can take up to 2 months. These books are also a great tool for every analyst in the S-2 section. They can eliminate the need to carry several binders of IPB data and Worldwide Equipment Guides. Creating the leader's books also has the benefit of ensuring analysts understand the operational environment, and the books can be used to test analysts' knowledge.

Always Plan

For intelligence to support operations, not having and not adhering to a planning SOP is detrimental to maintaining staff momentum and making recommendations for the next fight. It is akin to not using a tactical operations center SOP for current operations battle drills. Without a plan for how to plan, S-2 sections may find it extremely difficult to look past the first battle—one in which they had more time for and no current operations to distract them. Enforcing these codified processes, however, will ensure S-2 sections can simultaneously execute plans and current operations in sustained operations.

It is best to nest a planning SOP with the brigade staff's tendencies and to refine it based on battalion/squadron agreed-upon best practices. The best time to capture these observations is immediately upon completion of any culminating training exercise or combat training center rotation. If possible, the staff should develop these during the regeneration period before returning to garrison and losing focus amid myriad home station tasks.

Efficient S-2 current operations enables IPB/MDMP planning and vice versa. An updated tactical operations center SOP should be understood by all analysts and include—

- tactical operations center floor roles and responsibilities,
- primary, alternate, contingency, and emergency plan,
- how-to guides for systems,
- reporting flow diagrams for upper- and lower-tactical internet, and
- significant activities tracker formats.

The performance of roles and reporting processes should be rehearsed ahead of operations.

Similarly, a planning SOP should include timelines for rapid and full MDMP, product shells (the IPB shell from earlier analyst training can be used), and briefing formats. If not identified in the tactical operations center SOP, the planning SOP must delineate a plans space that is physically separate from the current operations floor's bustle. This could be a separate tent, an attached but walled-off tent, or a vehicle. Finally, this area needs a dedicated plans team identified by position in the planning SOP. This ensures the S-2 officer in charge (or whoever is identified as the S-2 plans lead) works mostly with the integrating cell's other warfighting

U.S. Army photo by SPC Keston Alonzo, Operations Group, National Training Center

A U.S. Army Soldier assigned to Bravo Battery, 3rd Battalion, 29th Field Artillery Regiment, 3rd Armored Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Fort Carson, CO, goes over the details of a fire mission for her crew during Decisive Active Rotation 19-02 at the National Training Center, Fort Irwin, CA, November 1, 2018.

functions. It is easy for current operations to consume the S-2. This loses the lead for the next battle and degrades the battalion's or squadron's ability to anticipate resources and plan to seize positons of relative advantage.

The cavalry squadron should plan with brigade, physically collocated whenever possible. Typically, the squadron must plan ahead of or with the brigade because of the common necessity of conducting line of departure movement at warning order 2. Planning in parallel with brigade is inefficient and creates information gaps. Just as a cavalry squadron must move to the line of departure early to fight for information, a squadron staff finds itself fighting for the newest version of the plan. The other benefits of planning with brigade are the formation of deeper relationships between echelons and the ability to positively influence the reconnaissance and information collection plan that the squadron will soon execute.

U.S. Army photo by SPC Kyler Chatman, Operations Group, National Training Center

U.S. Army Soldiers assigned to 3rd Armored Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, Fort Carson, CO, move to a new location during a simulated attack during Decisive Action Rotation 19-02 at the National Training Center, Fort Irwin, CA, October 28, 2018.

The axiom of "always be planning" can apply to IPB during MDMP itself. After the rush of mission analysis, the S-2 section has completed IPB. It then turns its focus to finalizing the initial collection plan with the Blue Force scheme of maneuver. The section then updates running estimates and supports COA development, analysis, and comparison; however, S-2s should continue refining IPB through MDMP steps 3 through 5 (COA development, COA analysis, and COA comparison, respectively) so that the planning does not go to waste. This is particularly helpful when supporting decision point tactics. Every Blue Force development will possibly influence enemy reactions and either introduce new enemy decision points or significantly change existing ones. S-2s should not change briefed enemy COAs because this is what the enemy is capable of and likely to do, in order to achieve its higher headquarters' end state. What should change is the *how*—i.e., based on the Blue Force scheme of maneuver, what options does the enemy have that may not have existed previously?

