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~~Intelligence~~ Failure:  
How a Commander Can Prevent It"

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A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of Joint Military Operations (JMO) Course

The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.

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## **Abstract**

### *Intelligence Failure: How a Commander Can Prevent It*

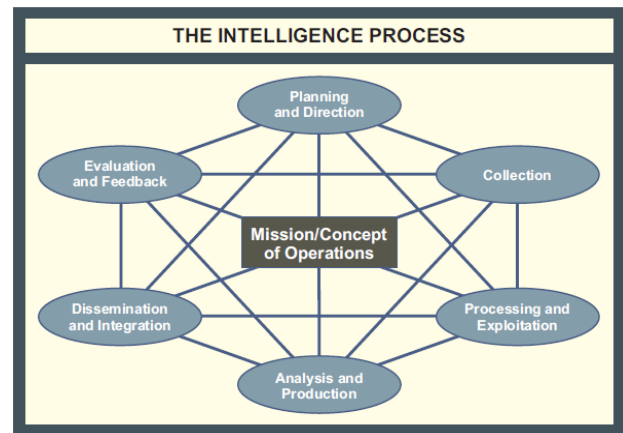
The job of intelligence is to provide the decision maker with sufficient understanding of the enemy to make the correct decisions on how, where and when to utilize friendly forces to accomplish the mission. To do this, the Intelligence Officer (J2) employs the intelligence process to bring the power of the intelligence community to bear in support of the commander's requirements. During each operation in the intelligence process there are potholes which can result in suboptimal or even faulty intelligence. This paper examines potential intelligence problems so that decision makers can understand what those are and how they or their intelligence officers can take action to avoid or minimize those problems and prevent them from resulting in mission failure. The Battle of Leyte Gulf provides the historical case study examples to reinforce these lessons.

## Introduction

The job of intelligence is to provide the decision maker with sufficient understanding of the enemy to make the correct decisions on how, where and when to utilize friendly forces to accomplish the mission. In order to do this, the Intelligence Officer (J2) employs the intelligence process to bring the power of the entire intelligence community to bear in support of the commander's requirements.<sup>1</sup> During each step of this process there are potholes which can result in suboptimal or even faulty intelligence. Potential intelligence problems will be examined so that decision makers can understand what those are and how they or their intelligence officers can take action to avoid or minimize those problems and to prevent them from resulting in mission failure. The Battle of Leyte Gulf provides an excellent historical case study to reinforce these lessons.

The "Intelligence Process", as defined by Joint Pub 2-01, consists of six concurrent intelligence operations - Planning and Direction; Collection; Processing and Exploitation; Analysis and Production; Dissemination and Integration; and Evaluation and Feedback (see Figure 1).<sup>2</sup> While the type of

intelligence provided varies at each level of command, the basic operations remain constant and provide a good structure to address areas of potential failure. The intelligence operations conducted by Admiral Chester W. Nimitz's Joint Intelligence Center Pacific Ocean Areas (JICPOA) and Admiral William F. Halsey Jr.'s intelligence team during the Battle of Leyte



**Figure 1. The Intelligence Process (Reprinted from Chairman, U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint and National Intelligence Support to Military Operations*. Joint Publication 2-01 (Washington, DC: CJCS, 7 October 2004), III-1.) Document is in the public domain.**

Gulf are illustrative of some of the problems and obstacles that could be encountered in each of these intelligence operations.

### **Brief Synopsis of the Battle of Leyte Gulf**

In October 1944, General Douglas MacArthur made his dramatic promised return to the Philippines at Leyte Island. The amphibious operation was protected by naval forces from Admiral Thomas C. Kinkaid's Seventh Fleet and Admiral Halsey's Third Fleet. The Imperial Japanese Navy would throw nearly all of its remaining Naval Forces in a desperate attempt to force the "general decisive battle" and the resulting naval battle would rank with the greatest naval actions of all time."<sup>3</sup> Kinkaid's fleet made an impressive stand with Rear Admiral Jesse Oldendorf's surface forces at Surigao Strait and RADM Clifton A. F. Sprague's light carrier task group off Samar. Halsey's fleet, on the other hand, was decoyed away from the battle by an empty Japanese carrier force. Although he eventually turned most of his Fleet back toward Leyte after learning of the attacks off Samar, those forces saw little action with the enemy and, even Halsey, called his efforts the "Battle of Bull's Run."<sup>4</sup>

### **Planning and Direction**

Intelligence, starting with the initial Joint Intelligence Preparation of the Operating Environment (JIPOE), plays a pivotal role in planning. "The JIPOE process provides the basic data and assumptions regarding the adversary and other relevant aspects of the operational environment that help the [commander] and staff identify intelligence requirements, information requirements, and collection requirements."<sup>5</sup> Additionally, it "provides a methodology for refining the assessment of the adversary's military option and

for hypothesizing the adversary's most likely and most dangerous [Courses of Action (COAs)].<sup>6</sup>

***Failure to realize the need for intelligence*** - Intelligence teams need to fully understand current operations and potential future operations not only in order to know what intelligence the commander overtly states is wanted, but also to assess what additional intelligence is needed. This process can fail in many ways such as when the J2 or a J2 staff member is excluded from any stage of the planning process, when the J2 does not know the commander or other key decision makers well enough to anticipate their decisions or requirements, or when the mission is not understood by the J2 early enough to get the intelligence process working in time to get the right assets in place.

