



## Intelligence Preparation of the Battlefield Lessons Learned: It's About Time

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### Introduction

What do rock and roll lyrics, a Buddhist koan, and intelligence preparation of the battlefield (IPB) lessons learned have in common? You'll find out if you keep reading.

Earlier this year, the Center for Army Lessons Learned produced a Combat Training Center (CTC) bulletin presenting lessons learned trends observed throughout fiscal year 2018. While the 119-page bulletin contains a host of intelligence lessons learned, best practices, and recommendations to reverse negative trends, it mentions IPB only once. This indicates that the improvements made to training and professional military education over the past several years are having a positive effect. This positive news, combined with the updated ATP 2-01.3, *Intelligence Preparation of the Battlefield*, comes at the perfect time as I draft this lessons learned column.

### A Key Factor: Time

The most critical element of the mission<sup>1</sup> or operational variables<sup>2</sup> affecting IPB performance is time. The Rolling Stones tell us that "time waits for no one"<sup>3</sup> while contradicting themselves by claiming that "time is on my side."<sup>4</sup> Sorry, Mr. Jagger, but time is definitely not on our side. Current operations doctrine describes the scarcity of time by explaining that "commanders realize that uncertainty and [the lack of] time preclude achieving complete understanding before deciding and acting."<sup>5</sup> IPB seeks to eliminate or reduce uncertainty as much as possible to support the commander's decision making. Unfortunately, it takes time to provide high-quality products and conclusions—time we don't have, as it keeps on "slippin', slippin', slippin' into the future."<sup>6</sup>

Other references to time are present throughout FM 3-0, *Operations*, and many other Army doctrinal publications. Frequent mention is made of tasks to gain time, the shortest time, tempo, speed of decision making and action, depriving the enemy of time, etc. Depriving the enemy of the

time to react effectively to our action is a major benefit of implementing the techniques that John Boyd, U.S. Air Force fighter pilot and military strategist, provides in discussing the observe, orient, decide, act loop.<sup>7</sup> But, how are we supposed to gain time as FM 3-0 calls upon us to do? We cannot acquire or store time as we are able to with other resources. I wish we could save "time in a bottle,"<sup>8</sup> but it's impossible. Perhaps gaining time is a way of describing the reduction of time required to perform tasks through increased efficiency. I hope that is what FM 3-0 compels us to do, as the rest of this column offers techniques others have used to perform IPB more efficiently. The S-2 section and military intelligence (MI) company personnel shared the following best practices to help us perform IPB tasks more quickly, more accurately, and with improved fidelity to better support planning and operations. Some of these examples are truly doing more with less.

Familiarity breeds contempt. This may be true for superior-subordinate relationships, but it's completely the opposite when describing IPB tasks. Familiarity improves performance. Some folks call it muscle memory, others invoke author Malcolm Gladwell's frequently quoted yet disputed 10,000-Hour Rule<sup>9</sup> to achieve mastery of a skill. That's a lot of time: 3½ years' worth of doing IPB every day for 8 hours. I don't know of any S-2 who has that much time to devote entirely to IPB. Nevertheless, it's clear that the more familiar we become with doing the task, the better we become at performing the task.

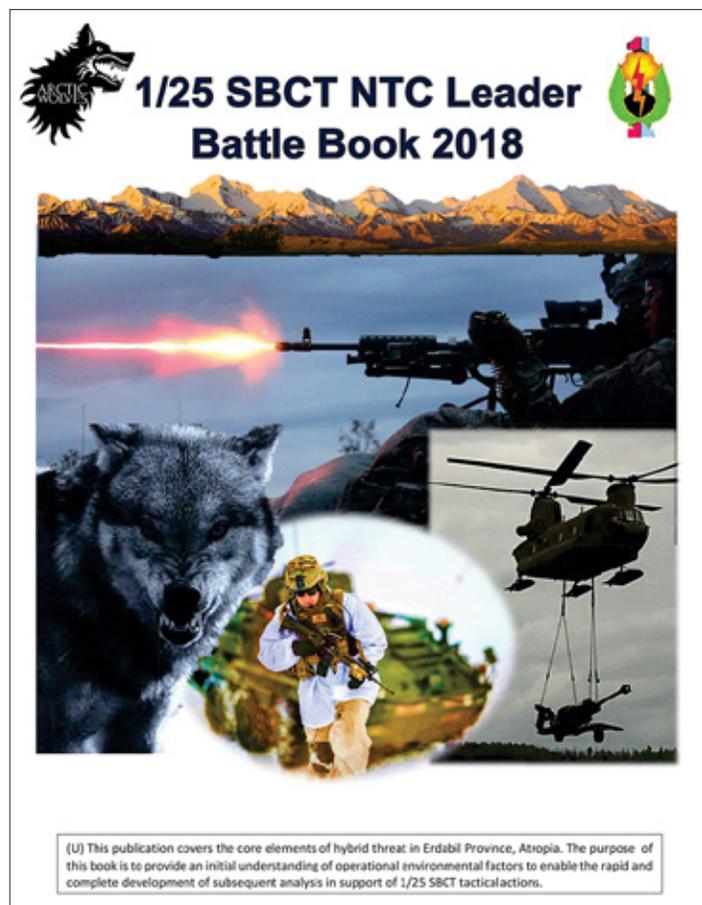
Do you remember the first time you disassembled, cleaned, reassembled, and performed a function check with your assigned weapon? I do—including the useful suggestions offered in a confidence-inspiring, mint-fresh whisper from my pleasant and friendly combat-veteran drill sergeant. Compare your initial experience to your most recent instance. You're more likely able to accomplish the task faster now in the rain, at night, and in extreme

