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<b>14. ABSTRACT</b>					
<b>Abstract</b>					
<p>The US Army must improve its information collection (IC) training practices if it wishes to fight effectively as part of the joint force in future, high-intensity wars. This paper identifies three areas in which current training reflects outmoded thinking and a general disregard for doctrinal principles. Moreover, it highlights the negative effects associated with this issue. To a large extent, this paper recapitulates information recently consolidated in the new <i>ATP 2-01 Collection Management (2021)</i>, to which the author was a contributor. However, doctrinal manuals (and sound procedures) are of little use if ignored. This essay will describe how current practices misalign with Army doctrine while outlining simple changes the Army can make to its intelligence and operations planning procedures.</p>					
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**Three Information Collection Myths:**

**DEBUNKED**

## Introduction

Information Collection (IC) is an activity that informs commanders' critical decisions by synchronizing and integrating reconnaissance, surveillance, security, and intelligence assets with military operations.<sup>1</sup> Doctrinally, IC requires close collaboration between staff sections in an Army headquarters, and—contrary to popular belief—no staff section exclusively owns it.<sup>2</sup> The *commander* owns IC, and the combined staff executes it. Specifically, the combined staff analyses orders received from its higher headquarters, identifies information gaps, and formulates information requirements relevant to planning and execution. Should the commander so designate, certain requirements will become priority intelligence requirements (PIRs) for collection and analysis. In turn, the intelligence section tracks requirements, recommends strategies for collection, and facilitates tasking by providing requirements management tools to the operations staff.<sup>3</sup> Analysts then fuse information gathered from across collection disciplines—producing intelligence relevant to command decisions—and the cycle repeats itself.

The preceding paragraph describes how IC doctrinally works and how it must work in large-scale, multi-domain operations. Unfortunately, Army units rarely execute information collection planning and management by the numbers or, more generally, in a manner that serves commanders' needs. Year after year, the combat training centers (CTCs) and the Center for Army Lessons Learned (CALL) report recurring performance shortfalls related to intelligence synchronization: staff often fail to nest collection management (CM) with the Military Decision-

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<sup>1</sup> Department of the Army, *Field Manual (FM) 3-55, Information Collection* (Department of the Army, 2013), 1-1.

<sup>2</sup> Joint doctrine uses the term 'intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance synchronization' (ISR Sync) to describe analogous processes, *Ibid.* This paper primarily references Army Information Collection (IC) for simplicity.

<sup>3</sup> Department of the Army, *Army Techniques Publication (ATP) 2-01, Collection Management* (Department of the Army, 2021), 9-1.

Making Process (MDMP), and they struggle to task collectors effectively.<sup>4</sup> Army units thereby fail to synchronize intelligence with operations, and commanders lack timely information required for rapid decision-making.<sup>5</sup> This paper highlights specific areas in which information collection training must improve if the US Army hopes to wield IC effectively in large-scale combat operations (LSCO). In short, we must get back to doctrine and improve staff collaboration.

### Spotting the Issue

The Army's IC difficulties derive, in part, from habits acquired in Iraq and Afghanistan, where low-level staff relied heavily on echelons above division (EAD) support to tactical missions. Through much of the Global War on Terror, tactical units used joint force theater sensors to provide persistent surveillance, near-real-time situational awareness, threat warnings, and security to forces on the ground.<sup>6</sup> In 2014, for example, intelligence synchronization with ground maneuver in the author's area of operations mostly involved tracking asset requests and direct tasking once a platform arrived on station. Detailed integration was often *ad hoc*, and rarely did collection relate to clearly specified command decision points.<sup>7</sup> While these practices

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<sup>4</sup> William Denn, Jason Turner, and Adam Wojciechowski, "Improving Brigade Combat Team Intelligence Collection Operations for Large-Scale Ground Combat," *MI Professional Bulletin*, PB 43-20-3 (July-September, 2020), 40; Raymond A. Kuderka and Andrew Eickbush, "Information-Collection Failures that Lead to 'Discovery Learning,'" *Armor* Vol. CXXV No. 2 (April-June 2015), 35; Operations Group: The National Training Center, *Mastering the Fundamentals: Training to Win at the Point of Contact*, (Fort Leavenworth, 2021), 38, 44.

<sup>5</sup> Center for Army Lessons Learned (CALL), "News from the Front: Priority Intelligence Requirements (PIRs)," *Combined Arms Center-Training* (Report) No. 22-712 (Fort Leavenworth, 2022), 1.

<sup>6</sup> Raymond A. Kuderka and Andrew Eickbush, "Information-Collection Failures that Lead to 'Discovery Learning,'" 35.

<sup>7</sup> In 2014, I was a company fire support (artillery) officer and joint fires observer in Herat Province, Afghanistan. I subsequently served as a battalion targeting officer in the same location. In both capacities, I worked closely with our battalion task force's intelligence section and tactical air control party (TACP) for near-daily integration of kinetic and non-kinetic airborne platforms. My team regularly had tactical control over one or more EAD assets

were, perhaps, sufficient for attacking insurgent networks and providing threat warnings to small units, they do not reflect the demands of high-intensity conflict.