Several field craft improvements can dramatically improve the S-2's planning efficiency:

- **First**, building a separate battle board provides the section a separate map area to develop situation templates without interfering with the common operational picture. Although a plans map should also be present, it is much easier to de-conflict its usage by space rather than by time. Mount this board in a command track vehicle or have it be stand-alone in the tactical operations center to facilitate constant planning.
- **Second,** if built with "standard drop" acetate fit, this board further improves productivity and collaboration among the staff, and even the brigade combat team staff (if standard drop is a common feature), by allowing instantaneous acetate transferring. Additionally, a section can make standard drop acetates before deploying, which reduces the amount of "arts and crafts" work its analysts must perform in a tactical environment.
- **Third,** digitally printed modified combined obstacle overlays and line-of-sight acetate overlays from a functioning plotter, if available, directly save analysts hours of hand-drawn work on the map. This directly enables them to develop detailed enemy COAs with situation templates and decision points.

Conclusion

Through planning deliberate analyst IPB training, leveraging garrison time and resources before deploying, and always planning, maneuver S-2s can overcome their greatest threat—time. The coming decades will see nations

continue to develop and adapt new technologies for the conduct of warfare. Fields such as big data, machine learning, and artificial intelligence will exponentially increase the need for military intelligence battlefield efficiency. Building efficiencies and best practices into our Army's intelligence enterprise *today* will make it easier to incorporate new technologies, tactics, techniques, and procedures *tomorrow.*

Endnotes

1. Peter Palmer and Jim Crider, "Decision-Point Tactics (Fighting the Enemy, Not the Plan!)," *CTC Quarterly Bulletin*, 1st Qtr, FY 97, no. 97-4 (1997): 1.

2. Department of the Army, Army Techniques Publication (ATP) 2-01.3, *Intelligence Preparation of the Battlefield* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Publishing Office [GPO], 1 March 2019), 4-22.

3. Department of the Army, ATP 2-01.3, *Intelligence Preparation of the Battlefield* (Washington, DC: U.S. GPO, 10 November 2014 [obsolete]), 6-5.

4. Ibid., 6-8.

5. Thomas M. Feltey and Lance C. Rae, "Military Deception and Reverse Intelligence Preparation of the Battlefield: How Staff Integration Creates Advantages for the Brigade Combat Team Commander," *Armor* CXXXI, no. 3 (Fall 2018): 59-60.

6. Department of the Army, ATP 2-01.3, 2014, 6-5.

Squadron Information Collection Synchronization in Support of Decision Point Tactics

by First Lieutenant Evan Shields

Overview

This article describes how to synchronize information collection in an armored cavalry squadron to best support decision point tactics. Specifically, it discusses how to focus information collection planning efforts during various phases of the military decision-making process (MDMP) and create a detailed and synchronized information collection plan while in a time-constrained environment. The author developed these best practices from lessons learned as the collection manager and assistant S-2 for the 4th Squadron, 10th Cavalry Regiment, 3rd Armored Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, during his involvement with command post exercise 2, warfighter exercise, Leader Training Program, Military Intelligence Training Strategy, Iron Strike exercise, and National Training Center Rotation 19-02.

Background

Information collection, when done correctly, synchronizes the warfighting functions of intelligence, movement and maneuver, and fires. However, when conducting information collection, many collection managers make the error of focusing on identifying general enemy activity, resulting in unfocused collection that may not synchronize with other warfighting functions. Ultimately, the brigade commander's decision points are what drive the brigade's information collection plan and thus the squadron's information collection plan and scheme of maneuver.

The purpose of information collection in an armored cavalry squadron is twofold:

- To answer the priority intelligence requirements (PIRs) that will enable the commander to exercise mission command (via decision point tactics).
- To support targeting in order to set favorable conditions (shaping operations).

Both of these concentrations enable friendly forces to seize, retain, and exploit the initiative to gain a position of relative advantage over the enemy. In doing so, friendly forces constrain the enemy to a reactive state throughout the operation. To achieve this, however, the collection manager must have an in-depth understanding of the assessed enemy course of action (COA), the friendly COA (including all decisive points, branches, and sequels), and the high-value/high-payoff targets. Throughout the planning process, it is crucial to have full integration of the collection manager with the adjacent staff. This is especially true when it comes to large-scale ground combat operations against peer threats.