temperatures than your first time. MI leaders identify and exploit opportunities to practice IPB tasks as often as possible to instill in their Soldiers the confidence, speed, and quality of IPB tasks through familiarity. In the time it takes to brew a pot of coffee or drop a K-Cup<sup>10</sup> in the machine, you can ask a Soldier to identify the avenues of approach on a printed map. Throughout the day or over several days, ask another Soldier to identify the mobility corridors. Ask another to identify the obstacles. You get the idea. These quick yet simple engagements breed familiarity.

Another effective technique is to introduce these quick tasks using analog methods and then to evolve using automation. Any discrete IPB performance measure can be practiced periodically or episodically throughout the duty day. Ask a Soldier to identify the signature pieces of equipment that identify one element from another in an actual or notional order of battle. Ask another Soldier which asset in the unit's task organization is most capable of detecting or identifying the item. To help intelligence analysts become familiar with solving unanticipated IPB problems and to further develop analytical skills, some MI leaders have used brainteasers and Mind Benders<sup>11</sup> delivered as pop quizzes. While all the aforementioned 5-minute exercises consume time in garrison, the familiarity and benefit of practice results in more efficient performance in the field. One of the enduring aspects of CTC rotations is that most intelligence personnel—particularly S-2s—experience a CTC as a one-and-done event. Rarely does an S-2 get a second opportunity to experience a National Training Center rotation as an S-2 with the same commander, primary staff personnel, and subordinates. Discounting serving as a guest observer-coach-trainer or participating in a ride-along, rare are the opportunities to become familiar with the CTC's operating environment and conditions firsthand time and time again. How do we acquire the familiarity of performing the steps in IPB if we're unable to conduct the repetitions and sets (reps and sets) at a CTC?

### **Don't Reinvent the Wheel—Refine It**

The CTC cadre and fellow MI leaders enthusiastically provide examples, tips, and IPB products to help you be successful during a CTC rotation. The resources available on the CTC websites, in materials provided, or identified during the Leader Training Program, help you avoid having to start from scratch. The same is true for the products, lessons learned, and best practices routinely offered by brigade combat team (BCT) S-2s and MI company commanders. Over the past several years, the MI professionals of the Arctic Wolves of 1<sup>st</sup> Stryker BCT, 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, have produced and updated a National Training Center *Leader Battle Book*.



The book has proven to be an item that both helps build task familiarity and provides a foundation for IPB steps 1 and 2 on which you can build or refine. The reference is available on the common access card-enabled side of the Intelligence Knowledge Network main page <https://www.ikn.army.mil/> MI Lessons Learned link.<sup>12</sup> The content of the book exceeds most email size limits, so you'll have to download it from our website. This limitation alone should give you an indication of the detail and quality the Arctic Wolves provide.

Seek, ask, and use what others have done in similar missions or areas to save time and effort. Few places or missions are the first of their kind or location. There's a good chance that if you're being asked to perform IPB for a particular area or training mission, another Soldier, Marine, or military professional has an IPB product that could help save you time. If in doubt, give us a shout. The lessons learned enterprise extends throughout the operational environment, which includes all the warfighting functions and joint services.

