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Navy Intelligence Officer Detailing: A Case for Specialization

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Executive Summary

Title: Navy Intelligence Officer Detailing: A Case for Specialization

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Thesis: The nature of the current threats facing the United States necessitates country specific training for intelligence officers which produce country experts rather than military generalists. The detailing process, in addition to maintaining current core competencies, can help achieve this goal by providing a threat based track and by assigning intelligence personnel to subsequent jobs within the same specialized country/field.

Discussion: The nature of the threat facing the United States has changed over the past two decades following the collapse of the Soviet Union. A new age of warfare wherein military forces fight disparate enemies spread across national boundaries and ideologies seem to be the new paradigm. As the nature of threat transforms, so must the military forces opposed to these new adversaries. While maintaining the combat abilities of our armed forces, we must also become experts at information. Particularly, soldiers, sailors and airmen must understand their adversaries and their capabilities. This type of knowledge is not something that can be learned, retained and used within a span of one assignment. The skills needed, language, cultural, military, and philosophical are something that must be learned, reinforced, and maintained over the span of several years. To provide warfighters with the very best information, the Navy Intelligence Community must develop officers with an expert knowledge of their target area. That is, Naval Intelligence Officers must develop and maintain a level of expertise about a specific target area throughout one's career, rather than focusing on a broad spectrum of often disparate intelligence problems.

Conclusion: The United States Navy Intelligence community must retire its system of developing generalists and focus on the training and development of subject matter experts, focused against a particular region or threat.

Preface

The inspiration for this paper stems from witnessing a travesty of career management within the Naval Intelligence Community for the past ten years. The manner in which the Navy details its intelligence personnel once served the community and its customers well. However, with a revolution of intelligence requirements and demands, the current system can no longer meet those needs. This paper, however, is not an indictment of the current personnel managers, as the community is working diligently to update procedures and personnel assignments to meet the changing demands of the community. Rather, this paper strives to point out a deficiency in the system that could be tolerated in years past, but can no longer be ignored.

This paper does not necessarily present epiphanies with respect to the management of intelligence personnel, as most of the arguments presented here have been discussed, in some form or another, in other forums. Yet, given the operational environment of military forces at the present time, the arguments presented here are particularly timely and need to be re-addressed with more vigor. It is hoped that those who reference this work will be persuaded that a change needs to be realized and will strive to realize those changes.

The focus and direction of this paper was influenced by a number of key contributors and/or advisors. I would like to thank Capt Robert Allen (USN) for his wisdom and experienced advice and Lieutenant Commander Jason Menarchik for providing suggestions and helping to guide the format of the paper. Dr. Bruce Bechtol was a source of inspiration whose patience and mentorship allowed this paper to be completed. For all of those intelligence officers and operators with whom I discussed this topic and who guided my thinking, I offer my most profound thanks.

“We are going to do a terrible thing to you. We will take away your enemy.”

- Georgi Arbatov

Prior to the fall of the Soviet Union, intelligence professionals focused on a singular threat— that of the Soviet Union. Despite which direction an officer’s career path led him, he would inevitably end up, in some way or another, working against the Soviet or proxy-Soviet threat. Since the fall of the Iron Curtain in the late twentieth century, the primary threat to the United States has shifted from one single adversary to a host of adversaries ranging from transnational terrorist organizations, developing nations, and unstable nations. The United States defense policy, as well as the Intelligence Community, has struggled in the aftermath to develop a coherent system to deal with the new world reality.

As such, the demands on military intelligence have also diversified. No longer can an intelligence officer work in several disciplines (i.e. collections, signals intelligence, imagery intelligence) throughout the course of one’s career and still be focused on the same adversary. Against a singular threat, intelligence officers were afforded the luxury of diversified tours as they nearly all related back to the primary threat. Given the eclectic range of threats facing the nation today, this is no longer the case. Today’s intelligence officer must maintain a general knowledge of the intelligence disciplines and their capabilities but have expert knowledge on a specific target. The same individual cannot be an expert on every intelligence problem that arises within or among various theaters of operations, yet that is what is being asked of them. The result is a reduction in the quality and accuracy of intelligence products and estimates; a sorry

state of affairs for the warfighter who demands intelligence products to assist in fighting in the air, ground, or sea.

These problems have led to a lively debate about whether Naval Intelligence professionals should be generalists or specialists. The arguments for specialization focus on the need for deeper understanding of the threat environment. The arguments against specialization, and therefore in favor of a generalist approach, deal with the need to develop officers with a variety of experiences that will help them at the more senior ranks, thereby trading expertise for a broad knowledge base. In the current threat posture, specialization is paramount.