As the commander considers various potential missions or COAs for a specific mission, the J2 needs to foresee them in order to jumpstart the intelligence team producing the Joint Intelligence Preparation of the Operating Environment (JIPOE). This is a vicious cycle since the mission must be known to prepare the JIPOE and the JIPOE must be prepared before the mission analysis. The earlier a JIPOE is anticipated, the more effort can be exerted to create a better product. If the J2 is not aware of potential missions, then the JIPOE will suffer due to the shorter preparation time. This will have a domino effect on the follow-on planning. A commander must ensure that the J2 is fully involved in all phases of the planning process.

***Lack of access caused by the weak voice of the J2*** - It is important that the J2 have a role in all phases of the commander's decision making process even if that role is limited to being an observer. During the Battle of Leyte Gulf, in the consultations after the Japanese carriers were first spotted and the decision was made to move Third Fleet north to attack

those carriers, one historian stated that —~~h~~ of the officers present concurred in the final decision....”<sup>7</sup> What that author failed to note was that Admiral Halsey’s Intelligence Officer, CAPT Mike Cheek, —was not consulted” in that decision.<sup>8</sup> Part of the reason for this was that Cheek —was not a strong voice. He had never had such close ties with Halsey as Col. Julian Brown, his predecessor as chief intelligence officer in the South Pacific. Brown had shared quarters as well as confidences with the admiral in Noumea. Cheek...never enjoyed the same intimacy.”<sup>9</sup> His deep knowledge of the Japanese was missing from that decision making process. The rest of this story will be discussed later in this paper.

The J2 must be a full member of the inner circle. If the commander refuses to allow the J2 into the inner circle because the J2 does not fit in for personal or professional reasons, either the J2 should be replaced with someone who will fit in, or the commander will need to accept the risk of less complete intelligence.

***Lack of basic understanding of enemy*** - Intelligence analysts can develop the analytical skills to understand how to work any problem. The tool kit required is not only just the skill set, but also an understanding of the enemy. In today’s world, we are fighting enemies now, but there are many other potential adversaries. If one were to list all of the countries that have fought against or attacked the United States since 1776 and then list all of the countries that fought on our side in conflicts, the list would be nearly identical. Frequently, when the United States entered into conflict, it is against a country (or countries) that had recently been friendly. For example, in World War I, Japan fought on the U.S. side and in the next war Japan was one of the primary enemies. Shortly, after that war ended, Japan was again our ally in the Cold War against our World War II ally, the Soviet Union. The commander’s J2 does not have enough analysts to watch every country at the level



needed to develop the deep understanding needed to fully understand current operations and predict future action. Thus, it is only the most likely or most dangerous potential adversaries that receive the most attention.<sup>10</sup>

Commanders should generate a demand signal for regional expertise to be resident on their intelligence team or to be augmented to the team in the event of a crisis in an under-watched region of the theater. This will drive the intelligence community to invest in that regional expertise. Additionally, a commander should be aware of the intelligence team's limitations in this area in order to weigh the credibility of their assessments.

***Failure to deliver a complete knowledge of enemy*** – Conversely, perfect knowledge of an adversary is not possible. Then-Lieutenant Colonel H. R. McMaster wrote an excellent monograph countering the false assumption that technology will make certain knowledge achievable. He states in a nod to Clausewitz, “Because war is indeed an extension of politics, it is impossible to have uncertain, unpredictable strategic and operational environments, yet enjoy certainty in military operations.”<sup>11</sup> Any commander who expects his or her J2 to deliver a complete knowledge of the adversary's capabilities, limitations and intentions will be disappointed as the intelligence officer fails to meet that unattainable standard. This is similar to a baseball manager expecting his best batter to get a hit at every at bat. Even the best batters in history still only get a hit less than 40 percent of the time over their career. A commander needs to develop realistic, but high, expectations that still drive the intelligence team to improve.

