



# Rethinking the Combined Force Air Component Commander's Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance Approach to Counterinsurgency

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*Editorial Abstract: Counterinsurgency (COIN) operations in Iraq and Afghanistan generate unique and complex intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) requirements for lower-echelon commanders who face a multitude of different insurgent groups fighting with asymmetric means. The air component finds itself ill equipped to handle the ISR challenges of COIN since it still adheres to a doctrine of major theater war. The author provides historical context, offers an alternative approach to managing ISR, and recommends changes to doctrine.*

**I**N THE counterinsurgencies (COIN) in Iraq and Afghanistan, commanders of brigades, battalions, companies, and special forces all conduct daily missions in their respective areas of operation (AO) to secure neighborhoods and seek out insurgents. As noted by Lt Gen Thomas Metz, former commander of Multi-National Corps-Iraq, "From small unit to theater level, intelligence provide[s] the basis for every mission."<sup>1</sup> These missions range from cordon and search to direct action, but all require high levels of intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) support to assist in target development, mission planning, and execution. Increasing the amount of ISR available to conduct an opera-

tion improves the probability of mission success. Mission planning by COIN units relies heavily on intelligence to help answer certain questions: Where is the enemy located? What does he plan to do? Where does he plan to act? Where might improvised explosive devices (IED) be located? Moreover, intelligence provided to units during execution helps them identify infiltration routes and possible ambush locations, gives commanders one more look at a target before moving against it, and enables decision makers to monitor enemy responses to friendly actions.<sup>2</sup>

Although human intelligence (HUMINT) is a key source for much of this data, imagery and signals information collected from ISR as-

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sets such as unmanned aerial vehicles or U-2 reconnaissance aircraft often complement information gleaned from HUMINT operations, providing commanders with a multidimensional intelligence perspective of the enemy and the objective area. Maj Dan Zeytoonian and others write that “in COIN, intelligence operations strive to fuse intelligence from nonorganic collection sources [multiple sources] into a seamless picture of the insurgency networks and to provide *corroborating* intelligence for targeting” (emphasis added).<sup>3</sup> The operational component charged with providing much of the ISR to support COIN operations in Iraq and Afghanistan is the combined force air component commander (CFACC).<sup>4</sup> The CFACC provides thousands of hours of ISR support each month to joint task forces (JTF) and other component commanders in US Central Command’s (USCENTCOM) area of responsibility, but the net effect of these missions, though helpful, is significantly less than it could be. Specifically, in the words of Col Teresa Fitzpatrick, 548th Intelligence Group commander, “We [the CFACC] have only one airborne ISR [tactics, techniques, and procedures]: [major theater war].”<sup>5</sup> *Were the air component to position itself more appropriately for COIN operations, the ISR it provides ground commanders would prove more useful in helping maneuver units accomplish their missions.* To understand the cause and extent of the CFACC’s deficiencies in providing effective ISR for COIN operations, we need to appreciate the historical context of the CFACC construct itself, the nature of COIN operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the way that ISR required for these operations differs from that in conventional operations. This foundation helps reveal how the CFACC currently conducts ISR operations in support of COIN efforts in Afghanistan and Iraq and how we could retool these operations to increase their effectiveness. Although COIN operations are incredibly complex and involve extensive diplomatic, governance, information, security, economic, and psychological efforts, this article largely focuses on ISR support to security operations in the COIN environment.

## Historical Context

In the post-Vietnam era, the Air Force dedicated a substantial effort to developing its ability to fight at the operational level of war through the CFACC and attendant air and space operations center (AOC) constructs.<sup>6</sup> Beginning in the early 1990s, CFACC principles were developed, based upon the threats of conventional wars in the Middle East and Asia. As “information” increasingly became a significant warfare medium and as weapons became more technology dependent, relying on precise information to guide them, the Air Force placed a premium on fielding a robust fleet of ISR assets that could locate the equipment that our conventional adversaries might possess.<sup>7</sup> From fixed enemy command and control (C2) facilities to mobile surface-to-air missiles, tanks, and fighter aircraft, the CFACC construct evolved to the point that the AOC could C2 a constellation of ISR assets capable of detecting enemy threats, while directing strike aircraft to destroy them day or night in all weather conditions. “The rigid nature of these [conventional] operations allowed our [ISR] systems and intelligence personnel to apply templates to probable [enemy] actions” and place our collection systems over optimal points in the battlefield to detect projected enemy activity.<sup>8</sup>

