



# Freedom to Maneuver: Information Collection, Security, and Targeting <sup>in the</sup> Division's Consolidation Area by Major Wesley Riddle and Captain Spencer Larson

## Introduction

In 2020, the Georgia Army National Guard's 648<sup>th</sup> Maneuver Enhancement Brigade (MEB) committed to participating in warfighter exercise 21-03 as a subordinate unit to 3<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division, tasked with security within the division's consolidation area. As a training audience, the MEB sought to exercise its mission command processes, refine and validate standard operating procedures, and train on mission essential tasks. This article describes—

- ◆ The lessons learned that made the MEB's information collection and targeting processes successful.
- ◆ The task organization that was eventually identified as the most effective given our subordinate units.
- ◆ The way the information collection plan was adapted to the limited collection capabilities internal to the MEB.
- ◆ The approach used to integrate the intelligence and fires sections to provide timely targeting and effects on enemy forces.

Additionally, this article addresses challenges we encountered in these areas and describes how we overcame or minimized them.

## Achieving Staff Integration

In August 2020, elements of the 648<sup>th</sup> MEB participated in a staff exercise with elements of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division and 3<sup>rd</sup> Sustainment Brigade at Fort Stewart, Georgia. This was the first time the MEB, 3<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division, and 3<sup>rd</sup> Sustainment Brigade had attempted to co-locate and integrate the staffs to effectively manage the division's consolidation area. The coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), both its quarantine requirements and mitigation measures, had a significant impact on the MEB's ability to effectively conduct the unit's mission. In one instance, COVID-19 resulted in the quarantine of an entire signal company, severely degrading the MEB's ability to maintain situational awareness.

At the beginning of the staff exercise, the tactical operations center for the MEB was not co-located with the support area command post (SACP), and the SACP was not co-located with the tactical operations center for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sustainment Brigade. All three headquarters were geographically separated, impeding efforts to fully integrate the respective staff sections. Initially, individual brigade and SACP commanders took the command and battle update briefs separately but did not achieve relative situational awareness of what each staff had planned. The biggest lesson learned from the staff exercise was to fully integrate the staffs of the three different

elements. By the end of the exercise, intelligence section personnel from the SACP, the MEB, and the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sustainment Brigade began coordinating efforts and building an integrated planning process. This enhanced both communication and situational awareness because it eliminated three separate planning processes by different staffs.

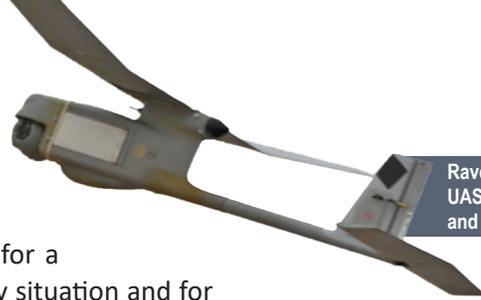
This lesson was carried over into subsequent command post exercises in September, October, and November, and all three staffs incrementally integrated further during each exercise. The staffs were fully integrated by command post exercise 3 in

November 2020. During this 5-day exercise, the intelligence sections of each headquarters held joint briefings, shared maps and intelligence products, participated in intelligence updates, and, most importantly, were all co-located under the same tactical operations center—an enlarged SACP. While each brigade maintained its own separate command and planning tent, it was a short walk from the MEB intelligence section to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sustainment Brigade intelligence section. The SACP intelligence section was located in between both. This setup was ideal because the SACP intelligence section maintained the intelligence picture for the SACP commander on the main floor of the combined operations and intelligence center, and both the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sustainment Brigade and the MEB intelligence sections were able to update their respective commanders as needed in separate portions of the command area.

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The integration of the intelligence sections of the SACP, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sustainment Brigade, and the MEB was a lesson learned over the course of 5 months that allowed for a better understanding of the enemy situation and for a more accurate targeting picture in the division's consolidation area. This directly enabled commanders to have a better awareness of the enemy's intent and location, allowed the MEB and 3<sup>rd</sup> Sustainment Brigade to effectively resupply the division, and allowed the division to be successful during the warfighter exercise.



Raven unmanned aircraft system (UAS). The Raven is a lightweight UAS. It is designed for rapid deployment and high mobility for military and commercial operations.

## Information Collection in the Division's Consolidation Area

Without being augmented by specific collection capabilities, the MEB is organically capable of limited information collection. The MEB relies primarily on collection from the Raven unmanned aircraft system (UAS) in the military police companies, the chemical threat detection from the chemical company, and the route reconnaissance capability provided by the engineer company. Outside of these limited collection capabilities, the MEB fully relies on higher or adjacent units, unless task-organized with an element that retains its organic collection capability. These can include an infantry battalion and its Shadow UAS company or a military intelligence company with its human intelligence (HUMINT), signals intelligence (SIGINT), and counterintelligence capabilities, which provide the intelligence data necessary to gain full situational awareness.