***Disregarding potential Enemy Course of Action*** - Despite the fact that the Battle of Leyte Gulf would rank with the greatest naval actions of all time,” General MacArthur and Admiral Kinkaid, planned the amphibious operations on the premise that the Japanese fleet

would not come out to challenge a landing at Leyte. That was stated in both their attack plans. It was even stated in Admiral Marc A. Mitscher's plan for Third Fleet's fast carriers. It was Nimitz's expectation, as well..."<sup>12</sup> Although initially this looked like intelligence personnel failed to anticipate the Japanese reaction, this was not the case. The intelligence teams on each of the staffs assessed the following potential Japanese COAs: COA 1- Defend Leyte with the forces on hand; COA 2- Reinforce land forces on Leyte and committed air units in the Philippines; COA 3- Attack in order to disrupt the landing and isolate the landing force; and COA 4- Withdraw from Leyte to consolidate on Luzon.<sup>13</sup> The COA actually chosen by the Japanese, COA 3, was the Most Dangerous COA (MDCOA), but the Allied intelligence teams assessed that COA 1 was the Most Likely COA (MLCOA). The commanders decided to base their planning on the MLCOA and discounted the MDCOA as unlikely —because it was not expected that the enemy would commit a major part of his naval forces to defend the Philippines” due to —the risks involved and the weakened state of the Japanese Navy.”<sup>14</sup> Sometimes there is not enough time to plan to multiple enemy COAs, but a commander must be leery of only planning with the MLCOA in mind. While the J2 selects one enemy COA as most likely, each of the adversary COAs included in the JIPOE is assessed as a potential option that the adversary may choose. A commander should understand the assessed likelihood of the other COAs and the risks associated with completely discounting the other options.

***Enemy acts “out-of-the-box” / “never before seen anywhere”*** - In nearly every conflict, the adversary will use a tactic, technique or technology that had never been seen before. Frequently, the mainstream intelligence community will be surprised and embarrassed because they failed to warn that it was coming. In most of these situations,

post-analysis finds some analytical writing suggesting the potential for the new tactic, technique or technology; but that analysis never made it to the decision makers because it was deemed too unlikely, too out-of-the-box or a distraction. For example, the intelligence community is faulted for failure to warn of the 9/11 attacks on New York and Washington. According to the 9/11 commission, there were numerous pieces of the puzzle that with the hindsight gained after the fact, appear to be painfully obvious warnings to expect that type of attack. Some analysts did indeed come to that conclusion. At least one exercise planner at NORAD suggested using a hijacked aircraft crashing into the Pentagon, but it was —put aside in the early planning of the exercise as too much of a distraction...too unrealistic.”<sup>15</sup> The commission found that it is —crucial to find a way of routinizing [*sic*], even bureaucratizing, the exercise of imagination.”<sup>16</sup> This exact type of operation may not ever have been conducted before, but the concept of using airplanes as human-guided cruise missiles can be traced back to the Japanese use of kamikaze aircraft.

The Japanese first used —“Special Attack” or kamikaze units to fly bomb-laden aircraft on suicide missions attacking Allied ships during the Battle of Leyte Gulf. The first successful mission was a single aircraft crash into the Australian heavy cruiser, *Australian*, on 21 October 1944.<sup>17</sup> Others state that the first targets of deliberate Kamikaze attacks were the Escort Carriers, *Santee* and *Suwanee*, on 25 October 1944 just after Admiral Kurita retired from battle.<sup>18</sup> American intelligence knew nothing of this new attack tactic until the first ones struck. Although the dire straits of the Imperial Japanese Air Forces were well known, and the Third Fleet staff —commonly spoke of desperate Japanese air assaults as —suicidal,” no one thought —“outside-the-box” enough to warn of the potential development of human-guided cruise missiles.<sup>19</sup> Eventually in 1945, —radio intelligence was able to inform

Admiral [Raymond A.] Spruance that kamikaze attacks were coming, in approximately what numbers and when, in time for him to alert all ships and planes,” but when the first attacks came during Leyte, the Navy was completely surprised.<sup>20</sup> Commanders need to create an environment where imaginative thinking is encouraged. While most of the day-to-day work of intelligence deals with understanding “normal” patterns of activity and this effort should not be curtailed, small red teams charged with thinking up alternative assessments can be valuable.

### **Collection**

After the requirements are understood, the information must be collected in order for the needed intelligence to be properly produced. According to Joint Publication JP 2-01:

Collection operations acquire information about the adversary and battlespace and provide that information to intelligence processing and exploitation elements. Collection management, which occurs at all levels of intelligence, converts validated intelligence requirements into collection requirements; establishes, tasks or coordinates actions with appropriate collection sources or agencies; and monitors results and retasks as required. The foremost challenge of collection management is to maximize the effectiveness of limited collection resources within the time constraints imposed by operational requirements.<sup>21</sup>

***Collection asset not tasked*** - The intelligence team must understand the proper way to task collections and must fight to ensure that the right assets are tasked to collect the right information. Even then, a collection asset may not be tasked or available. There is not an inexhaustible supply of collection assets and other commanders also have collection needs. Thus, the asset which could be tasked for the collection may be tasked for a higher priority mission. Additionally, if the requirement is identified late in the process, there may not be time to retask collection assets. Alternatively, there may not be an asset which is capable of collecting the required information available (or in existence). The platform may be

experiencing an outage or may be out of position without the time required to reposition. In some cases, the target of the collection may be something for which an exploitation technology or technique has not yet been developed. Finally, collection may also be thwarted by defective machinery, environmental factors, or superior adversary deception and denial techniques. A commander should understand these limitations.

