

Building Intelligence Relationships

by Lieutenant Colonel Casey L. Ramirez and Major Megan M. Spieles

Introduction

As many of us already know, intelligence is a commander-centric warfighting function. In order to support the commander, the intelligence professional must establish and maintain an intelligence architecture. Most will agree that when people hear the word “architecture” in a military sense, they think it applies solely to systems and their ability to “talk” to one another. While digital connectivity is important, connectivity alone lacks the most crucial aspect of the intelligence architecture—the relationships among people. Many of the intelligence shortfalls we observed over the last few years as intelligence observer-coach-trainers at the Mission Command Training Program trace back to how people communicated. This occurred not only within organizations, but also with organizations’ ability to communicate with higher, lower, and adjacent units in an effort to collectively support the commander’s ability to make a decision.

Mission Analysis

In a well-defined mission, the military decision-making process is often where the intelligence officer and staff test the intelligence architecture. The most important step

within the process is step two, mission analysis. Intelligence preparation of the battlefield (IPB) is the foundation of mission analysis. IPB is one of three staff functions, as defined in doctrine, and its conduct often defaults to the S-2/G-2. The end state of IPB is that the commander and staff have a thorough understanding of the operational environment and the threats that will affect the mission. As we observed in many units, when it came time to review the order and begin mission analysis, each staff section stove-piped their efforts.

With the exception of one unit we observed, the S-2/G-2 took portions of the base order, Annex B, and Annex L and developed IPB exclusively, often at the direction of the chief of staff or commander. Many intelligence sections did not include the entire staff’s input, nor did they know how to do it. It is crucial to remember IPB is a staff process, not something done solely by the S-2. Staff input helps to—

- ◆ Shape focus areas for all warfighting functions.
- ◆ Provide a more in-depth understanding.
- ◆ Develop requests for information and priority intelligence requirements (PIRs).



U.S. Army Photo by CPT Jason Sweeney

The 79th Infantry Brigade Combat Team medical officer briefs the command during a combined-arms rehearsal February 12, 2018, at Camp McGregor, NM.

For example, the Fires section is able to understand how the enemy would employ fire systems based on capabilities and the terrain; Logistics can provide knowledge of transportation equipment and insight into what would affect movement; and Signal understands where a command headquarters should position for optimal communications and knows the enemy’s capabilities.

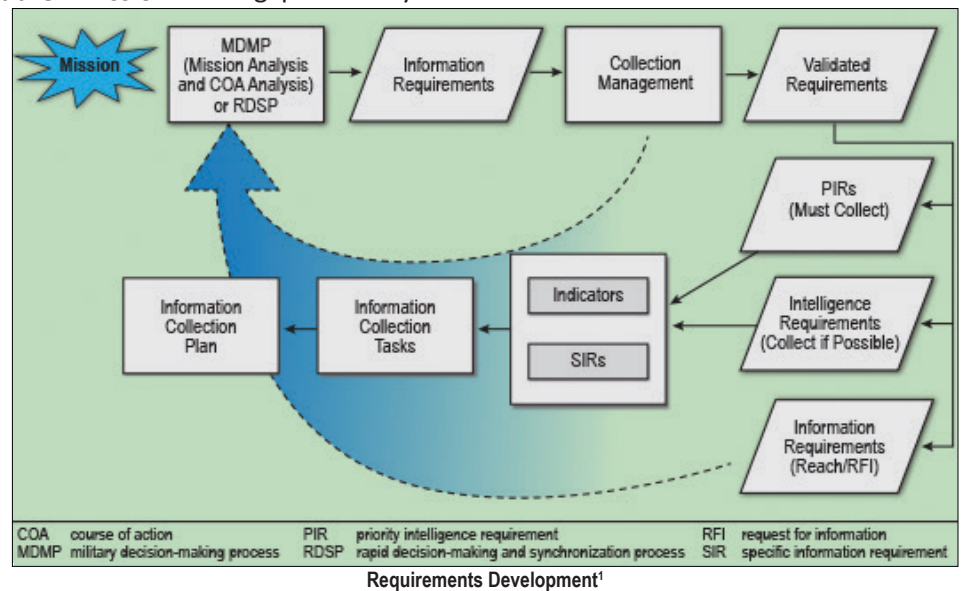
Establishing the Architecture

How does the intelligence officer build the relationship architecture? He or she should start by educating the staff on capabilities and the proper conduct of IPB. The S-2 must know what is important to each staff section and what each staff section needs to know about the threat or environment so that they can effectively conduct their mission. IPB is the foundation of the military decision-making process and helps ensure the staff can develop feasible courses of action—this is how to create “symbiotic” intelligence. The staff feeds the S-2/G-2, and the S-2/G-2 in turn feeds the staff. Furthermore, IPB is not a fire-and-forget event. It is continually updated and refined based on a more developed understanding of the operational environment, not just as the threat changes but also as the friendly situation changes.