To C2 this lethal force, AOC processes gradually developed into a carefully crafted 96-hour air tasking order (ATO) cycle, complete with meetings, processes, checklists, and products—all codified in joint doctrine and commonly practiced in each theater.<sup>9</sup> We not only created these processes based on a conventional-war assumption but also predicated them on the notion that we would direct friendly operations from the operational level. This level of focus essentially required the CFACC to have a macroview of the ground scheme of maneuver. For instance, the combined force land component commander (CFLCC) would develop battle plans that employed large ground forces, such as corps and divisions, moving against similar-sized enemy units. The scheme of maneuver for these ground operations could be visually depicted on a map by sweeping arrows indicating the friendly axes of advance. To plan

for and conduct these operations, the CFLCC would request ISR, interdiction, close air support (CAS), and a range of other support missions from the CFACC. To plan an ATO, the AOC had to understand what the ground component hoped to accomplish during an ATO period but did not need detailed information about lower-echelon operations.

In addition to the focus on conventional war and the operational level, the ATO cycle was based on a hierarchical request process that involved long lead times to incorporate requests into the ATO. In essence, if a division, brigade, or even battalion wanted its requests for ISR or CAS from the CFACC approved by higher headquarters, it had to forecast that requirement 72–96 hours in advance, typically based on templating friendly and enemy movements. The CFLCC would collate validated air-support requests and forward them to the CFACC for injection into the ATO process. The consolidated CFLCC list would then compete against the JTF's and other components' requests for inclusion in the ATO.<sup>10</sup> Ultimately, the 96-hour ATO battle rhythm worked well in a conventional framework since battle fronts, rates of advance, and enemy actions were relatively predictable. The ground unit could forecast consequent requirements for CFACC ISR and other support with an acceptable degree of certainty.

Although this operational C2 approach to air warfare, developed after Vietnam and perfected in time for Operation Iraqi Freedom, proved successful, it was designed to fight conventional wars. Unfortunately, with regard to ISR, for the most part we are applying the same conventional AOC processes in COIN efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan today, resulting in an ineffective use of CFACC ISR.

## Counterinsurgency Operations in Afghanistan and Iraq

Understanding how the CFACC can provide more effective ISR support to COIN operations demands an intimate understanding of the types of missions conducted by forces during Operations Enduring Freedom and

Iraqi Freedom, as well as the manner in which these forces operate. COIN operations in Iraq and Afghanistan have many characteristics, but we can describe them as highly complex, unpredictable, and dynamic—generally differentiated from conventional operations by the nature of the enemy.<sup>11</sup> As opposed to a conventional foe with all the trappings of a modern army, insurgents in Iraq and Afghanistan often wear civilian clothes, do not use traditional military equipment, and conduct a variety of irregular, small-unit actions. They do not operate from customary bases or in large formations, and, like many insurgent forces, they blend in with the population for protection. Trying to detect this enemy with ISR assets, therefore, differs considerably from looking for conventional weapon systems.

Insurgents in Iraq and Afghanistan conduct a variety of missions to disrupt coalition operations. They rarely engage coalition forces in anything resembling pitched battles, instead using suicide bombings, sniper attacks, ambushes, and IEDs against military and civilian targets to inflict damage and create instability.<sup>12</sup> Insurgents also conduct sabotage against key infrastructure, such as oil pipelines and power lines, and smuggle contraband into Iraq and Afghanistan from countries such as Pakistan, Iran, and Syria. The ISR challenges associated with detecting these types of activities are much different than those in conventional war.