In the current global condition, it seems clear that the U.S. Navy needs to recruit, train and mold specialists within various fields of the intelligence architecture. This change in mindset is not a revelation of structure, but would simply provide the Naval Intelligence Community with officers that have knowledge of a particular adversary similar to what Naval Intelligence Officers had during the Soviet era. The Naval Intelligence Community, like the Intelligence Community (IC) in general, has struggled to keep up with the demands of the current global environment and must change its attitudes, methods, and most importantly, the training and billeting of its officers to maintain a strong intelligence capability against several simultaneous threats. Specifically, the United States Navy must allow intelligence officers to train against a specific threat and maintain that training and expertise throughout their career. A “generalist” view of intelligence training and experience can no longer meet the needs of the intelligence consumer and we must strive to develop experts, especially with regard to country-specific knowledge.

The Generalist Approach and its Shortcomings

As stated above, Naval Intelligence is currently mired in creating generalist officers. This mindset has been institutionalized by the detailing process, which encourages diversity, not only of target familiarity, but also job selection and location. Furthermore, the detailing process seeks to increase billeting diversity, further eroding any chance of an officer gaining target familiarity. This process prevents an acute understanding of the target and fails in the face of doctrine and consumer satisfaction.

In the intelligence field, reach-back is important to the success of the intelligence mission. Those intelligence professionals working in forward-deployed areas simply do not have the experience, personnel, or equipment to make all the intelligence decisions required by their commander. They need support from other agencies at the theater and national level. These higher-level agencies maintain a mix of military intelligence officers, enlisted personnel and civilians to provide analysis and reach-back support to deployed forces. Yet, when one speaks of talking to the expert on a particular subject, one is nearly always directed to a civilian rather than the military officer present. Why is that? The answer is persistence, corporate knowledge, and staying power. These civilian intelligence analysts are not the experts due to superior skills or intellect, but by the experience they have gained by doing the same job (i.e. focusing on the same target) for more than 2-3 years at a time. The military officer, while possibly able to provide rudimentary support, simply cannot compare to the expertise of an individual who has been dedicated to the same target over a long period of time. Should the military not strive to train and foster this type of expert knowledge in its own ranks, rather than leaving it up to the civilians to be the expert analysts?

Joint doctrine supports this concept by implicitly requiring that intelligence officers be specialists. According to Joint Publication Two (JP-2), the role of intelligence is to provide knowledge of the enemy, telling commanders “what their adversaries or potential adversaries are doing, what they are capable of doing, and what they may do in the in the future.”¹ The new difficulty is that now several adversaries exist throughout the world that must simultaneously be monitored to achieve the results demanded in JP-2.

Intelligence is also a consumer-driven activity, and its consumers are best served by specialists. While the function of intelligence is based on adversary abilities, posture, and intent, it is driven by its consumers. The consumers of intelligence range from the President of the United States, Congress, Component Commanders, or commanders on the ground or at sea. The requirements of these consumers drive intelligence collection and analysis as well as changes in infrastructure that are necessary to meet these demands. Since the end of the Cold War, the consumers of Naval Intelligence have changed and become more numerous. The demand for ground-based intelligence in support of combat operations, the growing predominance of irregular and special warfare, a renewed focus on expeditionary warfare as well as the continued, time-honored support to naval activities all create demands of Naval Intelligence that stress the system and require readjustments from time to time.

Intelligence officers do not currently meet these needs, primarily due to detailing diversity. In the current detailing process, the career path of the Naval Intelligence Officer is developed to provide a wealth of varied and often disparate jobs in order to create an officer with a multitude of experiences, but not necessarily an expert in any field. In fact, the promotion potential of an officer is often directly linked to the level of diversity found in one’s career, and not necessarily on the accomplishments and level of expertise exhibited at one’s job. While

direction from Navy leadership emphasizes that job performance is paramount to other considerations, it is not difficult to find examples of officers who were stellar performers but nevertheless remained uncompetitive due to a lack of career diversity. Some officers take a personal interest in their job and prefer to study the same problem set, but often shy away from similar jobs as they may not remain competitive with their peers for promotion. Only a few officers have decided to focus on a particular region for the majority of their career and continued to be competitive. This self-specialization is a tribute to their personal work ethic and diligence, but not to the detailing process. Naval Intelligence must find a way to provide specialized support to warfighters while still retaining the core competencies and traditional intelligence support to naval forces. In addition, we must accomplish this specialization without punishing officers with respect to upward mobility and promotion potential.