The aforementioned concepts can also apply to establishing the overall architecture. The intelligence section needs to build a close relationship with the S-6 to discuss systems and capabilities, and with the operations section to discuss the command post layout and ways to ensure all Army Battle Command Systems can talk to one another. Without this dialogue, the unit cannot properly build its digital architecture to ensure the commander has the most relevant and accurate common operational picture. Another planning factor often overlooked is the 35T (military intelligence systems maintainer/integrator) support required to sustain intelligence systems (especially if the unit did not conduct proper training to establish and maintain its systems architecture). This is apparent when S-2 sections are not able to establish or re-establish their architecture after a command post displacement, or execute a primary, alternate, contingency, and emergency plan when that architecture is lost.

Conversations with higher headquarters need to occur to determine who will establish the overarching architecture. Based on observations, the corps and/or division headquarters should be the leading effort to establish an architecture

and capture the process in a standard operating procedure. It is necessary to conduct rehearsals using the standard operating procedure before the execution of any combat training center or warfighter exercise. A shared responsibility should also exist among the corps, division, and unit S-2s to ensure there is a plan for intelligence systems maintainers to support units that do not have the requisite military occupational specialties in their modified table of organization and equipment in order to sustain the equipment. We will not see support from field service representatives during large-scale ground combat operations as we have during warfighter exercises; therefore, units should rehearse as often as possible in today’s environment to determine current gaps in the systems architecture.



Understanding Priority Intelligence Requirements


Another challenge we saw repeatedly is the understanding of PIRs. Staffs know what the acronym stands for and what PIRs are, but they don’t understand the PIRs’ role in the commander’s critical information requirement. Staffs also struggle with the importance and purpose of PIRs. The purpose of a PIR is to drive the intelligence section to fill the gap in knowledge the commander has about the threat or environment so that he or she can make an informed decision. The staff must link a PIR in space and time to friendly decision points to give the commander a complete picture that will support decision making. PIRs become more relevant and manageable when built for each phase of the operation. The situation template and event template built during IPB can make this possible. A properly built situation template and event template should give the intelligence staff and operations staff an understanding of when and where they should see threat activity. This is crucial for the

intelligence and operations staffs to synchronize, especially since the S-3 tasks information collection assets through orders or fragmentary orders. How do the intelligence staff and operations staff manage this? With tools such as the decision support matrix and collection matrix. The value of the decision support matrix and collection matrix is immeasurable because they link PIRs (knowledge about the threat) and information collection to each decision the commander has to make.

Outside the Organization

As we discussed the architecture within the organization, we also need to mention the architecture outside the organization, which for most brigades is extremely important. Intelligence officers must establish relationships with other organizations across the intelligence community. They do this by synchronizing their efforts with units and echelons—higher, lower, and laterally. This also consolidates collection efforts. The linking of collection efforts creates “national-tactical intelligence” and can serve intelligence and operations sections well, especially those units in the support and consolidation area that do not have a lot of organic collection capability. This, of course, is challenging if we do not establish a well-defined architecture before execution.

Conclusion

Intelligence architecture is crucial to supporting the commander’s decision-making process. The coordination and continuous communication between staff sections, key individuals, and organizations are the core of the intelligence architecture. It is how collective and reinforcing intelligence relationships are created and maintained. It goes far beyond just digital systems and cannot be built behind a desk or solely through emails. Start by visiting staff sections across the formation. Participate in their processes before execution in order to identify shortfalls, not only to assist their commander but to assist yours as well. Build your architecture and build relationships early, with a genuine effort, to help one another and fight the fight together. You will find it rewarding to your commander, staff, and warfighting function—and to yourself as a standard-bearer in our profession of arms. 

Endnote

1. Department of the Army, Army Doctrine Publication 2-0, *Intelligence* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Publishing Office, 31 July 2019), 3-4.

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