

Delivering Intelligence and Biometric Architecture Support to DEFENDER- Europe 21

by Captain Brian Choe



SCANNING...

Introduction

DEFENDER-Europe 21 was a large-scale, U.S. Army-led, multinational, joint exercise designed to build readiness and interoperability between United States, North Atlantic Treaty Organization, and partner militaries in Europe from March to June 2021. The 709th Military Police Battalion conducted security and mobility support operations and detention operations training for DEFENDER-Europe 21 in Germany, Hungary, Albania, Greece, Croatia, and Slovenia to enable friendly forces in large-scale combat operations. To support the battalion's mission, the S-2 intelligence cell conducted intelligence preparation of the battlefield for the exercise, established a concept of intelligence support, and continually refined the running estimate as part of the military decision-making process. Additionally, the 527th Military Police Company used the Defense Exploitation (DEX) training portal as an introductory familiarization platform for the submission of biometric enrollments, deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) samples, and explosive residue.

Preparations for the exercise included an analysis of the area of operations, area of interest, and area of influence, compiled with forces available, critical planning factors, and constraints/restraints of the S-2's running estimate. The analysis identified that, in addition to support from the 18th Military Police Brigade, the S-2 cell at the tactical command post would require numerous external intelligence enablers.

Personnel Support

The 709th Military Police Battalion S-2 intelligence cell consisted of three internal 18th Military Police Brigade intelligence professionals:

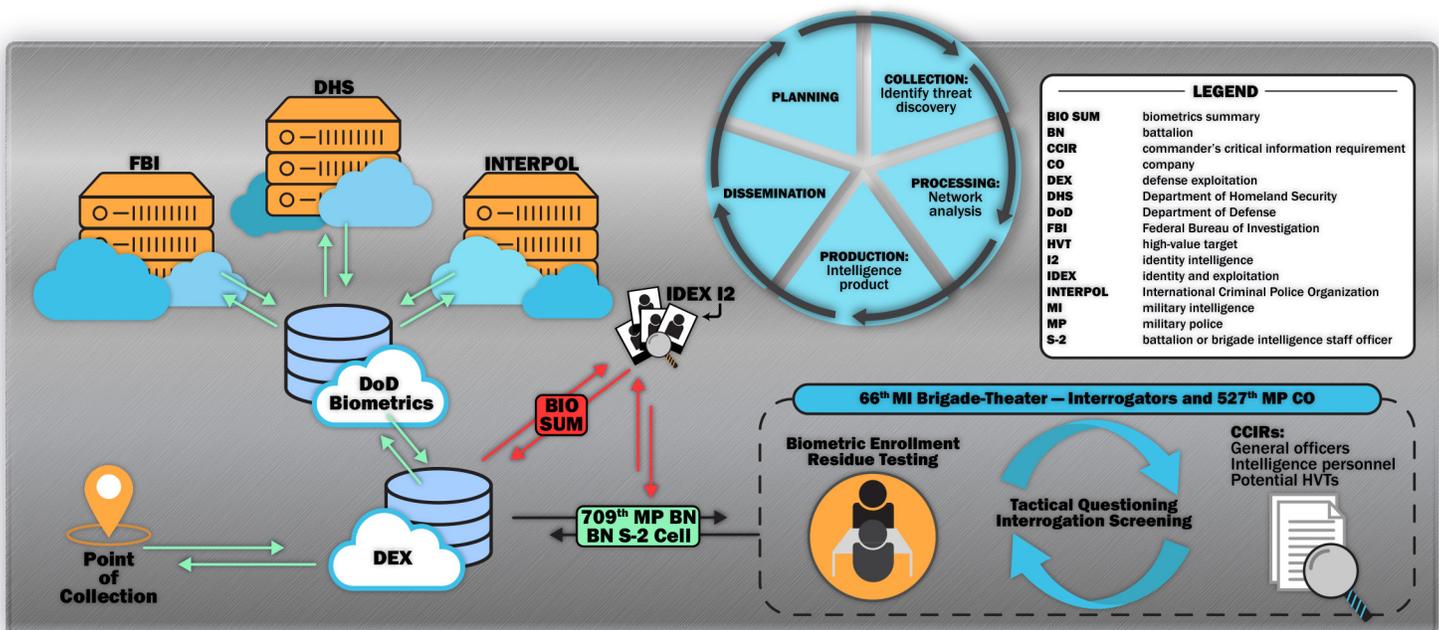
- ◆ A battalion S-2 officer in charge/counterintelligence (CI) officer.

