



# Collection Management: Five-Minute University Version

by Mr. Chet Brown, Chief, Lessons Learned Branch

*Normally, the greatest challenge for commanders is to focus the intelligence effort, and to gain dissemination of intelligence to the right place in time for key decisions.*

—FM 34-2, Collection Management and Synchronization Planning (1994)

## Introduction

The response to the coronavirus disease of 2019 has me teleworking from my kitchen table, divorced from the references at arm's length in my cubicle. I apply the concept from *Saturday Night Live* comedian Don Novello's "Five-Minute University" skit of teaching only "what the average college graduate remembers 5 years after he or she is out of school."<sup>1</sup> I mimic his approach to offer the most pertinent collection management lessons and best practices.

**1. Answer the Question.** The Five-Minute University version of collection management is simple: "Determine what the commander needs to know about the threat/enemy, terrain, or weather to make a decision, and then provide the answers." More simply, answer the priority intelligence requirement (PIR). Deceptively simple concept in description, aggravatingly complex in execution. The difficulty is in planning, preparing, executing, and assessing collection while integrated and synchronized with operations. Collection management requires the full-time involvement of a trained and competent professional.

**2. It's a Full-Time Job.** A best practice is to place an Information Collection Planner Course (ICPC) graduate in the brigade combat team (BCT) collection manager position. ICPC instructs the fundamentals of military intelligence (MI) system collection capabilities, large-scale combat operations, and the application of collection management principles in practical exercises and presentations. Multiple units we observed in operations and training have lauded the performance of ICPC graduates serving as BCT collection managers. We see a positive trend in units selecting

knowledgeable, skilled, and experienced personnel as the BCT collection manager. This reverses the trend of assigning the most recent MI lieutenant arrival to the BCT or MI company as the collection manager.

**3. Know Your Unit.** The collection manager must understand all of the unit's capabilities available to employ for answering the PIR. Which elements provide reliable and accurate reports? Which are prone to perform "drive-by" reporting? The collection manager should become familiar with the performance characteristics of organic elements when developing collection tasks. Will a Soldier operating from a vehicle in defilade be able to detect the enemy activity in the assigned named area of interest (NAI)? How will intervisibility lines and thermal crossover times affect differing systems? How does light data affect aerial reconnaissance? What is the impact of weather, vegetation, and terrain on Soldier performance or enemy signatures?

**4. Intelligence Collection Management is a Continuous Activity.** The introduction of ATP 2-01, *Plan Requirements and Assess Collection*, confirms that "although the discussions and descriptions in this manual may seem linear, planning requirements and assessing collection is a dynamic, continuous, and interactive process requiring constant interaction between the commander and staff."<sup>2</sup> Management is a noun, not a result. This also supports multiple units' recommendations not to assign the MI company commander as the BCT collection manager. The MI company commander and BCT collection manager duties are critical to the BCT's success—both require constant engagement and problem solving to ensure PIR satisfaction.

**5. It's the S-3's Plan, but We Own It.** FM 3-55, *Information Collection*, confirms operations owns information collection, yet intelligence takes ownership of the process. The collection manager must ensure the unit's collection plan is

postured and performing to answer the PIR before the latest time information is [no longer] of value (LTIOV) to the commander's decision making. The decision point graphically depicts the point in (the battle) space at which the U.S. commander can decide to employ a tactic or an effect before losing the opportunity. The graphic convergence of the U.S. commander's decision point, supported by a PIR, **must** be supported by an NAI depicted on the event template. Collection managers use the event template to track PIR satisfaction and forecast collection plan adjustments.

**6. Intelligence Synchronization.** Synchronizing intelligence activity with operations enables the intelligence warfighting function to be in the right places at the right times to fulfill the collection tasks assigned by the S-3. MI company collectors often arrive at a tasked grid location only to be told to go away or suffer fratricide because they failed to coordinate with the unit in whose areas they were operating. Coordination facilitates proper asset placement, reduces the potential for fratricide, and increases the probability of success. A best practice for both the collection manager and the MI company commander is to participate in the combined arms rehearsal to ensure tasked collectors are integrated into the scheme of maneuver.

#### For Want of a Nail<sup>3</sup>

For want of a nail the shoe was lost.  
For want of a shoe the horse was lost.  
For want of a horse the rider was lost.  
For want of a rider the message was lost.  
For want of a message the battle was lost.  
For want of a battle the kingdom was lost.  
And all for the want of a horseshoe nail.

