

Marine Corps Intelligence:
Investing in Its Personnel for Fourth Generation Warfare
EWS Contemporary Issue Paper
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The most pervasive challenge facing any national security apparatus involves identifying the range of threats the nation currently faces, predicting future threat models and preparing to confront both current and future threats. Effectively countering these threats requires investing in equipment, systems and, principally, personnel. Investing in people includes assigning specialities in the appropriate mixtures, organizing to maximize the complementary nature of those specialties, and educating those personnel. The U.S. Department of Defense (DoD), including the Marine Corps, has identified the most significant present and future threats to U.S. national security as those involving fourth generation warfare (4GW).¹ In light of the anticipated future threats, the Marine Corps intelligence community needs to increase its manning while re-organizing itself and broadening intelligence Marines' educations if the Marine Corps intelligence community is to be relevant in confronting these threats.

¹ Modern history of warfare has been divided by some theorists into "generations" intended to demarcate significant evolutions in the way wars are fought. The first generation began with the Peace of Westphalia in 1648 and involved line and column tactics. Second generation warfare was developed during World War I and sought victory through centrally controlled, synchronized, massed firepower. Third generation warfare, or maneuver warfare, uses speed, surprise, and mental and physical dislocation of an enemy's military forces to achieve a decision. Fourth generation warfare marks a departure from the first three generations in that it is a return to the style of warfare that pre-dated the rise of strong states when "many entities, not just governments of states, will wage war...for different reasons." [William S. Lind, "Understanding Fourth Generation War," *Lew Rockwell*. <http://www.lewrockwell.com/lind/lind3b.html> (accessed November 26, 2008).]

BACKGROUND

To understand how the Marine Corps intelligence community needs to transition, it's important to identify the threat that it should be designed to confront. As globalization continues, the shift to 4GW will provide both state and non-state actors with a relatively inexpensive means of challenging established authority and regional and global powers. Fourth generation warfare will become predominant as international power becomes distributed amongst several entities, as the likelihood of conflict between states and cultural/religious groups over scarce resources increases, and as criminal and terrorist organizations expand their influence.² Nations competing with the U.S. for influence will use 4GW to limit U.S. conventional forces' freedom of maneuver both prior to and during conventional operations,³ just as Iran has been using 4GW in Iraq to limit U.S. options in the Middle East.⁴

The ability to identify and exploit a foe's tactical, operational and, ultimately, strategic vulnerabilities determines the outcome of any conflict. Due to its focus on physically defeating enemy forces, conventional warfare -

² Office of the Director of National Intelligence, *Global Trends 2025: A Transformed World*, 2008 (Washington, D.C.: GPO, November 20, 2008), www.dni.gov/nic/NIC_2025_project.html, vi-xiii.

³ Edward P. Jamison, *Intelligence Strategy for Fourth Generation Warfare* (USAWC Strategy Research Project, Carlisle Barracks: U.S. Army War College, 2006), 12.

⁴ Steven K. O'Hern, *The Intelligence Wars: Lessons from Baghdad* (Amherst: Prometheus Books, 2008), 81-116.

essentially 2GW and 3GW - depends significantly on collection and analysis of intelligence gathered through technical means.⁵ As a result, the intelligence flow relies on top-down, centralized analysis and dissemination. Conversely, 4GW relies on human networks and readily available technology to conduct smaller, dispersed operations that are tactically less decisive but strategically more disruptive.⁶ As a result, 4GW is generally a localized conflict that favors a bottom-up, distributed approach to collection, analysis and dissemination that is then refined by intelligence provided by higher commands from the technical collection disciplines.⁷

Doctrinally, the Corps conducts maneuver warfare against another conventional military. Accordingly, the Marine Corps intelligence community has focused its manning, organization and education on physically defeating a conventional force's combat capability. However, conducting intelligence operations against an 4GW opponent is more difficult than it is against a conventional opponent and requires increased manpower and

⁵ Intelligence disciplines that use technical collection rely on systems instead of people to gather and process information. These disciplines include signals (SIGINT), imagery (IMINT) and measurements and signatures (MASINT) intelligence.

⁶ LtCol. Thomas X. Hammes (USMC). "The Evolution of War: The Fourth Generation." *Marine Corps Gazette*, September 1994.

⁷ *FMM-1A: Fourth Generation War*, Draft 4.3, August 12, 2008. <http://www.d-n-i.net/dni/strategy-and-force-employment/fourth-generation-warfare-manuals>, 25.

cognitive capabilities.⁸ If the Marine Corps intelligence community is to be relevant in future conflicts, it must transition to counter 4GW.