- ◆ An assistant S-2 officer to conduct all-source intelligence analysis directly supporting the tactical command post, battalion commander, and battalion staff.
- ◆ A human intelligence (HUMINT) collector noncommissioned officer to provide real-world foreign military intelligence collection activity debriefings.

HUMINT collectors from the 66th Military Intelligence (MI) Brigade-Theater provided vital tactical questioning training and exercise interrogation screenings. They also played an integral part in exercise/role-player development. Additionally, the MI brigade-theater deployed approximately 20 CI agents across the DEFENDER-Europe 21 area of operations, providing real-world foreign intelligence entity threat and collection activity analysis. The agents established Threat Awareness and Reporting Program channels for foreign significant activity information and mitigation efforts in support of potential insider threats.

An Air Force Albanian linguist, from Hill Air Force Base, Utah, provided external language support to the S-2 cell. This was in response to the U.S. Army Europe and Africa (USAREUR–AF) commander's initiative to use U.S. Service members with a language proficiency to meet DEFENDER-Europe 21's requirements, thereby minimizing a reliance on contractor linguists. The Air Force linguist provided technical oversight for the local national Albanian linguists hired by the Mission Essential Group for the duration of the exercise.

A contractor from the Identity and Exploitation (IDEX) Operations Branch, USAREUR–AF G-34, provided biometrics-enabled intelligence, forensic site exploitation, and identity intelligence expertise, as well as architecture support to assist with the military planning efforts of the exercise.



This illustrates the plan for integration of intelligence enablers who collectively provided tactical questioning, interrogation screenings, biometrics-enabled intelligence, forensic site exploitation, and identity intelligence for DEFENDER-Europe 21.

The battalion S-2 cell and external enablers' efforts throughout the exercise provided intelligence and biometric architecture support. Additionally, they assisted the battalion tactical command post and 527th Military Police Company by providing recommendations for biometric exploitation processes and procedures in accordance with AJP-2.5(A), *Captured Persons, Materiel, and Documents*.¹ Upon identifying gaps in the DEFENDER-Europe 21 scenario, the IDEX Operations Branch and 66th MI Brigade-Theater HUMINT collectors supported and assisted planning efforts to meet battalion- and company-level mission essential tasks and commander's training objectives.

Intelligence Analysis and Production

Before the exercise began, the battalion S-2 cell conducted intelligence analysis to generate knowledge, build the common operational picture, and assist the battalion commander and staff in their understanding of the battlefield. This included creating and disseminating intelligence through the daily battle update brief, the daily operations and intelligence brief, and periodic intelligence update briefs. The briefs included intelligence collected through intelligence information reports, open-source intelligence, and CI reports, presented through graphics, analysis, and geospatial products. The battalion S-2 cell also provided hip-pocket training to the 527th Military Police Company Soldiers about the dangers of social media activity and online cyber-hacking threats and provided a classified brief on Russia's information warfare capabilities.

The S-2 managed the integration of the Air Force Albanian linguist and HUMINT teams into the exercise, ensuring they were successful in creating and executing the training objectives. The battalion S-2 cell developed threat characteristics, friendly forces data, preliminary exercise injects, and an exercise road to war. The S-2 cell also developed and briefed a concept of support for all staff sections to ensure a shared understanding of the exercise environment. During the certification portion, the S-2 cell conducted 24-hour operations, with the S-2 officer in charge taking charge of the day shift and the assistant S-2 taking charge of the night shift.

During both shifts, the S-2 received, processed, and disseminated intelligence significant activities and exercise reporting. Collection of the information and data was in the form of biometric enrollments of U.S. role-players, SALUTE/spot reports,² information gathered from the 527th Military Police Company, HUMINT intelligence information reports,

and open-source intelligence. The processed intelligence provided predictive analysis of enemy courses of action and threats to operations, informing and advising the commander to choose the best friendly course of action.

