

# AUGMENTING THE OPPOSING FORCE WITH MILITARY INTELLIGENCE MISSION-ESSENTIAL TASK TRAINING

BY MASTER SERGEANT TAYLOR HADDEN  
& COMMAND SERGEANT MAJOR JOHN RIVERA

## Introduction

Training U.S. Army military intelligence (MI) Soldiers is critical to national security. In our complex, unpredictable, and interconnected world, the role of intelligence Soldiers has never been more crucial. Amid the evolving landscape of military operations, however, and in an era where budgetary constraints, resource limitations, and limited realistic environments are a constant concern, challenges abound in pursuing excellence in MI training. Integrating MI mission-essential task training with the opposing force (OPFOR) during combat training center rotations is an innovative and holistic solution to these challenges.

Historically, intelligence training has often lacked sufficient resources to prepare Soldiers adequately for the complexities of the modern battlefield. Constraints on the level of realism that can be achieved and the physical size of the replicated operational environment limit the effectiveness of any purpose-built training setting.

Scripted scenarios are the primary method of executing MI training. However, accessing or developing realistic training scenarios is only sometimes possible within a unit's organic capability, and developing these scenarios across all collection and analysis disciplines is time-consuming. Organizations such as the Army Foundry Intelligence Training Program offer some relief from this burden via a catalog of off-the-shelf scenarios.

The effectiveness of any of these training scenarios depends on the script's realism. Ideally, scenario developers must have some expertise in the warfighting functions to create an environment that realistically immerses Soldiers in the complexities of military operations. However, it is not feasible for scenario developers to be experts in *all* warfighting functions and have the breadth of experience to generate scripts that effectively replicate these complexities. Additionally, once executed, a scenario's iterative training events become less effective because Soldiers gain knowledge of the environment, actors, and storyline progression. This necessitates the development of multiple scenarios.

As a supplement to scripted scenarios, combat training centers offer a unique opportunity for MI training. Combat training centers already have the resources, realistic environments, and immersive training experiences to replicate convincing scenarios. During combat training center rotations, rotational training units execute the operations process, create and disseminate orders, and provide personnel, weapons, and equipment to support their identified training objectives.

Through integration with the OPFOR, MI Soldiers capitalize on the subject matter expertise of a rotational training unit's planning and execution of operations as the scenario in which they will train, thus replicating the realism necessary for effective training. This reduces the time requirement for external scenario development to zero while leveraging existing training resources. An excellent illustration of this approach is the recent integration of a human intelligence (HUMINT) element with the OPFOR during exercise Saber Junction 2023 at the Joint Multinational Readiness Center (JMRC) in Hohenfels, Germany.

## A Case Study

To assess the effectiveness of integrating MI Soldiers with the OPFOR, we invited a HUMINT platoon to participate as the OPFOR HUMINT during the Saber Junction 2023 exercise. The OPFOR HUMINT comprised an operational management team, which included one human intelligence collection technician and one intelligence officer, plus a HUMINT collection team composed of one noncommissioned officer and two junior enlisted human intelligence collectors. The primary training objective of the OPFOR HUMINT was to complete the MI Training Strategy (MITS) for the brigade combat team tier 3 crew certification. The training tasks focused on interrogation operations and friendly force debriefings.<sup>1</sup> The JMRC exercise procedures allow for the capture of rotational training unit personnel as enemy prisoners of war (EPWs) along with their associated equipment. When captured, the OPFOR holds EPWs at a replicated prisoner-of-war camp for 24 hours. Captured equipment may be retained until the end of the exercise if it is determined to have exploitation value.<sup>2</sup>

## ARTEP to Replace MITS

The Army is re-establishing the Army Training and Evaluation Program (ARTEP) for the operational domain and developing Mission Training Plans (MTPs). ARTEP MTPs focus training units, at echelon, on their mission essential tasks. MTPs are descriptive training products that provide battalions, companies, and platoons a hierarchy of collective training tasks showing leaders what training is needed to achieve mission essential task proficiency. The products will also provide guidance on how to plan, prioritize, and conduct unit training.