Currently, an intelligence officer's career path combines sea and shore tours to develop the core competency of Operational Intelligence (OPINTEL). The standard career path, if there is such a thing, consists of an initial operational/sea tour (currently called a Milestone Tour), a mid-career operational/sea tour at the Lieutenant (0-3)/Lieutenant Commander (0-4) level, and a final sea tour at the Commander (0-5) level. This process is designed to allow the junior officers to gain tactical intelligence experience, the mid-grade officers to practice and apply this training, and the senior officers to use their experience in a leadership role.

Upon receiving a commission, a Naval Intelligence Officer can look forward to six months of pipeline intelligence training at the Naval Marine Intelligence Training Center in Damneck, Virginia. The training here involves basic instruction on traditional intelligence skills as well as newly added emphasis on irregular warfare skills.² The diversification of the curricula at the Naval Intelligence Officer Basic Course (NIOBC) is a testament to how the

Naval Intelligence community has recognized the need to better equip NIOs with the skills for a multitude of possible assignments. The training center has realized that the operational requirements and emphasis on more traditional operational intelligence skills requires modernizing and adjusting to the current operational environment. Upon graduation from NIOBC, an officer can expect a 30-month sea tour, usually as ship's company on an aircraft carrier or as an Intelligence Officer of an aviation squadron. This tour is expected to provide junior officers with vital experience providing direct support to intelligence operations at the tactical level. Often, and especially when not at sea, the Air Intelligence Officer (AI) will likely only carry out duties such as security manager and classified materials custodian. In many cases, they do not even have local access to classified networks, which are the lifelines of the Intelligence Community. Thus, in 30-month tour, actual intelligence experience may include only a six-month deployment (with requisite work-up time) followed by a year or more of relative inactivity.

The next tour of duty for an intelligence officer may include a position at a theater-level intelligence center, Office of Naval Intelligence or other national or theater-level intelligence center. This tour is typically when intelligence officers will be ranked competitively among their peers and are expected to break out. The tour-length will typically be three years where they may focus on anything from collection management, terrorism, drug smuggling, to theater specific targets such as China or North Korea. During this time, an intelligence officer learns the reality that he/she is not simply a Naval Intelligence Officer but a joint intelligence analyst. The jobs being performed by naval personnel range from both ends of the joint spectrum. A Naval Officer may be the ground analyst for North Korea, the air analyst for China or simply the command briefer. For better or worse, it is rare that a NIO focuses solely on naval issues while

at this type of command. At this stage of his/her career is where an NIO is expected to apply the lessons learned during his/her initial tour and training.

Following the second tour, an NIO sees more opportunities arise. One can become an instructor, a student, an attaché, or maintain service among traditional operational intelligence assignments. A second sea tour at the Lieutenant or Lieutenant Commander level is mandatory between the officer's second and fourth tour of duty. These tours may include Carrier or Expeditionary Strike Group staffs, numbered Fleet Intelligence billets, Carrier Air Wing Intelligence or Targeting Officer, aircraft carrier or large-deck amphibious ship's company, Destroyer Squadron N2, Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa, and Naval Special Warfare billets. Recently, more opportunities for unconventional warfare billets are also being offered as sea duty billets that allow officers to complete this second milestone tour without being assigned to a ship.

The career path of a growing number of intelligence officers has also recently included opportunities in fighting the Global War on Terror (GWOT), specifically supporting Special and Expeditionary Warfare as well as Individual Augmentation (IA) or GWOT Support Assignments (GSA) to locations such as Iraq, Afghanistan, Horn of Africa, or Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. The skills and experience gained in these assignments are highly valued by the intelligence community and are becoming standardized. That is, some SPECWAR billets will count as milestone tours for intelligence officers, negating the need to go to sea on a large deck ship.”³

One can easily see that the jobs associated with being a Naval Intelligence Officer are varied and often unconnected. Despite initial training at NMITC, rarely will officers be fully trained to serve adequately at a new position for which they have no experience. Certainly, they

will have developed general intelligence skills and capabilities that have been learned and emphasized during previous tours, but the specialization required to properly analyze data specific to a region is not something that can be learned on the job over a short period of time. Yet, after NIOBC, nearly all training for the intelligence officer that is specific to their mission is learned on the job. There are intermediate and advanced schools, as well as Staff Colleges and other graduate level programs available, but these programs and institutions typically focus on the abstract and general nature of war fighting, rather than on specific mission-related skill sets that are so much in demand.

Additionally, the Intelligence function of the naval service recently reorganized into an Information Dominance Corps (IDC), which will further increase the trend toward the generalist approach. The IDC combines the functions of the N2 (intelligence) and N6 (communications) directorates into one entity. This entity will also include meteorology and other functions. These initiatives show a shift in focus to a more holistic approach to answering intelligence consumers' needs. It also represents the acknowledgement of the intelligence community of the need to focus on more specific unconventional warfare support and the desire to present a fusion of information to answer the intelligence questions of the Navy's various intelligence consumers.⁴ Overall, these initiatives accentuate the point that an intelligence officer career is and will be more eclectic than ever before.