Intelligence Preparation of the Battlefield and the Initial Collection Plan

Collection managers need to integrate themselves into both the brigade and the squadron staff during intelligence preparation of the battlefield (IPB). The analysis conducted during IPB and its resulting products are critical to the creation of an effective information collection plan. This is particularly imperative when operating in a time-constrained environment, which is typical of a cavalry squadron. The S-2 staff mitigates the time constraint by completing the first three IPB steps before leaving garrison—step 1 (define the operational environment), step 2 (describe environmental effects on operations), and step 3 (evaluate the threat). Similarly, the collection manager is able to create initial information collection products based on the doctrinal threat templates and reverse IPB products. Using the doctrinal threat templates and assessed order of battle,

an initial information collection matrix is produced for both offensive and defensive operations. It will not be as comprehensive as the final information collection matrix, but it may provide some initial information requirements, indicators, and specific information requirements (SIRs). By the squadron collection manager integrating into adjacent echelons' IPB process, their products will nest with the adjacent echelons' products, which facilitates shared understanding.

Once the initial information collection matrix is completed, the collection manager creates terrain-based areas of interest without regard for friendly or enemy disposition and direction of travel. These areas of interest will identify ideal geographical locations for—

- Position areas for artillery (both fires and counter-fires).
- Command and control nodes.
- Logistics lines.
- Air defense artillery.
- Radars.
- Observation posts.
- Advantageous sites for offensive and defensive maneuver.

All warfighting function staff representatives should participate in this effort to create areas of interest (each with a predesignated color) based on identifying terrain they themselves would use. This product is a reverse IPB overlay (see Figure 1). While this overlay will assist in the future creation of a named area of interest (NAI) overlay, it may also serve as a planning aid for staff sections later during the MDMP. Additionally, current operations should use this product when engaging in the dynamic re-tasking of collection assets by providing the collection manager with alternate locations to identify specific enemy elements.

Upon the receipt of warning order 1 and through the completion of IPB step 4 (determine threat COAs), the squadron collection manager (in conjunction with the S-2 staff) should refine the list of initial information requirements in conjunction with their brigade staff. The event template and decision support matrix are the two most useful planning tools for information collection during this step of the MDMP. The event template depicts snapshots of the assessed enemy scheme of maneuver and decision points in time and space. This allows the collection manager to identify when the enemy is moving at a faster or a slower rate of speed than the collection manager had previously anticipated and to adjust collection times. The decision support matrix will allow the collection manager and the S-2 to identify the enemy's likely collection focus and potential PIRs, which is critical to the cavalry squadron's counter-reconnaissance fight.

Identifying the enemy's information requirements through reverse IPB allows the brigade S-2 to determine how the enemy commander is likely to array his or her assets to collect the needed information. An effective and lethal cavalry squadron will not only answer PIRs and drive decision points, but it will also retain freedom of maneuver for the brigade combat team by degrading enemy collection assets during the counter-reconnaissance fight. This will enable the brigade combat team commander to keep enemy forces reactive to friendly actions either by targeting or by exploiting the enemy's collection efforts. Once squadron and brigade have completed IPB, some of these information requirements may be associated with probable friendly decision points, at which point they become brigade PIRs.

