

Modernization of Army Counterintelligence and Human Intelligence Collection Management

by Ms. Erin Masly



Photo by Louis Hansel on Unsplash

Chess involves a struggle of wills, and it contains what has been termed the essentials of fighting—to strike, to move, and to protect.¹

Introduction

Picture it—commanders sending their infantry Soldiers to fight without weapons; the launching of aircraft with no identified target; and combat engineers wandering the countryside, unsure of where to build a necessary bridge for their advancing forces. Does that sound like a modern, efficient military force? Any good Soldier recognizes that the tactical force needs to know the objective and have the means to meet that objective. It is obvious that infantrymen need their rifles. But what about Soldiers whose mission is information? What weapons do intelligence Soldiers have, and are those Soldiers being properly equipped with those weapons?

Collection management is a vital function within the intelligence process at all echelons throughout the intelligence community. Like the conductor of a symphony orchestra, collection managers direct and manage a myriad of information requirements, collection requirements, and taskings to direct intelligence collection from the national to tactical levels. Just as an infantryman needs a rifle, intelligence collectors need an understanding of information requirements and identified targets for collection, and a plan on how to collect the necessary intelligence. Collection management is a military intelligence (MI) Soldier's weapon system.

“Collection management is the process of converting intelligence-related information requirements into collection requirements, establishing priorities, tasking or coordinating with appropriate collection sources or agencies, monitoring results, and retasking, as required.”² In basic terms, *collection requirements management* determines the collection requirements, while *collection operations management* determines the best approach to obtain the necessary information.³ Collection management provides a critical link between collection and analysis, supporting defined and focused operations for national, Service-level, and regionally focused objectives.

Army collection management for counterintelligence (CI) and human intelligence (HUMINT) has been instrumental in directing intelligence collection against counterterrorism and counterinsurgency missions over the past two decades. Robust collection management will continue to be vital in supporting the execution of the Army's vision to field a force by 2028 capable of deploying, fighting, and winning in a multi-domain, high-intensity conflict while simultaneously deterring others and maintaining the ability to conduct irregular warfare.⁴ Modernization of Army CI and HUMINT collection management will be necessary to support the vision's objectives to man, organize, train, equip, and lead the Army toward this capability.

Modernization in a Changing Environment

The 2018 National Defense Strategy spells out U.S. strategy to compete, deter, and win in the emerging security environment of peer and near-peer great power competition. The National Defense Strategy acknowledges the erosion of the U.S. military's competitive advantage and the increasing complexity of the security environment, requiring a more resilient and rapidly innovative joint force.⁵ In response to this need, the Army's modernization strategy highlights six modernization priorities that focus on driving the Army to create a more modernized force capable of conducting multi-domain operations as part of the joint force. These priorities are—

- ◆ Long range precision fires.
- ◆ Next generation combat vehicles.
- ◆ Future vertical lift.
- ◆ Network.
- ◆ Air and missile defense.
- ◆ Soldier lethality.⁶

The Army G-2X is reforming CI and refocusing HUMINT to meet this shift toward great power competition and Army modernization.⁷ Army CI reform will posture the force to better protect current technological development and future strategic capabilities. Service-level HUMINT capabilities will be focused and aligned more effectively against peer adversaries while increasing regionally focused theater collection capability to support combatant commands and Army Service component command priorities. In direct conflict with technologically advanced adversaries such as China and Russia, our systems and networks will be the first capabilities targeted and possibly compromised, leaving traditional human-based collection as the most reliable and available intelligence collection capability.

CI modernization requires efficient and agile processes to identify, disrupt, and mitigate foreign intelligence entities and insider threats across all phases of conflict in all domains. The future environment in which Army CI will operate is likely to be crowded and complex, dealing with dense urban areas, antiaccess and area denial challenges, and the impacts of technological change. This environment will likely see empowered elements and proxies and will require working in a degraded, intermittent, and low bandwidth communication environment while facing peer and near-peer foes with the potential of large-scale combat operations. Delivery of intelligence to the warfighter must occur with speed, precision, and accuracy.

Modernization of Army HUMINT means transitioning from the experience of deployed counterinsurgency operations in support of targeting to using Army HUMINT full spectrum capabilities throughout each phase and domain across the continuum of conflict to support modernization, set the theater, shape battlespace understanding, and enable commanders' decision making. HUMINT is critical to increasing lethality of the force and opening windows of opportunity across all domains by providing commanders with detailed knowledge of threat strengths, weaknesses, intentions, organizations, equipment, and tactics.



U.S. Army photo by SSG Shane Hamann, 102nd Mobile Public Affairs Det.