Complicating the task of fighting insurgents in Iraq is the fact that they are not a unitary enemy. Rather, coalition forces face multivariate violence from dozens of insurgent groups, all employing different combat techniques. As such, two enemy groups may differ in their employment of the same method against friendly forces (e.g., the use of IEDs). Therefore, each brigade and battalion must become intimately familiar with the enemy in its AO and develop a strategy to defeat that enemy. Eliot Cohen writes that the “mosaic nature of an insurgency means that local commanders have the best grasp of their own situations” and, as such, must determine how best to deal with them.<sup>13</sup>

As a result, the true supported commander for COIN operations is not at the JTF or

CFLCC level, as in conventional operations; rather, according to Col Kirk Mardis, former intelligence-collection manager of Multi-National Force-Iraq, “The war is being fought at the brigade and battalion levels.”<sup>14</sup> This has the effect of highly decentralizing coalition operations, with each unit conducting its own—often independent—war in its AO.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, fighting the war at the brigade level and below means that taskings to the CFACC for ISR support originate there. A quick perusal of any day’s CFACC ISR collection deck reveals that the vast majority of requirements do not come from Combined Joint Task Force 76 in Enduring Freedom or Multi-National Force-Iraq in Iraqi Freedom, though these C2 nodes validate and submit lower-echelon requests for ISR to the CFACC.<sup>16</sup> Nor is the collection deck populated with targets from USCENTCOM or the CFACC, as it might be in a conventional war. Rather, maneuver units generate the vast majority of ISR requirements.<sup>17</sup> Lt Justin Mahoney, who recently served as a collection manager at the combined AOC (CAOC) at Al Udeid Air Base, Qatar, estimates that 80–85 percent of collection requests in Iraqi Freedom come from the battalion and brigade levels and that in Enduring Freedom, this same level initiates nearly 100 percent of collection requests.<sup>18</sup>

Without a fundamental understanding of who generates ISR tasking and who the true supported commander is, the CFACC cannot fully optimize C2 of ISR to support COIN operations. Ultimately, in the COIN fight, the focus for CFACC ISR support—unlike that in a conventional war—is not the combatant command, JTF, CFACC, or even the CFLCC but the company-, battalion-, and brigade-sized unit.

### What Counterinsurgency Commanders Need from Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance

To counter the insurgent threats in Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom, coalition

forces conduct a variety of missions. They may conduct cordon-and-search missions in a particular village or area of town, looking for weapons caches, insurgents, or insurgent hideouts. Prior to a mission, they may request ISR to surveil an objective area to locate enemy ambush points or determine insurgent patterns of activity. ISR may also provide overwatch of a convoy as it heads into a village searching for IEDs, ambushes, or other suspicious activity. Further, ISR assets can give commanders the situational awareness necessary to defend against enemy operations or reactions to friendly missions, such as detecting egress actions, reinforcing movements, or locating sniper positions.<sup>19</sup> These assets can also monitor critical infrastructure for sabotage or surveil border passes for illicit activities such as transshipment of weapons or drugs.

We task ISR platforms to image a spot on the earth for two primary reasons, one of which involves detecting enemy activity. When a ground unit requests that an ISR platform image a target, it does not just pick a spot in Afghanistan or Iraq and hope that an unmanned aerial vehicle will find enemy activity there—something comparable to searching for insurgents through a soda straw. Instead, the requestor increases the probability of detection by having ISR confirm activity identified by other intelligence sources.<sup>20</sup> For instance, a ground unit might receive a HUMINT tip indicating presence of the enemy in a certain location. To confirm the tip, a battalion may request ISR support from the CFACC to locate that activity. AOC collection managers then use the initial HUMINT tip to cue signals-intelligence and imagery-intelligence sensors on ISR platforms for that purpose. Ground-unit requests could include anything from locating an IED, to confirming the presence of high-value targets, to monitoring border crossing points for insurgents.

After detection of the enemy, ISR serves the second purpose of facilitating action against him. Intelligence gained from HUMINT or ISR missions may result in the planning and conducting of friendly operations against targets. General Metz writes that “in more cases than not, intelligence drives most of the bat-

talion and brigade-level operations.”<sup>21</sup> To be sure, much of this actionable intelligence in Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom initially comes from HUMINT sources. However, we then use these initial tip-offs to guide other ISR assets (signals intelligence and imagery intelligence) to further refine the intelligence picture. Ground-unit planning for the upcoming operation thus requires additional targeting and planning data to conduct its mission. Intelligence analysts with the ground unit request ISR support from the CFACC and fuse that intelligence with their HUMINT to “gain the best possible understanding of the insurgent network” and prepare for the upcoming operation.<sup>22</sup> Thus, intelligence plays a key role in both initiating friendly operations and then supporting their planning and conduct.