MANPOWER

In 2005, the Corps announced a force structure increase that included plans to increase the number of its intelligence personnel. The human intelligence (HUMINT) and all-source analysis fields will experience the most significant growth. Additionally, the increase provides some growth in language and cultural expertise. While the planned increase is a significant step forward in rectifying the personnel shortage, it falls short of what it is needed to succeed on a 4GW battlefield.

More Analysts, Linguists & Cultural Experts

The distributed nature of 4GW dictates that maneuver companies, sometimes even platoons and squads, operate independently of their parent headquarters. These distributed operations require each independent element to be supported by co-located intelligence analysts focused on processing locally collected information about the local human networks being exploited by a 4GW opponent. Creating company level intelligence cells (CLIC) has become a proven means of providing intelligence support to these independent elements. The

⁸ David C. Gompert, *Heads We Win: The Cognitive Side of Counterinsurgency (COIN)*, RAND Counterinsurgency Study (Arlington: RAND Corporation, 2007), ix-xiii.

increased force structure provides enough all-source analysts to the battalion S-2 to allow it both to function and augment the CLICs without drawing personnel from the battalion into the S-2.⁹ However, it continues to leave the CLICs predominantly manned by infantrymen.¹⁰ The battalion intelligence sections need to grow sufficiently to man the CLICs with predominantly all-source analysts. Coupled with an experienced, all-source NCO's leadership, the analysts would bring a greater intelligence capability and increased continuity to the CLICs and return the infantrymen to their normal duties.¹¹

Because 4GW opponents fight in small groups distributed amongst the local population, they rely on any available means of communication to coordinate their activities. The resulting dispersion and variety of sources will significantly increase the volume of communications intelligence (COMINT) collection as compared to purely conventional warfare. Though technology may facilitate some economy of force by consolidating some of the collected communications, much of the communication technology used in 4GW requires significant dispersion of collection and processing capabilities. To be effective, both the dispersed

⁹ Battalion S-2 manning determined by comparing 3d Bn, 1st Marine Regiment (3/1), 1/2 and 2/7's FY09 and FY10 Tables of Organization (T/O) accessed on the TFSMS website on February 19, 2009.

¹⁰ *Enhanced Company Operations (ECO) Limited Object Experiment One (LOE-1): Company Level Intelligence Cell (CLIC)*, Marine Corps Warfighting Laboratory X-File 2-1.2, 8.

¹¹ The CLICs should be composed of 5-6 personnel - a chief (an all-source NCO), two collections personnel (at least one all-source analyst) and three all-source analysts focused on intelligence analysis and production. [Ibid.]

collection sites and the consolidated processing sites must include Marines capable of translating the collected information so that it may be used by analysts. The Corps needs to increase its number of Marine linguists to support sustained, continuous (24/7) operations conducted by tactical COMINT collection teams and consolidated processing points.

In addition to understanding an opponent's communications, a sound understanding of the culture in which the threat operates is imperative to successful intelligence gathering and analysis.¹² Because 4GW relies extensively on networked groups operating semi-independently within cultural norms,¹³ intelligence collectors and analysts need cultural expertise to provide perspective to their information. To educate and maintain a large number of cultural experts for every possible location where a contingency might erupt is not practical. Instead, standing relationships should be developed with non-DoD intelligence agencies, the Department of State (DoS), and academia to develop and maintain detailed cultural information for those areas less likely to involve contingency operations. This would create an information reserve covering the human

¹² LTC Fred Renzi, USA, "Networks: Terra Incognita and the Case for Ethnographic Intelligence," *Military Review* Special Edition: Counterinsurgency Reader (October 2006), 180-1.

¹³ Col Thomas X. Hammes, USMC(Ret), "Countering Evolved Insurgent Networks," *Military Review* Special Edition: Counterinsurgency Reader (October 2006), 155, and Renzi, 181.

terrain¹⁴ in greater depth and currency than is presently provided by country handbooks. Concurrently, the number of Marine cultural experts for regions and countries where contingencies are more likely to erupt needs to be expanded and promoted. The Foreign and Regional Area Officer programs provide the framework for creating and sustaining this expertise. Participation in this program needs to be expanded significantly and promoted amongst both officers and SNCOs to diffuse cultural expertise throughout the Corps.

Increased HUMINT Personnel

Of particular importance, the number of HUMINT personnel must be increased to enable intelligence operations to penetrate the human networks and the social terrain relied upon by 4GW opponents. While the 2005 force growth substantially increased the number of HUMINT collectors, it did not create any HUMINT analysts and made little effort to provide organic linguistic abilities to HUMINT collection.

