



Change Is Constant— Yet Some Things Never Change

by Mr. Chet Brown, Chief, Lessons Learned Branch

Introduction

A master sergeant, an Army civilian, and a defense contractor walk into a gym one afternoon. Sounds like the opening line of a joke. Regrettably, it only describes what three individuals did upon returning to their intermediate staging base after a full day of tactical ground and air vehicle movement overseas. We had spent the penultimate leg of the day's movement in a C-130, our outbound flight, shoulder to shoulder in red webbed seats facing pallets of musty transit cases and muddy duffel bags. The brief ejection of aerial flares offered the only break from the monotony of the view and drone of the engines. A boring (transport) flight is a good flight. The accommodations and flight profile could have been worse.

The C-130 flight was relaxing compared to the last leg of our inbound flight on a CH-47 Chinook. Shortly after takeoff, we caught glimpses through the helicopter's hellhole of a sling load full of mortar rounds. Then we looked out the rear door and saw another Chinook leaving with a similar sling load. Flying over the mountainous terrain in the CH-47 was not as disconcerting as violating a lesson learned when we initially boarded the helicopter—a lesson previously shared by a combat veteran platoon sergeant during a Friday afternoon work call to “never get on a (Chinook) if you don't see hydraulic fluid on the floor.” The indisputable logic of the platoon sergeant was if the bird was leaking, it meant at least some fluid was in the system. A dry floor meant no fluid. No fluid meant no hydraulics. No hydraulics meant no control. Gravity wins every time. Seeing us hesitate during the seating process, the crew chief made a remark that correlated a clean, dry floor with the improved quality and operation of modern hydraulic systems now installed on the CH-47 and other Vietnam-era aircraft. Clearly, this was not the first time he had to dispel a misperception from an outdated lesson.

Heading to the Gym—Mission, Interrupted

Back to the outbound C-130...the U.S. Air Force aircrew allowed the Army passengers to stand, stretch, and move just enough to stay out of the way of unloading the palletized cargo. Pallet cargo had priority over the human cargo. We anxiously waited to deplane and doff the helmet and tactical gear mandated for wear until we cleared the flight line. A brief workout at the gym before evening chow seemed to be a good way to relieve the discomfort of cramped muscles and stiff joints from being crammed into a variety of transport modes since o-dark-thirty. We had to be fresh as we continued on mission the next morning.

Our team's mission was simple. First, meet with the intelligence leaders at the echelons above corps (EAC) to understand the current campaign's overall intelligence production and intelligence interoperability requirements. Then go “downrange” to speak with Soldiers, noncommissioned officers, and officers who were using the latest intelligence processing system laptop computers at the division, brigade, and battalion levels in support of the campaign. We would be able to use the knowledge of EAC operations to understand the national-to-tactical intelligence implementation in theater. Conversations with Soldiers would reveal which of the system's features or capabilities should be changed, added, or removed. The requirement to obtain the full range of input available from all the system's users was too broad and important to levy solely on us—only three people.

We were part of a larger team comprised of computer engineers and software experts from the commercial vendor building the laptops for the Army. The accompanying experts were not the field service representatives or engineers with whom most of us are familiar and on whom we routinely depend. The commercial vendor's experts were the electrical, computer, and system software engineers

who designed and built the system, and who would lead the commercial vendor's employees in refining it. The larger team included personnel from the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) Systems/Capability Manager, Program Executive Office, Program Manager, testing community, training domain, and experts in the national-to-tactical intelligence network. This was a diverse group of professionals dedicated to fielding the best capability to Army military intelligence (MI) Soldiers providing intelligence support to operations overseas.

On our way to the gym, we began to identify the offices of MI personnel at the supported corps and Army Service component command headquarters with whom we could discuss the information gathered and receive additional insights. The three of us had the gym to ourselves as we continued to discuss the work we would need to do once we returned to the continental United States. We agreed the team's most useful contribution would be to help the engineers apply all the pertinent recommendations. Then a televised news bulletin interrupted the session. Our workout, and the plans to meet with the corps and Army Service component command MI leaders, ended when the second plane hit the South Tower.

