

# OIF II: INTELLIGENCE LEADS SUCCESSFUL COUNTERINSURGENCY OPERATIONS

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When III Corps deployed to Iraq in January 2004, we knew that intelligence was key to victorious operations. As we reflect back on our thirteen months in Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) II, first as the core of Combined Joint Task Force 7 (CJTF-7) and then as Multi-National Corps-Iraq (MNC-I), that was clearly the case. Intelligence was the most important and challenging aspect of every endeavor. This article is intended to share some of what we learned about intelligence during our tour in Iraq.

The challenges we faced were perhaps most daunting as we transitioned from CJTF-7 to MNC-I on 15 May 2004. Both Shiites and Sunnis were fighting us on the battlefield, testing newly arrived formations. Furthermore, many of the Iraqi security forces had folded; the Abu Ghraib detainee abuse controversy was occurring; the insurgents were attacking Iraq's infrastructure (including our logistics lines); the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) was culminating; and a sovereign Iraqi government was a month away. Less than nine months later, MNC-I had a series of major victories against the insurgency leading up to the very successful elections on January 30, 2005. Across our area of responsibility, coalition forces had battled the growing insurgency in myriad ways, during countless engagements, and with absolute determination. Many factors contributed to the victories, but intelligence proved to be the key to all. Never before has intelligence driven operations as effectively as in OIF.

From small unit to theater level, intelligence provided the basis for every mission.

The demands of a new insurgency battlefield heightened our dependence on intelligence. While we had, and still maintain, robust technological advantages over the insurgents, the counterinsurgency battle requires a deep human intelligence (HUMINT) capability to understand the enemy, his intentions, and how to take the fight to him. We still need the technological advantages of our systems in the counterinsurgency fight, but our intelligence must leverage a significantly greater HUMINT capability.

Our intelligence capabilities during standard Cold War operations were quite effective in determining the enemy intentions, situation, and likely courses of actions. The rigid nature of these operations allowed our systems and intelligence personnel to apply templates to probable actions and maximize the collection capabilities of our technological systems. However, in the counterinsurgency environment (see Figure 1), our technical superiority in collection capabilities is somewhat marginalized and we become more dependent on collecting the enemy's intangible human dynamic which requires a heavier focus on HUMINT. Within the insurgency environment, a higher number of hard-to-predict events will occur, as occurs daily in Iraq. Assassinations, Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs), Vehicle Borne Improvised Explosive Devices (VBIEDs), and ambushes are less likely to be picked up

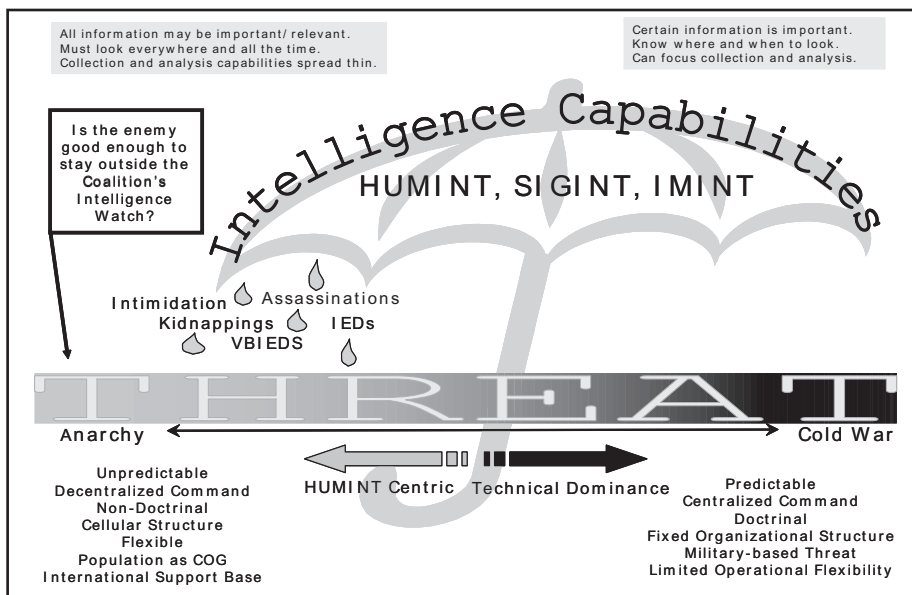


Figure 1. Under the Intelligence Umbrella.

through our Imagery Intelligence (IMINT) and Signals Intelligence (SIGINT). Rather, we are dependent on HUMINT to gather this information through interrogations, interaction with the community, and other means.

