



Soldiers of 2nd Battalion, 1st Infantry Regiment, plan for a mission at the Yakima Training Center, WA.

A Team Approach to Collection Management

by Lieutenant Colonel James King

Introduction

Collection manager is one of the hardest jobs in a brigade combat team. Unfortunately, it's a job often assigned to one of the least experienced people on the staff. This lack of experience and understanding of intelligence systems and operations often results in a less than optimal collection plan, one with holes big enough to drive a T-80 tank through it. However, the Army is a team sport, one that leverages its individual strengths at the appropriate time to achieve the desired effect. We can tackle the collection management problem in the same fashion. Building a team that can leverage the expertise of reconnaissance, organic collection assets, and echelons above brigade (EAB) assets will result in a collection plan that plugs its holes like a tank ditch in the Central Corridor.

Finding a Collection Manager

As the S-2 for a Stryker brigade, I found myself in the same dilemma as many brigade S-2s. We were training for a rotation at the National Training Center, and I had to appoint someone as our collection manager. My team at the brigade level was short several military intelligence (MI) officers, so the brigade commander graciously augmented us with some first lieutenants whose branch details were expiring soon. Doing so allowed these lieutenants to gain experience in an intelligence section before attending the Military Intelligence Captains Career Course. It was from this group that I had to find a collection manager.

I chose an officer whose branch detail was to field artillery. I believed his experience on the receiving end of collection

would help him make good decisions about the employment of sensors. Before our unit's validation exercise, I used the U.S. Army Intelligence and Security Command's Foundry Program to send him to a couple of collection management classes, one hosted in Hawaii and another at Fort Huachuca, Arizona, to familiarize him with the task. After he returned, I assumed he was ready for the role going into the validation exercise. I was wrong.

He didn't fail completely. He had a few successes but stumbled through most of it. The enemy problem set and the complexity of having to manage EAB assets at the National Training Center would be exponentially harder, and we had to up our game. I couldn't swap him out even if I wanted to because we had invested too much training in him. We had to find a way to make him better—or as they say in baseball, "raise the floor of our talent level." We discovered that very little academic focus is placed on the art and science of collection management. We had exhausted our Foundry options and were resigned to the fact that we were going to the batter's box with the staff section we had, rather than with the staff section we wanted.

Filling Two Additional Roles

At the same time that we in the S-2 were working through this problem, the brigade commander was working through how to incorporate a "chief of recon" for the brigade and who would fill that role. We were also kicking around ideas on how best to use the MI company commander. At the time, these were separate problems needing different solutions. We went to the National Training Center determined to try a few ideas to see what would fit.

Love it or hate it, doctrine or not, our commander wanted to have a "chief of recon." The process went through some fits and starts. We knew what we wanted the chief of recon to do—provide the brigade commander, S-3, and S-2 with recommendations on employment of the cavalry squadron—but we didn't know who should fill the role. After some trial and error, we settled on the cavalry squadron headquarters and headquarters troop (HHT) commander. We knew we didn't want to use the squadron commander, but we needed someone who could hold their own with the brigade staff. Before settling

on the HHT commander, we tried the squadron executive officer and the squadron liaison officer. The executive officer had the necessary experience but his time was already split too many ways, and the liaison officer was generally a post platoon leader lieutenant who didn't have the requisite experience.

The MI company commander question was much easier to answer. It was determined early on that during operations the MI company would be task organized from the brigade engineer battalion to work for the brigade and take direction from the S-2. The question now was what role the commander would have in support of the S-2. I didn't want to take away the fact that he was a commander and make him an assistant S-2, but I also couldn't afford to waste his experience as an intelligence officer on just managing the day-to-day administration of his company, which his first sergeant and executive officer handled most of anyway. I needed to get him in the fight.

The Collection Management Team

Our solution to these problems came early in the National Training Center rotation. To effectively incorporate all the collection assets available to the brigade, we decided to build a collection management team. This team would exploit the unique subject matter expertise of each of its members in order to build a collection plan that maximized the strengths of the reconnaissance capabilities of the cavalry squadron, the brigade's organic intelligence sensors, and EAB assets. Let's take a look at each member of the team and what they bring to the fight.



