Bridging the Brigade Combat Team Collection Management Manning Challenge

by Chief Warrant Officer 2 Bary McMaster

Introduction

The information collection task of the intelligence warfighting function allows the commander to gain a shared understanding of the operational environment. Doctrinally, the brigade combat team (BCT) collection management element is responsible for the planning and execution of the information collection plan. The current BCT intelligence warfighting function design maximizes support for the BCT in a counterinsurgency environment. While this worked well for most operations over the past decade, the current structure is not organized to meet the requirements of large-scale ground combat. However, there is some good news on the horizon.

Force Design Update

Based on a bottom-up review conducted by the U.S. Army Intelligence Center of Excellence and the Department of the Army G-2, the BCT military intelligence (MI) company internal structure will be realigned to enhance the overall quality, efficiency, and effectiveness of intelligence analysis and production support for multi-domain operations. Changes to the U.S. Army Forces Command (FORSCOM) modified table of organization and equipment (MTOE) will take effect in fiscal year (FY) 2022, and a portion of the changes will increase the BCT's collection management capacity and capability. These changes involve repurposing an all-source intelligence technician and an intelligence analyst noncommissioned officer (NCO) from within the MI company to fill the roles as the BCT's collection manager and the collection noncommissioned officer in charge (NCOIC). This MTOE alignment helps to mitigate the lack of long-term continuity within the collection management section. Pending the approval of a military occupation classification structure action currently with the Department of the Army G-1 (Personnel), both of these positions will carry the Q7 Additional Skill Identifier to ensure the BCT has the appropriate authorizations for formal collection management training.[1] In addition to these approved changes for FY 2022, FORSCOM will likely recommended future modifications to create a collection management section in the BCT S-2. In anticipation of this, in FY 2022 the synchronization and collection management section of the MI company will be renamed the analysis and fusion section. This section still remains a core element of the brigade intelligence support element supporting the BCT S-2.

Army-wide implementation of the new structure will require several years after the initial execution to be fully supported, and there are also doctrine and training considerations as part of the transition. ATP 2-19.4, *Brigade Combat Team Intelligence Techniques*,[2] is undergoing revision to align with updated intelligence and operations doctrine as well as the changes in force design. The revised publication provides a description of the responsibilities belonging to the synchronization and collection management section (which later becomes the analysis and fusion section). This draft publication is on pace for publication in early calendar year 2021. TC 2-19.403, *Military Intelligence Training Strategy for the Brigade Combat Team Tier 3*,[3] should also be updated to reflect the MI company structure realignment. However, this change largely does not impact the overall training and certification strategy of the collection management crew because the collection management tasks did not change and are independent of military occupational specialty. The curriculum of the Information Collection Planner Course (ICPC) (ASI Q7) may require some revisions to address the additional complexities associated with large-scale ground combat operations and to keep pace with emerging multi-domain operations requirements. Another consideration for ICPC is to include additional familiarization with the echelon corps and below elements the BCT collection managers are required to coordinate and synchronize with on a regular basis; for example, working with the brigade aviation element and requesting airspace for organic and nonorganic airborne collection platforms. The addition of more FORSCOM Q7 billets will also necessitate an increase to iterations of the ICPC, which is already a highly sought-after course.

During the Transition

During this transition period, it is possible that collection management may not operate at optimal capacity.The BCT MI company force structure realignment is approved, and BCT S-2s can better prepare the BCT by implementing changes now. Manning of an interim collection management section will require flexibility because of ongoing shortages of intelligence officers and enlisted Soldiers at echelon. In line with the BCT commander's intent, the BCT S-2, in coordination with the MI company commander, will need to look internally for solutions to manning for collection management. For example, the MI company's intelligence support team (COIST), which is most effective in counterinsurgency operations, could be an option to staff the collection management section for decisive action operations in the interim.

Roles and Responsibilities. Doctrinally, the collection management element is responsible for assisting the BCT S-3 in developing the information collection plan by creating and updating the information collection matrix, information collection synchronization matrix, and information collection overlay.[4] These planning tools require significant coordination and synchronization with the entire BCT staff, subordinate battalions, and echelons above brigade. BCTs that understaff the collection management element experience challenges at combat training centers effectively managing the collection management responsibilities described in ATP 2-19.4, *Brigade Combat Team Intelligence Techniques*[5]—

✦ Participates in the BCT's planning.