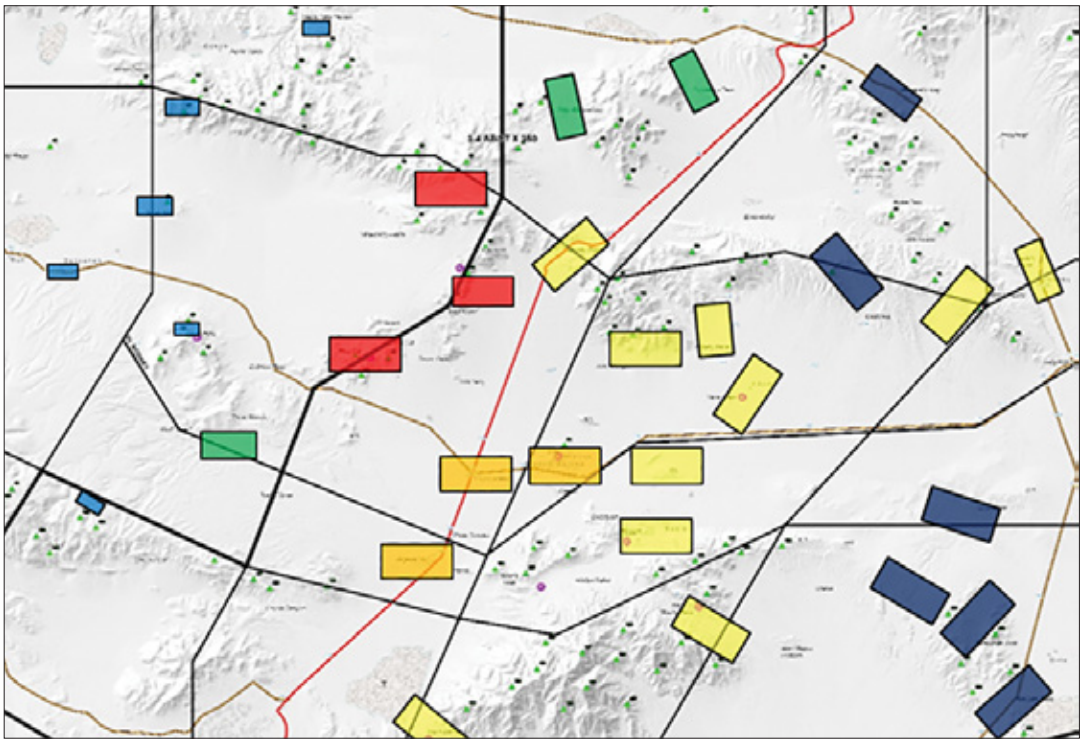

Figure 1. Reverse IPB Overlay

These PIRs are continually refined throughout the MDMP. The collection manager should be able to anticipate how the squadron and brigade combat team commander will fight, and then plan accordingly, because at this point the staff has not developed its COA. MDMP is a commander-driven process.

Information Collection Matrix

Following the mission analysis briefing, the collection manager begins further development of the information collection plan from the initial IPB effort. These products will eventually lay the groundwork to prepare the information collection order, also known as Annex L. The collection manager produces this in parallel with friendly COA development. To achieve information collection synchronization from this point in the MDMP, the collection manager must be collocated and integrated with the operations and fires staffs. The first step in building the information collection plan is completing the information collection matrix, which takes little time because an initial matrix was already prepared in garrison.

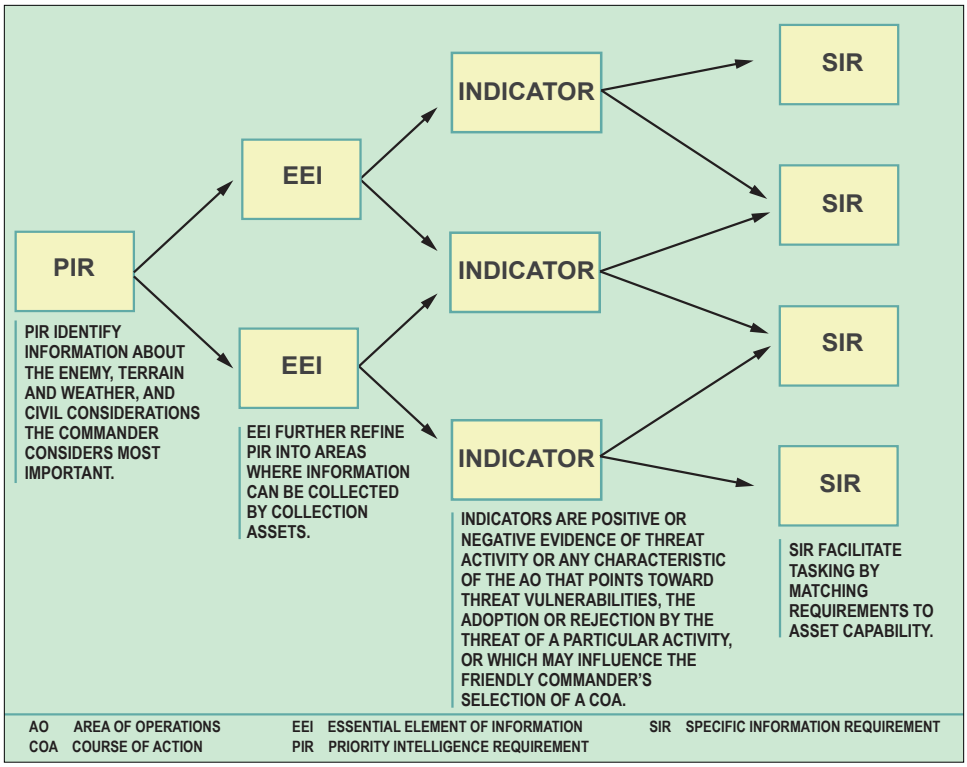

Figure 2. Relationship of SIRs to Indicators, to EEIs to PIR[1]