Then and Now

The September 11, 2001, attack provides an important temporal differentiation between legacy and current MI laptop system lessons learned interest. The team formed in 2001 sought to apply the lessons learned from, and recommendations of, U.S. Soldiers they had visited in Germany and at Camps Able Sentry and Bondsteel in (then) Macedonia¹ and Kosovo, respectively. This task endures, as does our tactical presence in the Balkans. Today, we still collect lessons and recommendations from Soldiers operating MI laptop systems downrange, albeit the area to which the term "downrange" now references has expanded greatly.

Another change between then and now is how MI Soldiers access and leverage the national-to-tactical intelligence enterprise. Our excursion to speak with the Soldiers and supporting personnel at Camp Bondsteel provided a tactical perspective. Meeting with U.S. personnel at the higher headquarters level in Europe provided an operational perspective. What remains important is identifying and sharing the best practices of linking EAC with the tactical force at echelons corps and below. Soldiers use different equipment now than they did then.

The Army listened to the requests of Soldiers and leaders engaged in operations to improve its flagship intelligence processing system. Analysts attempted to use the system

contrary to its original purpose of providing rapid, accurate, actionable intelligence to defeat a conventional combined arms threat force. The Army responded to the unanticipated operating conditions by building a smaller, lighter, more mobile (laptop-based) intelligence analysis automation system. Over the next several years, the Army and its corporate partners continued to transform the laptop and its parent family of systems in response to the differing and various intelligence users' continuously evolving tasks, missions, and types of operations.

The Army's current flagship intelligence processing system continues to evolve as rapidly as possible to address current and emerging operational and mission variables. The quick and frequent changes in the operational environment present unexpected challenges in collecting and applying lessons learned to drive system

improvements. Personnel returning to areas where they had recently served reported that conditions had changed so much as to be almost unrecognizable. Some offered that their experiential knowledge was obsolete if they were absent from the area of operations for only a month or two. This is just one example of the speed at which the operational environment can change. The adage that change is the only constant definitely applies to Army operations.

Conversely, some things in the Army never change. This is a different sentiment than the defeatist's lament that "the more things change, the more they stay the same." We know things change. We are all working to improve our profession by adapting to change to improve the situation and not remain the same. We want to adapt in anticipation of and before the inevitable environmental change occurs in order to remain ahead of our competitors. The Army recognizes the superiority of adapting in advance of, and not in response to, changing conditions. Army leaders have not wavered from the value placed on obtaining unfiltered Soldier feedback on Soldier, unit, and equipment performance. Support from EAC Army leaders and intelligence staffs 18 years ago provided the access to Soldiers using laptop computers at the tactical level. Today, with the same level of support from Army and MI leaders, we continue to collect and apply lessons, best practices, and recommendations from Soldiers using the latest intelligence processing laptop system—the Distributed Common Ground System—Army Capability Drop 1.