Simply stated, much of what we now teach and continually reinforce about IC is wrong. It is wrong from a practical standpoint and, in many instances, a doctrinal one.<sup>8</sup> Army trainers and units—especially in the intelligence branch—over-emphasize “box-check” intelligence products optimized for digital briefs in static environments and woefully underemphasize the importance of collaborative staff analysis.<sup>9</sup> Operational units thereby adhere to methods adequate in asset-rich environments but that do not support decision-making in LSCO.<sup>10</sup> In some cases, staff fail to follow basic procedures outlined in black letter doctrine. In other cases, they neglect “the why” behind doctrinal techniques vis-à-vis support to decision-making in high-intensity conflict. In response, the remainder of this essay will 1.) debunk three myths inspired by “this is how we’ve always done it” ways of thinking and 2.) summarize proper, collaborative IC planning.

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during routine missions or in ground combat. These included AH-64 attack helicopters, MQ-1 Predators, MQ-9 Reapers, an MC-12 Liberty, B-1 Bombers, and a variety of fixed-wing close air support platforms, to say nothing of a local Scan Eagle and RQ-7 Shadow support.

<sup>8</sup> The National Training Center, *Mastering the Fundamentals*, 46; From 2019 to 2022, I served as a Military Intelligence Captains Career Course (MICCC) small group leader, instructor, and course developer. Those roles allowed me to observe all-source training across the US Army Intelligence Center of Excellence (USAICoE) and interact with hundreds of enlisted Soldiers and officers (warrant and commissioned). While Army training curricula undergo periodic updates, the issues described in this essay were pervasive as recently as summer, 2022.

<sup>10</sup> Operations Group: The National Training Center, “Preparing for Large-Scale Combat Operations,” *Combined Arms Center-Training (Report)* No. 21-6 (Fort Leavenworth: January 2021), 5.

### **Myth #1: Information Collection is Step Five of IPB**

Information Collection (IC) is an umbrella term that includes planning, synchronization, subordinate enabling tasks, assessment, and all other facets of an organization's quest to obtain combat information and intelligence.<sup>11</sup> It informs how units devise friendly courses of action (COAs), enables targeting, and drives branch plan or sequel execution. As stated earlier, it is not solely the intelligence section's province. Nevertheless, units widely treat information collection as something the S2/G2/J2 does in isolation as a final add-on to Intelligence Preparation of the Battlefield (IPB).<sup>12</sup> In other words, intelligence sections complete Step Four of IPB (Develop Threat Courses of Action) and immediately draft collection products based on hypothetical threat timelines. These products—forming an 'IC or CM plan'—typically include an information collection matrix (ICM) for tracking intelligence requirements, an information collection synchronization matrix (ICSM), and an information collection overlay (ICO).

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<sup>11</sup> 'Collection Management' (CM) is an intelligence-specific set of subtasks embedded in IC; however, this essay defaults to the broader term 'IC' in many cases for simplicity. Department of the Army, *Army Techniques Publication (ATP) 2-01, Collection Management*, 1-4.

<sup>12</sup> Center for Army Lessons Learned (CALL), "News from the Front: Priority Intelligence Requirements (PIRs)," 1.

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BCT Action	Phase I: Area defense and security operations along PL Python							Phase II: Prepare to support passage of lines					Phase III: Clear enemy in zone					
Enemy Action	SPF and RISTA elements conduct screening operations							Mechanized infantry battalions establish battle positions to block friendly forces										
Collection Focus	Identify SPF and RISTA disposition within the disruption zone							Identify enemy defensive positions along avenue of approach within the battle zone										
Local Time	0200	0300	0400	0500	0600	0700	0800	0900	1000	1100	1200	1300	1400	1500	1600	1700	1800	
H-Hour	H-4	H-3	H-2	H-1	H	H+1	H+2	H+3	H+4	H+5	H+6	H+7	H+8	H+9	H+10	H+11	H+12	
EAB	COMINT						★					★						
	ELINT											NAI 3004						
	GEOINT						NAI 3001/TAI 1					NAI 3005/TAI 5						
	MASINT						NAI 3001/TAI 1											
BCT	A Troop						NAI 3001/TAI 1		Movement									
	B Troop								NAI 3003/TAI 3									
	C Troop								Movement									
	HCT 1						NAI 3001/TAI 1											
	HCT 2																	
	HCT 3						NAI 3002/TAI 2											
	CI																	
	Prophet 1	Maintenance					NAI 3002/TAI 2				NAI 3003/TAI 3							
	Prophet 2	Maintenance												NAI 3004				
	Shadow 1						NAI 3002/TAI 2							NAI 3004				
Shadow 2										NAI 3003/TAI 3								
Shadow 3														NAI 3005/TAI 5				

★ decision point    □ requested asset

BCT brigade combat team    HCT human intelligence collection team    PL phase line  
 CI counterintelligence    H-hour specific hour at which a particular operation commences    RISTA reconnaissance, intelligence, surveillance, and target acquisition  
 COMINT communications intelligence    MASINT measurement and signature intelligence    SPF special purpose forces  
 EAB echelons above brigade    NAI named area of interest    TAI target area of interest  
 ELINT electronic intelligence  
 GEOINT geospatial intelligence