A Note on Essential Elements of Information

FM 3-98, *Reconnaissance and Security Operations*, and joint doctrine use EEIs as a bridge between PIRs and indicators that are eventually captured as SIRs as a part of the information collection plan. However, ATP 2-01, *Plan Requirements and Assess Collection*, dated 19 August 2014, eliminated EEIs, and does not include the step of dividing PIRs into EEIs.

The squadron collection manager then refines the brigade PIRs into essential elements of information (EEIs), as shown in Figure 2.

EEIs focus the information collection to specific areas within the area of operations that are likely to become objectives in the upcoming operation. Indicators are a further refinement of EEIs, focusing collection on positive or negative evidence of enemy elements and activity in the area. Because of the specificity of indicators, once answered these indicators may confirm or deny an enemy COA. Moreover, they will provide the brigade combat team commander with information needed to support his or her decision-making cycle. When developing indicators, it is best to think of them as how the various warfighting functions associate with each EEI. Indicators will then be further refined into SIRs. SIRs focus information collection by matching the possible indicators to available collection assets. Think of SIRs like three of the five senses:

- What does it look like (cavalry squadron, full motion video, and imagery intelligence)?
- What does it sound like (communications intelligence)?
- What does it feel like (measurement and signature intelligence and unattended ground sensors)?

The final product must nest with the squadron commander's reconnaissance guidance. To improve the common understanding and association of PIR to decision points, decision points should be included as the first column of the information collection matrix.

Named Area of Interest Overlay

Upon completion of the information collection matrix, it is time to develop the NAI overlay. The previously discussed reverse IPB overlay may be useful at this point because many of the color-coded areas of interest may now be NAIs. It is important to collaborate with the squadron S-3 section to ensure that the scheme of maneuver supports the operation's information collection requirements and that it is feasible to collect on the NAIs under development. The two most important mistakes to avoid when developing NAIs are oversizing and saturation.

Large NAIs will not focus collection assets enough to facilitate timely and accurate reporting. If higher echelons

develop and task the squadron with NAIs that are too large, it may be necessary to create smaller, more focused squadron NAIs inside them. Alternatively, a quick and effective approach is to use the quadrant method of dividing an oversized NAI into four quadrants (A, B, C, and D). Ideally, the size of an NAI is dependent on the size of the enemy or terrain being collected upon, not the capability of the collection asset.

The collection manager develops NAIs that are of an appropriate size and orientation by drawing from the SIRs generated for the information collection matrix and the terrain without expanding the NAIs to encompass an entire grid square for convenience. Dissemination of the NAIs will be down to the lowest echelon; the NAIs will eventually become objectives for the troopers and other collection assets. They require diligence and precision. It is also important to consider the amount of terrain a single cavalry troop can cover during a zone reconnaissance mission. Each troop's frontage should be 5 to 7 kilometers—anything outside that range will degrade their reconnaissance capability. A focused and prioritized scheme of collection will rarely task a troop with more than three to four NAIs per phase.

Generally, each brigade combat team has a predetermined naming convention for its NAIs, as well as their subordinate units' NAIs. Squadrons need to create an internal naming convention as well. Creating a naming convention that correlates the NAIs to their corresponding PIRs works best. For example, brigade allocates the squadron NAIs 3100 to 3199. Internally, the squadron allocates NAIs 3110 to 3119 to answer PIR 1, 3120 to 3129 to answer PIR 2, and so on. The squadron reserves NAIs 3100 to 3109 for information requirements, which are associated with targeting and shaping operations rather than specific PIRs and decision points. Using this naming convention makes it far easier to generate a common understanding of the task and purpose of each NAI, as well as the PIR and decision point with which they are associated.