***Unreliable Sources-False Reporting*** - Another potential problem on the collection side is understanding the credibility and reliability of the source. Every type of information is potentially flawed. Photos can capture images of decoys or can suggest that a hidden item is not present. Human sources, either in face-to-face encounters or in electronically-derived methods, can deceive, exaggerate or misremember facts. Open source reporting can be biased or can rely on the same potentially fallible human sources. The intelligence analyst needs to know how much to rely on each nugget of information. This is very difficult to do since the source may believe the information to be correct or may have in the past provided accurate and verifiable information. The information also may be corroborated by a second source which is itself suspect. Frequently, commanders will see all of the data as it comes in before it is evaluated and will accept the data as accurate intelligence. Commanders must understand that unevaluated data is not intelligence and that it could give a false picture if not analyzed correctly.

Prior to the Battle of Leyte Gulf, and during the battle itself, pilot reports were notoriously over inflated. As shown in the following examples, in some cases this was due to honest errors and in others it was due either to glory seeking or shame avoidance. Following the Japanese attacks on the U.S. carriers which launched the aerial assaults on Formosa, the Japanese reports were grievously in error. —Obviously mistaking their own flaming crashes

as ships hit, the surviving Japanese pilots returned to claim a spectacular victory, which [Commander in Chief of Second Air Fleet, Vice Admiral Shigeru] Fukudome inflated in his reports to Tokyo...”<sup>22</sup> This was further reported by Tokyo Rose, who said –All of Admiral Mitscher’s carriers have been sunk tonight – INSTANTLY!”<sup>23</sup> Halsey famously responded with a message to Nimitz saying –The Third Fleet’s sunken and damaged ships have been salvaged and are retiring at high speed toward the enemy.”<sup>24</sup>

Halsey himself was not immune to the trap of fully believing post-flight or in-flight reports. He believed his planes’ attacks on the Center Force as it transited the Sibuyan Sea were much more successful than they actually were. –Overenthusiastic reports from his pilots led Halsey into believing that the Center Force had suffered disabling damage.”<sup>25</sup> –U.S. pilots returning from attacks that day in the Sibuyan Sea reported that the force had suffered such heavy damage to its guns and fire control that it was incapable of winning a decision.”<sup>26</sup> –Misled by over-optimistic aircrew reports, Halsey believed that Kurita could no longer be a danger after the hammering he had received.”<sup>27</sup> This false understanding was part of his justification for abandoning the gate keeper duties to run north after the northern carrier force.<sup>28</sup>

***Inability to read/see/hear collected data*** – It is possible that the process may accurately determine the requirement for intelligence and correctly task a collection asset which has the capability to collect that information, but still fail to collect the information since the adversary can impact on the successful collection of the desired information. During the run up to the Battle of Leyte Gulf, the Japanese promulgated their SHO-1 plan for reacting to an Allied invasion of the Philippines. The requirement to collect this information was levied, the systems were in place and had the capability, but the Japanese thwarted our

efforts by two methods: —A major change to the Japanese naval code and the observation of strict radio silence.” This effectively —denied [the Allies] advance knowledge of the SHO-1 plan.”<sup>29</sup> A commander must ensure they and their subordinates protect sources and methods to minimize the adversary’s awareness of what our capabilities are in order to make it more difficult for the adversary to work around them. Additionally, commanders must be aware that even when the J2 does all the right things, the adversary can still prevent the attainment of perfect knowledge.

### **Processing and Exploitation**

Processing and Exploitation intelligence operations involve the transformation of the collected raw data —into information that can be readily disseminated and used by intelligence analysts to produce multidiscipline intelligence products.”<sup>30</sup> Each type of intelligence has unique methods applied to it to convert raw data into a form that is usable by analysts. Most of the problems in this area are in the conversion process, but some are in the methods used to transmit the information to the right analyst.

*Over-classification prevents information from getting to the decision makers* - In order to protect intelligence sources and methods, classification markings and dissemination caveats are applied to sensitive information. It is critical to preserve those sources and methods so that they can be used again. Disclosure of information that can be traced back to a particular source or method could result in the method being ineffectual in the future or in the capture and execution of the source. Nevertheless, when the classification is so restricted that it is only available to a handful of people, its utility is minimized. In addition to ensuring that he or she and the critical staff members are read into all pertinent programs, a

commander should make certain that his or her Priority Intelligence Requirements (PIR) are accurate and that the J2 has transmitted them to the Intelligence Community.