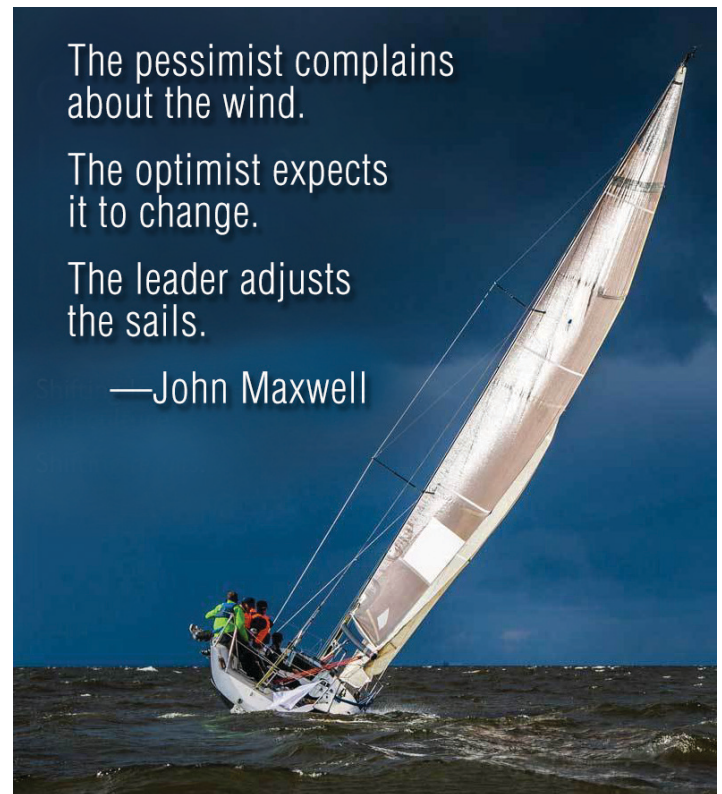


Commander's Guidance

When drafting this *Military Intelligence Professional Bulletin* (MIPB) submission, I received forwarded email messages originating from several U.S. Army general officers: TRADOC Commander, GEN Paul Funk; Headquarters, Department of the Army, Deputy Chief of Staff G-2 LTG Scott Berrier; and U.S. Army Intelligence Center of Excellence (USAICoE) Commanding General MG Laura Potter. Each email contained an element identifying the value of incorporating subject matter expertise into the Army's modernization efforts. GEN Funk's memo, *Funk Sends #3 – 28 August 19*, mentioned his recent attendance at "the TRADOC's Mad Scientist Conference, where the intelligence community comes together to discuss how future global trends will change our national security outlook and our Army." He emphasized, "TRADOC will be at the forefront of this change, driving constant improvements."² Clearly intentioned to be a comment on an aspect of effective leadership, GEN Funk's use of retired GEN Stanley McChrystal's quote "The solution that works perfectly one day can be miserably disappointing the next"³ underscores the need to seek out what's not working or what we need to work tomorrow. The quote also demonstrates why we are still collecting lessons from Soldiers using laptop computers supporting operations. The laptop solution implemented back then is not the solution we need today. The system we are using today may not be what we need to win tomorrow.

The *Fiscal Year 2020 Combined Arms Center Command Guidance* also provides another example of what used to work may no longer be appropriate in that the "current force that is optimized for the [counterinsurgency and counterterrorism] COIN/CT fight and is not optimized to meet the requirements in the current National Defense Strategy."⁴ Specifying the Army has a role in the National Defense Strategy confirms the Army is not alone in the need to apply experiential learning to meet emerging and current threats. In implementing the Combined Arms Center guidance in support of the National Defense Strategy, the USAICoE Commanding General described to us the crucial role of the Intelligence Center of Excellence. MG Potter directed us first to GEN Mark Milley's farewell speech as the Chief of Staff of the Army and then to the remarks of the incoming Chief of Staff of the Army GEN James McConville.⁵ The guidance and words of the general officers underscore the inherent responsibility of all MI professionals (uniformed and Civilian) to contribute their unique perspectives and observations to support the readiness and development of our Nation's intelligence warfighting function capabilities.

This recent focus is a natural evolution of the USAICoE Commanding General's initial guidance to the Lessons Learned Team to keep abreast of the fielded force's intelligence and operations activities to discover, validate, and integrate relevant lessons and best practices into the MI force modernization and branch proponent efforts. MG Potter mandated we keep attuned to what the operating force is doing so that we may help ensure MI training and doctrine evolve to keep pace with, and in anticipation of, the field's requirements.



The pessimist complains
about the wind.

The optimist expects
it to change.

The leader adjusts
the sails.

—John Maxwell

There Are Always Lessons to Be Learned

Performing the lessons learned tasks to fulfill the nested priorities of Army, TRADOC, Combined Arms Center, and USAICoE leaders may seem overwhelming. The good news for the Lessons Learned Team is that we are not alone. We are all in this together. If you are reading this, you are part of the "intelligence lessons learned" effort. If you are, or work with, an MI professional, you have something valuable to add to the discussion. Sometimes we are so close to the problem we may not be aware of the various and differing contributing factors or solutions. We may not be able to see the forest for the trees. We all benefit from information contained in an after action report, white paper, concept, MIPB article, or email telling of a useful technique or effective shortcut.

Intelligence is always engaged; thus, there are always lessons to be learned. The laws of physics prevent the USAICoE

Lessons Learned Collection Team from directly observing the breadth and scope of Army MI activities from the national to tactical. We are able to add value to the Nation, Army, and intelligence enterprise only through your support. You allow us to share what we learn from others with you. You allow us to observe training and operations and to meet with your Soldiers, noncommissioned officers, and officers. You provide after action reports; standard operating procedures; primary, alternate, contingency, and emergency plans; and examples of intelligence products. Your support allows us to provide all that we learn from you to those charged with driving improvements in the institutional, generating, and operating force.

