

**DOMAINS**  
(Land, Maritime, Air, Cyberspace)

**DIMENSIONS**  
(Human, Information, Physical)

ANALYZED AND DESCRIBED  
THROUGH

**OPERATIONAL VARIABLES**  
(PMESII-PT)

APPLIED WITHIN THE  
CONTEXT OF

**MISSION VARIABLES**  
(METT-TC [I])

SITUATIONAL  
UNDERSTANDING

# INFORMATION COLLECTION SUPPORT TO TARGETING

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## Introduction

Operations and intelligence are interdependent functions. Intelligence drives the conduct of operations, and the requirements of operations direct the focus of information collection. Imagine planning an advance without confirming through a collection asset the threat's current strength and disposition. Or, planning a mission to create desired effects on a high-value target without surveillance in place to confirm the target's location. The information collection tactical tasks and missions—reconnaissance, surveillance, intelligence operations, and security operations<sup>1</sup>—support the decision-making process of commanders and operations planners. Synchronization between the intelligence and operations staffs will be crucial to overcoming the challenges of large-scale ground combat operations against peer threats and the competition for limited collection assets at every echelon.

The commander drives collection management. The collection management team, in coordination with the staff, manages the intelligence requirements, prepares the collection management plan, and coordinates with the operations staff for tasking and directing collection. The commander also depends on the intelligence warfighting function to answer collection requirements. The intelligence staff does this by supporting the military decision-making process (MDMP), providing intelligence preparation of the battlefield products, supporting the information collection effort, and supporting the targeting effort.<sup>2</sup>

Collection requirements should be layered and integrated across echelons. Integration occurs both vertically and horizontally through a myriad of systems, capabilities, and efforts to obtain the information the commander needs to quickly make decisions. Layering ensures use of the limited collection assets to their best advantage as mutual support activities can share requirements. As part of the collection management effort, collection and analysis elements should disseminate information and intelligence to forward units to achieve the greatest effects. This information is meant to provide situational awareness and force protection to maneuver elements, as well as inform the targeting process against deliberate, dynamic, and time sensitive targets.

Accurate and timely information will result in creating desired effects based on the commander's targeting guidance.<sup>3</sup> After target engagement, analysts conduct battle damage assessment to confirm that the desired effects were achieved, to determine if target reengagement is necessary, and to inform forward units how they should proceed.

How effective the Army is at targeting will significantly affect how successful U.S. forces are at achieving military objectives. Currently, the Army is not postured to effectively conduct information collection in the deep area during large-scale combat operations that target antiaccess and area denial systems.<sup>4</sup> Army intelligence must adapt existing capabilities and leverage all available resources to include expanding collaboration with allies and partners.

## Collection Management During Large-Scale Ground Combat Operations

As the Army transitions to the multi-domain operations concept with a focus on large-scale combat operations, the change in how we think about the Army operating within the contexts of competition below armed conflict, crisis, and conflict must include a change in how we think about information collection. The chaotic nature of large-scale ground combat operations will place a greater demand on the information collection effort and strain available collection assets. Army forces will also contend with peer threats capable of employing long-range fires and denying freedom of airspace, compounded by the potential of a disconnected, intermittent, and limited communications environment.

During hostilities, U.S. forces will not always have the freedom to employ aerial collection assets in the same manner they were employed in past operations because of high levels of risk. These collection capabilities may be relegated to rear area support and tasked with monitoring logistic routes, non-combatant evacuations, or enemy special operations elements operating in non-contiguous battle spaces until friendly forces gain a position of relative advantage or window of opportunity. During this time, information collection will be almost entirely dependent upon the land and space domains to support the deep fight.

To reach positions of relative advantage and open windows of opportunity, coordination and synchronization between the collection management team and operations staff becomes infinitely more important. They must become creative with utilization of available assets and capabilities. If organic and supporting assets become over-tasked, collection management teams should seek assistance from their higher echelon.