An example of such over-classification from Leyte Gulf was the translation of the ~~Z~~ Operations Orders: Secret Fleet Orders Operation No. 73, dated 8 March 1944.<sup>31</sup> This document, also known as Plan Z, was recovered after then-Deputy Commander of the Combined Fleet Admiral Fukudome's plane crashed in the Philippines in March 1944. The plans were translated by General MacArthur's Allied Translation Information Service in Australia and were sent to a very select audience on 23 May 1944.<sup>32</sup> Admiral Nimitz was on the distribution list, but when his intelligence staff saw the plan, it ~~was~~ labeled Secret. Not to be copied or reproduced without permission of General MacArthur.<sup>33</sup> This would have made this highly pertinent information inaccessible by Halsey during Leyte Gulf. Admiral Nimitz's intelligence officer, however, understood the afloat decision makers' intelligence requirements and immediately convinced Admiral Nimitz to ask permission to further disseminate the translated document. The retranslated document was sent to Admiral Halsey's staff and received prior to the Battle of Leyte Gulf.<sup>34</sup> Unknown to them at the time, the SHO-1 plan, which was executed in response to the landings at Leyte Gulf, was a variation on Plan Z.

### **Analysis and Production**

Analysis and Production intelligence operations involve ~~integrating~~, evaluating, analyzing, and interpreting information from single or multiple sources into a finished intelligence product.<sup>35</sup> The potential problems in this area can be seen in the following examples.



*Delay due to over analysis* - Intelligence can err in the attempt to present the commander with perfect, certain knowledge. The analyst's awareness that the product may serve as a critical component in decision making leads to the desire to refine, confirm and second guess. The saying "Perfect is the enemy of good enough" applies in this circumstance.<sup>36</sup> With additional time, the intelligence analysts may be able to compile additional evidence which could refine the analysis. The decision maker, though, frequently does not have the luxury of additional time. A copy of the translation of the Japanese Plan Z discussed in the last example was delivered to Third Fleet. "When it arrived on *New Jersey*, Halsey and [his Chief of Staff Rear Admiral Robert B.] Carney saw it, but what caught their interest was the heavy emphasis, spread over page after page, on the enemy's elaborate plans for shore-based air counterattacks."<sup>37</sup> LT Harris Cox, one of Halsey's junior intelligence officers, however, thought there was more to the plan. "He kept the document in [his] quarters and was forever pulling it out of a drawer and talking with [his roommate] about it. He also went over it with Captain Cheek."<sup>38</sup> One of the options in the plan "involved engaging American carrier forces with air attacks from afar – and then sending in battleships to pummel an American landing fleet as it lay vulnerable at anchor."<sup>39</sup> As the situation unfolded on the night of 24 October, LT Cox saw the significance of the Japanese actions and correctly assessed that the Carrier Force to the north was a decoy, but he did not get this analysis to CAPT Cheek until after the decision was already made by Halsey to move the fleet toward the north. Once CAPT Cheek determined that his staff's analysis was correct and that the fleet was a victim of Japanese deception, he decided to take the new intelligence to his immediate boss, the Chief of Staff. "He came back saying he had presented [the] case to Admiral Carney. He told [his staff that] Carney said Halsey was asleep, not to be

disturbed.”<sup>40</sup> Initially, this event appeared to be a failure of the intelligence officer since he believed that he had information that showed the Japanese were attempting to decoy Third Fleet, and he did not get that information to Halsey. Yet, it is the commander who decides how he or she wants the staff process to work. In this case, Admiral Halsey empowered his Chief of Staff to control access to him, and CAPT Cheek worked through the process that was in place to ensure that his operational leadership was aware of the information. In Admiral Carney’s oral history, he says “Let others tell the story” of the night of October 24, 1944, and does not provide his thoughts, but it is likely he thought that the analysis was too weak to change Admiral Halsey’s mind.<sup>41</sup> This assessment is shared by many historians.<sup>42</sup>

One lesson to be learned from this event is that a commander needs to understand the risks of placing a gatekeeper between the J2 and the commander. This problem can be mitigated by allowing the J2 direct access in extraordinary circumstances.

CAPT Cheek’s attempt to get this delayed analysis to the commander highlights another factor which can contribute to intelligence failure or at least the perception of intelligence failure. A commander must be willing to hear new intelligence as it is produced regardless of the decision timeline, especially if it significantly alters the understanding of the situation.

***Inability to properly analyze huge amounts of data*** - In today’s operating environment, the J2 organization can be a victim of its own collection success as intelligence analysts need to sift through mountains of data chaff looking for the valuable grains of information that are needed to understand the adversary. If an analyst were to attempt to read every article, message or report that potentially contains data of value to the puzzle they are working to try to solve, they would never complete the task and would never have time to

synthesize the pieces they have gathered into a coherent picture that can be used by decision makers. The problem of finding the right data points can be minimized both by using technological tools with appropriate search criteria and by increasing the number of analysts working on the problem. But each of these fixes has problems of its own. A search program will only work properly if the item being searched is in a form compatible with the program or if it has the correct tags on it. Expanding the number of analysts on a problem adds the problem of merging each analyst's harvest into the consolidated picture. That option also increases the costs of the effort and may be compounded by not enough analysts or enough resources for that solution. Commanders should understand that any savings from understaffing the J2 directorate will increase the risk of missing significant intelligence.