With the range of billets expanding due to the joining of directorates the probability of cross-detailing becomes a reality, further entrenching the generalist approach. At the higher levels, commanders will require experience throughout the full spectrum of intelligence activities as well as those pertaining to communications and meteorology. The manpower office for Naval Intelligence was the first of the directorates to dedicate a senior intelligence billet to

be filled by a non-intelligence officer. Presumably, the future will see intelligence officers holding billets that were previously dedicated to communications experts and/or meteorologists. This will add to the argument for more diversity in one's career path, thereby further deteriorating the specialist role for intelligence officers. Yet, is it realistic, or desirable, to assume that the same officer can be proficient in each of these billets? Expanding the focus of Naval Intelligence to incorporate this type of support is necessary but cannot happen outside the limits of officer detailing. While these new specialized billets are being created, the detailing process remains bogged down in a system that is based on creating generalists.

As of October 2009, the intelligence function of the IDC alone consisted of 1481 officers. Of these, 1163 officers were in the 0-1 through 0-4 grades; the grades most affected by this thesis. Of the entire 1481 personnel, the billets filled consisted of the full spectrum of intelligence support ranging from carrier operations to theater intelligence duties to advanced education.⁵ The effort required to manage this number of individuals and to manage the shortfalls (gaps) in manning is indeed daunting. Yet, we must strive to improve, not the effort being applied, but the direction in which the effort is focused.

The detailing process possesses a means for specialization but does not employ it to the proper end. Additional Qualification Designations (ADQs) and Sub-Specialty Codes (SSPs) could be used to promote or further experience in an officer's particular area of expertise, but the current detailing process simply relies on them to identify if an officer has the required AQD/SSP for a billet. This lack of specialty code utilization is a failing of the Navy detailing process and of the Navy in general to capitalize on the skills and investments already made in the officer to contribute to further missions. The focus on diversity actually waters down an officer's skill set. Not allowing him/her to specialize and creating a more generalist officer may

be useful at the higher grades in the command environment, but does not aid in promoting experts and deep thinkers about problems that are facing the world today and might arise in the future.

The Navy has clearly decided to further its idea of the generalist officer, often in the vernacular as well rounded, versus training specialists in a particular area. If an Intelligence Officer wishes to become an expert in a particular field, it is up to the diligence and hard work of that officer to provide his/her own training and career management. Indeed, the forgoing pages may have painted a picture whereby, given the multitude of intelligence requirements, we should be training generalists so that they can fit into any of the assigned molds. However, this way of thinking is short-sighted and allows simply for the filling of billets, and not for filling the billets with highly qualified and competent analysts. In order to provide the warfighters with the type of intelligence they require to accomplish their missions, they need to be assigned people who are experts in their field.

The Specialist Approach and its Strengths

In contrast to the generalist approach, specialization can meet the needs of the consumer and joint doctrine. In fact, several measures are currently being enacted that could be incorporated by intelligence specialists; even the Director of Naval Intelligence sees intelligence as a specialist field. In an intelligence community memorandum in July 2008, Vice Admiral Dave “Jack” Dorsett stressed the reality that intelligence personnel need to continue to be specialists in order to keep pace with the current environment. Indeed, VADM Dorsett insists that as the world moves further into an information-intensive era, the debate between generalists and specialists becomes increasingly moot. VADM Dorsett continues, “The future of the Naval

Intelligence profession, and the success of our Navy, depends on our professionals becoming ever more specialized...specialized in the profession of Intelligence.”⁶

To demonstrate his point, the Admiral used an example of Chinese submarine operations, where we are to “take a specialist in Chinese submarine analysis, combine this person with a U.S. attack submariner, an oceanographer, Communications Intelligence (COMINT) and Electronic Intelligence (ELINT) specialists, and a specialist in Chinese culture. The result...acute, profound understanding of how a Chinese submariner will drive his boat.”⁷

VADM Dorsett was likely referring to an organization that already exists (mostly in the mold he describes) in the PACOM AOR and that has achieved the specialization goals he described. Indeed, this organization is widely acclaimed to be the premier submarine analysis shop in the Navy (or at the least the Pacific Theater), but not because of the specialization of the individuals, but more so due to the fusion of a cadre of divergent talents. The key to the success of this organization though, is the civilian analysts. They provide the continuity – the corporate knowledge that would otherwise be lost by the rotation of fledgling military analysts.