The traditional paradigm for collecting intelligence in conventional operations is inversely related to the collection approach needed in COIN operations. Whereas the requirements of the operational-level commander drive collection in conventional wars, General Metz writes that “the intelligence effort in Iraq is a ‘bottom-up’ process.”<sup>23</sup> Vice Adm Lowell Jacoby, former director of the Defense Intelligence Agency, expands on this paradigm shift by noting,

There’s [an] issue that’s desperately important. We grew up in a world where the echelon above us always had better information than we did, and it cascaded down. We need to be thinking about how we can have information flow up. Today, the platoon or company that is on the ground in Afghanistan and patrols the same area regularly for an entire deployment has a far better idea of what’s happening in that sector than someone who is further removed.<sup>24</sup>

Admiral Jacoby’s point is clear—successful intelligence operations necessitate close interaction between the tactical and operational levels, which in this case means between the CFACC and the maneuver units it supports at the brigade and battalion levels.

Col James Waring, who served as the CFLCC’s chief liaison officer to the CFACC in 2004, highlighted the need for CFACC integration with the maneuver unit, stating that “we have learned that the macro-view of the

ground scheme of maneuver that is echelons-above-battalion level provides insufficient situational awareness to the CFACC and his aircrews.”<sup>25</sup> Moreover, for the CFACC to provide value-added ISR support for COIN operations, it not only should have links to the maneuver unit but also must have access to the ground unit’s knowledge about the enemy in its AO. The AOC can then use this information to guide its ISR-collection efforts. For example, Army major Charles Baker explains that “utilizing [unmanned aerial vehicles] to find explosives or ambushes requires either luck or good intelligence to direct the unmanned aircraft, since the region is too large to maintain constant surveillance.”<sup>26</sup> By working with ground units to cull out their relevant knowledge about the AO and the enemy’s actions there, the CFACC can employ his or her ISR assets more effectively to increase the probability of detecting priority information needed by the maneuver unit to conduct its COIN operations. The CFACC must therefore understand how to employ ISR appropriately to find enemy activity, maintain connection with the supported unit to understand the enemy that he or she seeks to find, become adept at passing actionable intelligence in a timely manner to key decision makers at the battalion and brigade levels, and remain highly responsive in providing ISR to support resultant operations.

### The CFACC’s Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance Support to Counterinsurgency Operations

Unfortunately, the current CFACC approach to providing ISR support to COIN does not meet the requirements for this form of war. AOC ISR processes were developed so that CFACC ISR assets could locate enemy equipment and report hostile locations to the AOC, which, in turn, could direct air assets to destroy enemy threats. Given the nature of the insurgencies in Iraq and Afghanistan, the types of collection challenges presented by insurgents, the variety of missions conducted by coalition

forces, and the timelines they require to plan for operations, how does the CFACC currently approach ISR support to COIN?

For the most part, current COIN operations still use the timelines and processes employed during the conventional phase of Iraqi Freedom. CFACC timelines for conventional wars necessitate that components submit their ISR requests approximately 48 hours prior to ATO execution. This deadline has not changed for the COIN phase of either Iraqi Freedom or Enduring Freedom.<sup>27</sup> The CAOC at Al Udeid generally directs that the JTFs (Multi-National Corps-/Force-Iraq and Combined Joint Task Force 76) have their requirements to collection managers 48 hours prior to ATO execution.<sup>28</sup> Simple math highlights the flaw in this system. The commanders of the 2d Brigade Combat Team of the 4th Infantry Division in Iraq or Task Force Devil in Afghanistan, for instance, have to generate their ISR requirements at least 72 hours prior to ATO execution so that the JTF has time to massage and approve them before sending them to the CAOC 48 hours prior to execution. Often, the subordinate battalion must submit its requirements to the brigade level 96 hours out to give the brigade time to prioritize its own as well as the subordinate battalions' ISR requests before sending them to higher echelons. Predicting what the enemy will do, knowing the exact nature of the upcoming friendly mission, and understanding exactly how ISR will be employed that far in advance all pose a challenge in the extremely dynamic COIN battlefield. Moreover, this burdensome process simply discourages many units from submitting requirements and creates a mind-set at the tactical level that CFACC assets, such as the Global Hawk or U-2, are unavailable to support them.<sup>29</sup>

