The Vitality of Synchronized Intelligence Operations for a Division Support Area Command Post
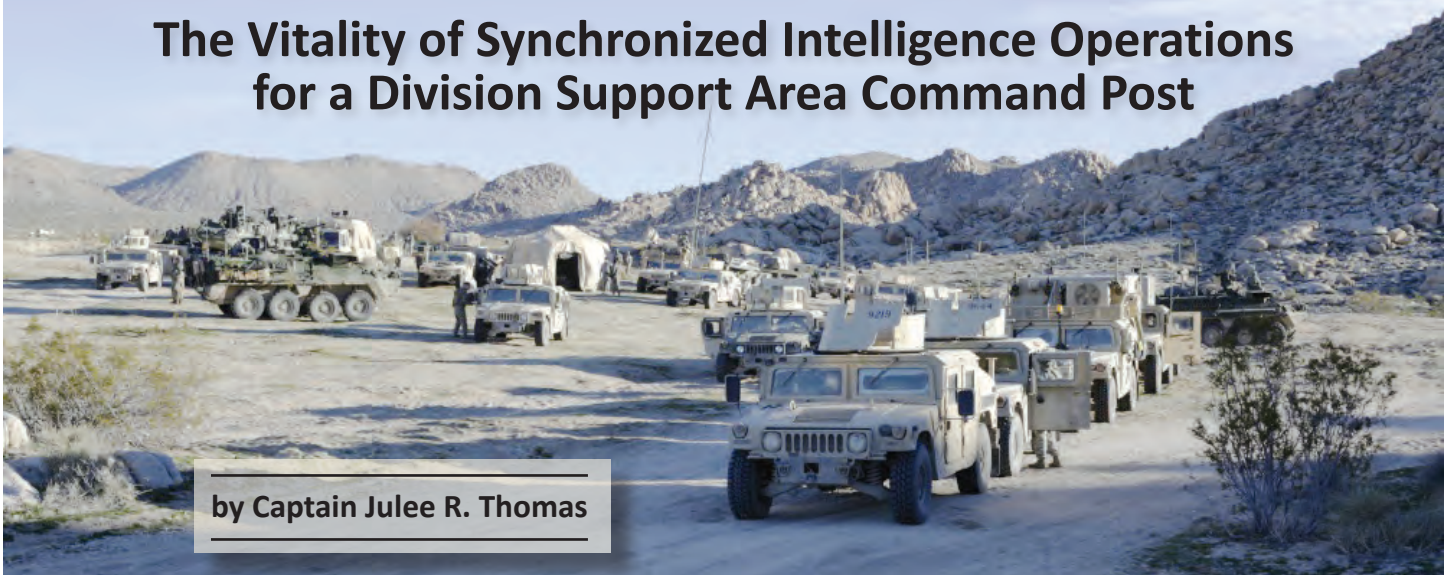
by Captain Julee R. Thomas

U.S. Soldiers assigned to 1st Battalion, 24th Infantry Regiment, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division, prepare to move a tactical operations center during Decisive Action Rotation 17-03 at the National Training Center (NTC), Fort Irwin, CA, January 18, 2017. Decisive action rotations at the NTC ensure units remain versatile, responsive, and consistently available for current and future contingencies.

Introduction

Effective support area intelligence operations require the centralization of dedicated personnel and military intelligence (MI) equipment. To meet the current need, FM 3-0, *Operations,* established the support area command post (SACP) for corps and division headquarters.[1] Since the SACP is not on the modified table of organization and equipment (MTOE), borrowing personnel and equipment from a unit's MTOE causes a major constraint for resources during an exercise or deployment. The division's support area, shown in Figure 1, consists of tenant brigades composed of company-level or above elements from combat aviation, field

Figure 1. Main Battle Area[2]

artillery, division artillery, sustainment, military police, and engineers. Most of these units merge intelligence from multiple enablers across a wide geographic area to provide to the analysis and control element (ACE). The presence of a G-2 cell enables the SACP to synchronize intelligence operations in the support area. It also provides commanders and senior intelligence officers with a common understanding of the enemy composition, disposition, and strength in the consolidation area.