The key to the future of Military Intelligence (MI) is to retain the old capabilities while providing for the new challenges. As we continue to transform our Army in consideration of the contemporary operating environment, we will still have a significant need for our established technological capabilities to deter and counter potential foes like China, North Korea, and Iran; but we will also see a growing dependence on HUMINT. Models of how the enemy will fight become more ambiguous as adversaries continue to develop and evolve their own systems and tactics—especially in a counterinsurgency. We must be prepared for both major combat operations and counterinsurgency possibilities, knowing that our nation’s enemies are studying what we have done in Iraq to better prepare them for a future conflict against us.

We benefited from a shared intelligence structure in Iraq, leveraging both the Intelligence Fusion Center (IFC) and the Coalition Analysis and Control Element (CACE). Although the IFC was on the Multi-National Force-Iraq (MNF-I) Joint Manning Document (JMD) and the CACE was on the MNC-I JMD, both organizations supported all levels of command—providing intelligence from the four-star level down to maneuver battalion commanders in an environment that did not dictate strict intelligence roles. Intelligence vital for the MNF-I commander could be just as important to a battalion commander on the ground. As such, we disseminated the intelligence to

as many levels as possible given both security requirements and availability of communications. This collaborative environment allowed for a great deal of cross-talk throughout the coalition in Iraq, setting a precedent for the future. Collection Management, Coalition’s 2X (C2X), the C2 Systems Section, Foreign Disclosure Office, and Special Security Office were among the other functions we shared with MNF-I—providing synergy between the echelons. As we departed Iraq, the intelligence architecture was continuing to evolve, but the premise of collaborating and sharing intelligence both vertically and laterally was alive and well.

The intelligence effort in Iraq is a “bottom-up” process, however, with battalion and brigade S2s performing key roles. These officers and their sections are inundated daily with information from their areas of operation. Interrogation reports, tips, and other intelligence pour into the units at a rapid pace and require a tremendous amount of diligence and professionalism. In more cases than not, intelligence drives most of the battalion and brigade-level operations; in a counterinsurgency environment we have to take the fight to the enemy in a very direct manner. In contrast to the standard Cold War major combat operations resulting in securing terrain and/or defeating conventional units and weapons, counterinsurgency operations must target specific people and/or places which would have little significance to an operational ground war. The critical variables and dimensions of this operational environment create a daunting array of factors for which we must plan and adapt to in the counterinsurgency (see Figure 2). However, very few of these variables are collectible with our intelligence systems and must be addressed through HUMINT and good old-fashioned homework.

Actionable intelligence is hard to come by or act upon in Iraq. Without a doubt the complex nature of the insurgency is the most significant impediment. Compartmentalized cells operating throughout a specific area make collection on these groups very difficult and inhibit our ability to discern who is directing and facilitating insurgency operations. Another significant issue is that the sensor-to-shooter link is often cumbersome, fragile, and untimely. While we have worked to streamline our intelligence reporting to enable action, there are still significant challenges in terms of timeliness of intelligence and, at times,

accuracy. As previously mentioned, the daily fight at the battalion and brigade levels is the core of our intelligence work; the nature of the decentralized fight complicates intelligence collection and coordination between echelons.

Furthermore, the coordination between intelligence agencies is sometimes complicated by competing focuses, which is a historical challenge. Without going into detail, the integration of some HUMINT organizations was initially difficult because their missions were to locate weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and high value targets (HVTs) rather than support the local fight in which combat units were embroiled. For the Tactical HUMINT Teams (THTs), the challenges included insufficient pre-deployment training in combat skills, communications, and advanced source handling; they also had no organic security which made them dependent on whichever combat unit they were operating with for security. Additionally, and this is a recurring theme in the intelligence arena, they had insufficient linguistic capabilities. Intelligence restrictions, over-classification, and limited sensitive compartmented information (SCI) connectivity also impacted efficient intelligence sharing down to the brigade and battalion level.