U.S. Army photo by SGT Dominique Washington, 7th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

The scout platoon of Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Armored Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, conduct a scout validation exercise January 21-22, 2020, at the Novo Selo Training Area in Bulgaria. They are evaluated on their abilities to navigate terrain while gathering, assessing, and reporting information, along with providing security and engaging targets when necessary.

Chief of Recon

Not every unit has a “chief of recon.” It is a non-doctrinal position intended to provide the brigade staff with a subject matter expert on cavalry operations. Within those units that maintain a chief of recon, there is no consensus on who should fill the role. One thing we did know was our organization did not want to use the squadron commander as some units have done. As discussed earlier, we chose the HHT commander.

The HHT commander’s role in the collection management team was to provide insight into how to best use the cavalry squadron to collect and what they could collect. As the only organic, all-weather collectors in the brigade, their effective utilization is vital to the success of the overall plan. An intelligence officer who has no experience with employing cavalry units often assigns tasks that turn out to be impossible to accomplish when attempted on the ground. This happens because intelligence collection managers make mistakes when they don’t understand reconnaissance operations, such as the terrain doesn’t support movement, the named area of interest is unobservable from where the reconnaissance team can get to, or the squadron is given too many named areas of interest to cover. Correct employment of the cavalry is the first layer of the team approach to collection management.

The Military Intelligence Company Commander

A brigade combat team’s MI company commander has historically been one of the most misused and often underutilized leaders in the organization. As with the chief of recon, very few units use their MI company commander the same way. Some use them as “just a commander,” leaving them to the day-to-day administration of the company. Others attempt to tap into the seniority of the individual within the intelligence branch and use them as another assistant S-2. In the collection management team concept, you get the best of both sides of the coin.

The MI company commander provides the knowledge on how to use the brigade’s organic intelligence assets. Employed properly, a brigade combat team brings to the fight a fairly robust set of signals intelligence, human intelligence, imagery intelligence, and unmanned aircraft systems. Aligned with what the cavalry can do, you have an all-encompassing overlay of all the collection that a brigade combat team

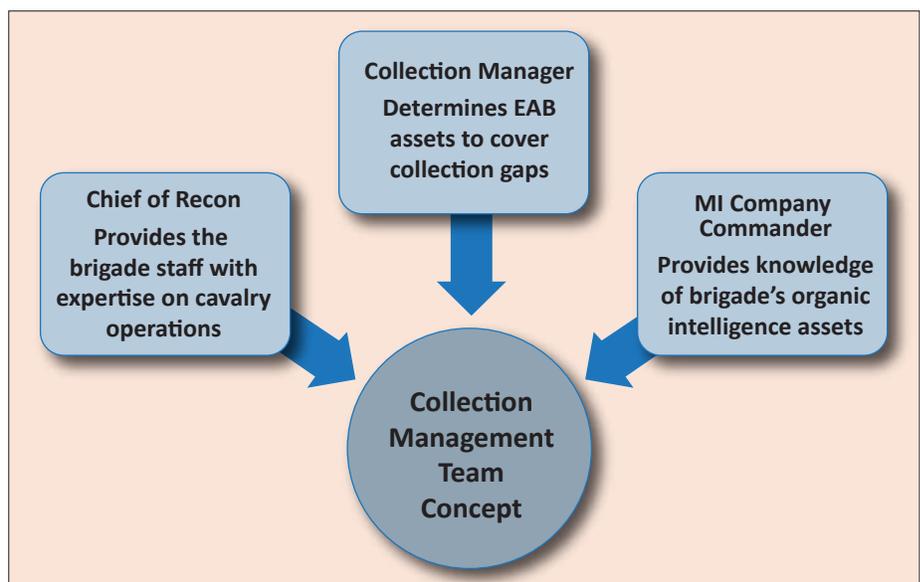
can do on its own without asking its higher headquarters for help.

Bringing the MI company commander into the planning process has the benefit of instilling a sense of ownership for the operations that their command is undertaking. Too often, MI company commanders watch as the brigade combat team S-2 farms out their assets without understanding the intent or requirements. This newfound understanding of the operation can energize the MI company commander to ensure that collection is happening and is happening effectively. When problems arise, as they inevitably will, the MI company commander can exercise mission command to solve problems and ensure limited to no interruption in collection.