*Information presented in a suboptimal format* - The production method must take into account the best method to ensure that the decision maker can make the best decision in the right amount of time. As everyone processes information differently, some commanders prefer to see the information in a glossy document, others prefer a PowerPoint brief, still others are more apt to digest the information best if the J2 pulls out a chart and discusses the situation in plain language. Finally, others just want the raw information so that they can do the synthesis and analysis themselves. The J2 should know the commander well enough to understand which way works best for that person, but the commander should also clearly state which is best for him or her to prevent any misunderstandings.

### **Dissemination and Integration**

The Dissemination and Integration intelligence operation is perhaps the most important phase, because this is when properly formatted intelligence products are disseminated to the requester, who integrates the intelligence into the decision making and

planning process.”<sup>43</sup> In this stage it is crucial that the intelligence gets to the decision maker in a form that is readily understood and directly usable by the recipient in a timely manner without overloading the user and, at the same time, minimizing the load on communications capabilities.”<sup>44</sup>

***Failure to inform decision makers in a timely manner*** - While the decision maker could be cleared to receive the information, and be on the distribution list, systems or process issues can cause the intelligence product not to arrive in time. An example of this from the case study concerns the distribution of a valuable translation. Admiral Nimitz’s intelligence team translated the Japanese Manual *Striking Force Tactics* and circulated it to the Fleet in the summer of 1944.<sup>45</sup> Because of this manual, U.S. Naval Intelligence was aware of the “gambit tactics of using carriers as a decoy,” but due to delays inherent in the system this translation was not seen by Third Fleet before the Battle of Leyte Gulf.<sup>46</sup> Harking back to the previously mentioned examples on lack of access and delay due to overanalyzing information, if the document had been on the flag ship, CAPT Cheek may have had more success convincing Admiral Carney to wake up Admiral Halsey and may even had been able to make the argument that the Northern Force was a decoy before the decision was made to move Third Fleet north. With today’s information accessibility, delays like this are mainly due to bandwidth issues or software compatibility problems. Another factor is the switch from the business practice of the production facility primarily pushing reports using a distribution list to the current practice in which most intelligence reports are posted on the production facility’s classified web site requiring the user to pull the data. While more intelligence is available to the decision maker’s intelligence team, they now must know

where to actively look instead of passively receiving reports. Commanders and their J2s should request that critical information be pushed to them in addition to being posted.

***Failure to say definitively what will happen*** - Many people bemoan the fact that “intel-speak” is too wishy-washy and berate an intelligence officer who refuses to take a stand. While there are cases where intelligence officers give too many possibilities, any J2 who states that “option A will happen without either definitive intelligence, or without caveating it to ensure the commander understands how much they can trust the call, is doing that commander a disservice. Thus, a commander should expect the J2 to follow the direction given by Colin Powell when he was in uniform and when he was Secretary of State—“Tell me what you know. Tell me what you don't know. And then, based on what you really know and what you really don't know, tell me what you think is most likely to happen.”<sup>47</sup> The last section of this doctrine requires the J2 to use caveats to ensure the commander understands the probability that is placed on that assessment. Joint Publication 2-0 (JP 2-0), *Joint Intelligence* contains a chart of Intelligence Confidence Levels which the J2 should use to clarify what it means when intelligence analysts use a variety of caveats such as “highly likely” (greater than 90 percent confidence level), “probable” (60-90 percent confidence), or “possible” (40-60 percent confidence).<sup>48</sup> A commander should discuss these caveats with the J2 to ensure that they share the same understanding of their meaning.

## **Conclusion**

Commanders can be well served by their intelligence teams, but there always exists the potential for intelligence to fail. As illustrated by Leyte Gulf, there are numerous areas where action or decisions by the commander can reduce the possibility of intelligence failure or at least minimize it so it does not cause mission failure. As you can clearly see, there are

lessons learned that seem redundant or overlapping, but that is due to the concurrent operations in the intelligence process. Some of these areas can be categorized as understanding the limitations of intelligence, such as limited collection assets, unreliable sources or uncooperative adversaries. Other areas can be categorized as properly utilizing intelligence capabilities, such as proactively using PIRs, tasking the system as early as possible, allowing the intelligence operations to convert data into intelligence, encouraging creative thinking and developing realistic expectations.

The solution to a majority of these issues lies primarily in the strength of the relationship between the commander and the J2. The most important action that a commander can take is to ensure that the J2 is a trusted member of the inner circle. Only then can the J2 completely understand what the commander needs (or will need) and know the best method for that commander to ensure that the decision maker can make the best decision in the right amount of time.