### **Speak Your Commander's Language**

Communicate the results of IPB using the means and modes that best support your commander's rapid comprehension and integration into his or her staff's processes. While the majority of IPB steps result in graphic products,

opportunities exist to augment graphics with text and text with graphics, and to discuss the results during briefings to support visual, textual, and aural receipt. Regardless of the presentation method chosen, MI personnel who build or contribute to building IPB products must be fluent in the language of our profession—ADP 1-02, *Terms and Military Symbols*.<sup>13</sup> Using terms and military symbols supports rapid situational understanding, comprehension, and use by every warfighting function. Being conversant in terms and symbols is the minimal level of performance. You achieve fluency when you are able to understand and communicate using the principles and fundamentals of your supported unit's doctrine. Being fluent eliminates the time needed to decipher unique terms or graphic symbols. A useful tool to enhance communication, which can be built in advance of any warning order, is a terms of reference (ToR) guide.

In 2016, the U.S. Army Intelligence Center of Excellence Lessons Learned Team observed another 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division BCT during a Lightning Forge home station training exercise during which they used a brigade intelligence support element (BISE) ToR guide. The division G-2 applied lessons learned from previous exercises to build and implement the ToR throughout the division. The ToR clarified roles and responsibilities for BISE leaders. The unit used the ToR to—

- ◆ Establish task-direction channels and authority among BISE members and sections.
- ◆ Assign scopes of responsibility or authority in providing intelligence support.
- ◆ Identify which positions were responsible for supporting specific events/products.
- ◆ Establish expectations of performance as the BCT and MI company transition into the BISE.

The division G-2 mentored subordinate BCT S-2s by directing them to tailor the ToR to their respective unit's knowledge, skills, abilities, task organization, standard operating procedures, and doctrine.

### **Using Doctrine Appropriately Saves Time for Everyone**

Understand your unit's doctrine. This recommendation is linked with being able to speak your commander's language. As intelligence professionals, we all must read, understand, and apply operations and intelligence doctrine regardless of the echelon, unit type, or location of our respective assignments. Successful MI personnel become proficient in their supported unit's doctrine through self-development. If assigned to a maneuver enhancement brigade, an MI

Soldier should read FM 3-34, *Engineer Operations*.<sup>14</sup> If assigned to a field artillery brigade, one should know FM 3-09, *Field Artillery Operations and Fire Support*.<sup>15</sup> If assigned to an Army Aviation unit, one should know FM 3-04, *Army Aviation*, and so on.<sup>16</sup> The aforementioned references are starting points. The various field manuals, Army doctrine publications, Army techniques publications, training circulars, and their inevitable successive updates (change 1, change 2, etc.) provide continuous learning material.

Those who understand the origins of doctrinal principles, techniques, and specifications are better able to revise operations or develop best practices that improve unit performance. Those who attempt doctrinal shortcuts without understanding the underlying doctrinal foundations often impede operations or fail to achieve the intended results of improved performance (speed, quality, and accuracy) or resource conservation (time, personnel, and equipment). Imagine the impact of planning a route through mountainous terrain without understanding the meaning of contour lines and intervals. A direct route across several steep ridges may seem to be a shortcut to someone who doesn't know what closely spaced contour lines indicate. A Soldier who knows the meaning of contour lines and their placement will identify a route requiring less time and effort to travel. Using doctrine appropriately enables a rapid initial common understanding, which saves time for both the speaker and the listener. Using doctrinal terms accurately, clearly, and concisely to convey the results of IPB saves time for everyone.

### **Who Leads the IPB Band?**

Everyone has a part to play in IPB. As mentioned earlier, it is a staff function. Every staff section can (and should) contribute to the unit's IPB effort. This is especially true when we're all pressed for time in the expected high tempo of large-scale ground combat operations and personnel in the command post will be doing "a half a million things all at a quarter to three."<sup>17</sup> We can accomplish more together than we can individually.

The first sentence in the introduction to ATP 2-01.3 identifies IPB as a collaborative staff function and specifies the intelligence officer is responsible for leading the IPB process. S-2's don't usually have tasking authority over fellow staff members. If IPB is a staff function, who leads the IPB Band? Is the officer (deputy commanding officer/executive officer) who leads the staff the leader of the band or only the lead singer? Does the S-3's vested authority represent the role of the rhythm or the lead guitarist? I liken the S-2's role to that of the bass guitarist in a rock band. Successful bands are similar to a well-functioning staff in that both are

collaborative partnerships that depend upon everyone knowing and performing their individual parts well to support the overall effort. In this analogy, the bass player has the most crucial role in the band. Everyone in the group depends on the bassist's performance. The bass provides the rhythm, the structure, and the harmonic foundation on which all the other band members depend.<sup>18</sup> If the guitarist or keyboardist makes a slight mistake, hardly anyone will notice. If the bassist makes a mistake, everyone in the band will know and ultimately the audience will hear that something is wrong.<sup>19</sup> If a unit's IPB is found to be substandard, everyone in the staff will look to the S-2.