Framing the Problem

During Decisive Action Rotation 20-10 at the National Training Center, Fort Irwin, California, the 1st Infantry Division established a G-2 cell to work at the SACP using organic personnel and equipment to resource the command post. Throughout the rotation, the SACP G-2 submitted intelligence collection requests each night to the ACE intelligence collection and management section in the division main command post (CP), which was primarily at the National Training Center. Compared to the priority for intelligence collection over the deep and close fight areas, the division consolidation area was at the bottom of the priority list for collection assets.

To exacerbate conditions during the rotation, one of the G-2 day-shift Soldiers tested positive for the coronavirus disease 2019, resulting in the entire G-2 day-shift section going into quarantine throughout the main phases of the exercise. Rapidly obtained intelligence personnel filled in for G-2 day-shift staff, but their lack of experience in division training made the transition less seamless than intended.
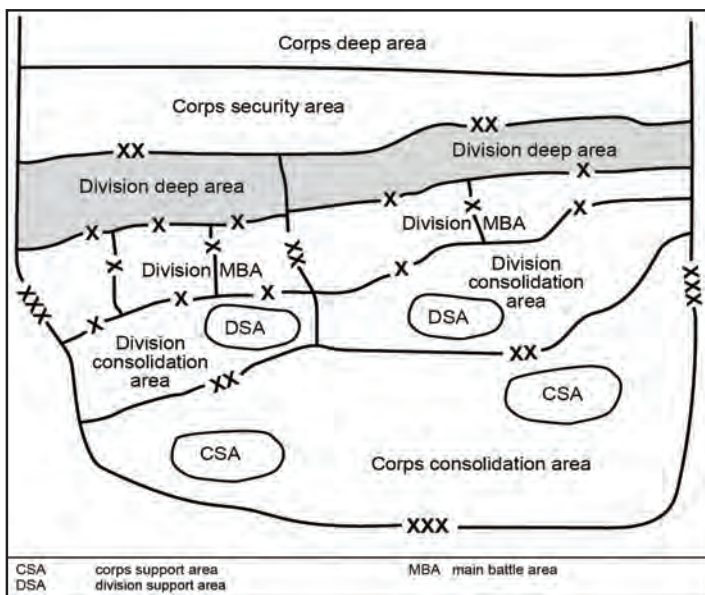
Toward the end of the exercise, when both the division main CP and division tactical CP jumped, the SACP had taken over the fight. Having a reduced staff for the G-2 and not having the resources of an ACE element at the SACP to manage intelligence operations during the fight was an enormous risk to the 1st Infantry Division's mission. The division consolidation area received multiple attacks by enemy threats, which most likely would have been prevented if the G-2 intelligence operations cell was adequately staffed and resourced with the proper intelligence equipment and personnel.

Intelligence Manning and Equipment

Success for a mission begins with the CP. "Commanders arrange CP personnel and equipment to facilitate internal coordination, information sharing, and rapid decisionmaking. They also ensure they have procedures to execute the operations process within the headquarters."[3] As mentioned earlier, the SACP does not have personnel or equipment under the MTOE. Recommendations for the G-2 intelligence cell at the division SACP would include properly trained MI (35 series) personnel to fill the roles of a G-2 officer in charge, G-2 noncommissioned officer in charge, a minimum of two intelligence analysts, a human intelligence officer, and a G-2X. Figure 2 shows an example SACP layout.