VADM Dorsett does not explain how we mold just such a military Chinese submarine analyst and what happens to this person on subsequent tours. Often, the officer filling the position of Chinese submarine analyst is simply a rather high performer in a previous position within the command who is promoted to the submarine analysis position. Once fully trained and seemingly capable, the individual may have no more than a year or two to employ this new specialization before moving on to a subsequent tour with no such connection to his specialization. The writer of this paper filled the billet of the Chinese submarine analyst working with the other specialists identified by VADM Dorsett; yet, before assuming that role, he had no formal training and upon leaving that billet, did not again use the expertise in a formal capacity.

So, while the organization is a specialization success story in the vein of VADM Dorsett's memo, the individual member did not achieve, nor maintain any such level of specialization.

The trend in the intelligence community is toward specialization, but there are yet few manifestations of this trend. As the unconventional operations in Iraq and Afghanistan have illustrated, the lack of regional military intelligence specialists has considerably hampered our war effort there. Recently, however, several initiatives have arisen that seek to correct this deficiency. Specialization is at the heart of all these initiatives.

Human terrain mapping is a skill a specialized intelligence officer could provide. In the spring of 2008, *Military Review* published an article written by members of Task Force Dragon operating in Iraq entitled *Human Terrain Mapping: A Critical First Step to Winning the COIN Fight*. This article dealt with the development and use of what became known as Human Terrain Mapping (HTM) or sometimes the Human Terrain System (HST). While conventional intelligence gathering had for years concentrated on enemy orders of battle, military disposition and intentions, no requirement was ever created to concentrate on the more personal level of intelligence. However, the nature of the Counterinsurgency (COIN) Operations being conducted in Iraq and Afghanistan demand that warfighters on the ground have information about groups and individuals operating in their area of operations. This type of information cannot simply be collected by technical means but requires a mix of human intelligence and personal interaction with the native population (combined with standard technical intelligence sources) in order to provide a "human map" of individuals and/or groups that may be a threat to coalition operations.⁸

In the past several years there has also been a litany of writings and discussions about the best way to collect and assess local population capabilities and intentions. Many of these

debates center around the need for structures similar to HTM as well as the use of ethnographers assigned to or supporting ground forces. General David Petraeus, Commanding General of the Multi-National Forces Iraq stated in 2007 that, “Knowledge of the cultural terrain can be as important as, and sometimes even more important than, the knowledge of the geographical terrain. This observation acknowledges that the people are, in many respects, the decisive terrain, and that we must study that terrain in the same way that we have always studied the geographical terrain.”⁹ Yet, while enterprising infantrymen and other ground troops have come up with creative approaches to this problem, the intelligence community has not kept pace and has not provided the depth of intelligence support required by coalition troops and commanders.

Currently, intelligence officers are outside of the HTM process, however, they could excel if given the chance as specialists. In describing the operational duties of creating a Human Terrain Map, the authors of the previously cited article explained how combat patrols were organized with specific objectives for each of the patrol’s elements. The tasks were security, information requirements gathering, and relationship building. During these patrols, the Fire Support Officer (FSO) acted as the intelligence officer.¹⁰ It is unclear whether this was due to a lack of intelligence officers or the lack of ability and expertise of the intelligence officers available. If the intelligence community were to train and mold its intelligence officers to become cultural experts of the area in question, the HTM patrols would be much more efficient and capable. Indeed, the skills, functions, and contributions argued for by protagonists of ethnographic intelligence are what would or should be expected from the intelligence community. Certainly, one would not expect an artilleryman or infantryman to become an expert on adversary capabilities and intent. While traditionally, the Naval Intelligence Officer (NIO) has not been required to know the minutia of a particular area; those questions invariably

seem to migrate to the intelligence directorate. Why then does the Navy not prepare officers to be those quasi-ethnographers of the sort that the warfighters so desperately need?

In a 2008 article, Dr. Pauline Kusiak investigates the role of cultural expertise, discussing the importance of socio-cultural knowledge and the controversy with the military assuming what has typically been an academic role. She seems to agree with Gen. Petraeus on the importance of this type of data, but suggests that it may be beyond the ability of the military to produce it. Yet, the concept of conducting ethnographic studies is directly in line with what specialists could provide – the military needs people who can look deeply into a region or country and derive “what makes them tick.”¹¹ In her experience supporting the military, she claims that she has witnessed many special operations personnel taking on the role of an “observant quasi-ethnographer” but they are quickly overwhelmed with the task.¹² She maintains that the mission of collecting and producing this level of cultural knowledge is not sufficiently prioritized to invest in the training required to develop this type of cultural/military expert. This point is valid; no sufficient priority has been placed on the need for collection of cultural data and developing a deeper understanding of issues related to the lower levels of conflict. With the litany of requirements levied on the intelligence community, the development of cultural specialists has not yet risen to a priority high enough to cause action. A change in the training and detailing process of the Navy could facilitate the rise of a cadre of just such specialists.