Throughout the exercise, the OPFOR HUMINT conducted a range of EPW tasks using the captured rotational training unit personnel, their documents, and their equipment. These tasks included screening, interrogation, intelligence report writing, technical report writing, and basic document and media exploitation. The OPFOR HUMINT also conducted friendly force debriefings with the organic OPFOR personnel.

During the exercise, the OPFOR captured 28 rotational training unit Soldiers ranging in rank from private first class to first lieutenant, incorporating at least 10 military occupational specialties (MOSs), as EPWs. The OPFOR seized various vehicles, communications systems, and paper documents associated with the multiple capturing events. Due to time and personnel constraints, the OPFOR HUMINT conducted 10 interrogations of the possible 28. The OPFOR HUMINT also conducted 5 friendly force debriefings of OPFOR personnel and wrote 6 spot reports (SPOTREPs), 7 intelligence information reports (IIRs), and 10 summary interrogation reports.

## Realism for the Opposing Force

The most valuable insight gathered from this training event was heightened realism. This realism took many forms, including integration with a higher headquarters operational structure, critical thinking for interrogation approach strategies, non-role player EPWs, and the quality and availability of exploitable documents and equipment.

The OPFOR personnel integrated the HUMINT team into all aspects of their operational infrastructure and operations. The OPFOR commander intentionally incorporated the OPFOR HUMINT into all battle rhythm events, including all staff briefings and rehearsals. This exposed the OPFOR HUMINT personnel to the operations process, a training feature usually ignored in scripted scenarios. This was particularly educational for the younger members of the OPFOR HUMINT as, traditionally, scripted scenarios do not consider the organizational structure of a unit's forces.

Immediately following EPW screening after capture events, the OPFOR HUMINT and the OPFOR operations staff conducted ad hoc meetings. These

meetings allowed the OPFOR HUMINT to immediately identify the OPFOR commander's most current information needs, which influenced the development of the interrogation strategy. Participation in rehearsals allowed the OPFOR HUMINT to develop tailored questioning plans for future friendly force debriefings.

There is an unavoidable element of gaming when conducting this type of training in conjunction with OPFOR integration. The JMRC exercise procedures impose some restrictions on operational methodology that would not otherwise be present during combat operations. Exercise procedures are briefed to rotational training units and are available for reference throughout the exercise. The most acute constraint is the 24-hour time limit imposed on EPW capture.<sup>3</sup> Because this time limit is known to the rotational training unit, the OPFOR HUMINT was limited in the number of iterative interrogations and their execution of interrogation approach strategies available to gain EPW cooperation. To overcome this, the OPFOR HUMINT had to think more critically about approach strategies to reduce gaming of the exercise.

The OPFOR HUMINT Soldiers described diverting from the traditional "easy button" approach strategies usually attempted during scripted training events. This process, which was primarily abandoned, combined the love of family and the futility approaches—a common strategy wherein an interrogator implies that the EPW's cooperation with the interrogator will facilitate a quicker resolution of conflict and hasten their return home.<sup>4</sup> As the exercise progressed, the OPFOR HUMINT was forced to devise approach strategies that focused more on the EPWs. One method included a combination of a hate of comrades approach, which focused on perceived low morale traceable to leadership, and a pride and ego-up approach centered on actions the EPW would

Soldiers from the Human Intelligence Platoon, Delta Company, 54<sup>th</sup> Brigade Engineer Battalion, 173<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Airborne), wearing the black uniforms and augmenting the opposing forces, interrogate a captured 2<sup>nd</sup> Cavalry Regiment Soldier during Exercise Saber Junction 2023 at the Joint Multinational Readiness Center, Hohenfels, Germany, September 2023. (U.S. Army photo by SGT Maria Tsukino)



A convoy of U.S. Army Soldiers, playing the role of opposition forces, roll through a training village with various armored vehicles during Saber Junction 23 at the Joint Multinational Readiness Center near Hohenfels, Germany, Sept. 13, 2023. (U.S. Army photo)



have undertaken to prevent capture and successfully execute their mission.<sup>5</sup>

Unlike scripted HUMINT training, the EPWs were not role-players during this training event. The knowledge of any individual EPW was directly associated with their rank, MOS, experience level, and duty position. The EPWs understanding of the rotational training unit's operations and the quality of information they received from respective headquarters or commanders also affected their knowledge level. The OPFOR HUMINT noted that the type of information these EPWs possessed was different from that experienced training with scripted role players. This reflects a need for scripted EPWs to have increased knowledge of future operational activities, technical equipment specifications, operational tactics, and operations intentions.