The G-2 intelligence cell at the SACP would primarily oversee intelligence collection requests integrated by the ACE collection management and dissemination and fusion sections for the division consolidation area but would still have
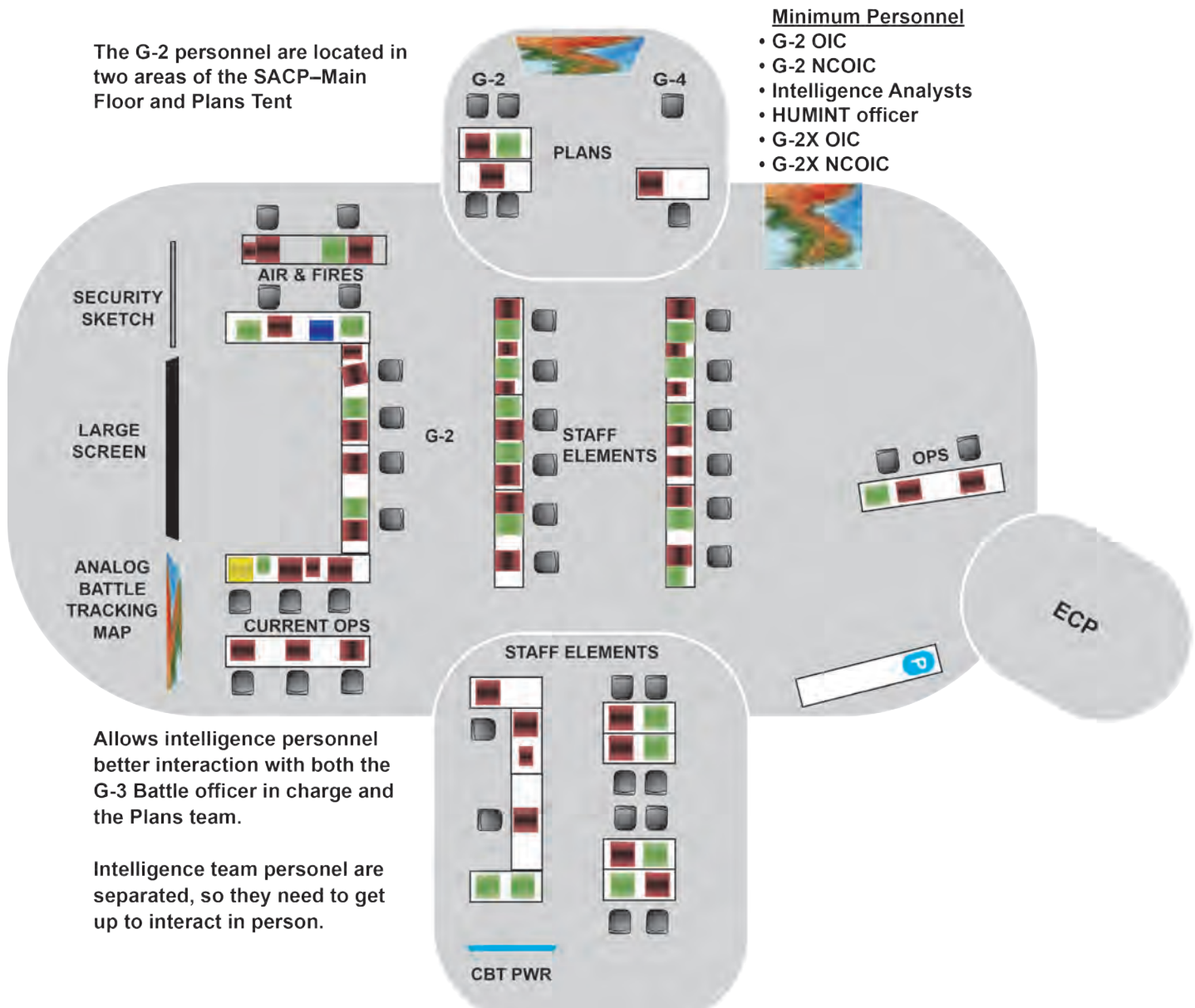

Figure 2. 1st Infantry Division Example SACP Layout

a shared understanding of the common intelligence picture of the deep and close fight areas. It would provide all-source intelligence and information pictures to the stakeholders while responding to group-specific needs for analysis, assessment, and collection.

Implementation

Following our current 1st Infantry Division tactical standard operating procedure, the SACP G-2 intelligence cell would provide daily intelligence support, including formal daily assessments to the SACP commander, chief of sustainment, chief of operations, primary staff, and all assigned units, satisfying a wide variety of requirements and multiple formats. The cell would manage the day-to-day operations of the section, focusing on structuring and collating intelligence products from the division main CP G-2 and tenant units in both the consolidated and support areas. All intelligence production derives from the division main CP G-2 but receives input from the SACP G-2 assessments specific to the consolidated and support areas. The intelligence cell product used for the sustainment confirmation brief incorporates weather, enemy threats, information collection matrix, and common operational picture for the division support area.