A recent initiative in the Central Command area of operations called Afghanistan Pakistan Hands (AFPAK Hands) seeks to achieve intelligence specialization in support of the missions there. Under this initiative, a cadre of specialists will concentrate solely on the issues concerning Afghanistan and Pakistan. The objective of the AFPAK Hands (APH) program is to

identify, select, train, and manage a cohort of Department of Defense experts in order to bring greater unity and cohesion to the fight in Afghanistan.¹³ AFPAK Hands personnel will be placed in positions of strategic influence to ensure progress towards achieving U. S. government objectives in the Afghanistan-Pakistan region. The targeted end-state is a program that will support critical elements of defense strategy in the region while preserving the member's career progression. The desired end strength of the AFPAK Hands initiative will be 608 individuals from the Department of Defense, of which 122 will come from the Navy. Ten Captains (O-6) from Naval Intelligence are being sought to fill these positions.

While seeking 608 positions, only 304 billets will be filled by Red and Blue teams. While one team is deployed forward in the theater of operations, the other team member will be stationed at a home base in the United States, but will still concentrate on the area for which the billet is focused. Some disagree with the two-for-one billet structure and suggest a three-team format (adding a White Team). This format would allow for a less strenuous rotation in and out of theater. This initiative does not go far enough in some respects. The initiative to provide specialists is commendable and certainly necessary for the gains the United States is seeking. However, the program length needs to be extended and the officers chosen should be expanded to include officers from the lower grades in an effort to develop them over time to be subject matter experts. A Navy Captain (O-6) has little time left in his/her career to effectively become a future expert. At the twilight of their careers, these officers are often looking forward to retirement rather than an arduous rotation into combat zones.

Junior officers can be developed as specialists from the beginning of their careers and would be an optimal fit for this program. These individuals would remain in a pipeline, similar to AFPAK Hands, wherein their assignments could be complementary and always focused on

similar countries or targets. Also, while the AFPAK Hands initiative only requires a three-year commitment, a regional specialization track in the Navy would need to be for a longer period of time, perhaps surpassing ten years. AFPAK Hands would also need to be structured to keep members in the track. Currently, AFPAK Hands only accepts volunteers with no obligated service requirement. Thus, an officer could accept an AFPAK Hands assignment, attend the requisite language and other training, spend a few months in theater and retire from the service. This would be a significant waste of resources and leave the initiative in need of further replacements, some of whom might follow the same pattern.

The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral Mike Mullen, in an address to the Navy War College in early 2010 stressed the importance of the AFPAK Hands initiative and described the current efforts to find and employ experts to the Afghanistan/Pakistan problem. He stressed during his address the need to act now and that he was behind schedule on training and developing experts to participate in the fight.¹⁴ Yet, the United States first began operations in Afghanistan in 2003. Why are we just now attending to the business of developing and deploying experts? Specialization in a particular country or region by Navy Intelligence professionals can ensure that during the next conflict, the United States will have experts at hand with the linguistic, cultural, and military knowledge the Chairman and other commanders desire.

In addition to the above initiatives, Navy Intelligence has made other tentative moves toward specialization. The detailing process, while continuing to beat the drum of career diversity, has endeavored to allow specialization in certain fields. As of Fiscal Year 2009, the IDC is striving to allow for specialization in Special and Expeditionary Warfare, Human Intelligence (HUMINT), Information Technology (IT), Targeting, Regional Studies, and

Acquisitions. Yet, according to the IDC manpower office, as of January 2010, only the Acquisitions field has been able to specialize with respect to career management. Additionally, with a focus on diversity, it will take significant efforts to adjust force requirements and billet structure to allow for adequate specialization in other fields.

Developing America's Intelligence Specialists: SME Detailing and Homesteading

So how do we create intelligence specialists? To adjust to a new system of detailing wherein the expert is paramount, the detailing process must, 1) establish a tracked system of intelligence billeting and assignments tailored to country/target specific knowledge, 2) assign billets according to one's proven expertise, 3) allow and encourage individuals to homestead if warranted by performance, 4) provide follow-on tours that are commensurate with the experience and expertise of the officer, 5) provide for continued education and training opportunities commensurate with an officers focus of effort. This cannot happen overnight. With minimal effort, however, the detailing process can begin with steps two, three and four. By allowing high performing officers to maintain their billets and expertise at their present command, they can make use of their growing expertise. When they rotate, the detailer must endeavor to place the officer in an assignment that augments the knowledge gained and allows the officer to make use of whatever expertise he/she has gained to that point.