The CFACC also follows conventional procedures for determining targets for imaging. For instance, a collection manager in the AOC will gather all of the ISR target requests from Iraqi Freedom, rank them according to theater priorities, and then draw a "cut line" above which assets will image the targets. This line is based upon a number of factors but depends upon the number of targets that a given ATO's

ISR assets can image. For example, units in Iraq may put in requests for 900 targets for imaging, but the CFACC may have the capacity to image only 500. In this case, ISR assets will image the 500 highest-ranking targets. This collection-management method, known as "peanut-butter spreading," divides ISR among a large number of requestors by giving each a portion of the collection it asked for. This method has the advantage of supporting a significant number of customers and imaging a sizeable number of targets. This process works fine in a conventional fight, but it is woefully inadequate for COIN, in which it is often preferable to dedicate an ISR asset to a specific problem for a long period of time in order to detect activity more clearly. Admiral Jacoby noted that "we need to be in an environment where we can achieve persistent surveillance, which means being able to linger on the problem as long as it takes to understand it."<sup>30</sup>

The CFACC's current approach to persistence involves thinking of the problem in terms of space rather than time. Sprinkling ISR around all of Iraq or Afghanistan rather than focusing it on a limited number of areas creates the illusion of persistence. For example, daily ISR update briefings to commanders depict various colored circles representing an assortment of collection assets covering most of the country.<sup>31</sup> However, in a COIN, ISR must often remain persistent over a single problem set for an extended period of time in order to develop the intelligence picture and tease out actionable intelligence. Clearly, the trade-off with this type of approach is that the CFACC can image only a small number of targets. The litmus test for success is not the number of targets imaged but the actual intelligence derived from these missions and the resultant impact on friendly operations.

Not only has the AOC failed to change its tasking timelines and collection-deck procedures to meet the demands of COIN, but also it has failed to adequately facilitate the integration of ISR into coalition schemes of maneuver. As discussed earlier, many ground operations are time sensitive and driven by intelligence. If, for instance, HUMINT indicates that Taliban fighters will cross the bor-

der from Pakistan into Afghanistan in the next 24 hours, the ground commander will require ISR support to search for and locate this possible activity. Because the tasking process is so hierarchical, the responsible brigade may not have its requests for ISR assistance approved in time to support planning for its operations.<sup>32</sup>

Additionally, no formal mechanism exists to link the actual ISR units to the supported ground units. As mentioned earlier by Colonel Waring, this link is necessary so that the ground unit can clearly tell the CFACC unit—in this case, the collection unit—how the enemy functions in its AO, how ISR can detect insurgent activity, and how ISR can integrate into friendly operations. For example, a battalion planning for an upcoming cordon-and-search mission might request ISR to search for IEDs and ambush locations. By linking the two parties (ISR unit to ground units directly), the collection unit can learn from the supported battalion where insurgents typically place IEDs (e.g., near street corners) in their AO, which, in turn, focuses the search patterns of the ISR unit on the areas most likely to contain IEDs. Again, in the multivariate violence in Iraq and Afghanistan, each battalion knows best how the enemy in its AO operates. Because a typical collection unit will be tasked to fly over and support multiple units during a single mission, it must be able to schedule the collection so that it completes the data gathering in time to support friendly operations. Once again, the collection unit must stay in touch with the supported unit to facilitate this level of integration.

Ensuring that such integration occurs is the responsibility of the CFACC. As the provider of ISR, the AOC must meet the needs of the requestor. To do so, the AOC tasks ISR units to perform collection in support of maneuver units. Unfortunately, the tasking mechanism is based on a conventional model which largely assumes that ISR would support operational-level commanders, and, as such, no mechanism exists to provide the level of tactical granularity needed by ISR units to execute effective collection in support of COIN operations.

