Military Intelligence Brigade-Theater Support to Multi-Domain Operations in the Indo-Pacific Strategic Environment

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Introduction

Today, the U.S. military faces dynamic challenges in the Indo-Pacific area of responsibility (AOR). The operational environment is arguably more complex than ever before. This complexity begins simply with demographics. The region contains 36 countries spread across 16 time zones. The region contains more than half the world's population, houses 24 of the 36 megacities (population centers with more than 10 million people) on Earth, and covers more than half the world's surface area. Three of the world's largest economies, seven of the largest militaries, and five of the United States' seven mutual defense agreement partners are all located in this theater.[1] The region is also extremely prone to severe weather patterns such as devastating tsunamis, volcanoes, and catastrophic earthquakes. When demographics are coupled with the unpredictable weather effects in the region, the complexity of the environment increases rapidly. These demographic, economic, and meteorological dynamics, combined with the rapid rate of technological change, add to the region's political and military complexity.[2]

Key Challenges and Threats in the Indo-Pacific

The 2018 U.S. National Defense Strategy emphasized four of the five national security threats reside in the Indo-Pacific region. These threats, particularly China and Russia, actively contest and leverage every domain to achieve great power status and reduce or eliminate United States influence within their near abroad. "Global proliferation of advanced military technology has eroded, to some degree, the advantage the U.S. and its military partners have held for decades, allowing adversaries to threaten use of the air, sea, land, space, and cyberspace domains."[3] Both states are actively competing against the U.S. military in an effort to achieve strategic standoff. Dramatic technological shifts created by unmanned capabilities, machine learning, artificial intelligence, nanotech, biotech, and big data are expanding military *hyper*-competition

The U.S. Indo-Pacific Command area of responsibility.

Map courtesy of U.S. Indo-Pacific Command

between geopolitical rivals. Much of these new technological tools depend on digital connectivity—with 8 billion devices connected to the internet in 2018 and a projected 50 billion by 2020—only increasing the already dangerous situation in cyberspace and its dependence on space assets for connectivity. Without a doubt, future conflict will be increasingly complex and distributed, involving actions across multiple domains by multiple military services, and at times simultaneously.[4]

It is evident that our strategic competitors have taken the information they learned through the study of our military doctrine and recent military operations to develop and employ capabilities that mitigate areas in which our military has enjoyed overmatch and that place our people, systems, and critical infrastructure at risk. They accomplish this through the employment of a wide array of layered antiaccess and area denial systems across all domains that provide standoff and limit our joint force's freedom of maneuver.[5]

In response, the U.S. Army unveiled its multi-domain operations (MDO) concept and rapidly evolved and adapted its doctrine to address this newly framed great power competition. Through MDO, the Army and the joint force seek to regain the ability to project forces into the theater and achieve convergence across all domains to defeat our adversaries. Furthermore, on 6 December 2018, the Army published TRADOC Pamphlet 525-3-1, *The U.S. Army in Multi-Domain Operations 2028,* which provides guidance on how the Army must build capacity and capability to enable MDO by:

✦ Continuing to update the MDO concept and subsequent doctrine.

✦ Developing a modernization strategy that nests with the MDO concept and synchronizes with a joint approach to force development.

✦ Identifying and driving rapid solution development across doctrine, organization, training, materiel, leadership and education, personnel, facilities, and policy.

✦ Improving the operational integration of general-purpose forces and special operations forces, and with allies and partners.[6]

The introduction of MDO has provided the Army and its warfighting functions a blueprint on how to organize their formations, develop and integrate new capabilities, and train those formations. For example, the intelligence warfighting function is heavily invested in MDO through its support for the Intelligence, Information, Cyber, Electronic Warfare, and Space (I2CEWS) detachment; publishing of new doctrine; investment in deep sensing; and introduc-

tion of machine learning powered analytics. Within the intelligence warfighting function, the military intelligence brigade-theater (MIB–T) continues to be the Army Service component command's primary intelligence organization at the theater level and the focal point of the Army's multi-domain intelligence support throughout both the competition and the conflict phases.

500th MIB–T Support to Multi-Domain Operations

As an element of the joint force, Army forces conduct MDO to prevail in competition; penetrate and dis-integrate enemy antiaccess and area denial systems when necessary; and exploit the resultant freedom of maneuver to achieve strategic objectives (win) and force a return to competition on favorable terms.[7] The MIB–T is postured to provide multi-domain intelligence support to Army, joint, and coalition forces within a theater of operations[8] through collection and analysis across the intelligence disciplines, such as through the use of human intelligence/counterintelligence platforms, open-source intelligence, forward-deployed signals intelligence assets, and national collection. The MIB–T is equipped with a unique set of capabilities to support MDO and help set conditions by improving and developing required Army capability sets. The MIB–T is equipped to set the theater for intelligence and establish the intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) dynamic forward posture. It stands ready to provide multi-domain intelligence.