The "intelligence failure" quip emphasizes that while IPB is a staff function, the intelligence officer must drive the process and integrate IPB products into the unit's planning, decision making, and information collection efforts to achieve operational success. Now and then, the S-2 must step onto center stage and play the bass as the lead instrument, like Geddy Lee.<sup>21</sup> Disciplined initiative is sometimes required to ensure a unit's success.

### You're Not in This Alone

Invite—and welcome—your unit's warfighting function professionals to the IPB party. Like a great rock band, it takes time and practice for a staff to come together and operate as a cohesive team. It will take time and multiple repetitions before our fellow staff members become comfortable with contributing to IPB. You can read all about music theory, understand musical notation, or strum a few guitar chords, but that doesn't make you ready to play in a band on stage. There is the potential for some friction in being only "book smart" in doctrine rather than having the "street smarts" that our warfighting function colleagues attained through years of practice in their respective fields.

### Conclusion

When performing IPB in the high tempo of large-scale ground combat operations, it's unlikely you'll ever

say, "I have 'too much time on my hands.'"<sup>22</sup> So, leverage the knowledge and experience possessed throughout the staff to support IPB product development. Enlisting staff sections to assist in determining how the enemy will array or employ artillery assets, fire direction systems, air defense systems, aviation, communications, reconnaissance, and other capabilities often provides an expert-level practitioner's assessment more rapidly, more accurately, and with more fidelity than MI personnel are able to produce on their own. These experts and their respective leaders are more likely to consider the IPB results they were involved in producing. The key is not to wait until a collective training event to solicit your staff colleagues' IPB input. Involve them in your familiarity efforts early and often. Ask a field artillery officer or a noncommissioned officer to comment on your MI Soldiers' selection of high-value targets or the estimated placement of enemy artillery in an enemy course



U.S. Army photo by SGT Christopher Hernandez, 345th Public Affairs Detachment

SSG Keenan McCarter, a baritone vocalist with the Soldiers' Chorus, performs a musical number with the Six String Soldiers during the 2018 U.S. Army All-American Bowl Awards Show January 5, 2018, at the Lila Cockrell Theatre in San Antonio, TX.

Sometimes the S-2 is not the single point of failure for the unit's IPB missteps. The S-2, the BISE, and the contributing warfighting function staff members may have completed a thorough and accurate IPB process resulting in excellent products. Sometimes units do not integrate IPB products into the orders writing or military decision-making process. We have seen this happen several times when observing home station training or a unit at a CTC. "If a unit's staff fails to integrate any of the unit's IPB products during the military decision-making process, is the operational result still attributed to an intelligence failure?" The answer is as readily available as the response to the koan, "If a tree falls in the forest and no one is around to hear it, does it make a sound?" Unfortunately, "time after time"<sup>20</sup> MI personnel hear of either operational successes or intelligence failures. Rarely do we hear of operational failures or intelligence successes—albeit often with good reason.

of action. Have the warfighting experts discuss employment considerations of their assets—comparing and contrasting with how an enemy or threat will employ their forces. This also builds upon IPB being a staff effort and not only an intelligence task.

### Musicians of Mars

There is still a tendency in each separate unit...to be a one-handed puncher. By that I mean that the rifleman wants to shoot, the tankner to charge, the artilleryman to fire...that is not the way to win battles. If the band played a piece first with the piccolo, then with the brass horn, then with the clarinet, and then with the trumpet there would be a hell of a lot of noise but no music. To get harmony in music, each instrument must support the others. To get harmony in battle, each weapon must support the other. Team play wins. You musicians of Mars...must come into the concert at the proper place at the proper time.

— MG George S. Patton Jr.