Whether selecting core or contributing members, the G-2 intelligence cell at the division SACP must be staffed with the right personnel with the right military occupational specialty (MOS) skills and experience. This requires that we develop a deeper understanding of the experiences and professional background of personnel on the division staff. At least 30 to 60 days before any exercise that uses the SACP intelligence cell, it is recommended to implement a two-pronged approach to educating and training personnel. The first focuses on staff proficiency with a phased methodology emphasizing individual training on MI systems. Collective training on MI systems would follow the Military Intelligence Training Strategy tier certifications. The second focuses on indoctrinating the various stakeholders affected by the division to reduce any friction and to ensure interoperability across the different CP nodes. This includes a communications exercise to test the installed intelligence equipment at least one week before the start of an exercise. In particular, ensuring the G-2 at the SACP has the proper intelligence equipment to support the intelligence cell along with the personnel trained in operating these systems.

Assessment and Feedback

The RAND Corporation summarizes these constraints and challenges in a 2017 research paper that addresses two interrelated Army projects, "Assessing Analytic Proficiency" and "Proficiency Across the All-Source Analyst Career Life Cycle":

Intelligence analysts, whether in the Army or the broader U.S. intelligence community, face constraints that present significant challenges for their work. Intelligence problems are ambiguous and unstructured, making it difficult to determine whether information to address the problems is adequate and accurate, and they lack objective feedback, which is a key factor in monitoring performance and developing expertise. Analysts also work under time pressure and in a culture in which there is a fear of failure, which limits their ability to conduct analysis using deliberate, systematic thinking processes. Analysts therefore work under conditions in which cognitive biases can pervade analytic thinking and processes. To combat these biases, analysts require cognitive and noncognitive competencies that are largely intangible, such as critical thinking (CT) and adaptability. Senior Army leaders have emphasized the need for such skills (often referred to as 21st-century competencies) in the force at large, particularly in light of an increasingly complex and dynamic operational environment.[4]

The RAND research paper states that the intelligence analysts develop biases because of the work pressure. To address this added work pressure and fear of failure, it is important to develop these MI Soldiers with skills such as predictive analysis and critical thinking besides the MOS training received from Army courses.

Preparing an intelligence analyst to work at the division SACP or any CP node starts with what they learn and experience at garrison. When a junior enlisted Soldier or junior officer is joining a unit, we must learn their background (education, training, and experiences) to focus on the proper individual development plan. If the Soldier is not trained on the unit intelligence systems and not included in an exercise requiring performance under pressure, one can only expect lackluster performance from this Soldier, and ultimately, it can negatively affect the Soldier's morale and confidence for future assignments or exercises. Not having the proper MI equipment at the division SACP to conduct proper intelligence analysis will affect the mission of the consolidation area. Factoring these important elements into assessments will help us improve our intelligence processes so that they are supporting the empowerment of the MI Soldiers of tomorrow and yielding "quality" products and processes to support the mission of the G-2 intelligence cell at the division SACP.

Conclusion

Effective support area intelligence operations require some centralization of "dedicated" personnel, mission command information systems, and leadership. In his U.S. Army Command and General Staff College master's thesis, MAJ Brian Chavis explains it best:

The last seventeen years of counterinsurgency operations saw many of the Army's division-level intelligence analysts and equipment remain in static, centralized tactical operations centers to facilitate intelligence support to ground operations….To support large scale combat, intelligence sections must rebalance personnel, capabilities, and equipment across all CPs a division is capable of establishing to enable the survivability of the division's Intelligence Warfighting Function.[5]

To meet the current and future threats of the operational environment that our U.S. military encounters, it is vital to synchronize intelligence operations for a division SACP. ✷

Endnotes

1. Department of the Army, Field Manual (FM) 3-0, *Operations* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Publishing Office [GPO], 6 October 2017), 2-37. Change 1 was issued on 6 December 2017.

2. Ibid., 6-10.

3. Department of the Army, FM 6-0, *Commander and Staff Organization and Operations* (Washington, DC: U.S. GPO, 5 May 2014), 1-8–1-9. Change 1 was issued on 11 May 2015. Change 2 was issued on 22 April 2016.

4. Maria C. Lytell, Susan G. Straus, Chad C. Serena, Geoffrey Grimm, James L. Doty III, Jennie W. Wenger, Andrea A. Golay, Andrew M. Naber, Clifford A. Grammich, and Eric S. Fowler, *Assessing Competencies and Proficiency of Army Intelligence Analysts Across the Career Life Cycle* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2017), 1.

5. Brian D. Chavis, *Fighting for Intelligence: Preparing Division Intelligence Operations for Large Scale Combat* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: School of Advanced Military Studies, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 2019), iii.

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