**7. "For Want of a Nail..."** An MI company platoon shipped its mounted collection system to the National Training Center by rail, packing system peripherals and other gear in a Conex sent separately. The Soldiers had barely enough time to access the Conex, configure the system, move to the training area, and begin operating as ordered. It was then that a Soldier discovered a critical cable was missing. It was left at home station. The team leader, platoon leader, and MI company commander failed to perform a pre-combat check/pre-combat inspection before transport or upon arrival. The missing cable rendered the system incapable of detecting opposing force (OPFOR) activity linked to a PIR, resulting in the commander missing a decision point, leading to OPFOR success. It is not the collection manager's job to perform a pre-combat check/pre-combat inspection for every system; however, the collection manager can influ-

ence training and track the operating status of each collection system.

**8. Collection Resource Status.** The information collection synchronization matrix (ICSM) of many units we observe is a color-coded spreadsheet depicting who is doing what and when. Recent observations reveal unit standard operating procedures directing detailed status reporting, which includes—

- ◆ Personnel (number, crew rest, trained, suitable, etc.).
- ◆ Sensor functions and consumables (communications, nitrogen, batteries, fuel).
- ◆ Prime mover status (including consumables, communications, maintenance, etc.).

Deficiencies in one element could render the collection system useless, slightly impair operations, or have no effect on the current mission. An MI company best practice is to post—and push—collection asset operational status to maintenance personnel and BCT S-2/collection manager for situational awareness. Combining the MI company status report with maneuver element combat effectiveness (and reporting) allows the BCT collection manager to revise the collection scheme to answer the PIR in the dynamic and fast pace of large-scale ground combat operations.

**9. Collection PACE Plan.** Establishing a feasible primary, alternate, contingency, and emergency (PACE) plan for intelligence reporting is a best practice. Multiple examples exist of combat training center rotational training units detecting critical enemy information but failing to receive the information at the decisive point (time or location). The collection manager should understand how information moves from the point at which the sensor detects the expected phenomenology and processes and transmits the information to the commander before the LTIOV—through each element of the PACE plan. The ICPC cadre instructs that a critical PACE factor is evaluating the available network capacity (bandwidth) at the points in the operation when a report/product that answers the PIR is expected. Capacity or communication modes may only support a text message (particularly when command posts displace) when the commander expects an image. This is another reason for the collection manager and MI company commander to attend the combined arms rehearsal—to identify impediments to answering the PIR.

**10. Clarity.** We often observe elements operating in the open within meters of natural concealment. Invariably leaders state they are operating from the tasked location without understanding they should establish positions to increase performance, cover, or concealment. A six-digit

grid provides 100 meters of adjustment. Conversely, collection managers need to clarify what units are tasked to observe and report. For example, a polygon NAI containing a road intersection, several multistory buildings, a drainage culvert, and a hilltop resulted in a platoon leader telling the BCT S-2 and collection manager, “I need to know what you expect me to look at, observe, and report so I can prepare the squads for the mission.” The S-2 responded by listing each NAI (in a spreadsheet) by number and including a grid location and a description of the specific feature (road intersection, building, bridge, terrain feature, etc.). The collection manager used the NAI spreadsheet to produce clear collection tasks and reporting requirements.

tion management articles in this quarter’s issue of *Military Intelligence Professional Bulletin* are great starting points. Share your collection management lessons with our profession; iron sharpens iron. In the words of Dennis Miller, a *Saturday Night Live* alumnus, “Of course, that’s just my opinion. I could be wrong.” ✨

What is a master but a master student? And if that’s true, then there’s a responsibility on you to keep getting better and to explore avenues of your profession.  
—Neil Peart, Rush Drummer, 1952–2020<sup>4</sup>

### Conclusion

Collection management requires continuous self-development. ICPC and the Army Intelligence Development Program-Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance are frequently cited as best practices. Read doctrine: Army and MI. Engage with your peers; the authors of collec-

### Epigraph

Department of the Army, Field Manual 34-2, *Collection Management and Synchronization Planning* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Publishing Office [GPO], 8 March 1994 [obsolete]).

### Endnotes

1. Don Novello, “Father Guido Sarducci’s Five Minute University,” YouTube video, 3:55, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kO8x8eoU3L4>.
2. Department of the Army, Army Techniques Publication 2-01, *Plan Requirements and Assess Collection* (Washington, DC: U.S. GPO, 19 August 2014), v (emphasis added).
3. Wikipedia, s.v. “For Want of a Nail,” last modified on 3 June 2020, 12:49, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/For\\_Want\\_of\\_a\\_Nail](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/For_Want_of_a_Nail).
4. “Neil Peart,” Rush website, accessed 18 May 2020, <https://www.rush.com/band/neil-peart/>.

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