Example Information Collection Synchronization Matrix (ICSM)<sup>13</sup>

There are three primary reasons why it is wrong for the staff—let alone the intelligence section in isolation—to create detailed collection plans for future operations so early in the planning process. First, assessed threat courses of action and corresponding event matrices may describe actions forecasted days, weeks, or even months in the future depending on the context. As this paper will show, it is counterproductive to create synchronization products (even recommendations) relative to H-Hour if offensive or defensive operations will not begin, hypothetically, for another two weeks. No COA development will have occurred, and in cases

<sup>13</sup> Source: Department of the Army, *Army Techniques Publication (ATP) 2-01, Collection Management* (Department of the Army, 2021), 6-16, Figure 6-6 (U).

where doctrine does not prescribe it, H-Hour's defining event may be unknown. Moreover, the intelligence section cannot reasonably forecast future organic asset dispositions until a friendly scheme of maneuver has materialized.<sup>14</sup>

The second problem with current practices is that large-scale operations will demand great attention to commanders' decision points tied to a plan's execution. Typically, these will not become apparent until after mission analysis. For example, during COA development, the staff may identify a need to reconnoiter potential water crossing sites during movement, thereby informing an execution decision at a specific time. However, the collection manager cannot form a coherent strategy for answering such requirements until 1.) the commander's critical information requirements (CCIRs) and timeliness standards have been prioritized by phase and 2.) the staff has assessed collection resources available at critical times and places. Execution-phase collection plans are, therefore, meaningless before COA Dev and wargaming.<sup>15</sup>

Finally, collection plans made prematurely—and in a vacuum—ignore deconfliction requirements that *will* arise between intelligence and targeting tasks.<sup>16</sup> A collection timeline is no good if it fails to prioritize limited assets relative to competing operational demands. However, the intelligence staff will only have fragmentary information about tentative friendly COAs and targeting decisions in the early phases of planning. And while the staff may produce a draft high payoff target list (HPTL) during mission analysis, it will be too soon to establish sensor-to-shooter relationships. Such relationships derive from the targeting process, fire support planning,

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<sup>14</sup> Department of the Army, *Field Manual (FM) 3-55, Information Collection*, 3-4.

<sup>15</sup> Department of the Army, *Army Techniques Publication (ATP) 2-01*, 4-3; US Department of the Army, *Field Manual (FM) 5-0, Planning and Orders Production* (Department of the Army, 2022), F-1.

<sup>16</sup> Premature (and compartmentalized) planning and poor staff collaboration are almost certainly why IC-Fires rehearsals often become technical fires rehearsals and why units sometimes become target-focused (at the expense of intelligence collection).

and wargaming. Thus, it is a mistake for collection managers to create lengthy and time-consuming plans without knowing phased requirements for both intelligence and fires. Nevertheless, the habit of treating collection management as an unofficial “fifth step” of IPB is still deeply ingrained in Army training.<sup>17</sup> This practice wastes valuable time, promotes staff compartmentalization, and encourages planners to ignore a crucial planning output. That output is the ‘initial information collection plan’ in its *proper* form.

### **Myth #2: The Initial Information Collection Plan is Just a Draft**

Notwithstanding the preceding arguments, Army and joint forces doctrinally *do* identify ‘initial CCIRs’ and devise ‘initial information collection plans’ early in planning.<sup>18</sup> However, the term “initial” is misleading, and confusion over this matter creates avoidable friction between intelligence and operations. Initial requirements and plans are not draft planning outputs, and they do not derive from a collection manager’s guesses as to how an operation will go. Instead, they address the commander’s most pressing concerns vis-à-vis information gaps relevant to Course of Action Development and refinement.<sup>19</sup> In other words, initial collection plans pertain to reconnaissance, surveillance, security, and intelligence missions that must occur *immediately or in the near term*. They are not tentative “recommendations” for asset tasking in the distant future, i.e., during decisive phases tied to H-Hour. Rather, they should represent a unit’s earliest

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<sup>17</sup> While the phrase “Step 5 of IPB” was never used, finished IC plans attached to IPB were part of MICCC assessments between 2019 and 2022. As of 2022, only the Information Collection Planners Course evaluated collection planning synchronized to operations; however, it did not discuss the ‘initial information collection plan’ as described in this paper. Furthermore, the latter course only made brief mentions of decision points and the operations process.