Set the Theater for Intelligence

Doctrinally, MIB–Ts "provide the theater army with its foundational capabilities to set the theater for the intelligence warfighting function."[9] They do this in a number of ways, to include providing—

✦ intelligence (assessments, support to the combined operational/intelligence picture, graphic products, and persistent intelligence overwatch),

✦ integration (theater intelligence architecture and data sets),

✦ training (live environment training, mobile training teams, and subject matter experts), and

✦ support to the Army Service component command's theater security cooperation program and engagements.[10]

The 500th MIB–T assists the U.S. Army Pacific (USARPAC) G-2 in setting the theater for intelligence in all areas, enabling multi-domain intelligence support. Some key focus areas include the provision of the theater intelligence architecture backbone; the role of the theater analysis and

control element (ACE), to include providing the common intelligence picture; support to partner nation engagements; and the provision of discipline-specific theater entry requirements.

Intelligence Architecture Backbone. The 500th MIB–T, in coordination with the USARPAC G-2, maintains the Army Indo-Pacific intelligence architecture to provide consistent readiness for the Pacific theater of operations. The MIB–T serves as the architecture backbone of the intelligence enterprise in theater. These efforts connect rotational, aligned, and assigned forces entering the U.S Indo-Pacific Command (USINDOPACOM) AOR to the theater intelligence enterprise. They also provide forces with the ability to leverage U.S. Army Intelligence and Security Command capabilities in support of MDO. This enhances commander's decision making through access to timely, predictive intelligence and shared understanding of the multi-domain threat. Units deploying into the AOR rely on intelligence reach to access intelligence from joint forces, combatant commands, and the national intelligence community. The 500th MIB–T integrates regionally aligned, assigned, and rotational units early, in both exercise and operational planning cycles, to support shared understanding, streamline information sharing, and maintain readiness within the Pacific theater.

Theater Analysis and Control Element, Common Intelligence Picture, and Partner Nation Engagement. The 500th MIB–T, in coordination with the USARPAC G-2, provides the theater analytic capabilities in the form of the ACE. The ACE serves as the integration mechanism fusing intelligence across every intelligence discipline and every domain, across federated sites throughout the USINDOPACOM AOR. The analytic capabilities the MIB–T offers include the deployment of an expeditionary, configurable deployable intelligence support element in support of combined and joint operations while still maintaining analytic capabilities in both strategic support and operational support areas. The elements within the ACE maintain the common intelligence picture that feeds the joint operational picture, leveraging federated intelligence to include Reserve and National Guard units. Additionally, with web-based applications on both the SECRET Internet Protocol Router and the Joint Worldwide Intelligence Communications System, intelligence production is available using relatively minimal bandwidth. The MIB–T further provides support to building partner nation capacity and capabilities through subject matter expert exchanges and increasingly complex joint and combined exercises.

Theater Entry Requirements. As the MIB–T supports the Army and joint forces, specific requirements exist for all forces to connect to the MIB–T intelligence architecture backbone, ensuring units are consuming and benefiting from the daily intelligence produced by the theater ACE, across the multi-domain battlefield from the strategic support areas to the deep fight. The objective is to ensure no cold starts for joint and combined forces both in theater and in support of the theater. Across multiple intelligence disciplines (all-source, geospatial intelligence, signals intelligence, human intelligence, counterintelligence, and open-source intelligence), the 500th MIB–T provides specific theater entry requirements to facilitate connectivity, clear lines of mission and authority, and a continuous intelligence cycle of situational awareness and shared understanding of the threat.

Establish the Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance Dynamic Forward Posture

The MDO concept requires the Army to develop or improve required Army capability sets. These capability sets include setting the theater through such activities as establishing basing and access rights, prepositioning equipment and supplies, and conducting preparatory intelligence activities. Additionally, aspects of MDO require the establishment of necessary authorities and permissions normally reserved for conflict or for higher echelons to operate in competition and rapidly transition to conflict. There is perhaps no better example of development and improvement in these capabilities than that of the MIB–T ISR dynamic forward posture.

Focused on the MDO tenet of calibrated force posture, the MIB–T establishes an ISR forward presence, as part of the "contact forces" forward deployed in theater, to provide warning intelligence, maintain an accurate and timely common intelligence picture of the threat across all domains, support competition phase operations in contested spaces/

Photo courtesy of COL David Elsen

500th MIB–T Soldiers provide analysis from the deployable intelligence support element during Exercise Pacific Sentry 19-3, U.S. Army Pacific's Joint Task Force Certification Exercise, June 2019.

environments, and be in position in the event of crisis or escalation. For all these reasons, ISR should not be held in reserve but rather be "always out front" in line with the Military Intelligence Corps motto. The ISR dynamic forward posture is supported by established and future basing and access rights and enables the achievement of positional advantage through prepositioned capabilities and support packages. The MIB–T establishes sensor and collection capacity forward to increase situational awareness of threat competitor activities taking place across and through stand-off layers before transition to conflict, not after. Additionally, small processing, exploitation, and dissemination nodes positioned forward in theater mitigate the risks associated with monitoring these collection assets in the disconnected, intermittent, limited bandwidth environment expected given current threat capabilities. This initiative focuses on overcoming the challenges of gaining positional advantage and maneuver over strategic distance.