In presenting this argument to my peers and leadership, I am not faced with opposition to the validity of the concept, but as to the realistic application of the concept and problems thereby encountered. The first step in overcoming these limitations is the detailing process. As previously stated, the detailing process as it now stands strives to provide intelligence officers with a broad spectrum of experiences and duty assignments. The underlying concept in this

method is that the officer will benefit from varied experiences, thereby allowing him/her to use those experiences in future leadership roles. The current process allows for and rewards an officer who has completely disjointed tours of service and who never became a true expert at any of the jobs held. As long as the officer can remain relatively competitive with respect to performance, he/she can almost be guaranteed promotion to at least Lieutenant Commander.

Another argument that antagonists proffer is that the officers themselves would not agree to work in a single track over long periods of time and retention would suffer. I disagree. It appears to me that those officers who tend to remain on active duty are those who excel at what they do and find their work important and rewarding. Those who never really find a niche in the intelligence field typically wander off after four to eight years in search of that niche, often ending up at a government intelligence agency that satisfies their search for a job that interests them. Thus, if we allow our officers to become true experts and take pride in a field of study that interests them, they will most likely remain where they can most usefully employ that knowledge and expertise.

In 2006, Lieutenant Commander Jim Griffin published an award-winning essay that described a High-Low mix with regard to intelligence detailing and training. In this work he demonstrated a need to provide a tracked program of intelligence officer training and detailing. In particular, he was referring to the need to provide a three-track system of officer detailing. The three tracks would provide dedicated personnel to maintain conventional naval operational intelligence support (conventional track) while also providing for intelligence support to irregular warfare (low end) and support to specific naval war fighting functions (high end).¹⁵ LCDR Griffin was certainly on the right track and the thesis of this paper agrees wholeheartedly with the concepts developed in the High-Low mix. In examining the various roles that

intelligence officers must fill, having specific tracks for each sub-specialty (see detailing section for description of billet allocation) would be difficult. This paper argues only for a ‘country specific’ track or ‘subject matter expert’ track, yet, there must be some commitment to place officers in mutually supporting assignments that will allow these officers to develop, maintain, and further their knowledge of a particular field. In short, we must allow them to become Subject Matter Experts (SME).

The SME track, for lack of a better term, would require an officer to maintain the core competencies of an intelligence officer but would focus on a specific target area. In addition to the core competencies learned during initial training and reinforced during normal duties, this officer would become a veritable expert on a specific country, region or problem (i.e. China, North Korea, and Iran). Training involved in this track would allow for study of the military structure, culture, language, and temperament of the country and its military. This individual would become a quasi-Foreign Area Officer (FAO) dedicated to the intelligence community for support of intelligence missions targeted against his/her area of expertise. Only by dedicating individuals to such endeavors will we move away from ephemeral billet holders to true intelligence experts.

The FAO program, in fact, is an excellent existing template for establishing SMEs. In 2005, the Department of Defense issued DOD Directive 1315-17 which outlined the requirements of the different services to develop Foreign Area Officer programs. This document outlined the need for officers to have, “knowledge of political-military affairs; have familiarity with the political, cultural, sociological, economic, and geographic factors for the countries and regions in which they are stationed; and have professional proficiency in one or more of the dominant languages in their regions of expertise.”¹⁶ In accordance with this directive, the U.S.

Navy has revised its FAO program to allow for fifty qualified FAO's by 2009 and at full maturity in 2015 to maintain a cadre of 400 Foreign Area Officers. The SME track as stated above would be a quasi-FAO channel. With the exception of language proficiency, the requirements levied against the FAO commonly mirror what is currently expected of the intelligence directorate. These requirements are exactly what intelligence officers are expected to know on a day-to-day basis, without the benefit of a training program akin to FAO training. While the Navy cannot provide the level of training and education dedicated to a FAO for every intelligence officer, it can and should strive to educate its intelligence officers in such a manner to allow them to support their commanders' war fighting needs. The parallel between the FAO program and intelligence training is predictable. The type of knowledge and experience exercised by a FAO is what a true intelligence analyst strives to achieve. Yet, the system does not yet allow for this type of specialization. By creating a tracked detailing and training program that stresses the development of a country area expert in addition to conventional and irregular warfare tracks, the Naval Intelligence community can better provide commanders with the type of information required by operational forces.