The final step in completing the NAI overlay is to synchronize with the S-2, S-3, and fires staff to identify preplanned targets and desired effects in and around the NAIs. Once the fires staff plans a target within an NAI, it will become a target area of interest (TAI). The type of fires and desired effects on the target will depend on the operational requirements and templated enemy within the TAI. Because of staff manning and time constraints, it is difficult to hold formal target working groups at the squadron level. A good practice is to combine the fires and NAI overlays onto the same sheet of acetate as a forcing function for this synchronization.

Named Area of Interest Matrix and Worksheet

Once the NAI overlay is complete, the collection manager must record the grid coordinates to each corner of every NAI/TAI to produce the NAI matrix. Employing available Soldiers from multiple staff sections is a good practice to mitigate this tedious process. The NAI worksheet comprises a list of the task and purpose of each NAI/TAI. To maximize efficiency, it is a good idea to combine these two products to include all the information and to identify the TAIs in red, as shown in Figure 3.

NAI	Top Left	Top Right	Bottom Right	Bottom Left	Task/Purpose
3120-TAI	11SNV 42900 04800	11SNV 43600 04000	11SNV 43300 03700	11SNV 42700 04000	Area Recon – Identify presence of AT systems utilizing key hole shots
3128-TAI	11SNV 47200 08600	11SNV 48100 08600	11SNV 48100 08000	11SNV 47200 08000	Area Recon – Identify presence of AT systems And enemy Maneuver assets
3129	11SNV 56100 04300	11SNV 57000 04300	11SNV 57000 03700	11SNV 56100 03700	Area Recon – Identify presence of AT systems And enemy Maneuver assets
3135	11SNV 58500 10100	11SNV 59400 09700	11SNV 59000 08900	11SNV 58200 09200	Area Recon – Identify presence of enemy Maneuver assets
3040-TAI	11SNV 57200 07800	11SNV 58100 07100	11SNV 57000 05200	11SNV 56200 05800	Observe enemy HPT – Enable deep targeting
3042-TAI	11SNV 36400 14600	11SNV 37500 15500	11SNV 37900 14800	11SNV 36800 14000	Observe enemy HPT – Enable deep targeting
3043-TAI	11SNU 47100 99100	11SNU 47100 97900	11SNU 45900 97900	11SNU 46500 98600	Area Recon – Identify Composition, disposition, and orientation of Obstacles
3044	11SNU 45500 98900	11SNU 45700 97700	11SNU 43700 97700	11SNU 44500 98500	Area Recon – Identify Composition, disposition, and orientation of Obstacles
3047	11SNV 36100 02100	11SNV 35700 01400	11SNV 34800 02300	11SNV 35500 02200	Area Recon – Identify enemy counter attack force
3048	11SNV 38800 07500	11SNV 38800 06900	11SNV 37400 06900	11SNV 38400 07400	Area Recon – Identify enemy counter attack force
3150-TAI	11SNV 48900 06300	11SNV 49900 06300	11SNV 49900 05400	11SNV 48900 05400	Area Recon – Identify enemy simple or complex battle positions
3151	11SNV 48000 04000	11SNV 50000 04000	11SNV 50000 03000	11SNV 48000 03000	Area Recon – Identify enemy simple or complex battle positions
3152	11SNV 49800 08800	SNV 51000 08800	11SNV 51000 08000	11SNV 49800 08000	Area Recon – Identify enemy simple or complex battle positions
3054	11SNV 41000 01800	11SNU 41000 99500	11SNU 39500 99600	11SNV 40300 00600	Area Recon – Identify enemy counter-attack force
3160-TAI	11SNV 53000 08800	11SNV 54400 07900	11SNV 54100 07100	11SNV 52500 08200	Area Recon – Identify enemy simple or complex battle positions
3061	11SNV 50700 10500	11SNV 52200 10000	11SNV 52000 09400	11SNV 50600 09800	Area Recon – Identify enemy simple or complex battle positions
3162	11SNV 54500 02800	11SNV 55800 02800	11SNV 55800 01100	11SNV 54500 01100	Area Recon – Identify enemy simple or complex battle positions
3163-TAI	11SNV 50800 04800	11SNV 52000 04800	11SNV 52000 03500	11SNV 50800 03500	Area Recon – Identify enemy simple or complex battle positions
3164-TAI	11SNV 53000 04500	11SNV 54000 04500	11SNV 54000 03500	11SNV 53000 03500	Area Recon – Identify enemy simple or complex battle positions

Figure 3. Example NAI Matrix and Worksheet

Information Collection Synchronization Matrix

Using all the previous products, along with the operation's scheme of maneuver, the collection manager produces the information collection synchronization matrix (ICSM), typically during step 4 (COA analysis), step 5 (COA comparison), and step 6 (COA approval) of the MDMP, with constant refinement throughout the operation. The ICSM tasks each collection asset, graphically depicting the scheme of collection in time and space. Current doctrine lacks a good example of an ICSM, which prompted us to create a new template for the squadron's planning standard operating procedure.

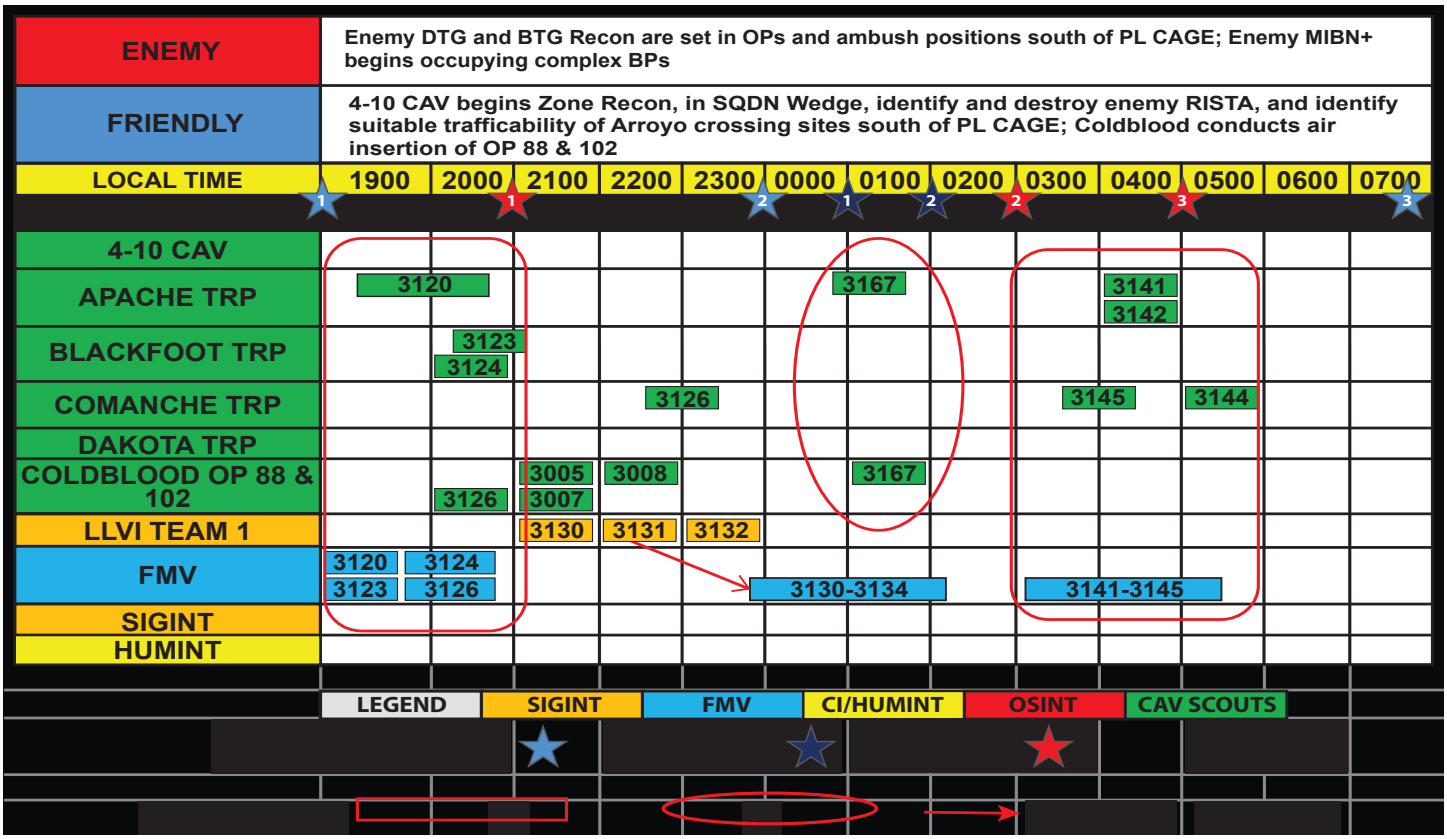

Figure 4. ICSM Example

A best practice is to refine the format of the ICSM after each training exercise with the goal of depicting as much critical information as possible while retaining a visually intuitive product. The first and second rows of the ICSM, shown in Figure 4, are a good place to include a brief summary of the enemy and friendly COAs during each phase of the operation. This aids in the continuous planning process and serves the information collection manager as a script during the various rehearsals before movement to the line of departure. It also helps to frame the friendly action, enemy reaction, and friendly counteraction cycle. This cycle helps to incorporate cueing, mixing, and redundancy into the ICSM, shown with specific symbols identified in the legend. Color-coding each category of collection asset results in quick and easy referencing. Last, but most important, the friendly (squadron and brigade) and enemy decision points in time and space are depicted along the third and fourth rows of the ICSM.

Depicting decision points on the ICSM helps everyone to visualize how the operation will develop and optimizes the timing of collection assets. Before friendly decision points, the collection manager tasks assets to collect on NAIs that contain the information requirements needed to reach that specified decision point. For enemy decision points, collection assets are tasked to exploit and maximize the desired effects of friendly actions as they provoke enemy reactions or decision points. For example, the squadron S-2 may determine that friendly forces seizing a certain objective or key terrain will meet the criteria for the enemy commander's decision point to mass indirect fires on that area. Then it is imperative that the squadron collection manager, being predictive, request assets from higher to collect on the assessed points of origin (using the reverse IPB overlay) of enemy fires before friendly forces seize the objective. The brigade's geospatial intelligence capabilities may be able to provide the assets, or a request may be submitted to echelons above brigade for a national- or theater-level collection asset. If done correctly, this cycle will identify high-payoff targets for prosecution by appropriate shooters and ultimately neutralize any indirect fires threat while friendly forces seize the objective. Once again, this will keep the enemy in a reactive state.

