

A Misallocation of Resources: Assigning Second Lieutenant
0203s to the Logistics Combat Element (LCE)

Captain G.S. McSween

Major A.B. Irvin, CG 7

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Introduction

Most ground intelligence [military occupational specialty (MOS) 0203] second lieutenants report to the ground combat element (GCE) for their first tour once they reach the operating forces. However, a number of them report to the logistics combat element (LCE) for their first tour in the operating forces. This is a misallocation of resources. Instead of being assigned to the LCE, second lieutenant 0203s should be initially assigned only to the GCE to follow the original intent of "the Van Riper Plan", to make the best use of their infantry-centric skills, and to provide 0203s with invaluable platoon commander experience.

Background: "LOGINT?"

The term "logistics intelligence", or "LOGINT", does not appear in the U.S. Marine Corps' or any other branch of the U.S. military's publications when referring to the specific type of intelligence that supports logistics operations. As a result, Marine Corps MOS schools instruct neither intelligence officers nor enlisted analysts on how intelligence supports logistics operations. To define, standardize, and incorporate this term into the Marine Corps' and military's vernacular and establishment would help put this potential "INT" into perspective relative to

the more established "INTs" to which the intelligence community has become accustomed. The lack of a specific plan to deal with the Marine Corps' support to "logistics intelligence" is at the root of why a number of 0203 second lieutenants are shortsightedly assigned to the LCE upon finishing their MOS schools.

The "Van Riper Plan"

The "Van Riper Plan" refers to the intelligence plan of 1994 set in motion by then-Major General P.K. Van Riper, USMC (now Lieutenant General P.K. Van Riper, USMC, Retired). It was implemented as a result of problems associated with Marine Corps intelligence in Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm. One of the six specific problems that Major General Van Riper intended to address with this plan was a perceived "lack of professional intelligence officer career development and structure."¹

With this specific problem in mind, the Marine Corps overhauled its entire intelligence structure. For officers, the result was a system that involved training second lieutenants in one of four intelligence specialties. These four included ground intelligence (0203), human intelligence (0204), signals intelligence (0206), and air intelligence (0207). These MOSs were granted at TBS to second lieutenants. After their first operating forces

tour, officers would attend the Marine air-ground task force (MAGTF) Intelligence Officer Course (MIOC) to become MAGTF intelligence officers (MOS 0202). The desired endstate was to have officers start as lieutenants with a specialized MOS, then become a more generalized intelligence officer as a senior first lieutenant or captain upon completion of MIOC. This would enable the versatile 0202 to serve in a variety of intelligence billets.

Assigning 0203s to the LCE detracts from General Van Riper's intent since it takes these officers off of an already difficult-to-follow career path, and hinders their development.

Infantry-Centric Training

After TBS, the requirements for the designation of the 0203 MOS are the successful completion of the Infantry Officer Course (IOC), the Scout Sniper Employment Course (SSEC), and the Ground Intelligence Officer Course (GIOC). To finish these courses requires seven months. If 0203s do not put their infantry-centric training to use in the operating forces, their skills will atrophy. The Marine Corps has spent and continues to spend a considerable amount of time and money on making ground intelligence officers capable of commanding rifle, weapons, sniper, or

reconnaissance platoons or to serve as assistant intelligence officers upon reporting into the operating forces- presumably into the GCE.

To place second lieutenant 0203s into LCE billets, which have nothing to do with anything they have been taught throughout their MOS training, is to waste the time and money that the Marine Corps has invested in these officers.

Platoon Commander Experience

Per their MOS training, ground intelligence officers new 0203 second lieutenants should be assigned only to the GCE following their MOS training. This will afford them platoon commander time and experience, and most importantly, MOS credibility.

Of course, the number of ground intelligence officers seeking platoon command far exceeds the number of platoons that are available in the Marine Corps. Captains M.W. Peters and B.L. Gilman are correct in their assertion that "Unfortunately, there are now many more 0203 second lieutenants than there are scout-sniper or reconnaissance platoons."² This is especially true when infantry officers are considered in the overall numbers. To expect a 0203 second lieutenant to serve as a platoon commander for the duration of his first three-year tour in the operating

forces is unfeasible and unrealistic. However, he should expect and be given the opportunity to lead a platoon for a period of time that allows him to gain invaluable platoon leadership experience and credibility while still a lieutenant.

If ground intelligence officers report directly to the LCE from MOS training, they will have significantly fewer, if any, opportunities for platoon leadership. This will cause some to lose ground relative to their 0203 peers who are assigned directly to the GCE from MOS training.