Presently, the lack of HUMINT analysts is remedied by assigning all-source analysts to assist the collectors.¹⁵ This solution diminishes the all-source analytical capabilities of

¹⁴ Sometimes referenced as "ethnographic information", cultural norms, organizations and interactions are often known as the "human terrain." [Anna Simons and David Tucker, "Improving Human Intelligence in the War on Terrorism: The Need for an Ethnographic Capability," report submitted to Office of the Secretary of Defense for Net Assessment (2004), 5, quoted in Renzi, 180-1]

¹⁵ Based upon the author's experience while assigned to 1st Intelligence Battalion between 2006 and 2008.

the Marine air-ground task force (MAGTF) and assigns poorly prepared personnel to assist the HUMINT collection. Instead, the HUMINT force needs to grow and to be shaped by transitioning a portion of experienced collectors into analysts. Due to their experience with HUMINT collection, collectors-turned-analysts are best suited to develop intelligence products based upon HUMINT and assess source reliability. As former collectors, these analysts are also well-prepared to assist collectors¹⁶ in focusing their sources' efforts on the information most needed by the commander and most accessible to the source.¹⁷

Because HUMINT is highly dependent on human-to-human interactions, the requirement for language skills is irrefutable. Ironically, several years ago Marine translators¹⁸ were phased out of Marine Corps HUMINT operations when their specialty designator¹⁹ was eliminated. Currently, Marine Corps HUMINT can only provide translation by sourcing reliable, trustworthy contractors. This reliance limits the collectors' abilities to begin operations on short notice and to maneuver freely. To remedy this weakness in its HUMINT capabilities, the Corps needs to reinstate Marine translators within its HUMINT personnel in numbers sufficient to allow dividing standing

¹⁶ O'Hern, 266-268.

¹⁷ O'Hern, 248-251.

¹⁸ The ability to converse in a language differentiates a translator and a linguist. The former is required to be able to converse in both languages; the latter is only required to be able to translate what is heard or read.

¹⁹ MOS designator 0251 - Interrogator/Translator.

HUMINT teams into smaller teams capable of limited, sustained operations.

ORGANIZATION

In addition to not providing sufficient intelligence personnel growth to the Corps, the 2005 force growth neglected any organizational changes designed to address 4GW. While increasing the number of all-source analysts at the maneuver battalions, other elements critical to a 4GW conflict, such the Marine logistics groups (MLG), remain understaffed.²⁰ In addition to shaping the maneuver battalions' intelligence staffs to counter 4GW, the Corps' supporting elements need intelligence staffing that supports their roles of increased significance in 4GW.

In addition to reshaping unit intelligence staffing, the most immediate organizational need is to reform the intelligence organizations that provide general support to the Marine expeditionary force (MEF). This reorganization should provide both an overarching and a disciplinary focus of effort. The first step should create an intelligence regiment that absorbs the intelligence and radio battalions from their respective MEF headquarters groups. This creates a single commander responsible for the intelligence support provided to the MAGTF

²⁰ Based upon the author's review of the 1st, 2nd and 3rd MLGs' FY09 and FY10 T/Os accessed on the TFSMS website on February 19, 2009, and the manpower requirements described by the 1st and 2nd MLG Intelligence Officers (AC/S G-2) in personal correspondence with the author.

who also has the authority to enforce a unity of effort. A HUMINT battalion needs to be formed that includes analysts, collectors and translators. The intelligence battalions would focus their efforts on analyzing materials not collected by the intelligence regiment.²¹ The ground sensor platoons would shift to the reconnaissance battalions. This shift would ensure that a single battalion is responsible for monitoring and emplacing the ground sensors throughout the MAGTF's battlespace.²²

However, the reconnaissance battalions should remain within the divisions for similiarity of training and integration with the MAGTF element they will most frequently support. Likewise, the VMUs²³ should remain within their respective air wings.

At first glance, the idea of forming an intelligence regiment may appear counter-intuitive when organizing for the distributed 4GW battlefield. However, it brings several advantages that make it well suited to counter 3GW and 4GW threats. First, the collection and analysis capabilities unique to COMINT and HUMINT are best developed within a single unit where synergy can be found in training as a group. Second,

²¹ This would include imagery, topographic, open source and all-source analysis. It would also include exploiting captured materials.