Planning and Scenarios

The battalion S-2 cell met with the 527th Military Police Company's command team to assist in developing the commander's training objectives derived from AJP-2.5(A) and determining their relation to the mission essential tasks implemented during DEFENDER-Europe 21.

The IDEX Operations Branch and 66th MI Brigade-Theater HUMINT collectors developed the scenario spanning 4 days, from 1 through 3 June 2021, allowing 4 June for retraining opportunities. The exercise included 14 key injects designed to exercise and evaluate mission essential tasks and commander's training objectives with the support of the Albanian 3rd Infantry Battalion—designated opposing forces (OPFOR). The 527th Military Police Company partnered with Albanian military police enablers and, with the support of the battalion tactical command post, executed the scenario. External observer coach/trainers observed and evaluated the scenario as part of exercise evaluation.

The DEFENDER-Europe 21 threat network, consisting of 3rd Infantry Battalion and 709th Military Police Battalion role players, replicated near-peer threats and malign actors. Within the scenario, the network consisted of a platoon-size element of Donovanian Special Purpose Forces, Donovania, as the exercise's adversarial country threat. Role-player packets were developed, translated, and disseminated to the assigned OPFOR. The IDEX Operations Branch and 66th MI Brigade-Theater provided additional training to ensure all role players understood the expectations, biographical information, and safety considerations. Points of capture with accompanying capture circumstances and a detainee collection point were part of the scenario to exercise intelligence reporting and battle tracking.



An example exercise enemy course of action centered on a complex small arms fire attack generated by collected intelligence from exercise role players during tactical questioning interrogations.

Over the course of the exercise, eight captured persons were dropped off at the detainee collection point and one role player surrendered. Each role player was searched, administratively in-processed, screened, tested for explosive residue, processed for a DNA sample, biometrically enrolled, medically screened, and questioned. However, exercise constraints did not allow the biometric enrollment, DNA sampling, or questioning of the Albanian OPFOR.

U.S. role players functioned as “stand-ins” during biometric enrollments, DNA sampling, and questioning to meet the commander’s training objectives. The Albanian OPFOR was only notionally biometrically enrolled, DNA sampled, and questioned during the exercise. Before participating in the biometric enrollments, each U.S. role player signed a Training Exercise Biometric Collection Consent form, acknowledging they had received a briefing on, and would participate in, the conduct of a privileged biometric and exploitation training exercise involving the U.S. Department of Defense. Role players understood that the activity was lawful and pursuant to the authority of the Secretary of Defense under the National Security Act of 1947, as amended. This included ensuring that within 5 days after the training exercise, authorized individuals would discard and permanently delete the collected information, including information on all training collection devices and in the exercise scenario databases.

The IDEX Operations Branch and 66th MI Brigade-Theater HUMINT collectors methodically developed and validated role-player scripts and biographical data, ensuring the exercise scenarios were properly actioned through identified key injects. The 66th MI Brigade-Theater developed several key events for role players during the exercise. These key events included attempted weapon/equipment smuggling during search procedures, escape attempts, misleading biographical information, medical complaints, and a riot attempt. The 66th MI Brigade-Theater also developed intelligence information for collection in order to tie the scenario together.



A U.S. Army role player along with an Albanian opposing forces role player notionally being biometrically enrolled, tactically questioned, and DNA sampled during the exercise.

Defense Exploitation Training Portal: Data Uploads and Reports

IDEX operations deny anonymity to malign actors, foreign intelligence entities, violent extremist organizations, and their proxies operating throughout the USAREUR–AF area of responsibility during the competition phase. The DEX training portal replicates the actual functions of the IDEX portal. The DEX portal acts as a repository and submission network for a variety of exploitable modalities: biometrics, cell phones, subscriber identity module cards, documents, media, video, weapons, drones, DNA, trace residue (including narcotics and explosives), audio files, currency, and improvised explosive device components. At the time of submission, the prospective external agency or organization receives the data for further exploitation. After exploitation, the agency or organization posts its responses to the DEX portal, which disseminates the information to the submitting unit for integration into intelligence production and operations and to assist the commander’s decision making.