One way of controlling and monitoring officer assignments and experience is to use a system of qualification designations, the AQDs (Additional Qualification Designation) and SSPs (Sub-specialty codes) mentioned previously. While AQDs are primarily billet-based, that is they identify more specifically the qualifications of officers and the qualifications required by a billet, SSP codes are personnel and/or billet-based and reflect experience and/or skills of particular individuals, often within the realm of further education. These AQD or SSP codes are entered into an officer's official records. The AQDs/SSPs are not used, however, to identify follow-on assignments for these officers, but rather help to identify what additional

qualifications an officer will receive by accepting the billet. They benefit the officer by providing a record of diversification in one's career, but they are rarely used to identify that officer for follow on assignments. These qualifications could be used to track and ensure that an officer is appropriately detailed to be a SME.

If one were to take the SME track, that individual would most likely remain in the same theater of operations for a majority of his/her time in the military. This approaches a concept long thought of as taboo in the Navy – homesteading. Homesteading exists when a sailor has particular ties to a specific region and endeavors to remain in that location for an extended period. In certain locations like San Diego and Norfolk where there are a multitude of diverse naval billets, one can remain in the same region while benefiting from a variety of different billets without severely damaging promotion potential. I argue that homesteading is not a bad concept and officers should not be punished for remaining in the same area as long as they are focused on the same threat and perform in such a manner to warrant their continued presence. Remaining in the same general area benefits not only the command that will retain highly knowledgeable and proficient officers, but will reduce the cost of Permanent Change of Station orders, a problem that endures within all the services. Some will argue that remaining at the same command or in the same general area does not allow one to “travel the world”, long a hallmark of Naval service. To this, I respond that the Navy is not a travel agency but a branch of the military. Within reason, the Navy should allow for personal desires, but ultimately it is the good of the Navy and the mission that should take precedence.

Conclusion

Naval intelligence has built a reputation of professionalism and quality over the years. Why should we change it at this point? The answer is in the shift of threats and the new realities that the warfighter faces coupled with an associated shift in intelligence needs by a multitude of intelligence consumers. Previously, a Naval Intelligence Officer was afforded the luxury of diversity in one's career due to the always present focus on the Soviet threat. Without such a singular target, an intelligence officer is now faced with a litany of varied opportunities, each of which has specific and peculiar needs. The requirements of a Special Operations unit contrasts significantly with those of an OPINTEL center. Imagine a hospital with its cadre of doctors. It would be nonsense to have the pediatrician take his next job as a gerontologist, and then later as a surgeon. Specialization is required due to the intricacies of each field. Moreover, a pilot will not switch from flying an F/A-18 to an EA-6B. Why then are intelligence officers not afforded the opportunity to gain the same level of expertise in their assigned field?

In order to ensure Naval Intelligence can meet the needs of its consumers, we must re-address the manner in which we employ our people. We must ensure they are given the training and support to become the subject matter experts required by operational forces, and we must maintain this effort over the long term. This specialization can be accomplished by reconfiguring the detailing process in such a way that tracks and fosters specialization, and by homesteading our officers, ensuring that they are leaning (and learning) forward to be the experts they are needed to be. The alternative is to continue to face more diverse and specialized threats with personnel who are incapable of providing the type, quality, and quantity of intelligence demanded by the commander.

Notes

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² Navy News. "Naval Intelligence Training Gives Navy, Marine Corps Team Edge." Story Number NNS090506-11.

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³ Notations taken from Detailer briefings to intelligence community staff

⁴ Brock, Tony. "*Special Operations Require Special Intelligence Officers*." United States Naval Institute.

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⁵ Intelligence Detailer Brief Oct 2009

⁶ Dorsett, David. "Intelligence: The Profession of Specialists." Office of the Director of Naval Intelligence. July 22, 2008.

⁷ Dorsett: 2008.

⁸ Marr, J., Cushing, J., Garner, B., & Thompson, R. "Human Terrain Mapping." A Critical First Step to Winning the COIN Fight. (2008, March). *Military Review*, 88(2), 18-24. <http://usacac.army.mil>.

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¹⁰ Marr: 2008.

¹¹ Kusiak, Pauline. "Sociocultural Expertise and the Military: Beyond the Controversy." (2008, November): *Military Review*, 88(6), 65-76. www.dtic.mil.

¹² Kusiak: 2008.

¹³ Office of the Chief of Naval Operations. NAVADMIN: Afghanistan Pakistan Hands Program. 242337Z SEP 09

¹⁴ Mullen, Mike. "Address to Faculty and Students." Navy War College, Newport, RI, January 8, 2010.

¹⁵ Griffin, Jim. "Naval Intelligence Needs a High-Low Mix." *United States Naval Institute*.

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¹⁶ Department of Defense. DOD Directive 1315-17: Military Department Foreign Area Officer (FAO) program. April 28, 2005.

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