A U.S. Army Soldier and Afghan Border Policeman exchange greetings after assignment providing security to the same area at the Spin Boldak, Afghanistan district center for a district leaders' shura, on February 11, 2013.

Addressing Human-Based Intelligence

Human-based intelligence collection is the oldest form of intelligence. Information sharing between individuals, within communities, and among allied groups is at the base of human interaction. Some of the earliest writings on statecraft identify intelligence as a key component in maintaining the security of a state. In the era before the development of the modern technology that supports intelligence collection today, collection was undoubtedly human-based. From Sun Tzu's declaration in *The Art of War* that "one who knows the enemy and knows himself will not be endangered in a hundred engagements,"⁸ to George Washington's Culper Ring, human-based intelligence has been at the forefront of maintaining strategic advantage for thousands of years.

In a rapidly advancing, technologically focused battlefield, CI and HUMINT operations are unique in that the Soldier is the collection platform. Agents and collectors often perform their functions independently in one-on-one engagements, necessitating a level of understanding and independence in lieu of direct technological support. In order to be effective, CI agents must be aware of key U.S. technologies, research and development efforts, and priority critical infrastructure and locations in order to counter foreign

The Culper Ring

The Culper Ring was an American spy network operating during the War of American Independence that provided George Washington with information on British troop movements. This network operated successfully in and around New York City for 5 years, during which time no spy was ever unmasked. The name “Culper” was suggested by George Washington, taken from Culpeper County, Virginia.



Memoir of Colonel Benjamin Tallmadge. Sons of the Revolution, New York, 1904

Benjamin Tallmadge as a dragoon, by John Trumbull, c. 1783.

Informants used fake names and a numerical codebook consisting of 763 numbers representing words, names, and places to communicate their information. Developed by Major Benjamin Tallmadge, the Culper Code was essential in protecting the vital communications and identities of this important intelligence-gathering group.⁹

T	U	Proposed Names	Alphabet
hang they 629	uncommon 676	Gen. Gortals 718	d e
liber 630	unfriendly 677	W. of the Lord 719	b f
thing 631	unfortunate 678	Germain d. 720	c g
though 632		Billon John 721	d h
time 633		Culper barn 722	e i
to 634		Culper farm 723	f j
troops 635	wind 679	Wash. Ave 724	g k
thankfull 636	was 680	C. Brewster 725	h l
therefore 637	we 681	Livingston 726	i m
timber 638	will 682		j n
tory 639	with 683		k o
transport 640	whom 684	Places	l p
trial 641	wharf 685	New York 727	m q
traitor 642	wound 686	Long Island 728	n r
transgrasp 643	wood 687	Staubel 729	o s
	want 688		p t

Image courtesy of the Library of Congress

Pages from the Culper Code Book

intelligence entity threats. Likewise, HUMINT collectors must have an understanding of gaps in information with regard to adversary capabilities and intentions, as well as knowledge of the priorities of those gaps both within and between target areas. This intimate familiarization with collection priorities is a fluid process, requiring responsiveness to shifting focus areas and changing operating environments. Both CI and HUMINT rely on dynamic targeting practices to identify collection opportunities. This targeting is critical to successful CI and HUMINT collection operations, translating analytically identified gaps into targets of opportunity for collection. The ability to provide warning of intentions and identify enemy courses of action, both active and discarded, that are not otherwise easily observable or discernible, distinguishes these intelligence disciplines.

In order to be effective, CI and HUMINT operations require strong collection management at all echelons. Collection management provides a critical link between analysis and collection. This link synchronizes analytical assessments of gaps in knowledge of the adversary with HUMINT collection elements. Collection management also links analysis of critical U.S. technology and capabilities requiring protection with CI agents in the field. Collection managers are critical in providing collection support briefs and collection emphasis messages, and in assisting targeteers to develop targeting packages. Since human-based collection has the capability of doing specifically targeted collection as well as incidental collection, knowledge and understanding of a wide range of collection focus areas are necessary for both the CI agent and the HUMINT collector. Strong collection management support and direction provide this breadth and width of understanding. Additionally, CI and HUMINT have long lead times in the development of operations; therefore, priorities and specific requirements will doubtlessly change over the course of an operation. Collection management is vital to maintain clear and focused collection despite dynamic adjustments to priority areas over the course of time. The time and presence of CI and HUMINT collectors are as inherently limited as the shutter time and bandwidth of technically based intelligence sensors and must be managed actively in a similar fashion to generate efficient and effective collection.