²² One of the missions Marine reconnaissance can be assigned is to emplace remote sensors. The following mission statement is repeated on each of the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Reconnaissance Bn FY09 and FY10 line company T/Os accessed via the TFSMS website on February 19, 2009: "WHEN PROPERLY TASK ORGANIZED WITH OTHER FORCES, EQUIPMENT OR PERSONNEL, ASSIST IN SPECIALIZED ENGINEER, RADIO, MOBILE, AND OTHER UNIQUE RECONNAISSANCE MISSIONS."

²³ VMUs are the squadrons that maintain and operate unmanned aerial systems, or vehicles (UAS or UAVs).

forming an intelligence regiment offers each MEF a local "center of excellence" for intelligence that hosts and coordinates training and operational planning teams for its respective MEF's intelligence elements. This would ensure exposure of each element to the other's capabilities and limitations and would facilitate broader interaction during pre-deployment and contingency planning. Additionally, an intelligence regiment can readily task organize for 4GW by distributing collection and analysis teams amongst the maneuver and support units. At the same time, the regiment can coordinate intelligence support from national and theater agencies to meet any requirements that cannot be met by organic MEF assets.

EDUCATION

Developing its intelligence personnel's cognitive abilities is the most important, and potentially most difficult, reformation the Marine Corps needs to pursue. Improving the intelligence Marines' education will enable the Corps to overcome other shortfalls when manning, organization, and equipment are not uniquely tailored to a specific contingency. Intelligence Marines need more than training; they need an education of broadened experience and ongoing instruction that develops their critical thinking skills.

Too often, the only formal training that intelligence Marines, especially the enlisted Marines, receive is their

initial MOS training. They need to attend mid-level and advanced instruction to learn cognitive skills and interact with other disciplines. For enlisted Marines, courses such as a CLIC Chief's Course and a battalion Intelligence Chief's Course should be developed and focused on improving their analytic and critical thinking skills.

Once completed, formal courses need to be followed by opportunities for more diverse experiences. For many of the intelligence Marines, particularly all-source analysts, their only opportunities to gain experience are to move amongst tactical units. This limits both the breadth and depth of their experience. Instead, they need more opportunities to work outside of the Marine Corps in agencies with a broader focus. SIGINT Marines and imagery analysts have a long history of rotating between the tactical and strategic intelligence organizations where they can bring tactical experiences to strategic capabilities and vice versa. Similarly, more HUMINT Marines need opportunities to serve within the Central Intelligence and Defense Intelligence Agencies (DIA) to broaden their experiences. All-source analysts should also be assigned in greater numbers to DIA, the National Ground Intelligence Center, the National Air and Space Intelligence Center and non-DoD agencies, such as the Secret Service, the DoS and the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

The nature of 4GW dictates that intelligence Marines be able to provide commanders with an understanding of how opponents are using local economic, social and even criminal networks to their advantage and how those same networks can be used to the commander's advantage. Other governmental agencies are more adept at studying criminal networks than the DoD. The best way to draw upon their knowledge and expertise is to create exchange assignments where Marines have the opportunity to work with these agencies. The education and experience gained from this exchange would greatly enhance a MAGTF's ability to operate within a 4GW environment.

Just as intelligence personnel need time away from tactical units to broaden their experiences, they also need time to focus on gaining new skills through instruction. The majority of the formal instruction provided to intelligence personnel must occur during working hours as part of a duty assignment. While personal initiative to complete off-duty education is important, the Corps depends too heavily on off-duty education. For example, recognizing the importance of language training, access to Rosetta Stone software is now available to all Marines through MarineNet.²⁴ However, network restrictions²⁵ and daily work schedules force Marines to complete this training during

²⁴ *Release of the Rosetta Stone Language Learning Software*, MARADMIN 661/08, November 21, 2008.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

their off-duty time. Learning a language requires time and focus, which are often at odds with the current operational tempo. Such training tools are best suited to sustainment training, not the initial development of skills. To be more effective, the Corps needs to provide more opportunities for resident, formal instruction to develop their skills.

CONCLUSION

The most significant threat the Marine Corps must prepare to confront is one involving 4GW in dispersed, remote areas. While the Marine Corps could be a 3GW force that defeats a 4GW opponent, history demonstrates that this would be very difficult and that the Corps should prepare for 4GW conflicts instead. If it is to be "most prepared when the nation is least prepared," the Marine Corps must increase its investment in its intelligence personnel. Specifically, the Corps must increase its manning, re-organize its intelligence capabilities in a manner that ensures unity of effort across the MAGTF, and educate its Marines through broader experiences and development of their cognitive abilities.

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