



Paratroopers from the 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, jump into Donnelly Training Area, AK, October 9, 2019, to kick off exercise Arctic Anvil 19-01. (U.S. Army photo by John Pennell)

# Intelligence Architecture for Airborne Joint Forcible Entry Operations

by Captain Matthew Yannitello

## Introduction

As the Army reinvests in large-scale ground combat operations, the airborne assault, as a component of a joint forcible entry operation, remains a viable option for the joint force. The airborne joint forcible entry operation seeks to deliver and mass combat power by parachute assault and airlands to seize key terrain. Often, the airhead becomes a perimeter defense because major challenges to building combat power fast enough include the constraints and limitations associated with methods of delivery for available airlift.<sup>1</sup>

An airborne brigade combat team's (BCT) intelligence warfighting function grapples with the same challenges. The intelligence warfighting function cannot bring all elements on the airborne assault and must sequence the building of intelligence combat power differently compared to a ground assault. An airborne assault disperses key intelligence personnel across a drop zone and renders the intelligence architecture dysfunctional. Meanwhile the majority

of the intelligence warfighting function remains at an intermediate staging base. This dispersion and separation frustrates the intelligence architecture and disrupts intelligence synchronization. BCT S-2s know these dilemmas yet struggle to find consistent solutions. Intelligence support to the airborne joint forcible entry operation needs quality intelligence preparation of the battlefield, information collection planning, and targeting support, but the mission variables demand specific attention to a unique problem set. To have a chance at success, the BCT intelligence warfighting function must create a viable intelligence architecture plan specific to airborne operations.

## Intelligence Architecture Products

The BCT intelligence warfighting function must have an intelligence architecture plan suitable for an airborne operation that resides in a standard operating procedure (SOP). The SOP's intelligence architecture plan is not exclusive to the brigade intelligence support element (BISE), the battalion S-2 sections, or the military intelligence company.

The SOP encompasses all elements ensuring the intelligence warfighting function's ability to communicate throughout the entire formation in addition to being interoperable with other mission command systems. Products that support an intelligence architecture plan include—

- ◆ a mapping of the architecture,
- ◆ a continuity of operations plan,
- ◆ a physical layout by command post, and
- ◆ deployment, load plan, and establishment standards.

## Map the Architecture

Mapping the architecture helps with visualizing the sensors, information systems, networks, servers, data and information flow, sustainment requirements, relationships, and organization of the plan.<sup>2</sup> The map is the conceptual blueprint for human, hardware, and software interactions absent of terrain and weather considerations, in much the same manner as a threat template during intelligence preparation of the battlefield. Many times, BCT S-2s map a limited version of the architecture for a specific mission in a green book or on a whiteboard and share it with their staff without having a baseline mapping first. Worse, some BCT S-2s only provide general guidance and defer architecture planning entirely to the military intelligence systems maintainer/integrator technician or a Digital Intelligence Systems Master Gunner graduate. Of the last 25 brigades to train at the Joint Readiness Training Center, only two brigades mapped the intelligence architecture in their SOP, and neither of these were airborne BCTs. The intelligence architecture map must be a priority, understood by all elements, and validated with signal staff. Once this occurs, planning on how to communicate inside the architecture becomes easier during airborne operations.

When mapping the intelligence architecture for airborne operations, the intelligence warfighting function considers how best to fight light and take only the necessary equipment to access data feeds and fused intelligence.<sup>3</sup> The intelligence warfighting function considers what systems will enable information flow in the airhead, reporting to the division tactical command post, and intelligence reachback

to other enablers. Intelligence personnel in the assault echelon cross-load upper- and lower-tactical internet systems that mapping identified as going to the assault command posts. Specifically, the map assists with assigning who jumps with systems and who jumps with additional batteries, antennas, and single key loaders. Meanwhile, the remaining personnel and equipment know they will arrive on bravo echelon airlands.

## Continuity of Operations Plan

Within the context of the architecture map, the intelligence warfighting function must describe how it plans to operate. The continuity of operations plan acknowledges that unanticipated events occur and postures the intelligence warfighting function to continue to operate despite



Paratroopers with U.S. Army Alaska's 4<sup>th</sup> Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, and the 4-25<sup>th</sup> Airborne Task Force, wait at England Air Force Base, LA, to perform a night jump and forced entry operation into the Joint Readiness Training Center's exercise area of Fort Polk, LA, February 16, 2016.

U.S. Army photo by CPT Richard Pecker, U.S. Army Alaska Public Affairs

challenges. The continuity of operations plan includes four components:

- ◆ It establishes the intelligence communication plan, identifying primary, alternate, contingency, and emergency (PACE) methods of communication and build redundancy.<sup>4</sup>
- ◆ The plan's operating instructions prescribe procedures, roles, and responsibilities for transmitting and receiving digital and analog reporting. Operating instructions for all reports, products, and requirements by system within the PACE plan ensure the right information gets to the right person in a usable format. These operating instructions address information management responsibilities for the intelligence warfighting function, request for

information procedures, and knowledge management expectations. Of 25 BCTs, fewer than half of BCT intelligence warfighting functions have any mention of knowledge management within their SOPs, with only two airborne BCT intelligence warfighting functions planning for knowledge management in any capacity.