We also depend upon an increasingly expanding lessons learned relationship with the U.S. Army Intelligence and Security Command (INSCOM), Center for Army Lessons Learned, and Army centers of excellence. Applying intelligence lessons learned to all the Army's warfighting functions is critical in anticipating the knowledge demands of training and preparing for large-scale ground combat operations. Impacts in one warfighting function ripple through every other warfighting function. Applying experiential learning (lessons and best practices) to help drive experimental learning (concepts, simulations, experiments, etc.) also helps reveal the challenges of multi-domain operations.

Exercise Defender 2020

We have additional sources of support with the temporary expansion of the intelligence lessons learned contractor capability. We have added two personnel at INSCOM headquarters and another two at USAICoE. The temporary (one-year) increase in the professional lessons learned capability provides some of the additional capacity needed to observe major learning events of the next year such as Exercise Defender 2020.⁶ This exercise will span 10 countries throughout Europe (mainly Germany and Poland) from April to May 2020.⁷ "Defender 2020 is a Department of the Army-directed, [U.S. Army Europe] USAREUR-led exercise designed to demonstrate the United States' ability to rapidly deploy a division to the European theater. This exercise, the largest in 25 years, will test echelons-above-brigade units in operational-level warfighting and its associated sustainment."⁸ Defender 2020 is not Reforger 2.0.⁹ Good news

for you. It means I will not drag 1990s light infantry battalion S-2 Reforger lessons learned into a future MIPB column. Okay, maybe just one. Don't volunteer to be the washrack officer in charge for an armored unit as thanks for a couple days of hot chow.

I'll end by extending thanks in advance to those of you who are going to contribute your lessons, best practices, recommendations, and invitations in support of Exercise Defender 2020. 🌟

Endnotes

1. Macedonia is now the Republic of North Macedonia; this is not referring to Macedonia in Greece.
2. Department of the Army, *Funk Sends #3 – 28 August 19* (Fort Eustis, VA: Training and Doctrine Command, 28 August 2019).
3. Stanley McChrystal, Jeff Eggers, and Jason Mangone, *Leaders: Myth and Reality* (New York: Penguin Random House, 2018), 408, quoted in Department of the Army, *Funk Sends #3*.
4. Department of the Army, *Fiscal Year 2020 Combined Arms Center Command Guidance* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: U.S. Army Combined Arms Center, 2 August 2019), 2.
5. Timothy Quinn, email message to U.S. Army Intelligence Center of Excellence (USAICoE), August 12, 2019. Email sent on behalf of MG Potter, USAICoE Commanding General.
6. Edward A. Fraser and Robert V. Abernethy, "Strong Europe: A continental-scale combat sustainment laboratory," *U.S. Army Worldwide News*, April 1, 2019, https://www.army.mil/article/219091/strong_europe_a_continental_scale_combat_sustainment_laboratory.
7. John Vandiver, "Thousands of troops to take part in largest U.S.-led exercise in Europe since the Cold War, EUCOM says," *Stars and Stripes*, 7 October 2019, <https://www.stripes.com/news/europe/thousands-of-troops-to-take-part-in-largest-u-s-led-exercise-in-europe-since-the-cold-war-eucom-says-1.602097>.
8. Fraser and Abernethy, "Strong Europe."
9. Exercise Campaign Reforger (an abbreviation of "Return of Forces to Germany") was an annual exercise and campaign that the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) conducted during the Cold War. The exercise was intended to ensure that NATO had the ability to quickly deploy forces to West Germany in the event of a conflict with the Warsaw Pact. Wikipedia, s.v. "Exercise Reforger," last modified 20 September 2019, 02:15, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Exercise_Reforger.



On 19 August 1994, the last intelligence class graduated from the U.S. Army Intelligence School at Fort Devens, Massachusetts. Signals intelligence training had been conducted at Fort Devens beginning in 1951 when the Army Security Agency School moved there from Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania.