U.S. Army photo by SPC Michael Schwenk

Army Soldiers with the New Jersey National Guard sit inside a ground control station for an RQ-7B Shadow unmanned aircraft system at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, NJ, February 10, 2020.

Information Collection Synchronization

by Chief Warrant Officer 3 John E. Burris

Introduction

Information collection management during large-scale ground combat operations is a new concept for modern collection managers, and the synchronization of the information collection plan is proving difficult. Trends and observations regarding information collection include reach limitations; communication disruptions; processing, exploitation, and dissemination (PED) issues; and limited availability of assets. Additional challenges are associated with the lack of experience in large-scale ground combat operations and knowledge of traditional and nontraditional collection capabilities, along with the rapid advances in technology. Through integrated information collection efforts, commanders and staffs can continuously plan, task, and employ appropriate collection assets and forces to gather timely and accurate information to facilitate satisfying commander's critical information requirements (CCIRs) and other information requirements.[1] Information is the driving factor behind the operations process, including the military decision-making process, staff estimates, and commander's decision points. As such, collection managers must ensure their efforts are synchronized and nested to accomplish the needs of their customers (commander, staff, and subordinate units).

FY 2019 Key Observations and Trends

Annually, the Center for Army Lessons Learned (CALL) assists the combat training centers and mission command training program with publishing key observations and trends. These documents are located on the CALL website,[2] accessible to common access card-enabled users through CALL's Request for Publication portal. In fiscal year (FY) 2019, several recurring trends emerged from various rotations at the combat training centers and mission command training program. These trends indicate that—

✦ Divisions, corps, and Special Operations Forces (SOF) units do not effectively synchronize information collection with operations and targeting.[3]

✦ CCIRs and priority intelligence requirements (PIRs) were not synchronized with the intelligence collection plan.[4]

✦ Collection management requires multi-echelon synchronization and incorporation of all possible collection assets to maximize support to targeting and decision making.[5]

✦ Rehearsals do not synchronize operations or enhance developing a shared understanding and generally revert to wargaming.[6]

Pathways to Success

These trends are not the only intelligence warfighting function observations described in the FY 2019 documents; however, they have a single commonality—the synchronization of all parties involved in the information collection management process. FM 2-0, *Intelligence,* states:

Rehearsals assist units in preparing for operations by either verifying that provisions and procedures are in place and functioning, or by identifying inadequacies that leaders and the staff must remedy. They allow operation participants to become familiar with and translate the plan into specific actions that orient them to their environment and other units when executing the mission. Rehearsals allow the [military intelligence] MI element to integrate with and become familiar to the supported unit. It also allows the MI element to understand its role and scheme of maneuver within the larger mission objectives.[7]

FM 2-0 further states, "MI leaders conduct information collection rehearsals to ensure the right information is collected…information collection rehearsals may be combined with the combined-arms rehearsal or fires rehearsal."[8] When executed properly, rehearsals will orient all parties to their exact roles and responsibilities in upcoming collection operations. As the operational tempo in large-scale ground combat operations generally does not allow for full dress rehearsals, the best rehearsal option is a digital rehearsal. These rehearsals should be built into an information collection working group. The information collection working group table (pictured below), which is from ATP 6-0.5, *Command Post Organization and Operations,* identifies the participants and agenda of the working group.

General Information	Participants	
Title: information collection working group **Purpose**: coordinate for, integrate, and synchronize information collection in support of the concept of operations **Frequency**: daily **Duration**: one hour **Location**: G-2 work area **Medium**: face-to-face, defense collaboration service	**Staff proponent**: G-2 **Chair**: chief of staff **Members**: G-3 (current operations), G-3 (future operations), G-9, fires, air liaison, information operations, space, cyberspace electromagnetic activities, staff judge advocate representative, liaison officers	
Inputs and Outputs	**Agenda**	
Inputs: • Commander's guidance • Commander's critical information requirements • Future operations requirements • Subordinate unit requirements • Targeting requirements • Air tasking order nomination **Outputs**: • Priorities and recommendations for latest updated information collection plan • Recommended changes to commander's critical information requirements • Fragmentary order input	• Roll call (G-2) • Past information collection plan review (G-2) • Weather update (staff weather officer) • Intelligence update (G-2) • Operations update (G-3) • Future operations requirements (G-3) • Subordinate unit requirements (G-3) • Targeting requirements (targeting officer) • Allocation of collection resources and assets availability (collection manager) • Summary (G-2) • Guidance (chief of staff)	
G-2 assistant chief of staff, intelligence G-3 assistant chief of staff, operations	G-9 assistant chief of staff, civil affairs	

Information Collection Working Group Table[9]

The information collection working group is built into the operations process as part of the critical path leading to the commander's decision points and is programmed into the headquarters' battle rhythm. During every warfighter exercise in FY 2019, an information collection working group was included on the battle rhythm. However, the timing and variations in execution of the working group were evident in each unit. The working group was also not optimized to synchronize the staff and participants in the collection planning. The agenda (shown in the lower right quadrant of the table) sets the conditions to accomplish the coordination, integration, and synchronization of information collection in support of the concept of operations. The agenda steps are as follows:

Roll call: The roll call, which the collection manager typically conducts, should include the participants listed in the upper right quadrant of the table. The information collection working group should be expanded to include—

✦ **Collection asset(s) team members.** Examples would be a Gray Eagle (unmanned aircraft system) pilot, reconnaissance platoon leader/noncommissioned officer in charge (NCOIC), or SOF liaison officer. This enables a shared understanding of what the asset needs to collect and from where.

✦ **PED asset team member.** The asset tasked to exploit in near real time any ongoing collections. The PED member will back brief what they are looking for and where they need to report time-sensitive information.

✦ **Supported unit representative.** This will help to ensure the supported unit is being supported in the desired manner.

✦ **Electronic warfare representative.** This ensures the deconfliction of collection assets and electronic attacks. The electronic fratricide vignette, on the next page, provides an example.

✦ **Air liaison officer or joint tactical air controller.** This individual will identify any potential ad hoc collection opportunities as aircraft transition above a unit's battlespace.

✦ **Army aviation unit representatives.** Army aviation elements operating within the battlespace are capable of conducting traditional and nontraditional collection during multiple types of operations.

✦ **Field artillery intelligence officer.**

✦ **Targeting officer.** This enables a walkthrough of both deliberate and dynamic targets for

the next 24 hours. This includes understanding what assets are tasked to conduct first- and second-level battle damage assessments. JP 3-60, *Joint Targeting*, provides information about the levels of battle damage assessment, and CJCSI 3370.01, *Target Development Standards*, describes the phases of battle damage assessments.

✦ **Analysis and control element (ACE) chief or NCOIC.** This allows them to garner an understanding of what reporting should be forthcoming in an effort to update battle damage assessments and running estimates. This individual could also lead the G-2 update portion of the information collection working group.

Electronic Fratricide

Following document exploitation from material found on an enemy scout, which revealed the frequencies of enemy reconnaissance command net and reporting timeframes, the G-2 signals intelligence section requests collection and exploitation of identified frequencies. The mission was tasked to both ground and aerial assets to build in redundancy. Collection from both tasked assets yielded zero results after attempted collection during two enemy reporting timeframes. It was later identified that nonlethal effects in the form of electronic attack were jamming the same identified frequencies to prevent enemy call for fire missions.

Past information collection plan review: Units should back brief the collection manager on whether the collection met the required intent, if additional collections are needed, and if anything hindered the collection.

Weather update: The weather officer should identify any potential weather effects on planned collection missions. This includes ground and air missions.

Intelligence update: The ACE chief or NCOIC should outline enemy potential courses of action 24 to 96 hours out (dependent upon echelon) in order to enable named area of interest (NAI) refinement. If there have been adjustments to NAIs, collection schemes must match the new NAIs in order to maximize the collection.

Operations update: The designated operations officer will discuss the friendly forces scheme of maneuver for the next 24 to 96 hours outlining key targets and objectives. The operations officer also ensures that collection assets are properly tasked in the operation order or fragmentary order. Finally, the operations officer should ensure that collection assets and PED entities are working to answer CCIRs and PIRs and support the commander's decision points.

Targeting requirements: During this portion of the information collection working group or, as an alternative, during the targeting working group, the field artillery intelligence officer, collection manager, and PED should cover deliberate and dynamic targets programmed in an "if-this-then-that" format.

Collection Example

The field artillery intelligence officer calls out target 001 and describes the target. The collection manager identifies the asset(s) to collect against the target and the timeframe in which the asset is collecting and in which NAI(s). The PED analyst(s) identifies the information requirement(s) and indicator(s) followed by how the analyst will relay critical target information. The field artillery intelligence officer then indicates what assets execute the mission's desired effects. Then the collection manager identifies assets designated to conduct phases 1 and 2 battle damage assessment. The PED analyst should then call out how they will assess effects and how they will report to the ACE and field artillery intelligence officer the assessed battle damage assessment. Re-attack guidance is called out, circling this process back to the initial target call out. This is finalized with the ACE representative, indicating the updated battle damage assessment's tracking and running estimate.

Allocation of collection resources and assets availability: The collection manager ensures a shared understanding of the intelligence collection plan 24 to 96 hours out and allows the SOF and air liaison officers to provide additional input to collection opportunities. An example of this is in the tipping and cueing vignette.

Tipping and Cueing

While attempting command and control of a division wet-gap crossing, Task Force-Gap (TF–G) was heavily engaged by enemy long-range fires. Efforts to suppress the continuous attacks were less than fruitful by the friendly counterfire batteries due to rapid displacement by the enemy. The G-2 initiated ground moving target indicator (GMTI) collection based upon radar-acquired points of origin and providing the end location of the GMTI track for immediate targeting. After requesting immediate engagement, the division legal advisor informed the targeting team that engagement based upon GMTI alone was counter to the rules of engagement. With the available information, the G-2 requests SOF reconnaissance assistance to provide eyes on target. After the next iteration of enemy fire, the G-2 followed the GMTI from the point of origin and provided the end of the track to the SOF team, which then moved into position, verified the enemy artillery location, and initiated a call for fire. After several hours, this tactic reduced enemy fires on TF–G by 80 percent, allowing friendly forces to complete the wet-gap crossing.

Summary: The collection manager should summarize collection efforts, communication plans, and re-tasking criteria of collection assets during this portion of the information collection working group.

Guidance (from the chief of staff/executive officer or designated representative): Like other working groups, the information collection working group is designed to synchronize staff efforts. In any working group, guidance can change or one staff section's priorities may not align with another staff section's priorities. It is imperative that the chief of staff/executive officer or designated representative have a complete understanding of the commander's intent and priorities. These key personnel must be present at the information collection working group and other working groups. Their attendance ensures the staff is working as a cohesive team toward the commander's most recent and relevant guidance. During this portion, the chief of staff/executive officer will confirm that the information collection working group's inputs and outputs are on track and, if not, will make the necessary adjustments.

Completing a full rehearsal during the information collection working group allows synchronization of the staff and alleviates the need to conduct another battle rhythm event in an already saturated timeline during large-scale ground combat operations. This recommended approach is not an attempt to dictate how S-2s and/or G-2s should conduct an information collection rehearsal; rather, it is an attempt to reinforce the need for rehearsals and the level of detail the rehearsal requires in order to mitigate recurring observations and trends at the combat training centers and mission command training program.

Understanding and Tasking of All Available Assets

An additional identified trend focuses on the collection manager's and information collection operations' lack of understanding of all available assets for the collection and tasking of those assets to provide information to customers. An example of this is the counterfire radar's acquisitions or resupply missions by Army aviation and sustainment units.

All friendly forces operating within an area are capable of providing potentially valuable information and enhancing situational awareness. (FM 3-0, *Operations,* provides additional information on situational awareness.) Continuing to review the FY 2019 mission command training program key observations, we find additional inefficiencies that led to less than optimized collection plans that were not synchronized:

✦ Collection managers from brigade to Army Service component commands have universally been hesitant to leverage collection requirements on subordinate units.[10]

✦ The collection plan is generally not approved by the G-3 nor promulgated through operation orders or fragmentary orders.[11]

First Corps staff directorates compare notes before a targeting briefing during Warfighter Exercise 20-3 on Joint Base Lewis-McChord, WA, February 11, 2020.

U.S. Army photo by SPC Joseph E.D. Knoch

During FY 2019 warfighting exercises, the collection manager developed daily information collection matrixes to share at various battle rhythm events; however, few were included in fragmentary orders and even fewer assets were tasked to conduct collection. When the higher headquarters' information collection matrixes include all subordinate assets and units, a clearer picture is developed, enabling the collection manager to gain efficiencies in the collection plan and optimize redundancies and tipping/cueing efforts in the plan. The synchronization of the information collection plan as described could alleviate the collection manager's need to recommend a direct tasking on subordinate units, even though the collection manager has no tasking authority. FM 3-55, *Information Collection,* indicates "the G-3 (S-3) is the

primary information collection tasking and directing staff officer in the unit, tasking the organic and assigned assets for execution. The G-3 (S-3) collaboratively develops the information collection plan and ensures it synchronizes with the operation plan."[12]

Conclusion

As identified through FY 2019 observations from the combat training centers and mission command training program, the collection manager's synchronization of the information collection plan is critical to the success of the entire staff and operations process. Using the information collection working group as a rehearsal and synchronization mechanism, and effectively tasking collection assets in all order types, will allow the intelligence community to begin reversing these trends. ✴️

Endnotes

1. Department of the Army, Army Doctrine Publication 5-0, *The Operations Process* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Publishing Office [GPO], 31 July 2019), 3-5.

2. The Center for Army Lessons Learned website is at https://call.army.mil/.

3. Department of the Army, *Mission Command Training in Large-Scale Combat Operations: Mission Command Training Program Fiscal Year 2019 Key Observations* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Center for Army Lessons Learned, n.d.), 5.

4. Ibid., 9.

5. Ibid., 22.

6. Ibid., 54.

7. Department of the Army, Field Manual (FM) 2-0, *Intelligence* (Washington, DC: U.S. GPO, 6 July 2018), 3-14 (common access card login required).

8. Ibid.

9. Department of the Army, Army Techniques Publication 6-0.5, *Command Post Organization and Operations* (Washington, DC: U.S. GPO, 1 March 2017), A-20.

10. Department of the Army, *Mission Command Training,* 22.

11. Ibid., 5.

12. Department of the Army, FM 3-55, *Information Collection* (Washington, DC: U.S. GPO, May 2013), 2-4.

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Fort Huachuca Museum

Check out the Fort Huachuca Museum website at:
https://history.army.mil/museums/TRADOC/fortHuachuca/index.html