

Enabling Bottom-Up Intelligence Reporting

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Enabling Bottom-Up Intelligence Collection

Until you can plug a cable into a lance corporal's head and download his memories, there needs to be some form of manual reporting to capture his experiences.¹

If today's warfighters truly adopt the mantra "All soldiers and Marines are intelligence collectors"² the reporting and dissemination of tactical information must improve. Unfortunately, potentially valuable information is hemorrhaging in the gap between collector and formal reporting. To compound this problem much of the information which is documented becomes stovepiped within internal unit channels and is never posted to national intelligence databases accessible to tactical units and the rest of the Intelligence Community (IC). In order to close the gap between human knowledge and accessible intelligence products, bottom up reporting at the lowest levels must be enabled by addressing basic shortfalls in Marine Corps and joint doctrine, tactics, training and systems.

Background

Over the past five years significant strides have been made within the IC to capture relevant tactical information. Marine Corps initiatives such as the Company

¹ CWO 4 Sean Thompson, interview, 11 Dec 2008.

² MCWP 3-33.5. *COUNTERINSURGENCY*. December 2006.

Level Intelligence Cell (CLIC) and systems like Marine Link have significantly advanced the production of tactical level intelligence and have enabled access to real-time and archived intelligence data respectively. Dedicated tactical collections systems are now automatically populating collection reports and disseminating them without operator intervention. At the national level, the IC has enhanced the accessibility and diversity of databases available to develop an accurate analysis of a particular topic. Despite these improvements to information processing, much of the data available to troops on the ground is never captured. The extent of missed opportunities caused by stovepiped or undocumented reporting can not be measured; it can, however, be mitigated.

Everyday information or clues which are never recorded or shared could be the missing piece to a puzzle disparate units do not know is being assembled. The following scenario provides an example of this issue: Naval Special Warfare teams in Baghdad have been trying to target Mr. X for months. They know he has associates in Kahlidiyah, Iraq, but they have not been able to identify his whereabouts. First Battalion First Marines conducts regular dismounted patrols in Kahlidiyah and 1st platoon

often visits Mr. X's neighborhood. On several occasions, Mr. X has even approached 1st platoon patrols to discuss the status of the local power plant, when it would be operational, and if he could get a job there. The patrol leaders have conducted verbal debriefs with members of the CLIC; however, none of these interactions with Mr. X were ever documented or captured in a reporting format accessible outside the Battalion S-2 section. Here in lies the problem. Had any of these encounters been formally reported, analysts conducting simple name searches for Mr. X would have been able to focus their analysis and enabled direct action to capture him.

Common Practices

The current operating environment has accentuated the need for flashy briefs and has created a disproportionately low troop-to-task ratio. In reaction to this, many analysts spend what little time they have available creating high-tech PowerPoint presentations instead of conducting analysis or producing formal reporting. The combination of these elements has created a culture which favors the product rather than the substantive analysis. The following two practices stovepiping and undocumented reporting are current operational procedures which lead to a fissure in information documentation and sharing:

Stovepiping. A generally accepted practice of producing a daily Intelligence Summary (IntSum) as a Microsoft Word Document or a Graphic IntSum (GrIntSum) as a Microsoft PowerPoint presentation designed to inform the unit commander, staff, and higher headquarters of the current battlefield situation. These summaries contain information from the unit's organic collection as well as external reporting. The summary also includes analysis from the unit's intelligence Marines based on debriefs from patrols, civil affairs meetings, community engagements, etc. The information gained from the observations of troops on the ground is often included in these summaries; however, it frequently fails to be converted into formal reporting. Thus, much of the collected information is not available outside the local hard drive of the S-2 shop or to whomever it was emailed.

Undocumented Reporting. A patrol leader returns from a dismounted security patrol in which he met with sheiks and government officials and observed the atmospherics of the civilians in the area. He will conduct a debrief with his patrol members about the events that occurred during the patrol, often with a member from the CLIC or S-2 section

present. The S-2 or CLIC representative may take notes, back brief the intelligence section, and include some of the patrol's observations in the unit's IntSum. However, if he does not coordinate with a coded Human Intelligence (HUMINT) reporter to produce a Draft Information Intelligence Report (DIIR), which will populate various HUMINT databases, the information is unlikely to be accessible to the broader IC. Currently, for this information to be readily accessible to the IC, it must be produced by specially trained reporters (typically Counterintelligence/HUMINT Marines) in a specific format. The reliance on and limited availability of 0211/0204 HUMINT Marines to conduct this type of routine atmospheric reporting is prohibitive.