## End Notes

<sup>1</sup> Depending on the type of staff, the senior intelligence officer is sometimes referred to as the Director for Intelligence, Deputy Chief of Staff for Intelligence, the Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence or the senior intelligence officer. The office code given is “2” preceded by a letter code indicating the type of staff: Joint – J2, Navy – N2, Army or Marine Corps General-level – G2, Army or Marine Colonel-level – S2, Air Force – A2. For this paper, the author will refer to the person leading the intelligence team as the J2.

<sup>2</sup> Chairman, U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint and National Intelligence Support to Military Operations*. Joint Publication 2-01 (Washington, DC: CJCS, 7 October 2004), III-1. This process was originally known as the “intelligence cycle” and what are now known as concurrent intelligence operations were described as consecutive phases in the cycle. Chief of Naval Operations, *Intelligence Support to Operations Afloat*. Naval Warfare Publication (NWP) 2-01. (Washington, DC: Department of the Navy, CNO, January 1997), 4-3.

<sup>3</sup> Samuel Elliot Morison, *History of United States Naval Operations in World War II Volume 12: Leyte* (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1958) 159, 69.

<sup>4</sup> Potter, *Bull Halsey*, 286-304.

<sup>5</sup> Chairman, U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Intelligence Preparation of the Operating Environment*. Joint Publication 2-01.3 (Washington, DC: CJCS, 16 June 2009), xiii.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, I-5.

<sup>7</sup> Potter, *Bull Halsey*, 296.

<sup>8</sup> Solberg, *Decision and Dissent: With Halsey at Leyte Gulf*, 118.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 125.

<sup>10</sup> This was not a major problem in the war in the Pacific since Japan was viewed as the most likely adversary by the U.S. Navy for decades. In fact, the Navy started a language program in 1910 with an average of two officers a year starting the program. These Language Officers spent three years in Japan studying the language and the culture. Admiral Nimitz’s Intelligence Officer, then-CAPT Edwin Layton, had spent 3 years in Japan studying the language along with CAPT Joseph Rochefort, the head Cryptologist on Hawaii in the early years of World War II. From Edwin T. Layton with Roger Pineau and John Costello, “*And I Was There*”: *Pearl Harbor and Midway-Breaking the Secrets* (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1985), 25, 39. CAPT Check had been in business in the Far East and returned to duty as a reservist” and had an insight into Japanese mindset from playing poker with them in Tokyo.” From Solberg, *Decision and Dissent: With Halsey at Leyte Gulf*, 27, 125 and also discussed in Thomas, *Sea of Thunder: Four Commanders and the Last Great Naval Campaign 1942-1945* Amazon Kindle E-book Location 2413-2426.

<sup>11</sup> H.R. McMaster, *CRACK IN THE FOUNDATION: Defense Transformation and the Underlying Assumption of Dominant Knowledge in Future War* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: Center for Strategic Leadership, the United States Army War College), 19.

<sup>12</sup> Morison, *History of United States Naval Operations in World War II Volume 12: Leyte*, 159, 69 and Carl Solberg, *Decision and Dissent: With Halsey at Leyte Gulf* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1995), 79. Not everyone on MacArthur’s staff agreed. CAPT Ray Tarbuck, USN, attached to G3, “had a seafarer’s hunch that the Japanese would try to make a run at attacking the American invasion force from the sea. He guessed that the Japanese ships would divide into two prongs, one passing through Surigao Strait to the south, the other through San Bernardino Strait to the north.” After the G3 forwarded this analysis to General Charles A. Willoughby, G2, he was told “to mind his own business...and stay out of intelligence.” From Evan Thomas, *Sea of Thunder: Four Commanders and the Last Great Naval Campaign 1942-1945* (New York: Simon & Shuster, 2006) Amazon Kindle E-book Location 2585-2607.

<sup>13</sup> Chairman, U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Intelligence Preparation of the Operating Environment*. Joint Publication 2-01.3, A-8 to A-11.

<sup>14</sup> Milan Vego, *The Battle for Leyte, 1944: Allied and Japanese Plans, Preparations, and Execution* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2006), 100 and Chairman, U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Intelligence Preparation of the Operating Environment*. Joint Publication 2-01.3, A-12 to A-13.

<sup>15</sup> National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States, 346.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 344-348.

<sup>17</sup> Vego, *The Battle for Leyte, 1944: Allied and Japanese Plans, Preparations, and Execution*, 233.

<sup>18</sup> Morison, *History of United States Naval Operations in World War II Volume 12: Leyte*, 300 and Carl Solberg, *Decision and Dissent: With Halsey at Leyte Gulf*, 145.

<sup>19</sup> Solberg, *Decision and Dissent: With Halsey at Leyte Gulf*, 143.