## Recommendations

Because the conventional collection-management processes now employed by the AOC undermine its ability to optimize ISR support to COIN efforts in Afghanistan and Iraq, the CFACC must reevaluate his or her approach to this nontraditional form of warfare. Specifically, the CFACC should shorten ISR-request timelines, change the tasking process, synchronize ISR collection with the ground scheme of maneuver, and codify the changes so that the AOC can employ ISR across the range of military operations.

Changing the ISR request-and-tasking process will result in the greatest improvement in the CFACC's ISR support to COIN. To truncate the timelines associated with requesting ISR support, the CFACC can adopt the same process used for CAS requests, whereby ground units submit air-support requests to the AOC, typically 36 hours prior to ATO execution.<sup>33</sup> That is, the ground unit requests CAS support for a specific mission during a block of time for a general area. The AOC prioritizes the requests and determines which ones it can satisfy. However, the ground unit decides how to use that CAS asset once it checks in with its ground customer. Applying this methodology to collection not only would shorten the timelines for requesting collection but also would allow the tasking of ISR assets for imaging the most current and important targets of the ground commander and put the asset in a direct-support role. For example, a Global Hawk could be assigned to support a brigade for two hours during a given operation. Prior to departure, the aircraft's team could contact the supported ground unit and receive an update on its operation as well as additional information about the enemy. Before entering the brigade's AO, the Global Hawk pilot could check in with the brigade for a tasking update. The supported unit could then elect to have ISR targets collected as planned, drop irrelevant targets, or add those required by changes in enemy movements or friendly operations. Employing the CAS air-support-request method for ISR does not preclude the use of collection decks. Units and operational headquar-



ters could still submit targets to the AOC for standard collection. The AOC would simply have to determine the amount of time a platform would spend collecting deck targets versus providing direct support to ground units. However, by adding the air-support-request method and allowing units to submit requests for direct support 36 hours in advance, ground units could continuously update the targets they want collected. The AOC could thereby ensure that the targets for intelligence collection were relevant to the situation on the battlefield as opposed to determining them 72–96 hours earlier.

Though some might argue that the CFACC would lose control of his or her theater assets through the use of the air-support-request method, the alternative is to peanut-butter-spread them over large areas, imaging potentially irrelevant targets in an attempt to service as many collection-deck targets as possible. Although for conventional wars, we must often image large numbers of targets, doing so dilutes the effectiveness of ISR in COIN. Of note, the AOC would still maintain direction of the asset in the tasking process by determining which units to assign it to and for what duration. Furthermore, the AOC would keep divert authority for the collection asset, retaining the ability to shift the platform to higher-priority operations during execution, when required. In the final analysis, this air-support-request method would greatly increase the flexibility and relevance of CFACC ISR by providing current, direct support to COIN operations.

The CFACC can also improve ISR support to COIN and optimize collection by facilitating the integration of ISR units with the ground scheme of maneuver prior to and during mission execution. The CFACC currently uses the reconnaissance, surveillance, and target acquisition annex, produced for every ATO, to pass the collection game plan to ISR units. Unfortunately, this product has evolved into a generic, high-level document that communicates very little information of tactical relevance. We should amend the annex to provide ISR units with contextual guidance for their mission. The document should link collection units with the ground units they

support to provide contact information and as much enemy and friendly information as possible. Doing so will integrate CFACC collection with ground operations and move it from a target-centric to a mission-focused model.

Finally, changes to AOC ISR procedures that reflect COIN requirements should be codified in joint doctrine and in Air Force tactics, techniques, and procedures documents to enable operational commanders to request and use ISR according to the type of war they are fighting. Current joint and Air Force AOC documentation focuses solely on major theater war.<sup>34</sup> By providing conventional and COIN methodologies for operational ISR, the CFACC will be able to support operations across the spectrum of warfare.

## Conclusion

Success in the COINs in Iraq and Afghanistan is critical to securing our nation's defense. Key to achieving victory are the synchronization and optimization of all resources the United States commits to Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom. The CFACC must also optimize the effectiveness of the ISR provided to US forces as these troops pursue their goals in the security arena of these COIN operations.