- ◆ The continuity of operations plan describes how the intelligence warfighting function fights on the move and conducts battle handover between command posts.
- ◆ A compromise and destruction plan describes how the intelligence warfighting function reacts to threats to cyber and local security.<sup>5</sup>

During initial entry, the continuity of operations plan helps describe how intelligence processing, exploitation, and dissemination (PED) occurs between collectors, control elements, and higher echelon support despite constraints and limitations. Adjusting for multi-echelon collection and intelligence PED during an airborne joint forcible entry operation is a primary challenge of the BCT intelligence warfighting function because no PED capability will exist initially in the airhead. To synchronize PED support to the assault echelon, the BCT S-2 liaises with multiple entities throughout planning. During an airborne joint forcible entry operation, the preponderance of PED activities must shift to a higher echelon, or the BCT must leave organic PED capabilities established long after the BCT initiates the breakdown of the main command post. Without either option, the BCT risks PED not occurring and creating a gap in information collection despite having planned.

### Physical Layout at Command Posts

Once an architecture map and a continuity of operations plan exist, paratroopers must know where to establish within a command post. Layout diagrams show where to establish personnel and equipment at the assault command posts, the tactical command post, and the main command post. Typically, an airborne BCT has two assault command posts that establish within the first 30 minutes of paratroopers exiting aircraft in order to gain situational awareness of the operation and to communicate decisions. Only a few intelligence personnel go to each assault command post. Those paratroopers must bring with them the systems needed to communicate across the drop zone, back to the BISE if established, to the division tactical command post, and to any airborne full motion video assets. Such systems might include frequency modulation and tactical satellite radios, One System Remote Video Terminals, a Global Rapid Response Information Package, and a Deployable Network Kit. Having these systems at assault command posts ensures an increased information flow from other intelligence

personnel in the airhead, as well as from classified data networks that use chat and voice functions. Again, it is imperative that the intelligence warfighting function estimate power requirements and assign personnel to carry extra batteries, which ensures sustained command post operations. The tactical command post and main command post require layouts of personnel and systems, which includes a current operations and BISE layout at the main command post. It is now a matter of getting to the right spot and setting up in the correct sequence.

### Deployment, Load Plan, and Establishment Standards

An airborne assault is just another way to get to work, but it requires configuring personnel and equipment in a unique manner. Whether personnel and equipment are on the assault echelon or the bravo echelon, arriving mission capable in the airhead is the driving force for deployment standards. For personnel, it is the proper dawning of the T-11 parachute, a good static line control, a vigorous exit from the aircraft, and addressing malfunctions as required. For equipment, it means packing in rucksacks, weapons cases, door bundles, and container delivery systems. The intelligence warfighting function SOP specifies how intelligence systems prepare for a jump in the same manner as other equipment in airborne SOPs. Diagrams in the SOP provide simple visual instructions on how to prepare equipment. These diagrams also cover equipment that arrives in airlands, such as the Tactical Ground Station, the Shadow unmanned aircraft system, and the TROJAN SPIRIT LITE, in addition to the rolling stock that supports troop and supply movement. Those pieces of rolling stock require load plans for secondary loads in order to optimize establishing once they arrive in the area of operations.

Once personnel and equipment deploy, SOPs set priorities of work and specify procedures for the roles and responsibilities of all personnel to efficiently build intelligence warfighting function capabilities and capacities. A simple checklist associated with the layout diagram will make this process go faster, resulting in the intelligence warfighting function contributing to the fight sooner. Once established, not much difference exists between airborne and non-airborne infantry BCT intelligence.

### Implications for Intelligence Synchronization

There are two types of plans: plans that will not work and plans that might work. Too often, BCT intelligence architecture plans do not work. Solving intelligence architecture challenges can lead to improved synchronization, targeting, and collaboration. The deployment and establishment of the intelligence architecture throughout the joint



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forcible entry operation, combined with the speed and tempo of operations, make intelligence synchronization a challenge. There is too much information for seven to nine subordinate units to process and share in a single meeting for the meeting to be timely and of value. Supported by a functioning intelligence architecture, actual intelligence synchronization is continuous through current operations. When good leaders demonstrate the discipline to fight for information in a contested or degraded information environment, and move that information through the appropriate channels to the right person at the right time in a usable format, synchronization occurs.

Within the airhead, the BCTS-2 receives situational updates from battalion S-2s while shaping their understanding of the overall operational environment. Reporting must be constant; otherwise, a distorted understanding of the operational environment may emerge. Synchronizing with a higher headquarters at discrete points in time improves the BCT's understanding of the enemy's reaction to the airborne assault and updates the assessed immediate and most dangerous threats to the airhead. In an airborne joint

forcible entry operation, it is the difference between achieving a relative position of advantage or not.

## Conclusion

Solving the intelligence architecture plan is essential as the Army moves toward large-scale ground combat operations. Airborne-specific intelligence architecture plans ensure the intelligence war-fighting function operates effectively despite fighting initially with fewer people and systems. A functional intelligence architecture on a drop zone makes it so that intelligence can reach the airhead from echelons above brigade, and elements of the BCT

S-2, battalion S-2s, and military intelligence company can synchronize. Even with the chaos of the airborne assault, a flexible and redundant intelligence architecture will support the commander's intent and help agile formations close with and destroy the enemy. 🌟

## Endnotes

1. Department of the Army, Field Manual 3-99, *Airborne and Air Assault Operations* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Publishing Office [GPO], 6 March 2015), 3-9.
2. Department of the Army, Military Intelligence Publication (MI Pub) 2-01.2, *Establishing the Intelligence Architecture* (Fort Huachuca, AZ: U.S. Army Intelligence Center of Excellence, 4 February 2014), 1-1.
3. Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Publication 3-35, *Deployment and Redeployment Operations* (Washington, DC: U.S. GPO, 10 January 2018) III-3.
4. Department of the Army, MI Pub 2-01.2, 1-4.
5. Department of the Army, *Digital Intelligence Systems Master Gunner (DISMG) Handbook Version 2.0* (Fort Bragg, NC: FASTIC Team, DISMG Course Office, 2018), 62.

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