



CSM Forum

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Movies and television shows have highlighted rifles, pistols, tanks, demolitions, and artillery as the key weapon systems on the battlefield to gain the advantage over the enemy. Although these are still very important, they have been joined by another “system”—*information*—in the form of cyber warfare, electromagnetic warfare, information operations, psychological operations, signals intelligence, network operations, spectrum management, and space operations. Information has become a critical component of modern warfare that affects the Army’s ability to obtain and maintain the *information advantage*.



to synchronize efforts and provide up-to-date situational awareness. We can maintain this advantage if we know both our and the threat’s communication capabilities on the battlefield. This includes asking questions like, what are we communicating, is the information classified, and are there any communication barriers or limitations. We must also ask how friendly, enemy, and civilian assets on the battlefield communicate, and whether there are trends with regard to the type of communication and time. However, when we find ourselves in a denied, intermittent, or limited communications environment, where communications are disrupted through-

The world has evolved both technologically and socially, and continues to do so at a very fast pace. As a result, information is being operationalized throughout society, including the military, with a goal to inform, misinform, and influence audiences through direct and indirect messaging. When we watch television shows, look at social media, or listen to the radio or a podcast, whether we like it or not, what we see or hear affects our thoughts and actions.

So what is information advantage and why is it important to the Army? Simply stated, “Gaining and maintaining the initiative during competition, crisis, and armed conflict largely depends on a commander’s ability to attain an information advantage.”¹ With this in mind, it may be beneficial to consider information from an offensive/defensive perspective. We all know about lethal effects on the battlefield, but nonlethal effects can be just as important if properly planned, coordinated, and executed, especially if synchronized with other operations. Intelligence supports planning by providing understanding of the threat’s information element—those aspects of the information environment that influence or are influenced by the threat.

Understanding the battlefield capabilities and forecasting operations for both friendly and enemy forces will be key to maintaining an information advantage. For example, we have an information advantage when commanders are able to rapidly communicate orders on the battlefield and Soldiers can share information using our battlefield systems

out the battlespace, we may no longer have an information advantage.

Training our Soldiers to consider the information advantage in all operations is important. This might be as simple as changing passwords on our networks and systems or updating software patches. It could also mean trying to learn what information is passed in a battlespace and then relaying it to higher headquarters in a SPOT/SALUTE report. It may also be through operations security. We need to communicate to our Soldiers the reasons for protecting information from an enemy that exploits social media to influence military and civilian populations. They must also understand the need to be skeptical of the information they see on social media and other sources, because if not, that gives the enemy the advantage.

Information advantage brings a new aspect to the battlefield. We must include it in our training so that Soldiers understand what they can do to contribute to decision dominance over the adversary. ✨

Endnote

1. Department of the Army, *White Paper on Information Advantage and Decision Dominance* (working paper, U.S. Army Cyber Center of Excellence, Fort Gordon, GA, 2021).

Always Out Front!