The Collection Manager

In the team construct, the collection manager is responsible for determining the necessary EAB assets to cover the brigade’s collection gaps. They do this by overlaying what the cavalry squadron can cover with what the MI company is able to cover. It is the collection manager’s responsibility to request EAB assets to provide coverage for any gaps.

As the only full-time member of the team, the collection manager is also responsible for all the traditional tasks of collection management, including building the collection plan, the information synchronization matrix, Annex L to the operation order (OPORD), the collection overlay, and any briefings as a part of the planning process. The collection manager is further responsible for working with the next higher headquarters to secure EAB assets and to fight for dynamic re-tasking if needed. Ultimately, the collection manager is responsible for all aspects of the final collection plan.



The team concept exploits the distinctive subject matter expertise of each of its members.

How It Works

In practice, the collection team is most effective during the military decision-making process, when building the collection plan for specific operations. During this process, the collection manager will assemble the other members of the team and lay out the requirements for the upcoming operation. They must do this early enough to get the cavalry squadron their assignments with enough time to allow for movement to cover those locations. The collection manager gathers the inputs of the other members of the team, drafts requests for EAB assets, and builds the overall collection plan. While the other two members of the team return to their primary duties, the collection manager participates in the wargame, socializes required changes with the other team members, writes Annex L of the OPORD, and briefs the collection plan as a part of the OPORD brief to subordinates. The other members of the team come together one more time before execution of the operation to participate

in the intelligence collection rehearsal and combined arms rehearsals.

Final Thoughts

The preceding method is a “way” to achieve success in the realm of collection management, particularly when your organization’s expertise level is not where you would like it to be. This approach is effective only if members of the team take ownership of their respective element. However, this approach will fail if the “chief of recon” is not a trusted member of the cavalry squadron. All interested parties must accept that individual’s recommendations. Any second-guessing by those who think they know better will derail the entire plan. In some cases, this may require brigade commander emphasis to ensure the team isn’t overridden. Effective implementation of this approach will result in a holistic collection plan that will provide the S-2 and commander as complete a picture of the battlefield as possible. ✨

LTC James King serves as the G-2X for an Army Service component command. He previously served as a theater analysis and control element chief, a military intelligence battalion executive officer, and a brigade combat team S-2 for two different Stryker brigade combat teams. LTC King holds a bachelor of arts in sociology from the University of Washington and a master’s degree in strategic intelligence from American Military University.

The graphic features a central 'FOUNDRY' logo with interlocking gears labeled 'STRATEGIC', 'OPERATIONAL', 'TACTICAL', 'TECHNICAL EXPERTISE', and 'ANALYTICAL'. To the left is a shield with a key and a wrench. To the right is the U.S. Army star logo. Below the logo are five sections: 'What is Foundry', 'Foundry Training Types', 'Funding', 'Schedules', and 'Points of Contact'. A central circular seal for the 'UNITED STATES ARMY INTELLIGENCE AND SECURITY COMMAND' is also present.

What is Foundry

The Foundry Intelligence Training Program is a critical enabler to Army global readiness. It provides commanders the necessary resources (funding, facilities and subject matter experts) to prepare military intelligence Soldiers, Civilians, and units to conduct intelligence operations and activities at the tactical, operational, and strategic levels.

Foundry Training Types

Foundry enhances individual and collective intelligence training for the Active and Reserve Components through –

- Resident (TDY) or at a Foundry Site
- Live Environment Training
- Mobile Training Teams

Funding

Headquarters, Department of the Army, Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Intelligence, may allocate Foundry resources that support unit METL, Army Service component command’s intelligence warfighter function training requirements and advanced intelligence training provided by the intelligence community.

Schedules

Foundry Courses can be scheduled through the Army Training Requirements and Resources System (ATRRS). ATRRS allows units to submit training requests online and view calendars of all available, requested, and scheduled intelligence training. ATRRS also displays training objectives, prerequisites, class size, and course administrative requirements. ATRRS URL: <https://www.atrrs.army.mil>.

Points of Contact

DA G-2 TRAINING POINT OF CONTACT
Foundry Program Manager: 703-695-1268
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