✦ Receives requests for collection from subordinate maneuver elements and incorporates those requirements into the BCT information collection plan.

✦ Receives and coordinates nonorganic requests for collection support, and manages employment of organic information collection assets.

✦ Develops requests for collection and submits requests to higher headquarters for incorporation into the higher headquarters information collection plan.

✦ Develops collection-asset [specific information requirements] SIRs based on approved [priority information requirements] PIRs.

✦ Coordinates with the MI company commander on the employment of MI collection assets.

✦ Coordinates with the BCT and battalion commanders and staffs on the employment of information collection assets.

✦ Develops and submits recommendations for information collection tasks to the BCT S-3.

✦ Coordinates daily with the BCT S-2 plans element.

✦ Coordinates daily with the BCT S-2 current operations element and obtains information collection asset status reports from the BCT S-2 current operations element and MI company.

✦ Maintains daily communications with BCT subordinate units to remain current with operations and targeting priorities.

✦ Coordinates with the brigade aviation element for airspace usage and coordination by aerial collection assets.

✦ Provides briefings to the commander and staff.

Bridging the Gap. Numerous adjustments can be made to support collection management and bridge the gap until the force design changes are implemented. These adjustments include dedicating a minimum of four personnel to a collection management element and solidifying their roles and responsibilities in the BCT/S-2's tactical standard operating procedures. With regard to assignments, we can assign one of the BCT all-source intelligence officers, the information collection platoon leader, or a senior first lieutenant BCT assistant S-2 as the collection manager. We can also assign an MI company all-source intelligence technician fusion chief (if at 3/3) or the information collection platoon leader as the deputy collection manager.

Leveraging one of the MI company COIST intelligence analyst NCOs as the potential collection management element NCOIC is also a consideration. We should prioritize staffing the collection management element over the COIST if that is in line with the BCT commander's intent because the collection management element has a greater potential to affect operations for the entire BCT. We should consider sending at least one of the MI company's all-source intelligence technicians, BCT intelligence analyst NCOs, or MI company COIST intelligence analyst NCOs to ICPC to acquire "train the trainer"skills for the collection management element and current operations section. The selection criteria for this "train the trainer" role should be based on competency and longevity to ensure the collection management element's efficiency and continuity.

Conclusion

Applying these recommendations will help the BCT collection management element to operate at an improved capacity. This will in turn enable the effective planning and execution of the information collection plan, which will help

the commander to gain a shared understanding of the operational environment. ✹

Endnotes

1. The Q7 Additional Skill Identifier is awarded from the Information Collection Planner Course. The course provides instruction in managing the employment of organic and supporting collection assets, as well as processes for reachback to higher headquarters and intelligence agencies for information, in order to provide the commander with effective intelligence support.

2. Department of the Army, Army Techniques Publication (ATP) 2-19.4, *Brigade Combat Team Intelligence Techniques* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Publishing Office [GPO], 10 February 2015) (common access card [CAC] login required).

3. Department of the Army, Training Circular 2-19.403, *Military Intelligence Training Strategy for the Brigade Combat Team Tier 3* (Washington, DC: U.S. GPO, 25 February 2020) (CAC login required).

4. Department of the Army, ATP 2-19.4, *Brigade Combat Team Intelligence Techniques,* 2-11.

5. Ibid.

Reference

Department of the Army. *Brigade Combat Team Military Intelligence Company (BCT MICO) Force Design Update Junior.* 14 August 2019.

CW2 Bary McMaster is assigned to Operations Group Brigade Trainers as an observer coach/trainer (OC/T) at the National Training Center. As an OC/T, he is responsible for the coaching and training of brigade combat team intelligence officers, noncommissioned officers, and enlisted Soldiers in conducting intelligence preparation of the battlefield, information collection operations, and reconnaissance planning. He is formally trained in information collection operations through the Q7 Information Collection Planner Course and certified through U.S. Central Command/U.S. Indo-Pacific Command Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance Manager courses. As a warrant officer, he has served as a brigade combat team collection manager for 2 years. As a noncommissioned officer, he served as a squadron collection manager during a 12-month deployment to Iraq.