To ensure the success of the targeting process, the MEB had to maximize the use of all assets for the collection process. The military intelligence element provided passive collection, including HUMINT and SIGINT capabilities. The MEB relied on the collection from Raven UAS that are internal to subordinate units during reconnaissance patrols and security patrols. The MEB was also able to leverage collection capabilities of adjacent units. Residual collection from the Shadow UAS and Gray Eagle UAS maximized aerial surveillance of the consolidation area. Patrolling subordinate units established the common intelligence picture for the brigade. The cavalry squadron conducted reconnaissance (area, zone, and reconnaissance in force), the military police and light infantry conducted security patrols, and engineers conducted route clearance with support from explosive ordnance disposal. The operations process directed subordinate units to be proactive in their maneuver throughout the consolidation area, driving the targeting process.

Being fully integrated with the SACP intelligence section and the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sustainment Brigade intelligence section allowed the MEB to fully leverage the collection capabilities of the division and better inform the MEB commander of threats and opportunities in the division's consolidation area. It is critical for the MEB intelligence staff to be able to access reporting and intelligence feeds from division and higher assets to inform planning by the MEB staff and to help shape the MEB commander's decisions.



## Command Post Organization and Employment Considerations<sup>1</sup>

Commanders organize command posts based on the mission requirements and the conditions that will provide them with the best command and control. Factors that affect the planning of command post organization and employment can be categorized as—

- ◆ Those contributing to effectiveness.
- ◆ Those contributing to survivability.

These factors often work against each other, requiring tradeoffs to balance effectiveness and survivability.

An effective command post is arranged to facilitate coordination, to exchange information, and to enable rapid decision making. However, command post survivability is vital to mission success. Depending on the threat, command posts need to remain as small as possible and retain mobility. Size makes them vulnerable to acquisitions through visual, auditory, electromagnetic, and digital signatures, which can lead to an attack.

## Task Organization That Enabled Success

The 648<sup>th</sup> MEB's doctrinal tasks include support area operations and maneuver support operations as defined in FM 3-81, *Maneuver Enhancement Brigade*. To accomplish their mission, the MEB can be task-organized with engineer assets; chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear assets; military police; explosive ordnance disposal assets; intelligence assets; and a tactical combat force with the MEB as the support area controlling headquarters. During warfighter exercise 21-03, the MEB was task-organized with a cavalry squadron, a light infantry battalion, additional military police assets, a fires battery of M777 howitzers, and elements of an expeditionary military intelligence battalion, all of which were critical to the success of the MEB's information collection, security, and targeting. The limited organic collection capabilities within the MEB must be reinforced through a task organization that enables the MEB to employ additional collection capabilities in the division's consolidation area. This is necessary because the division's primary collection focus, and where most of the division and national-level assets are tasked, is the deep and close areas of the fight.

## Targeting in the Division's Consolidation Area

The MEB refined its targeting process using the decide, detect, deliver, and assess methodology, and had two parts to the targeting process: deliberate targeting and dynamic targeting. Dynamic targeting was successful because of a preplanned process applied by the brigade fires section that outlined succinct fire clearance procedures and a developed working relationship with the Joint Air-Ground Integration Center and Division Artillery. The dynamic process of targeting maximized the use of the battalion's internal mortars, with the cavalry and infantry battalion firing 230 missions.

Deliberate targeting was less defined at the beginning, but the staff was able to refine the process. In order to implement the MEB commander's "aggressive targeting" plan, the MEB intelligence staff analyzed terrain and population areas to determine named areas of interest for collection by intelligence assets. The collection process fed directly into deliberate targeting and the MEB's targeting working group, which synchronized intelligence, fires, maneuver, and protection warfighting functions. The targeting working group also dictated requirements to coordinate with higher headquarters and adjacent units following division targeting within the air tasking order cycle. The significant challenge to deliberate targeting within the consolidation area is predictive analysis. The division's consolidation area continually expands as the division close fight extends across the battlefield. Analysis and intelligence collection have two priorities to support targeting: identification of bypassed and left behind threat forces and dynamic threats to security. The MEB's success in deliberate targeting was the synchronization of the warfighting functions to drive subordinate units to be proactive in security, going out and finding threats within the area of operations. The synchronization during the targeting working group turned named areas of interest into target areas of interest, which allowed fires to pre-plan targets for quicker delivery and assessment.

While the MEB targeting process is still developing, warfighter exercise 21-03 provided significant insight and gains into how the staff integrates and synchronizes efforts to maximize security within the division's consolidation area and support area. Targeting within the area of responsibility allows the MEB to conduct support area operations, a mission essential task. Proactivity in the support area is key to enforcing protection and deterring the enemy. A MEB does not have the organic assets needed to accomplish the mission; task organization is crucial to its success. The staff provides assessments and recommendations, allowing the MEB to be a multifunctional headquarters in support of division operations.

## Conclusion

The MEB's experience during warfighter exercise 21-03, including the staff exercise and three command post exercises leading to the main exercise, emphasized the need for additional collection capabilities through task organization. These capabilities enable the MEB to maintain situational awareness throughout the division's consolidation area. They also provide the means for more deliberate and informed planning during the military decision-making process that identifies potential named areas of interest (both in the division's consolidation area and projecting forward as the fight moves) that become target areas of interest. Additionally, these capabilities enable the development of an effective fires coordination process and flexible staff in the fires and intelligence sections who can dynamically target and synchronize across warfighting functions to empower the MEB's mission. 

## Endnote

1. Department of the Army, Field Manual 6-0, *Commander and Staff Organization and Operations* (Washington DC: U.S. Government Publishing Office, 16 May 2022), 7-8-7-11.

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