The "INT" Disconnect

Ground intelligence officers appear to be the best suited of the four entry level "INTs" to fill LCE billet requirements, due only to the process of elimination. Upon finishing MOS training, 0204s report to CI/HUMINT Company within intelligence battalions; 0206s report to radio battalions, and 0207s report to the air combat element (ACE). Unfortunately, this leaves ground intelligence officers to fill second lieutenant billets in the LCE.

A disconnect exists between the type of GCE-focused training that 0203s receive, and the type of tasks they will be required to perform once assigned to the LCE. The GCE's mission is to locate, close with and destroy the enemy. As such, 0203 training focuses on leading and

employing Marines in combat, and gathering information about the enemy. The LCE, on the other hand, is most concerned with the throughput of logistics. Associated LCE intelligence tasks include conducting route studies and trafficability analysis. Training for one task, then being expected to perform another is illogical. Conversely, should a Marine be trained in "logistics intelligence" then be placed in a unit whose mission required him to employ snipers, gather information on the enemy, and lead Marines in combat, problems would arise.

Competency and Experience

Typically, ground intelligence second lieutenants in the LCE are combat logistics battalion (CLB) or combat logistics regiment (CLR) intelligence officers, and most are the junior ranking staff member in their respective primary staffs. In a CLB, new 0203s are sometimes peers with fellow staff officers as lieutenants but are rarely peers with company commanders in the battalion. For credibility purposes, it goes a long way for the intelligence officer to either have platoon commander experience or to at least be a captain and thus a peer with the company commanders in a CLB or CLR.

With regard to experience, Captain Hood asserted that "The Marine on point should be in a unit with an

experienced intelligence officer. This is not always the case."³ In the LCE, having a second lieutenant as a battalion S-2 is a disservice to CLB or CLR commanders and their staffs. They deserve a more experienced and "MAGTF-level thinking" primary staff intelligence officer, particularly with regard to today's highly complex current operating environment (COE).

Career Progression

Career progression is also a problem for officers who report directly to the LCE from MOS training. Their lack of specialization in a traditional "INT" in conjunction with their lack of platoon commander experience limits their options following their first tour in the operating forces. This puts LCE ground intelligence lieutenants at a significant disadvantage relative to their peers in the intelligence field.

Current 0203 LCE Billet Manning

The First, and Second, and Third Marine Logistics Groups (MLGs) all rate three 0203 second lieutenants on their tables of organization.⁴ These nine total 0203 second lieutenant billets should be changed to reflect 0202 first lieutenants/captains or 0203 first lieutenants/captains-who will soon attend MIOC. Only post-platoon command ground

intelligence officers or MAGTF intelligence officers should be assigned to the LCE.

The Global War on Terrorism (GWOT) has placed a significant emphasis on military intelligence throughout all branches of the Department of Defense. This means that more Marine Corps lieutenants are becoming intelligence officers. With a larger base of intelligence officers coming into the field, the Marine Corps will soon have more 0202s who can fill the required LCE billets, thus freeing 0203 second lieutenants for service in the GCE.

Manpower Issues

From a manpower perspective, maintaining the status quo is preferable because it is easy to cut three year orders for a new 0203 to the MLG. Sending a 0203 to division, tracking his progression, then assigning him to the MLG is preferable to the status quo, but this would be especially difficult with respect to individuals' timing, unit deployment cycles, and the officers' choices and preferences. Assigning 0203 second lieutenants to the GCE and would be in the best interests of the Marine Corps.

Counterargument

Affecting change in an bureaucratically heavy institution like the Marine Corps is difficult and takes time. Reasons for change need to be identified and

validated. The current outlook on the use of 0203 second lieutenants in the LCE is seemingly that the current system is working and does not need to be changed or modified. CLB and CLR commanders appreciate the versatility and training of their 0203s. For the aforementioned reasons, and for the long term health of Marine Corps' intelligence, the current system needs to be changed.

Conclusion

The Marine Corps is doing itself a significant disservice by assigning second lieutenant 0203s directly to the LCE from their MOS training. Their GCE-focused infantry and intelligence training makes them better suited to initially serve in the GCE than in the LCE. The current approach to determining intelligence officer manning in the LCE needs to be readdressed. Only post-platoon command ground intelligence officers or MAGTF intelligence officers should be assigned to the LCE. By having platoon command in the GCE and then staff officer experience in the LCE, 0203s will be better rounded and better balanced officers.

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¹ Capt John K. Hood, "Surviving First Contact?," *Marine Corps Gazette*, October 2008, 54-57.

² Capt Brian L. Gilman and Capt Mark W. Peters, "Refocusing the Effort: Another Perspective on 0203 Training," *Marine Corps Gazette*, March 1999, 47-48.

³ Capt John K. Hood, 54-57.

⁴ Phone interview with the 2d MLG G-2, Major B. Vinfrido, 17 Dec 2008.

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