Address to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Armored Division, 8 July 1941<sup>23</sup>

Musicians listen to, and sometimes incorporate into their own compositions, the riffs, melodies, or lyrics of other artists. Hopefully, MI personnel can incorporate the techniques others have shared with us to save time in performing IPB. I continue to be amazed at the level of sharing and commitment to fostering success throughout the MI Corps at the tactical level. You’ve definitely proven that we care about, and are committed to, the success of those at the pointy end of the spear. You’ve also provided an answer to Chicago’s lyric, “Does anybody really care (care about time)?”<sup>24</sup> Yes, MI professionals definitely do care about time. 🌟

### Endnotes

1. “The mission variables are mission, enemy, terrain and weather, troops and support available, time available, and civil considerations (METT-TC).” Department of the Army, Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 5-0, *The Operations Process* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Publishing Office [GPO], 17 May 2012), 5.
2. “Eight interrelated operational variables: political, military, economic, social, information, infrastructure, physical environment, and time (PMESII-PT).” Ibid.
3. The Rolling Stones, “Time Waits for No One,” *It’s Only Rock ‘n Roll*, Rolling Stones Records, originally released in 1974.
4. The Rolling Stones, “Time Is on My Side,” 12 x 5, London Records, originally released in 1964.
5. Department of the Army, Field Manual (FM) 3-0, *Operations* (Washington, DC: U.S. GPO, 6 October 2017), 1-5. Change 1 was issued on 6 December 2017.
6. Steve Miller Band, “Fly Like an Eagle,” *Fly Like an Eagle*, Capitol Records, originally released in 1976.
7. Robert Coram, *Boyd: The Fighter Pilot Who Changed the Art of War* (New York: Back Bay Books/Little, Brown and Company, 2002).

8. Jim Croce, “Time in a Bottle,” *You Don’t Mess Around with Jim*, ABC Records, originally release in 1972.
9. Malcolm Gladwell, *Outliers, The Story of Success* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2008).
10. This is a reference to the Keurig® My K-Cup®, Keurig Dr Pepper Inc.
11. This is a reference to Mind Benders®, created by The Critical Thinking Co™, which are deductive thinking puzzles that help to develop logic, reading comprehension, and mental organization skills.
12. The Intelligence Knowledge Network (IKN) is a knowledge management tool that hosts discussion forums. IKN serves as a single point of entry to the U.S. Army Intelligence Center of Excellence and other intelligence community websites, and hosts a variety of public and private web applications that support the intelligence community.
13. Department of the Army, ADP 1-02, *Terms and Military Symbols* (Washington, DC: U.S. GPO, 14 August 2018).
14. Department of the Army, FM 3-34, *Engineer Operations* (Washington, DC: U.S. GPO, 2 April 2014).
15. Department of the Army, FM 3-09, *Field Artillery Operations and Fire Support* (Washington, DC: U.S. GPO, 4 April 2014).
16. Department of the Army, FM 3-04, *Army Aviation* (Washington, DC: U.S. GPO, 29 July 2015).
17. Huey Lewis and the News, “The Heart of Rock & Roll,” *Sports*, Chrysalis Records, originally recorded in 1983.
18. “Understanding the Bass Player’s Function in a Band,” Dummies website, accessed 23 July 2019, <https://www.dummies.com/art-center/music/bass-guitar/understanding-the-bass-players-function-in-a-band/>.
19. Andrew Pouska, “The Role of the Bass in Music,” Leading Tone Media, LLC, accessed 23 July 2019, <https://www.studybass.com/lessons/basics/the-role-of-the-bass/>.
20. Cyndi Lauper, “Time After Time,” *She’s So Unusual*, Portrait Records, originally released in 1983.
21. Geddy Lee is a singer, songwriter, bassist, and keyboardist for the recently disbanded rock band Rush. Wikipedia, s.v. “Rush (band),” last modified 20 July 2019, 13:03, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rush\\_\(band\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rush_(band)).
22. Styx, “Too Much Time on My Hands,” *Paradise Theatre*, A&M Records, originally released in 1981.
23. Center for Army Lessons Learned, *Handbook No. 19-08, Musicians of Mars, Volume III: The Cobra Strikes, Tactical Vignettes for Professional Discussion* (February 2019): iii, <https://usacac.army.mil/sites/default/files/publications/19-08.pdf>.
24. Chicago, “Does Anybody Really Know What Time It Is?” *Chicago Transit Authority*, Columbia Records, originally recorded in 1969.

### Reference

Department of the Army. Army Techniques Publication 2-01.3, *Intelligence Preparation of the Battlefield*. Washington, DC: U.S. GPO, 1 March 2019.