The 527th Military Police Company conducted three categories of tests:

- ◆ Biometric enrollments using BioSled, a device that performs multimodal biometric collection and on-board matching using a fingerprint sensor and dual iris camera.³
- ◆ DNA sampling with buccal swabs.
- ◆ Explosive residue testing using SEEKERe, a handheld system that uses an automated colorimetric methodology to detect trace amounts of both explosives and drugs.⁴

They then submitted the data to the DEX training portal. Through use of the IDEX Role Player Management system architecture and DEX training portal management, submitting units were able to monitor real-time responses directly related to role-player identity management. Soldiers documented in the DEX training portal each captured person processed within the 527th Military Police Company captured holding facility.

After the upload of biometric enrollments, DNA samples, and explosive residue submissions in the DEX training portal, along with the corresponding chain of custody documentation, a dossier was created for each captured person encounter.

Biometric enrollments to the DEX training portal identified historical enrollments, watch list notifications, biometric matches to the IDEX Joint European Multination Exploitation Center forensic cases, and first-time enrollments. Responses were posted on the DEX training portal, visible by the 527th Military Police Company and the 709th Military Police Battalion S-2 cell. Soldiers generated personnel encounter detail summaries and submitted them to the DEX portal, which disseminated them to DEFENDER-Europe 21 participating units. In the event of first-time biometric enrollments within the

training scenario, the S-2 made biometric-enabled watch list nominations.

DNA buccal swabs submitted to the DEX training portal generated a DNA summary report. The generated report replicated the Defense Intelligence Agency's DNA laboratory summaries. Each summary included the buccal swab; the process used to extract, quantify, concentrate, and amplify the swab; and test results and conclusions. The submissions used DEFENDER-Europe 21's internment serial number naming convention for the processing of the 527th Military Police Company's captured persons. The DNA samples were notionally ingested into the training database, and the submissions were processed. Responses were provided both to the DEX training portal and to the submitting unit to assist in intelligence production, operations, and commander's decision making.

Explosive residue testing generated real-time test summaries of role players for submission to the DEX training portal. Explosive residue submissions generated an identification match (positive hit) or a non-identifiable result (negative hit) to assist in intelligence production and operations and in commander's decision making.



Explosive residue tests for the exercise were conducted by 527th Military Police Company Soldiers using the SEEKERe, an automated colorimetric handheld device. (U.S. Army photo)

Conclusion

The 709th Military Police Battalion S-2 cell's intelligence and operations process denied adversary anonymity, assisted in identity intelligence discovery, and developed intelligence that supported operations throughout the exercise. For the first time, an exercise demonstrated the successful implementation of IDEX capabilities at the tactical level. Additionally, the 527th Military Police Company used the DEX training portal as an introductory familiarization platform for the submission of biometric enrollments, DNA samples, and explosive residue. The synergy of all intelligence professionals and linguistic enablers resulted in the successful execution of the exercise. Planning considerations must involve "thinking outside the box"—asking the questions of how one can achieve the mission and meet the commander's intent through collaborative efforts with external enablers. 

Endnotes

1. North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), Allied Joint Publication-2.5(A), *Captured Persons, Materiel, and Documents* (Brussels: NATO, 1 August 2007).
2. SALUTE: size, activity, location, unit identification, time, and equipment.
3. "Partner Solutions," Integrated Biometrics, 2022.
4. "SEEKERe Explosives and Narcotics Detection," DetectaChem, 2015.

CPT Brian Choe has served over 15 years in the Army. He is a counterintelligence officer/battalion S-2 for the 709th Military Police Battalion in Vilseck, Germany. Before his direct commission, he was a staff sergeant with military occupational specialties of 37F (Psychological Operations Specialist), 35F (Intelligence Analyst), and 35L (Counterintelligence Agent). He holds a bachelor of arts in psychology from Pepperdine University and a master of science in emergency services administration from California State University Long Beach. Previously, he was the counterintelligence team chief for U.S. Africa Command, Combined Joint Task Force Horn of Africa J-2X, in Mogadishu, Somalia.

Contributor: Mr. Matthew Haubrich is a defense contractor working as the lead forensic and biometric-enabled intelligence training and fusion integrator for U.S. Army Europe and Africa G-34, Identity and Exploitation Operations Branch. He has more than 14 years of intelligence experience and has worked for the Defense Intelligence Agency, National Ground Intelligence Center, U.S. Army Special Operations Command, and Combined Joint Task Force Horn of Africa.