<sup>18</sup> Department of the Army, *Field Manual (FM) 5-0, Planning and Orders Production*, 5-15.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

efforts to improve situational awareness and inform the commander's decisions. In simplified terms, the initial plan is an execution order for ground reconnaissance units and all other capable collectors disposed to begin their missions.<sup>20</sup>

According to *FM 5-0: Planning and Orders Production*, the initial collection plan sets reconnaissance assets in motion, and collection should begin as soon as conditions allow.<sup>21</sup> Appropriately, all Army organizations assigned reconnaissance, surveillance, surveillance, or intelligence tasks should begin their missions before the staff publishes Warning Order 2 or soon thereafter (assuming constraints and limitations do not prohibit movement).<sup>22</sup> Thus, all capable and available assets should already be at work shaping the information environment by the time planning concludes. However, collectors cannot deploy early if they do not know where to be or what to report. The initial collection plan must, therefore, apply to the "now" of operations, and the collection manager's presentation during a mission analysis brief should reflect ongoing collection missions or near-term plans. In practical terms, initial schemes of collection should extend no more than a few days into the future (perhaps only a day or two)<sup>23</sup> and reflect concepts already worked out through parallel planning.<sup>24</sup> Future operations collection is a separate matter, and staff must push regular updates to collectors as planning continues.

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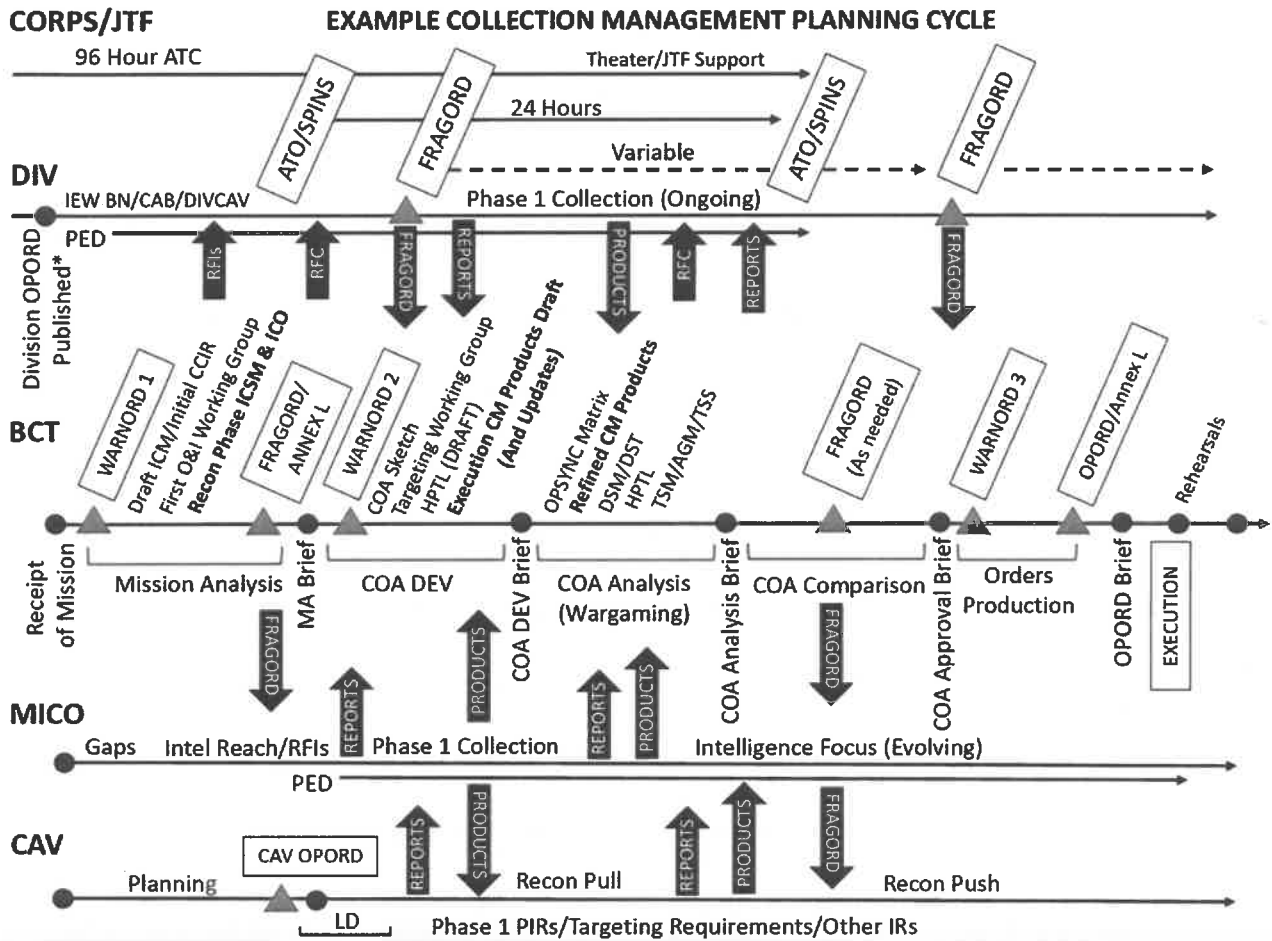
<sup>20</sup> James E. Armstrong, "Information-Collection Plan and Reconnaissance-and-Security Execution: Enabling Success," *Armor*, (July-September, 2016), accessed May 11, 2023, [https://www.benning.army.mil/armor/earmor/content/issues/2016/JUL\\_SEP/3Armstrong16.pdf](https://www.benning.army.mil/armor/earmor/content/issues/2016/JUL_SEP/3Armstrong16.pdf)

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, G-11; FM 6-0, FM 3-55, and ATP 2-01 all agree on this definition and concept.