Unfortunately, the Abu Ghraib controversy negatively impacted interrogation operations for a time. One result of the scrutiny prompted by the revelations about Abu Ghraib was the reluctance by some to effectively exploit detainees, but that was by and large a temporary overre-

action. The lingering effect, however, was the ill will it created with the Iraqi people. In an environment where we needed to win the hearts and minds of good Iraqis, the Abu Ghraib scandal severely impacted the cooperation of citizens with soldiers, THTs, and other intelligence collectors—adding to the already existing cultural and language challenges.

## What Worked in OIF II

During OIF II, countless intelligence successes serve as examples of how to do things right. Of note, HUMINT and SIGINT collection provided significant intelligence upon which we executed operations against the enemy. One reason for this success came from the C2X portal which streamlined and databased HUMINT reporting, which was available to all the major subordinate commands (MSCs). Additionally, we surged Mobile Interrogation Teams (MITs) to assist with detainees from successful operations throughout the area of operations (AO). This flex of resources allowed for the quick and efficient collection of additional HUMINT for future exploitation. Our document and media exploitation greatly supported target development and execution. The integration of civilian-trained technicians from the Reserve and National Guard assisted forensic study and targeting efforts. Furthermore, the unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) proved a vital resource for target and situation development at all levels. In terms of analysis, we successfully integrated national level subject matter experts (SMEs) into the analytical process across the command, and the bilateral interrogation operations with Iraqi National Intelligence Service (INIS), Ministry of Interior (MOI), and Ministry of Defense (MOD) proved an incredible success, garnering specific and vetted intelligence on insurgents throughout Iraq.

## The “INTS” in OIF II

**SIGINT:** Our SIGINT collection was the most spectacular intelligence discipline on the battlefield, as we were able to collect on many targets cued by other intelligence disciplines. Trusted and useful, SIGINT provided an abundance of intelligence on insurgent networks, named persons of interest, and enemy operations. SIGINT is a critical area where continued development of linguists, not only in skill but in numbers, must occur.

**IMINT:** IMINT was the most dependable of the intelligence disciplines in Iraq, and the UAV was the key to IMINT. In the past, commanders have offered to trade combat power for UAVs. Our experience in Iraq demonstrated why. Commanders up and down the chain of com-

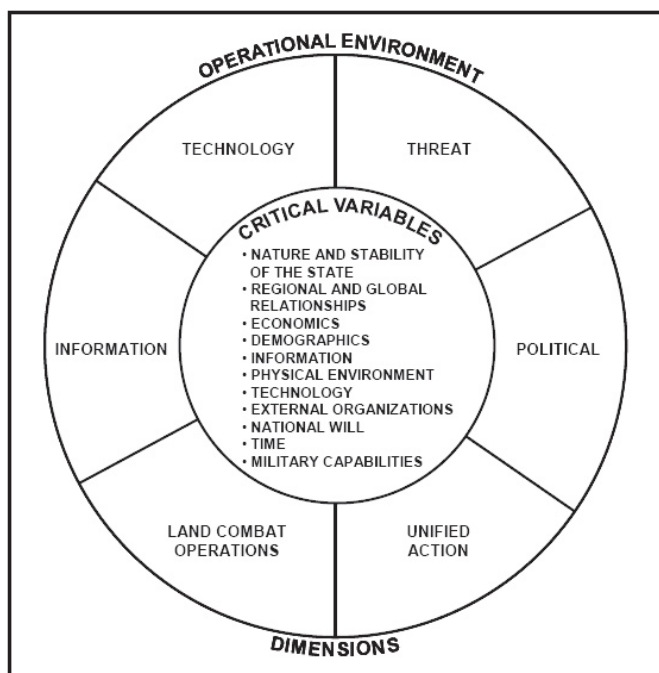


Figure 2. Critical Variables and Dimensions of the Operational Environment.<sup>1</sup>

mand cannot get enough UAV coverage and will always want more. A battalion level UAV is clearly needed so that commanders are not dependent upon brigade or corps and above platforms—and can get the IMINT support they need. At corps level, we used UAVs to significantly weight the fight for the commanders on the ground, especially with the Hunter, I-GNAT, and Predator. There were countless times when we had to make the tough calls on which MSC would receive the I-GNAT or Predator coverage for the day; most days several MSCs shared the coverage, splitting up the support. However, even at the Corps level we would lose our I-GNAT and Predator coverage to higher priority users, leaving the MSCs significantly unsupported.