Unfortunately, the air component finds itself ill equipped to handle the ISR challenges of COIN because it still adheres to its heritage of major theater war, which emphasizes the detection and destruction of conventional targets, a lengthy planning process, and support to operational-level commanders. However, the COINs in Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom, centered around lower-echelon commanders who face a multitude of different insurgent groups fighting with asymmetric means, differ greatly from major theater war. US ground commanders, therefore, need flexible, time-sensitive ISR support from the CFACC to assist them in combating an unconventional enemy. The current CFACC collection-management system does not meet the COIN needs of ground commanders, but truncating request timelines, adjusting the ISR tasking process to mirror the CAS-request process,

synchronizing collection with ground operations, and codifying these changes in joint doctrine would greatly increase the system's utility.

By revamping the ISR approach to COIN, the CFACC will increase the value of the intelligence provided to ground commanders and play a valuable role in assisting supported JTF,

land, and special operations forces components as they establish security in Iraq and Afghanistan. Moreover, developing a successful CFACC ISR methodology for COIN not only will benefit the current operations in Iraq and Afghanistan but also will serve the joint force well as it deals with the range of military operations in the long war and beyond. □

## Notes

1. Lt Gen Thomas F. Metz, Col William J. Tait Jr., and Maj J. Michael McNealy, "OIF II: Intelligence Leads Successful Counterinsurgency Operations," *Military Intelligence Professional Bulletin* 31, no. 3 (July–September 2005): 10, <http://www.universityofmilitaryintelligence.us/mipb/article.asp?articleID=172&issueID=12> (accessed 26 February 2007).

2. Ibid.

3. Maj Dan Zeytoonian et al., "Intelligent Design: COIN Operations and Intelligence Collection and Analysis," *Military Review* 86, no. 5 (September–October 2006): 33, <http://usacac.leavenworth.army.mil/CAC/milreview/English/SepOct06/Zeytoonian.pdf> (accessed 26 February 2007).

4. The CFACC in US Central Command's area of responsibility plans and conducts operations at the combined air operations center (CAOC) at Al Udeid Air Base, Qatar. The CAOC at Al Udeid simultaneously supports Operations Iraqi Freedom, Enduring Freedom, and Joint Task Force Horn of Africa.

5. PowerPoint briefing, Col Teresa Fitzpatrick, 480th Intelligence Wing, Langley AFB, VA, subject: Centralized Control, Decentralized Execution of Airborne ISR, 1 June 2006.

6. See Air Force Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures (AFTTP) 3-3.60, "Operational Employment: Air and Space Operations Center," draft, September 2006, 1-2. "The AOC is the operational-level command and control (C2) center that provides the JFACC with the capability to direct and supervise the activities of assigned and attached forces and to monitor the actions of both enemy and friendly forces. . . . In a joint or combined environment, the AOC will be designated either as a joint air operations center (JAOC) or a combined air operations center (CAOC) and manned accordingly." Ibid.

7. The information in this section regarding the AOC is based on the author's multiple years of service in AOCs in the Pacific, Europe, and Middle East. The author has served in a variety of AOC positions in the Strategy, Combat Plans, and ISR divisions as well as in the Special Operations Liaison Element.

8. Metz, Tait, and McNealy, "OIF II," 10.

9. AFTTP 3-3.60, "Operational Employment," 1.4–1.5.

10. To determine which stage in the collection-tasking process generated requirements, the author interviewed multiple JTF, Army, and special operations personnel in

Iraq and Afghanistan (intelligence-collection managers and analysts assigned to tactical and operational-level units) during trips to war zones there in 2004 and 2005.

11. Eliot Cohen et al., "Principles, Imperatives, and Paradoxes of Counterinsurgency," *Military Review* 86, no. 2 (March–April 2006): 52, <http://usacac.leavenworth.army.mil/CAC/milreview/English/MarApr06/Cohen.pdf>.

12. Metz, Tait, and McNealy, "OIF II," 10.

13. Cohen et al., "Principles, Imperatives, and Paradoxes," 49.

14. Col Kirk Mardis, collection-management chief, Multi-National Force-Iraq, Baghdad, Iraq, July 2005–July 2006, discussion with the author, December 2005. A collection manager, potentially located at every level from tactical through strategic, is responsible for determining which intelligence problems commanders want answered and then matching the appropriate collection asset—whether HUMINT, signals intelligence, imagery intelligence, and so forth—to collect against that requirement.