Current Realities of Collection Management within CI and HUMINT

Currently, the Army has no codified collection management career field for CI and HUMINT—no military occupational specialty or additional skill identifier (ASI) covers CI or HUMINT collection management. Below the levels of Headquarters, Department of the Army and U.S. Army

Intelligence and Security Command, often collection management within Army CI and HUMINT units is an additional duty or an ad hoc assignment. Soldiers and U.S. Army Civilians filling these roles often learn on the job, and turnover is high as individuals rotate between duties. No formalized training route exists for CI and HUMINT collection management; likewise, current CI and HUMINT training pipelines do not robustly represent collection management duties and skills.

As CI and HUMINT operations have long lead times, leadership can often attribute preparation of operations as a lack of forward movement. This results in the use of CI and HUMINT forces for garrison duty, or other necessary support functions, but detracts from the intelligence collection mission. Similarly, many individuals often overlook collection management and do not view it as the critical function that it is. Collection elements may engage directly with their analytical cell to ensure a clear understanding of collection requirements and discuss collection opportunities generating notices of intelligence potential. While analyst-collector engagement is essential to support operations, collection management is a key partner in this dialogue to ensure the translation of analytical priorities through the lens of overall focus areas as part of a larger regional and Army strategy. Without effective collection management, collectors risk focusing their efforts on information that is not a priority collection area.



U.S. Army photo by SGT Melissa N. Lessard

Soldiers with 163rd Military Intelligence (MI) Battalion, 504th MI Brigade, complete an interrogation exercise as part of certifying their MI platforms on Camp Bullis, TX, March 20, 2019.

Modernization of Collection Management

So how does the Army modernize management of the oldest kind of intelligence collection? Changing how CI and HUMINT collection management is viewed and conducted will require adjustments in three key areas: leadership, structure, and training.

The Army Intelligence Plan (TAIP), published by the Army G-2, identifies two lines of effort (LOEs): *CI Reform*, LOE-1; and *Modernization through implementing Multi-Domain Intelligence (MDI)*, LOE-2. Within LOE-1, TAIP indicates that Army CI must be better prepared to counter a “persistent and growing threat of Foreign Intelligence Entities.” This growing threat requires reform that includes changes to the CI force structure.¹⁰ One area that requires improvement is CI and HUMINT collection management.

Leaders across the Army MI Corps must have a greater understanding of collection management functions and capabilities, as well as the value that these functions and capabilities add to the mission. CI and HUMINT collection management must be fully incorporated into individual unit processes and must be regarded as a critical function—one that is worth maintaining regardless of budget considerations, restructuring, staffing levels, or other mission requirements.

MI units need to keep collection management positions as a permanent duty position. Personnel assigned as collection managers should remain in the position for a full assignment. The Army will address the professionalization of the collection management career field, possibly as an ASI within the CI and HUMINT disciplines. Completion of a CI or HUMINT collection management position could be a requirement for consideration for certain assignments or as a developmental position for officers. Some echelon above corps units, realizing the importance of CI and HUMINT collection, create ad hoc collection management cells (or fusion cells/centers) that include CI, HUMINT, and often open-source intelligence capabilities pulled from within their organic force structures. However, there is a potential risk when creating a capability from within—another organic unit capability may become the bill payer. In addition, these created cells take various forms and therefore lack standardization across units.

Collection managers must have access to focused CI and HUMINT collection management training, either as a stand-alone course or as part of the existing training pipeline. Current collection management training focuses on intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) assets. While CI and HUMINT are in the intelligence category, traditional collection management focuses on electronic systems and platforms, not on intelligence collection using humans. In the latter case, HUMINT and CI collectors *are* the collection platform. Collection managers will benefit from including them in any collection synchronization matrix.

The inclusion of CI and HUMINT personnel in the Army Intelligence Development Program-Intelligence,

Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (AIDP–ISR), and the eligibility of CI and HUMINT Soldiers for advanced/ASI-producing collection management training, would be a partial step toward closing this gap. AIDP–ISR is the Army’s current effort to train and develop certified ISR collection managers who can operate at the tactical, operational, and strategic levels.¹¹ Another initiative that may generate comprehensive results is the establishment of an integrated concept team, led by the U.S. Army Intelligence Center of Excellence, to review gaps in collection management training and processes across the Department of Defense CI and HUMINT enterprise.

Modernizing CI and HUMINT collection management will be a long-term process that will require changing training; adjusting manning practices; and building greater understanding among leaders, agents, and collectors on the value and necessity of having a strong, committed force of collection management professionals. As the Army moves forward to combat the future’s emerging threats, Army CI and HUMINT collection management must, and will, help the MI force move out with clear and focused direction. ✨

Endnotes

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