<sup>22</sup> Department of the Army, *Field Manual (FM) 3-98, Reconnaissance and Security Operation* (Department of the Army, 2015), 1-11; By implication, all organizations charged with executing 'initial collection' adhere to the same logical timeline as cavalry squadrons.

<sup>23</sup> Different assets and organizations will require more lead time for conducting their missions and varying levels of updated instructions. The collection manager and staff should assess the extent to which detailed synchronization and integration are important, especially during initial collection periods.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*; Department of the Army, *Army Techniques Publication (ATP) 2-01*, 4-14.



**An Example Information Collection and Joint ISR Synchronization Timeline<sup>25</sup>**

**ABBREVIATIONS**

<b>AGM:</b> Attack Guidance Matrix	<b>ATO:</b> Air Tasking Order	<b>BCT:</b> Brigade Combat Team
<b>CAB:</b> Combat Aviation Brigade	<b>CAV:</b> Cavalry	<b>CM:</b> Collection Management
<b>DIV:</b> Division	<b>DSM:</b> Decision Support Matrix	<b>DST:</b> Decision Support Template
<b>FRAGORD:</b> Fragmentary Order	<b>HPTL:</b> High Payoff Target List	<b>IEW:</b> Intelligence and Electronic Warfare
<b>JTF:</b> Joint Task Force	<b>LD:</b> Line of Departure	<b>MICO:</b> Military Intelligence Company
<b>O&amp;I:</b> Operations and Intelligence	<b>OPORD:</b> Operations Order	<b>PED:</b> Processing, Exploitation, Dissemination
<b>RFC:</b> Request for Collection	<b>RFI:</b> Request for Information	<b>SPINS:</b> Special Instructions
<b>TSM:</b> Target Synchronization Matrix	<b>TSS:</b> Target Selection Standards	<b>WARNORD:</b> Warning Order

<sup>25</sup> Graphic by the author; expanded from Figure 4-4 in Department of the Army, *Field Manual (FM) 3-98, Reconnaissance and Security Operation* (Department of the Army, 2015), 4-15. A simpler version of this now appears in *ATP 2-01 Collection Management*.

Understood correctly, ‘initial collection’ and ‘initial PIRs’ will address immediate and short-term information gaps...not questions that may arise once friendly or threat forces cross the line of departure. If organic assets are indisposed, the intelligence staff must conduct further data mining and submit requests for information (RFIs) to higher or adjacent headquarters.<sup>26</sup> Execution-phase collection plans subsequently arise out of requirements derived from proposed friendly COAs later in MDMP.<sup>27</sup> All things being equal, it is during COA development that “draft” collection concepts tied to execution should take shape.<sup>28</sup> That is where the staff creates further coordination measures, possible decision points, new PIRs and NAIs, etc. Concurrently, the staff adjusts ongoing and near-term collection based on refined requirements. Finally, a detailed, sequenced, and synchronized collection plan (with its adjoining ICSM) then arises from wargaming: not before.<sup>29</sup>

Before proceeding, it is important to note that Army staff struggle to draft useful PIRs *in general* and commonly fail to update PIRs—initial or otherwise—throughout planning.<sup>30</sup> A 2022 Mission Command Training Program (MCTP) report notes that division reconnaissance assets habitually deploy without clear guidance in simulated scenarios, and units’ PIRs often do not

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<sup>26</sup> Department of the Army, *Field Manual (FM) 3-55, Information Collection*, 3-7.

<sup>27</sup> Department of the Army, *Field Manual (FM) 6-0, Commander and Staff Organization and Operations* (Department of the Army, 2014), 9-10.

<sup>28</sup> Draft products made during MDMP Step 3 might only include sketches and statements to go with the S3/G3/J3’s products. Collection managers must work closely with the combined staff during COA Development even if the commander directs (prescribes) a course of action.

<sup>29</sup> Ideally, staff should conduct wargaming (COA analysis) even when refining a directed COA. Even in abbreviated forms, wargaming is where the staff derives synchronization products, identifies friction points, and formulates branch plans.

<sup>30</sup> Center for Army Lessons Learned (CALL), “News from the Front,” 5.

reflect commanders' decision points.<sup>31</sup> Units create PIRs during mission analysis, which tend to be enduring and unspecific, while failing to identify likely decisions connected with them. Thus, the authors recommend tactical patience and advise units to wait until later in planning to codify information requirements. However, the report seems to overlook the practical necessity of collecting as early as possible in a way that feeds planning. MCTP's concern over rushed and nebulous PIRs is warranted; however, a more nuanced response is appropriate. Units should appreciate—and doctrine should clarify—that commanders make many decisions in planning. Like subsequent PIRs, initial requirements should address time-sensitive decisions—such as where to conduct a breach or whether to assign additional combat power to a decisive point. In these and other examples, early and aggressive collection might be crucial.<sup>32</sup>

In sum, confusion over collection planning timelines—owed greatly to institutional training gaps—contributes to the Army's intelligence synchronization problems. Army staff misunderstand how intelligence cycles should nest with operations and misapply doctrinal guidelines intended to promote unity of effort. Intelligence sections waste time building ineffective products “for the brief” while ignoring valuable opportunities to fight for information in the early phases of an operation. In the worst cases, initial collection plans—wrongly created as draft proposals—arise from pure speculation and substitute collaboration for hours spent on PowerPoint. These plans become obsolete the moment a commander issues specific guidance to subordinate organizations. In turn, collectors deploy forward with piecemeal information, lack time to conduct planning at their respective echelons, and may execute their missions based on

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<sup>31</sup> Mission Command Training Program (MCTP), “FY 22 Mission Command Training in Large-Scale Combat Operations: Key Observations,” *Combined Arms Center-Training* (Report) No. 23-3 (763) (Fort Leavenworth, 2022), 29.