Doctrine

Marine Corps Warfighting Publication (MCWP) 2-12, MAGTF Intelligence Production and Analysis, provides a brief discussion of intelligence products in which it describes INTSUMS, Target Studies, and the Intelligence Report (INTREP). Defined as "...a standardized report that is disseminated as rapidly as possible based on its importance to the current situation," the intelligence report is "...the primary means for transmitting new and significant information and intelligence, when facts

influencing threat capabilities have been observed or when a change in threat capabilities has taken place.”³ In practice, the INTREP has largely become an internal document underemployed by MAGTF Intelligence sections.

The utility of standardized INTREPs produced by tactical units needs to be reinforced by Marine Corps doctrine. It must also support the origination of INTREPs by any echelon of unit which has information of value regardless of the presence of an 02XX. Units providing reporting must rely on doctrine to determine a standard reporting chain which incorporates oversight of quality control, validation, deconfliction, and formatting before a product is published. And lastly, doctrine needs to identify methods of dissemination which are accessible and uniform across the Department of Defense and the IC.

Tactics

All operations have an intelligence component. All Soldiers and Marines collect information whenever they interact with the populace. Operations should therefore always include intelligence collection requirements.⁴

MCWP 3-33.5, Counterinsurgency, identifies the importance of understanding the link between operations and intelligence. The tactics advocated by *MCWP 3-33.5* support

³ *MCWP 2-12. MAGTF Intelligence Production and Analysis*. September 2001.

⁴ *MCWP 3-33.5. COUNTERINSURGENCY*. December 2006.

enabling the collectors who have the best placement and access to the populace. Simply by injecting a Marine into an environment, the environment will react to him and produce indicators of the situation. Tactics must support the Marine's ability as a collector to be keenly aware of his surroundings. Training and operations alike need to reinforce this role as a collector and provide the Marine with the opportunities to both observe and to document. In the current asymmetric fight, seemingly mundane observations, personal interactions, or information not directly linked to an intelligence requirement may not seem noteworthy. However, when this information is documented and accessible to the IC, it can assist in establishing an Intelligence Preparation of the Battlefield (IPB) baseline or provide clues to future analysis about areas or individuals. Collectors must be able to communicate the obvious as well as the acute to maximize the value of their observations.

Systems

Information deemed to be only valuable at the company level for a specific [area of operations] needs to be databased due to migration and transient patterns of insurgents.⁵

⁵ Capt A. J. Goldberg, interview, 19 February 2009.

Observations such as Capt A.J. Goldberg's, a reconnaissance platoon commander who recently returned from operations in Iraq, exemplify the need for using a common intelligence system which is accessible at the company level. The current operating environment requires Marines to be familiar with an array of technical systems to support their daily tasks. Once reporting formats or methods are identified to record routine tactical data, they will need to be incorporated into the existing national and service intelligence systems architecture. The software applications, storage databases, and communication network already exist to support the production and nationally available dissemination of tactical information.

Counterargument

We do not develop lengthy intelligence studies just because we have the ability to do so or because a subject is of academic interest. Intelligence that is not acted upon or that does not provide the potential for future action is useless.⁶

Broadening the scope of collectors and the content of reporting has opposition even within Marine Corps doctrine. Opponents argue that reporting on details which are not of immediate tactical relevance or which do not directly answer a priority intelligence requirement is not an

⁶ *MCDP 2. Intelligence.* June 1997.

efficient use of assets. This argument has some merit in the most expeditionary of missions and even has roots in expeditionary intelligence doctrine. *MCDP 2* states, "...too much information can be as harmful as too little."⁷ However, with current technological capabilities and the proper training, putting forth the effort in complete tactical reporting is cost and time effective. The nature and duration of the mission will dictate the level of detail that tactical units will be able to present in their reporting. The current focus on the "long war" has demonstrated the utility and necessity of a wide array of detailed reporting covering tactical areas of operations. For example, biometric data, census data, and communication logs are time consuming to collect and process, but once refined and combined with other sources of information, they can yield great returns in achieving overall mission objectives.

Conclusion

The primary objective of military intelligence is to reduce decisionmakers' uncertainty by providing battlefield awareness. The most efficient and complete method to achieve battlefield awareness is to enable every Marine to

⁷ *MCDP 2. Intelligence.* June 1997.

become part of the intelligence mechanism. This can be accomplished by introducing updated tactical intelligence reporting doctrine, widespread basic collection and reporting training, and access to intelligence systems at the lowest levels. Simply adding another report format to the arsenal of doctrinal reporting templates is not the answer. An approach must be taken which provides the structure, training, and systems necessary to expose tactical information to the broader military and intelligence communities. Only when this information is documented and accessible can the analytic processing power of the military and intelligence communities be leveraged to the full potential to support decisionmaking. To this end, Chief Warrant Officer Joe Toscano of Marine Corps Systems Command asserts "If all the information gathered on a battlefield could be injected into an information architecture, we would never lose."⁸

⁸ CWO 4 Joseph A. Toscano, interview, 16 February 2009

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