UAV coverage allowed the commanders to view insurgent operations, infiltration routes, protests, and a myriad of other events. UAVs provide a significant ability to instantly provide the commander the critical situational awareness he needs to make decisions. A force multiplier which greatly supported targeting across Iraq, IMINT has fast become a force multiplier. However, we still have some challenges in how we operate our UAVs. For example, commanders must weigh how they will employ their armed UAVs—as an ISR platform or a targeting platform.

**HUMINT:** HUMINT was so dedicated to targeting that often not enough was left for situational understanding development. Rather than using HUMINT to understand the enemy as a whole and development of the insurgency across the country, it was largely focused on target after target. In Iraq we had roughly 132 THTs working in support of MNC-I and subordinate MSCs. Whether the teams worked in a general support role to answer the MNC-I priority intelligence requirements or in direct support to the brigade combat teams (BCTs) developing actionable intelligence, they were the critical intelligence discipline for the counterinsurgency—helping us to develop long-term and short-term sources, identify enemy intentions, and cuing other intelligence disciplines to collect on people, places, and events. We could never have enough THTs.

As part of the Corps concept of “Every Soldier is a Sensor,” we focused a fair amount of training on cultural awareness prior to deployment. Undoubtedly, our soldiers need to know the intricacies of Muslim life, the Arab mind, and how Iraqis view our American culture. Only then can we effectively operate in Iraq knowing how the Iraqis will perceive our actions, understand our environment, and integrate our mission into the battlefield with a

higher degree of success. MTTs, academic courses, and other training events were executed to develop our soldiers’ cultural awareness. We expected everyone, regardless of rank or position, to exhibit this awareness.

In conjunction with cultural awareness, language proficiency was, and is, a critical factor in THT success and proved to be one of the greatest challenges. Across the battlefield, a soldier who has Arabic language skills provides an invaluable service to his/her unit in terms of HUMINT capability. However, we will always be short Arabic linguists. This shortage is one reason the Army is reviewing our language programs, promoting the growth of our own Arabic, Chinese, and Farsi linguists in the long term.

As we develop our HUMINT, it is critical we share our intelligence laterally and up and down the chain of command. Again, in the counterinsurgency environment, the distinctions between enemy areas of operation are not as clear as in the traditional major combat operations; therefore, we must understand there are no intelligence handover lines, rather intelligence sharing lines. As we work the intelligence situation in our specific AO, it is highly probable that the intelligence may also bear fruit in another AO.

We face the challenge of time when we develop our HUMINT. However, time is exactly what you need to develop HUMINT capabilities not only at home station but also in country. Over time, relationships must be forged with contacts, and as units rotate through Iraq, we must examine how well we transfer these built-up relationships between rotations. In the Iraqi and Muslim culture, relationships with others—through religion, family, tribe, or work—are paramount to all other issues.

One emerging practice, which showed promise in Iraq and HUMINT, was the use of telephone hotlines. Telephone hotlines allowed Iraqis to anonymously telephone in tips to the MSCs. The tips did not always provide the necessary actionable intelligence; however, it was another method to develop our HUMINT in the country. The biggest challenge was working through the false tips, the misuse of the tip line to get back at another Iraqi or, in a few cases, the attempt to set up Coalition forces in an ambush based off a deceptive tip. However, this new practice warrants continued attention and support as it served us well in Iraq.

Directing and planning intelligence operations in a counterinsurgency is a very difficult process the commander must address, not just the “2.” Before we can collect, ana-

lyze, and disseminate the intelligence to the forces we must first have a direct and precise plan on how we can gain our intelligence. As LTG Odierno commented during a visit to MNC-I in January of 2005, "Intelligence is an operation. You have to fight for Intelligence." How many times have we seen a great deal of time and effort put into a tactical operation and then watch as the intelligence collection plan is briefed as a supporting event instead of the main event it should be? In the HUMINT-centric environment of a counterinsurgency battle, the intelligence mission often must become a mission unto itself, receiving the same kinds of support and resourcing as a tactical operation. Otherwise, tactical operations will likely display the attributes of a movement to contact—not the optimal situation.