<sup>32</sup> Some might argue that collection intended to clarify the OE is a regression back into IPB. However, IPB is continuous and should always inform decisions—whether in planning or execution. There is no such thing as “going back to IPB.”

guesswork.<sup>33</sup> Synchronization then devolves into a cycle of unfocused, dynamic re-tasking based on *ad hoc* requirements.<sup>34</sup>

### **Myth #3: Planning Equals Physical Products**

At this point, one might ask, “How can a headquarters formulate an actionable collection plan before or immediately after mission analysis concludes? What about the event template and collection management tools?” These are valid questions, to which there is a two-part answer. First, intelligence professionals must work efficiently and not let staff products constrain mission command. Mission analysis and its outputs are means to an end (decision-making), not ends in themselves. Some outputs are unnecessary for collection, at least in their refined forms. Second, collaborative planning and parallel planning are essential for successful collection. This paper’s final section will address areas in which graphic intelligence products can undermine effective IC and conclude by describing a proper method for collaborative planning.

#### **Product Fixation and Analysis Paralysis**

The event template is a critical input for collection planning.<sup>35</sup> Produced during IPB Step 4, the event temp is an overlay aligning named areas of interest (NAIs) against indicators corresponding to threat COAs in time and space. As such, it helps the staff synchronize

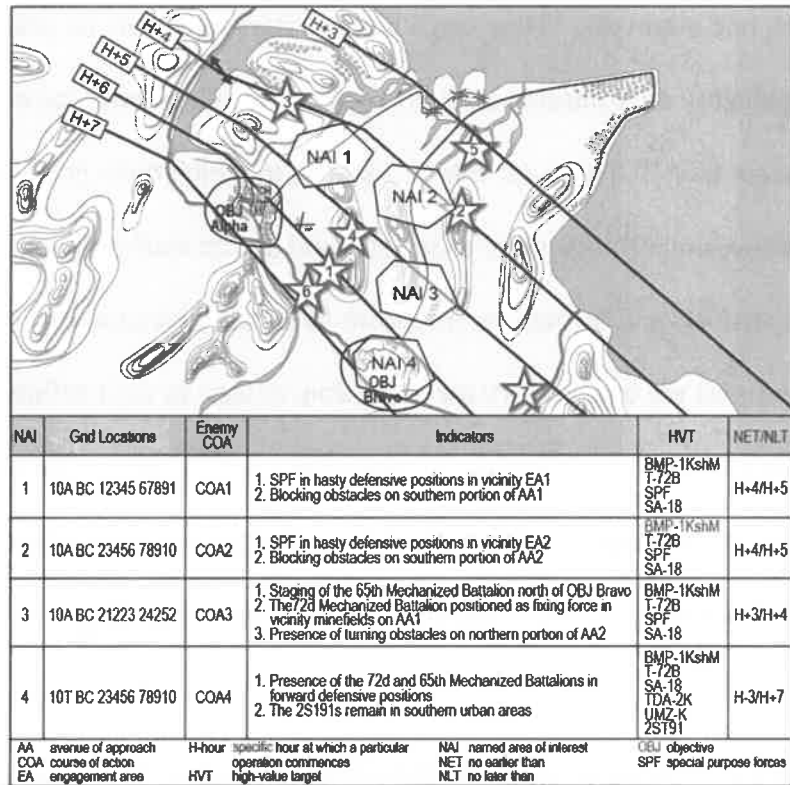
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<sup>33</sup> Cortis B Burgess, “Intelligence After Action Review Trends at the National Training Center,” *News from the CTC*, Center for Army Lessons Learned, October 21, 2020, 4; Operations Group: The National Training Center, “Preparing for Large-Scale Combat Operations,” *Combined Arms Center-Training (Report)* No. 21-6 (Fort Leavenworth: January 2021), 5.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*; Richard L. Sharp, Ray C. Joyce II, and Roy S. Swearingin, “Resolving Challenges for Brigade Combat Team Collection Management,” *MI Professional Bulletin*, PB 43-20-3 (July-September, 2020), 58.