- <sup>20</sup> Holmes, *Double-Edged Secrets: U.S. Naval Intelligence Operations in the Pacific During World War II*, 208.
- <sup>21</sup> Chairman, U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint and National Intelligence Support to Military Operations*. Joint Publication 2-01, III-11.
- <sup>22</sup> John Costello, *The Pacific War 1941-1945* (New York: Quill, 1981), 499.
- <sup>23</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>24</sup> E. B. Potter, *Bull Halsey* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1985), 285.
- <sup>25</sup> Holmes, *Double-Edged Secrets: U.S. Naval Intelligence Operations in the Pacific During World War II*, 191.
- <sup>26</sup> Potter, *Bull Halsey*, 295.
- <sup>27</sup> John Winton, *Ultra in the Pacific: How Breaking Japanese Codes & Ciphers Affected Naval Operations Against Japan* (London: Leo Cooper, 1993), 184.
- <sup>28</sup> Another example of false reporting involved a human intelligence source in China, but this case was handled correctly. During the time before Leyte, the U.S. received —æreport from a Chinese observer that a powerful Japanese surface force had departed from Amoy, China, for Luzon.” If this were a credible report, Admiral Halsey would have needed to react to the information, but intelligence officers on his staff as well as on Admiral Nimitz’ staff recognized that the named ships —were all ships that had been sunk but whose loss had been kept secret by the Japanese.” They ensured Halsey was aware of this fact so no resources were diverted to react to imaginary ships. Holmes, *Double-Edged Secrets: U.S. Naval Intelligence Operations in the Pacific During World War II*, 189-190.
- <sup>29</sup> Layton, Pineau and Costello, “*And I Was There*”: *Pearl Harbor and Midway-Breaking the Secrets*, 490.
- <sup>30</sup> Chairman, U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint and National Intelligence Support to Military Operations*. Joint Publication 2-01, III-3.
- <sup>31</sup> Solberg, *Decision and Dissent: With Halsey at Leyte Gulf*, 120-121.
- <sup>32</sup> John Prados, *Combined Fleet Decoded: The Secret History of American Intelligence and the Japanese Navy in World War II* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1995), 551.
- <sup>33</sup> W. J. Holmes, *Double-Edged Secrets: U.S. Naval Intelligence Operations in the Pacific During World War II* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1979), 179.
- <sup>34</sup> Solberg, *Decision and Dissent: With Halsey at Leyte Gulf*, 121.
- <sup>35</sup> Chairman, U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint and National Intelligence Support to Military Operations*. Joint Publication 2-01, III-4.
- <sup>36</sup> According to [http://www.famous-quotes.net/Quote.aspx?The\\_perfect\\_is\\_the\\_enemy\\_of\\_the\\_good](http://www.famous-quotes.net/Quote.aspx?The_perfect_is_the_enemy_of_the_good) (accessed 16 October 2009), the original quote in French is "Le mieux est l'ennemi du bien.", from Voltaire's *Dictionnaire Philosophique* (1764) Literally translated as "The best is the enemy of good.", but is more commonly cited as "The perfect is the enemy of the good."
- <sup>37</sup> Solberg, *Decision and Dissent: With Halsey at Leyte Gulf*, 120-121, 122.
- <sup>38</sup> Ibid., 123.
- <sup>39</sup> Thomas, *Sea of Thunder: Four Commanders and the Last Great Naval Campaign 1942-1945*, Amazon Kindle E-book Location 1820-1832.
- <sup>40</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>41</sup> Ibid., 177.
- <sup>42</sup> —. when Halsey decided, he would point his finger and announce that he had made up his mind. That was it. There were no appeals. His subordinates, long accustomed to the absolute power of captains, knew not to press a point.” Thomas, *Sea of Thunder: Four Commanders and the Last Great Naval Campaign 1942-1945*, Amazon Kindle E-book Location 2379-2403.
- <sup>43</sup> Chairman, U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint and National Intelligence Support to Military Operations*. Joint Publication 2-01, III-4.
- <sup>44</sup> Ibid., III-51.
- <sup>45</sup> Morison, *History of United States Naval Operations in World War II Volume 12: Leyte*, 160.
- <sup>46</sup> Solberg, *Decision and Dissent: With Halsey at Leyte Gulf*, 175.
- <sup>47</sup> Colin L. Powell, *Written Remarks to Senate Governmental Affairs Committee for hearing on “Ensuring the U.S. Intelligence Community Supports Homeland Defense and Departmental Needs”*, 108<sup>th</sup> Cong., 2<sup>nd</sup> sess., 13 September 2004, [http://hsgac.senate.gov/public/index.cfm?FuseAction=Files.View&FileStore\\_id=ea505711-63a7-487d-8c58-f0ecf9e84479](http://hsgac.senate.gov/public/index.cfm?FuseAction=Files.View&FileStore_id=ea505711-63a7-487d-8c58-f0ecf9e84479) (Accessed 24 September 2009), 4.
- <sup>48</sup> Chairman, U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Intelligence*. Joint Publication (JP) 2-0, A-2.



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