### Information Collection Support to Targeting

Decide, detect, deliver, and assess (D3A) is the Army's targeting methodology. It provides organization for the commander's targeting decisions and the staff's requirements for an effective information collection effort. Targeting is a leader driven process conducted in conjunction with the MDMP. The *decide* function occurs from the receipt of mission through the issuing of an approved plan or order. The commander, staff, and targeting working group plan and develop the high-payoff targets, target selection standards, attack guidance matrix, targeting synchronization matrix, named

areas of interest and target areas of interest, and other outputs that articulate the commander's intent for deliberate targets.<sup>5</sup>

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The *detect* function of the methodology uses the outputs from the *decide* function and the corresponding step of the MDMP.<sup>6</sup>

Named areas of interest are an output of the MDMP used to direct information collection in time and space based on the enemy course of action, friendly scheme of maneuver, and terrain.<sup>7</sup> The collection strategy is constructed using the named areas of interest and the associated target areas of interest; it remains fluid based on the commander's decision points, phase of operation, and the enemy's reactions. This ensures that target engagement is at the right time to maximize effectiveness and allow friendly forces the ability to employ decisive action.


Information collection directly supports target detection, tracking, and execution of the desired effects on the attack guidance matrix during the *deliver* function of D3A. Information collection is integral to detecting dynamic and time-sensitive targets that require immediate response because they are highly lucrative, fleeting targets of opportunity or pose a danger to friendly forces.<sup>8</sup>

The *assess* function of the targeting methodology is when battle damage assessment occurs.<sup>9</sup> After target prosecution, follow-up analysis is conducted to confirm if the desired effects were achieved. A component of combat assessment, battle damage assessment consists of the physical damage assessment, functional damage assessment, and target system assessment.<sup>10</sup> When assessing the enemy's remaining critical capabilities, analysts must account for decoys, over reporting, force displacement, and enemy reconstitution or reinforcement to provide an accurate assessment and to refine deliberate targeting operations.

Military occupational specialty (MOS) 35Gs, Geospatial Intelligence Imagery Analysts, use aerial and space-based imagery, full-motion video, geospatial data, and other electronic monitoring to identify activity, extract intelligence information, and conduct combat assessments. They perform point measurement and determine collateral damage estimates, when necessary. The past focus on counterinsurgency operations degraded certain more refined analysis skills; however, the Army has recently added these tasks back into institutional training programs. It will take some time for these proficiencies to permeate throughout the force.



## Conclusion

Commanders and leaders at all levels must engage with their subordinates about the challenges of the future operational environment. While the models we use to understand our operational environment have changed, and there are new capabilities to consider, the nature of war remains the same. Multidomain operations and large-scale combat operations should be familiar terms within the Army lexicon; collection management and targeting should also be familiar. What may not be as familiar is how to apply the information behind these concepts. Conducting realistic training and building effective relationships are crucial to operational success. Conducting information collection in support of targeting requires thorough and creative planning, aggressive execution, and adjustments based on the situation.<sup>11</sup> The intelligence warfighting function needs to continuously train to meet a high degree of proficiency. The MDMP and intelligence preparation of the battlefield set the foundation for operations, lead to better collection and more effective targeting, and create windows of opportunity to dominate enemy forces. Intelligence must be deliberate, accurate, and timely to support targeting and maneuver for U.S. forces to succeed. 

## Endnotes

1. Department of the Army, Army Techniques Publication (ATP) 2-01, *Collection Management* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Publishing Office [GPO], 17 August 2021), 1-5.
2. Ibid., 1-6, 3-1.
3. Department of the Army, ATP 3-60, *Targeting* (Washington, DC: U.S. GPO, 7 May 2015), 1-2.
4. Army Futures Command, Army Futures Command Pamphlet 71-20-3, *The U.S. Army Concept for Intelligence 2028* (Fort Eustis, VA: Army Futures Command, 18 September 2020), 15.
5. Ibid., 1-7; and Department of the Army, ATP 2-01, *Collection Management*, 3-12.
6. Ibid.
7. Department of the Army, ATP 2-01, *Collection Management*, 3-13.
8. Department of the Army, ATP 3-60, *Targeting*, 1-4.
9. Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Instruction 3162.02A, *Methodology for Combat Assessments* (Washington, DC: The Joint Staff, 16 July 2021), B-5.
10. Ibid., B-7.
11. Department of the Army, Field Manual 2-0, *Intelligence* (Washington, DC: U.S. GPO, 6 July 2018), B-17.

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