<sup>35</sup> Department of the Army, *Army Techniques Publication (ATP) 2-01.3 Intelligence Preparation of the Battlefield* (Department of the Army, 2019), 6-20.

collection, targeting, and maneuver against threat actions. However, an event template may not exist when collection planning begins, which begs the questions posed above. In short, units do not need a physical event template to initiate collection, and there are several reasons why relying too heavily on the event template is counterproductive.<sup>36</sup>



An example event template and associated event matrix<sup>37</sup>

First, an effective staff will not wait until the mission analysis brief to capture a commander's initial requirements and identify NAIs associated with them. While collection must

<sup>36</sup> Event templates should continually evolve, and they will never be "complete." However, units commonly fail to update them. Ideally, event temps and matrices should capture threat timelines from "now" until execution, despite what the graphic shows.

<sup>37</sup> Source: Figure 6-13, Department of the Army, *Army Techniques Publication (ATP) 2-01.3 Intelligence Preparation of the Battlefield*, 6-22.

inform commanders' decisions and support targeting, some decisions will—as stated earlier—occur during planning. The Army's preferred method for planning is, after all, the Military *Decision-Making Process*. Second, some PIRs may be unrelated to the physical movement of threat forces (if related to the threat at all).<sup>38</sup> Commanders' decisions pertain to *all* characteristics of the operational environment (OE)—enemy, terrain, weather, and civil considerations—and even enemy-focused requirements can vary dramatically based on the situation. Moreover, initial PIRs, especially when the enemy picture is relatively vague, may be somewhat open-ended or tailored toward developing the operational picture.<sup>39</sup> Finally, even the best event templates are estimates derived from the intelligence staff's visualization; they can and must undergo constant revision based on updated intelligence. Consequently, even where predicted threat activities are concerned, there is nothing wrong with initiating collection based on a temporary “mental event template” and rough estimates. The event template is a tool for planning, but its absence should not cripple the staff.<sup>40</sup>

Similarly, the staff must not inflate the importance of the ICSM. The ICSM is a briefing product and a visual tracking aid, nothing more. It is not a “tasking document,” contrary to how many units and trainers have come to conceptualize it. It is not a mission order. Thus, there is no doctrinal or practical reason for the collection manager to create extended sync matrices

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<sup>38</sup> The Army should revise and clarify its explanation of event templates and their relevance to operations. ATP 2-01.3's explanation is brief and overly reductionist; it is easy to get the impression that PIRs and NAIs derive solely from event templates and ECOAs, which is false. Moreover, it fails to emphasize the necessity of collecting in depth (spatially and temporally) apart from a brief mention of forward-looking indicators.

<sup>39</sup> See FM 3-98 (Chapter 5) and FM 3-55 (Chapter 1) for explanations of ‘reconnaissance push’ and ‘reconnaissance pull’.

<sup>40</sup> Units commonly fail to update their event templates after initial IPB. Though initial collection does not require a physical event temp, units *must* create and maintain one. Operations Group: The National Training Center, *Mastering the Fundamentals*, 45. Eric Slater, a former colleague and former opposing force commander at the National Training Center, further corroborated these points in an April 2023 phone conversation.

spanning numerous days—especially where a concept of operations does not yet exist or when detailed synchronization is not needed. Nevertheless, even when managers try to focus on immediate collection priorities or critical execution periods, they may feel pressured to create superfluous graphics capturing recommendations and requests well into the future. To a large extent, this behavior derives from the tyranny of the air tasking cycle (ATC) and units' continued reliance on external collection support. However, while the current ATC requires units to submit requests for support 96 hours in advance, it is usually a waste of time to create detailed ICSMs associated with each.<sup>41</sup> ICSMs can take hours to produce and change rapidly. Collection managers should, therefore, restrict their use of ICSMs to cases where collection has been approved (or formally requested) and where integration requirements have been worked out. Managers who create seven+ day synchronization slides decks will spend exorbitant amounts of time behind a computer and little time collaborating with the staff. Appropriately, the final topic of this section addresses the collaborative process for devising IC plans and tasking effectively.

### Collaborative Planning and Proper Tasking

When a unit receives an order from its higher headquarters, all affected parties should meet to strategize collection.<sup>42</sup> This meeting (called the Operations and Intelligence Working Group) ideally occurs as early and as often as conditions permit.<sup>43</sup> At a minimum, it should consist of key staff members and representatives from organizations involved in collection,

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<sup>41</sup> Some collection agencies require collection managers to submit "ISR plans" and ICSMs with requests for support. This must change. There is no reason for supporting agencies to require detailed layouts of a requesting unit's graphical collection concepts, especially when standardized, text-based products convey more information. Whether or not the current ATC is appropriate for modern warfighting is beyond the scope of this paper.

<sup>42</sup> Operations Group: The National Training Center, "Preparing for Large-Scale Combat Operations," 21.

<sup>43</sup> Units and trainers sometimes refer to this meeting as the 'Information Collection Working Group'.

targeting, or analysis.<sup>44</sup> It can be as formal or informal as a unit chooses, and it does not have to be time-consuming. Space does not permit a detailed description of this meeting; however, its purpose is to identify ways and means for executing collection based on known requirements. Thus, the most important output from the O&I Working Group is a feasible initial collection concept informed by the expertise and running estimates of those responsible for its implementation. By bringing the staff and other stakeholders together, the commander (or executive officer) can reduce information stove-piping and promote proper, collaborative planning. While the meeting will not produce an hour-by-hour scheme of collection, it will give the CM and operations teams the information they need to complete an initial plan.