Because the EPWs were subject matter experts in their fields, the availability of detailed follow-up information far exceeded any scripted role. This was both an advantage and a disadvantage. Data collected through follow-up questions provided nuanced and specific information required by the OPFOR. It also allowed the interrogator to lose time pursuing immaterial information. However, the OPFOR HUMINT indicated the utility of the follow-up questioning for rapport building.

In scripted scenarios, captured documents and equipment are rare additions to HUMINT roles. The quantity and availability of captured documents and equipment in this unscripted environment, however, provided an added layer of realism for the OPFOR HUMINT, who used these seized items as control measures to identify truthfulness and accuracy, validate analytical assessments, and provide additional actionable intelligence. In at least one instance, the OPFOR HUMINT conducted part of an interrogation inside a captured vehicle using the Joint Battle Command-Platform's blue force tracking capability as the centerpiece of the collection effort.

### Utility to the Opposing Force

At JMRC, the OPFOR is a battalion-sized element replicating a brigade-sized enemy. The JMRC OPFOR has a minimal number of personnel composing their intelligence warfighting function, consisting of reconnaissance Soldiers, electronic warfare, virtual-only unmanned aircraft systems, and intelligence analysts. The OPFOR has no permanently assigned Soldiers with MI *collection* MOSs.

The integration of the OPFOR HUMINT significantly increased the OPFOR's warfighting capability, which enhanced the OPFOR Soldiers' training objectives. Typically, the five permanently assigned all-source intelligence analysts process and exploit the OPFOR-captured personnel and equipment. These analysts conduct tactical questioning of EPWs and screen captured documents and equipment on a time-available basis, which has limited success. Incorporating the OPFOR HUMINT alleviated these requirements, allowing the all-source intelligence analysts to focus on analytical assessments. The OPFOR HUMINT's SPOTREPs and IIRs led the OPFOR all-source intelligence analysts to practice fusing single-source HUMINT streams into their analytical assessments. Additionally, the OPFOR HUMINT provided an extra workforce to screen and process captured enemy documents and equipment, which led to more analytically robust evaluations.

The OPFOR used information gleaned from SPOTREPs, IIRs, and exploitation of captured documents and equipment in several ways. Future intentions confirmed analytical assessments, allowing modification of maneuver operations. Disposition information tipped and cued follow-on operations, including reconnaissance and fires. Interestingly, discussions between the OPFOR staff and the OPFOR HUMINT compelled the OPFOR leadership to reevaluate intelligence priorities and reexamine their targeting strategy.

### Logistics and Finance

The OPFOR integration proved to be a highly cost-effective method of training. The only training costs for the HUMINT Soldiers were the temporary duty expenses covering transportation to JMRC and meals and incidentals. The total cost to the government for the entire team was approximately \$6000. The HUMINT platoon integrated with the OPFOR and provided their own specialized equipment, which only included government computers with the essential operational



document templates needed for intelligence reporting. The OPFOR provided a workspace for report writing, an area for conducting interrogations, maps, radios, and the OPFOR uniforms. The JMRC provided billeting for the duration of the exercise.

## Opposing Force Augmentation as a Vehicle for MI Training Strategy Certification


The integration of OPFOR elements to achieve MITS certification posed several challenges that highlight the need for a more creative approach to the evaluation process. While the OPFOR HUMINT did achieve tier 3 MITS certification through this training event, this strategy has significant drawbacks. Although well-defined, the conventional performance step-based standards model used for MITS evaluation may align differently with the spontaneous and ever-changing scenarios encountered at a combat training center. For example, assessing the “Conduct Map Tracking” performance step depended on specific conditions, such as the EPW’s cooperation and knowledge of unit dispositions, which may not occur during an exercise.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, procedural lapses by the OPFOR personnel—for example, not creating adequate capture tags or not documenting the chain of custody for enemy materials beyond the JMRC exercise requirements—hindered the evaluation process, particularly regarding the “Initial Examination of Records and Materials” step.<sup>7</sup>

The presence of MITS evaluators had unintended consequences during interrogations. Instead of focusing solely on extracting intelligence based on the EPW’s cooperation, knowledge, and attitude, the interrogators were preoccupied with adhering to the MITS performance step criteria. One OPFOR HUMINT Soldier likened this disruption to “trying to qualify on your weapon in the middle of a firefight.”