Furthermore, based in part on the geography in the Indo-Pacific theater, any newly established forward presence of ISR creates the requirement for coalition, cross-Service, and cross-domain coordination, breaking through historically stove-piped, domain-federated operational approaches. This coordination is essential in synchronizing collection across national, coalition, and other theater capabilities; in providing the necessary fidelity for the common operational and intelligence pictures; and in moving toward the synergy and convergence required for effective MDO.

Establishment of the MIB–T ISR dynamic forward posture further supports future integration of the multi-domain task force and its I2CEWS detachment through improved theater-wide baselining and situational awareness of adversary placement, posture, and activity.

Stand Ready to Provide Multi-Domain Intelligence

Multi-domain intelligence is the Army intelligence framework that increases the speed, precision, and accuracy of the intelligence process. Within the multi-domain intelligence framework, the MIB–T provides key support in the foundation layer, in managing and synchronizing layered collection, and in intelligence support to multi-domain targeting.

Foundation Layer—Redundant and Survivable Architecture. The MIB–T has a unique ability to collect, analyze, and track threat characteristics, the ground order of battle, and the doctrine of both partner nations and adversaries over many years. Such abilities enable the MIB–T to create and maintain a valuable database of intelligence regarding regional military forces, key military and political leaders, and the evolving doctrine and capabilities of regional military forces. Furthermore, critical to the targeting process is the Cross Domain Solution Suite and combat information needed on collateral networks, which the MIB–T will provide to support lethal and nonlethal effects. Of equal importance is the establishment of an agile, flexible, and converged architecture that leverages the Distributed Common Ground System family of systems.

Photo by U.S. Army SSG Shameeka R. Stanley

A military intelligence systems maintainer/integrator assigned to 715th Military Intelligence Battalion, 500th Military Intelligence Brigade-Theater (MIB–T), briefs the 500th MIB–T command team on communications equipment capabilities during training exercise Lightning Forge on the Island of Oahu, July 24, 2018.

Collection Layer—Layered Intelligence Collection. MDO will require layered, redundant, and complementary collection to enable cross-domain synergy when faced with the challenges of a hyper-contested, communications-degraded environment linking the network of sensors to the web of shooters. This increases the required speed of friendly recognition, decision, action, and reaction. In addition to its organic collection assets, the MIB–T must also leverage joint, coalition, and national assets in coordination with the USARPAC and USINDOPACOM collection plans. The required collection must occur across the terrestrial, aerial, and space layers, across all domains, and must encompass national-to-tactical capabilities. Furthermore, the MIB–T's ability to leverage nontraditional collection, including open-source

intelligence, to tip and cue more traditional sensors will be critical to the joint force success.

Intelligence Support to Multi-Domain Targeting. Intelligence support to multi-domain targeting is a central component of intelligence support to MDO and will help drive MDO writ large. In order for the MIB–T to effectively support targeting, a baseline needs to be established during the competition phase through robust intelligence preparation of the battlefield, determination of the ground order of battle, awareness of threat capabilities and disposition across all domains, and generation of indicators and warnings. Multiple units within the MIB–T perform these functions. These units include the theater ACE, organic TROJAN remote operations facility, composition 2 and 3 elements, and Joint Intelligence Operations Center formations that encompass the combatant command's larger intelligence enterprise, including at echelon corps and below. Key components of effective multi-domain intelligence support to targeting comprise—

✦ redundant, survivable architecture and communications pathways;

✦ layered collection;

✦ timely, often near-real-time reporting;

✦ focused analysis;

✦ and closely coordinated and rehearsed sensor-to-shooter battle drills, incorporating both lethal and nonlethal fires and across all phases from competition through conflict.

Conclusion

China and Russia actively contest and leverage every domain to achieve their strategic national objectives and compete against the United States military in an effort to achieve strategic standoff. With the advent of emerging technologies and threat competitor focus on employment of layered antiaccess and area denial systems across all domains, it is imperative that the Army evolve and adapt its warfighting techniques and build ground forces capable of maximizing deterrence and, if necessary, winning future wars. The MDO concept stands as a foundational guide for this iterative process. As part of this process, the MIB–T evolves in order to increase the speed of friendly recognition, decision, and reaction. With a focus on setting the theater for intelligence, establishing the ISR dynamic forward posture, and standing ready to provide multi-domain intelligence, the 500th MIB–T is uniquely equipped and postured to face the evolving threats in the Indo-Pacific theater.

Endnotes

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3. Forum Staff, "Unpredictable Behavior: Joint forces view multi-domain battle as key to future success," *Indo-Asia Pacific Defense Forum* 42, no. 4 (2017): 11.

4. McCreary, *The Multi-Domain Task Force.*

5. Department of the Army, Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) Pamphlet 525-3-1, *The U.S. Army in Multi-Domain Operations 2028* (Fort Eustis, VA: TRADOC, December 6, 2018).

6. Ibid.

7. Ibid.

8. Department of the Army, Army Techniques Publication 3-93, *Theater Army Operations* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Publishing Office [GPO], 26 November 2014).

9. Department of the Army, Field Manual 2-0, *Intelligence* (Washington, DC: U.S. GPO, 6 July 2018), 4-3.

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