15. Metz, Tait, and McNealy, "OIF II," 12; and Cohen et al., "Principles, Imperatives, and Paradoxes," 52.

16. A collection deck is a list of ISR targets compiled by the collection manager.

17. 1st Lt Justin Mahoney, collection manager, USCENTCOM CAOC, Al Udeid Air Base, Qatar, September 2006–January 2007, interview by the author, 17 April 2007. Based on his experience as the collection manager at the CAOC in Al Udeid, which simultaneously supports operations in Iraqi Freedom, Enduring Freedom, and JTF Horn of Africa, Lieutenant Mahoney estimated that 80–85 percent of collection requests in Iraqi Freedom were generated from the battalion/brigade level and that nearly 100 percent of collection requests in Enduring Freedom were generated from this same level.

18. Ibid.

19. Lt Col Ahmed Hashim, 3d Armored Cavalry Regiment, Tal Afar, Iraq, interview by the author, 16 April 2007.

20. Metz, Tait, and McNealy, "OIF II," 13.

21. Ibid., 11.

22. Zeytoonian et al., "Intelligent Design," 34.

23. Metz, Tait, and McNealy, "OIF II," 11. The term *bottom up* refers to the idea that actionable intelligence in COIN is often collected at the lowest level (e.g., company) rather than at the corps level.

24. Vice Adm Lowell E. Jacoby, "Intelligence Collection, Handling and Analysis Undergo Fundamental Change" (lecture, Joint Warfare Conference, Arlington, VA, 25–26 October 2006).

25. Col James M. Waring, Lt Col Carl L. Giles, and CW3 John A. Robinson, "The 19th BCD in Counterinsurgency Operations," *Field Artillery*, July–August 2005, 17, [http://sill-www.army.mil/FAMAG/2005/JUL\\_AUG\\_2005/JUL\\_AUG\\_2005\\_FULL\\_EDITION.pdf](http://sill-www.army.mil/FAMAG/2005/JUL_AUG_2005/JUL_AUG_2005_FULL_EDITION.pdf).

26. Quoted in Robert Wall, "Finding the Needle: Pentagon Intelligence Agency Expands Fleet of Unmanned Aircraft," *Aviation Week and Space Technology* 159, no. 25 (22 December 2003): 28.

27. Mahoney, interview. CAOC procedures still require units to submit their imagery needs 48 hours prior to kickoff of the ATO. However, for full-motion-video assets such as the Predator, ground units can change their requirements up to 12 hours prior to ATO execution, provided the change in tasking won't affect aircrew or aircraft timing or the overall route of the mission.

28. Ibid.

29. Col Kirk Mardis, telephone conversation with the author, 12 April 2007.

30. Jacoby, lecture.

31. The information in this section regarding persistence and the AOC's approach to this requirement is based on the author's multiple years of service in AOCs in

the Pacific, Europe, and Middle East. The author has served in a variety of AOC positions in the Strategy, Combat Plans, and ISR divisions as well as the Special Operations Liaison Element and has been present in dozens of daily update briefs to the CAOC director that include the daily ISR game plan.

32. Units can submit an ad hoc request via the JTF to the CAOC for time-sensitive, unplanned collection requirements. The CAOC will accept some of these requests, but it is hesitant to do so very often unless the priority is extremely high. Tasking an airborne ISR asset with an ad hoc requirement generally means that it will not be able to collect all of the taskings assigned prior to takeoff. Therefore, the CAOC must weigh the value of ad hoc and preplanned taskings. Ultimately, the CAOC wants to dissuade units from overusing the ad hoc tasking method.

33. Maj John Vincent, chief, USCENTCOM CAOC Master Air Attack Plan Night Shift Cell, Al Udeid Air Base, Qatar, November 2007, telephone conversation with the author, 14 November 2007; and Joint Publication 3-30, *Command and Control for Joint Air Operations*, 5 June 2003, GL-3, [http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/jel/new\\_pubs/jp3\\_30.pdf](http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/jel/new_pubs/jp3_30.pdf).

34. Amy Ryder, to the author, e-mail, 12 April 2007. Mrs. Ryder is a consultant working on the development of training and documentation related to CAOC tactics, techniques, and procedures.

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