Moreover, the presence of MITS evaluators led to confusion among the EPWs, with some mistaking them for the JMRC observer, coach, and trainers responsible for assessing adherence to the code of conduct within the rotational training unit. This misunderstanding likely influenced the EPWs’ behavior during interrogations, which diverged from their expected participation had the MITS evaluators been absent.

Given the limited time available for exercises at a combat training center, it is improbable that an OPFOR HUMINT element could certify on all MITS tables without disrupting the flow of intelligence collection and the realism of the training environment. The sheer number of performance steps and OPFOR HUMINT personnel requiring evaluation would monopolize the available time, especially considering the dynamic and unpredictable nature of OPFOR operations and the availability of intelligence sources. Therefore, there is a pressing need to explore alternative evaluation approaches that balance certification requirements with practical training and realistic scenarios.

## Conclusion

Conducting MI training through OPFOR augmentation during Saber Junction 2023 was a significant success. The simplicity and cost-effective nature of this training strategy is transferable to all MI occupational specialties. This method is scalable to incorporate individual, crew, or platoon-sized assets. It is infinitely modifiable to fit the training needs of MI Soldiers and the intelligence augmentation requirements of the OPFOR. The strategy is easily transferable to other combat training centers and any training event using a dedicated OPFOR element. The JMRC intends to continue MI augmentation of with the OPFOR, including electronic warfare, signals intelligence, unmanned aircraft systems, geospatial intelligence, all-source intelligence analysis, and subsequent HUMINT teams. 

### Endnotes

1. Department of the Army, Training Circular 2-19.403, *Military Intelligence Training Strategy for the Brigade Combat Team Tier 3* (Washington, DC: Government Publishing Office [GPO], 25 February 2020).
2. Seventh Army Training Command, *2023 Exercise Procedures*, ver.23.0 (Hohenfels, Germany: Joint Multinational Readiness Center, 2023).
3. Ibid.
4. Department of the Army, Field Manual 2-22.3, *Human Intelligence Collector Operations* (Washington, DC: GPO, 6 September 2006) 8-9, 8-13.
5. Ibid., 8-10, 8-12.
6. Ibid., 9-4.
7. Ibid., 6-5, D-2.

### References

- 173<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Airborne). *Exercise Summary HUMINT Support to JMRC OPFOR for Saber Junction 2023 Friendly Forces Debriefing and Interrogation Operations* [EXSUM]. 2023.
- Hadden, Taylor. “LTC Huff (Warrior 6) and CSM Lothspeich (Warrior 7) Interview.” In *Exercise Summary HUMINT Support to JMRC OPFOR*.
- Hadden, Taylor. “OPFOR HUMINT Soldier Interviews.” In *Exercise Summary HUMINT Support to JMRC OPFOR*.
- Hadden, Taylor. “SFC Shin interview, MITS Evaluator.” In *Exercise Summary HUMINT Support to JMRC OPFOR*.

MSG Taylor Hadden is a senior intelligence sergeant who serves as an operations observer, coach, and trainer at the Joint Multinational Readiness Center, Hohenfels, Germany. He previously served as an instructor for the Human Intelligence (HUMINT) Advanced Leader Course and the HUMINT Advanced Individual Training Course at the U.S. Army Intelligence Center of Excellence in Fort Huachuca, AZ.

CSM John Rivera is the Command Sergeant Major for the 743<sup>rd</sup> Military Intelligence (MI) Battalion, 704<sup>th</sup> MI Brigade, Buckley Airforce Base, CO. He previously served as the senior intelligence sergeant major at the Joint Multinational Readiness Center, Hohenfels, Germany and as the Deputy Commandant at the Noncommissioned Officer Academy, U.S. Army Intelligence Center of Excellence in Fort Huachuca, AZ.