Annex L and Orders Production

According to Army doctrine, Annex L includes the NAI overlay, NAI matrix, NAI worksheet, information collection matrix, ICSM, and information collection overlay. During the creation of Annex L, the goal of squadron collection managers is to generate a product from which troop commanders can fight. The following are additions and recommendations for a squadron's information collection products:

- ✦ Include the enemy and friendly decision support matrices with Annex L, as well as the friendly decision points

in the first column of the information collection matrix, to aid in the association of PIRs to decision points.

- ✦ Ensure NAIs are focused and are supported by a realistic troop frontage.
- ✦ Adjust squadron NAI naming conventions so that NAIs are easily associated with designated PIRs.
- ✦ Combine the NAI matrix and NAI worksheet to save time and effort.
- ✦ Combine the information collection overlay and the fires overlay to reinforce synchronization and targeting, in lieu of a targeting working group.
- ✦ Describe the assessed friendly action and enemy reaction by phase in the first and second row of the ICSM.
- ✦ Depict friendly and enemy decision points by phase, as well as cueing, mixing, and redundancy, in the ICSM.
- ✦ Disseminate all information collection products across all mission command systems (Distributed Common Ground System, Command Post of the Future, Advanced Field Artillery Tactical Data System, and Joint Capabilities Release). A true synchronization of information collection products across echelons and warfighting functions is not achievable without this dissemination up, down, and across.

Conclusion

Information collection is a critical component of decision point tactics. It aims to answer the commander's PIRs necessary to making informed decisions, as well as enabling targeting to set conditions for each phase of the operation. By using the recommendations described in this article, a collection manager can expect to produce a nested, synchronized, and tactically sound information collection plan. In doing so, the collection manager can prevent the all too common problem of "chasing the shiny object" when dynamically re-tasking collection assets. This will ensure the information collection plan remains focused on driving decision points and maximizes the brigade combat team's lethality.

Endnote

1. Department of the Army, Field Manual (FM) 3-98, *Reconnaissance and Security Operations* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Publishing Office [GPO], 1 July 2015), 4-17.

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