### SCAN-FOCUS-ACT

During OIF II, the MNC-I promoted the "Every Soldier is a Sensor" concept with the SCAN-FOCUS-ACT Program. The soldiers, sailors, airmen, and Marines needed to understand that not only were they the eyes and ears of the Coalition but they were also capable of making a difference to save the lives of their comrades and, in some cases, their own lives through the simple process of scanning their area, focusing on what was not correct, and acting. The program was not only specific to what the troops were doing while out on patrol or in their movements in Iraq but also what they came across in their daily jobs. One example is a young intelligence staff sergeant who worked in the MNC-I Joint Operations Center (JOC). The staff sergeant, in executing his shift duties, was about to pass on a report about a suspected VBIED in Baghdad. Rather than simply passing the report on to the respective MSC, he reviewed the report and saw something that did not make sense. Plotting the grid coordinates, he realized the coordinates could not be correct. Instead of passing the report on, he contacted the report originator, shared his concerns about the grids, and found out that indeed the grids were incorrectly annotated in the report. As a result, a new report was issued and sent down to the respective MSC which in turn sent a patrol out to find the VBIED, which they did shortly afterwards. The staff sergeant's actions were exactly in line with SCAN-FOCUS-ACT and directly contributed to denying the enemy his ability to use a VBIED against Coalition and Iraqi forces.

*"Intelligence is an operation. You have to fight for Intelligence."*

— LTG Raymond T. Odierno, January 15, 2005

## Conclusion

Intelligence played a critical role in our success in OIF II. IMINT, SIGINT, and HUMINT all contributed to the commander's ability to understand the enemy and the situation. As we continue to fight the counterinsurgency fight, our dependence on HUMINT will continue. Critical to understanding the decentralized insurgency fight, HUMINT provides the situational understanding we need to effectively engage the enemy on our terms. If we fail to develop our HUMINT to a higher degree, then our fight will become a battle of attrition as the enemy's mantra appears to be to simply fight another day. We must, however, continue to keep our technical intelligence capabilities sharpened as the major combat operation threats still remain in the world.



## The 12 Major Victories of OIF II

1. Karbala. The 1st Armor Division and the Multi-National Division-Central South (Poles) were able to control the Shia Uprising in Al Kut and Najaf Provinces and defeat it in Karbala.
2. Al Kut. Special Forces, a Stryker Battalion Task Force and Corps enablers defeat the insurgents in Al Kut.
3. Najaf. The Najaf operation required most of the month of August, but in the end we defeated Sadr's militia, gave the Interim Iraqi Government its first major victory, and launched Najaf to follow Karbala as a model province.
4. Tal Afar. The Stryker Brigade took on the enemy in Tal Afar and gave the city back to the free Iraqis.
5. Samarra. The 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division was able to take back the city of Samarra from the enemy after a carefully planned and prepared operation was executed with overwhelming power and precision.
6. Sadr City. This victory was ours, by virtue of the brilliant leadership and management of the 1<sup>st</sup> Cav-

alry Division as they defeated the enemy in Sadr City not just militarily, but also politically, economically, and in the battle for information and public opinion.

7. Fallujah. The combined Coalition fight which the Marines spearheaded with the support of the 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division and British forces was a textbook urban fight.

8. Mosul. The forces of MNB-NW took on the surviving elements of Fallujah who fled to Mosul before, during, and after the Fallujah fight.

9. North Babil and South Baghdad. The daily fights to secure these areas paid large dividends as the elections drew near.

10. MND-SE. The sustaining fight the British forces fought throughout their AO kept the insurgency from returning to this once volatile region.

11. MND-NE. The Korean brigade deployed to the northeast provided continued pressure on the insurgency.

12. The elections on January 30, 2005. 8.5 million Iraqis voted in free and fair elections.

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#### Endnote

1. FM 2-0, *Intelligence*, May 2004, 1-24.

*LTG Thomas Metz is Commanding General, III Corps and Fort Hood. He was Commanding General, Multi-National Corps-*



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