Assuming collaborative planning has taken place, nothing the collection manager subsequently presents at the mission analysis brief should surprise the commander or any collectors that might be in attendance. For example, the reconnaissance squadron and MICO commanders should not be taken aback by how unrealistic the plan is (assuming also that collectors are not “out” already). The collection manager will have already heard the commander’s reconnaissance guidance and captured each constraint or limitation affecting collection across echelons. Concordantly, the plan as briefed will merely reflect what everyone already knows, perhaps with finer details worked out. Moreover, each organization will have received vocal or written orders (from the S3/G3/J3) conveying clear IC tasks. Therefore, if the collection manager has had time to create a synchronization matrix, it will illustrate the details of a plan either underway or pending final approval.

Once initial planning concludes, collection managers need only provide refined or updated details to collectors. Such requirements might include specific information requirements

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<sup>44</sup> Department of the Army, *Field Manual (FM) 3-55, Information Collection*, 2-5.

(SIRs), overlays, timeliness standards, and so on. Crucially, they must come through mission-type orders published through the S3/G3/J3 shop with the collection operations manager's assistance. A FRAGORD, WARNORD, or Annex L (Information Collection Annex) attached to either document is the appropriate method for issuing collection tasks—not an ICSM, though units can attach graphical products if desired. The Army has lost proficiency in using mission-type orders and Annex L to task intelligence assets, but fast-paced operations in degraded environments necessitate change.<sup>45</sup>

Below is a hypothetical example of a concise, text-based mission-type order. The collection management team or operations cell could disseminate it to forward units via radio or digitally. It could propagate as a stand-alone message or as part of Paragraph 3 (Execution) to a formal 5-paragraph mission order. Any updates to the situation, mission, command and control, or logistical considerations (by collector) should be included, in which case a full 5-Paragraph format would be appropriate.

#### **Shadow 1:**

**Task** to UAS platoon during Phase 1: Establish FLS NLT 23 2100ZJUN23; **Area reconnaissance** between PLs Red and Blue **Purpose:** IOT to refine picture of second echelon defenses (LTIOV 232300ZJUN23), identify and track enemy reserve (LTIOV 230400ZJUN23), and target enemy battalion C2 nodes. **On Order:** Screen AA2 IOT provide early warning of enemy division reinforcements and other threats to US mission.

#### **Coordinating Instructions:**

Shadow 1 direct support to 1<sup>st</sup> BCT BICE for Phases 1-2. See commo card for PACE. 1<sup>st</sup> BCT GEOINT responsible for PED. Alternate taskings from S-2 CUOPs; Contingency 1<sup>st</sup> BCT CHOPS. Direct Support to S-2 CUOPs begins in Phase 3 (See commo card). Dynamic re-tasking approval authority is the collection manager or BCT commander.

<sup>45</sup> Colonel Neil Myres, a former reconnaissance squadron observer, controller, and trainer (OC/T) at the National Training Center informed me in a phone conversation (Spring 2022) that he never saw a rotational unit disseminate an Annex L.

Current PIRs for PH I (BPT receive updates):

PIR 1: What defensive preparations in depth has the enemy made east of the White River? (DP 2); PIR 2/TIR 1: Have enemy reserve forces crossed PL Blue? (DP 3 and HPT1); 3.) TIR 2: Where are C2 nodes located for battalions and above? (HPT2) PIR 4: Is the enemy reinforcing south of Smallville? (DP 4)

Targeting functions for enemy reserve and C2: Identify (BPT track and/or conduct BDA).

See NAI worksheet dated 221230ZJUN23 for SIRs by location; See ICO dated 221230ZJUN23 for NAIs and coordination measures. S-2 CUOPs will send updates as relevant according to PACE. ICSM (221530ZJUN23) attached for situational awareness.

These requirements will determine US branch COAs associated with the BCT's main effort and enable success by degrading the enemy's ability to respond to US offense in PH II.

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Collection management teams or operations cells can draft mission-type orders like the one above in a few minutes using collection management tools as quick references. Combined with an ICO or NAI overlay, they convey much more information than PowerPoint matrices like the ICSM, and they do not include superfluous details irrelevant to specific collectors—as with the ICM. To maintain an aggressive cycle of tasking and refinements, units must become adept at using simple, text-based instructions to collectors, transmittable over radio or mission command systems. While boilerplate collection management tools are valuable for planning, they use excessive amounts of bandwidth in transmission and create version control issues when over-issued; more crucially, they are inadequate for communicating detailed requirements. In other words, units must exercise mission command by issuing clear mission orders.

### **Conclusion**

The Army's underlying IC weakness is not in how well Soldiers understand platforms and sensor capabilities. Rather, it lies in our staff training practices and our tendency to fall back

on deeply engrained, often counterproductive habits. Nevertheless, the US Army must conduct aggressive information collection and effective collection management if the joint force is to dominate in large-scale, multi-domain operations. Doing so requires unity of effort and common procedures Army-wide. While imperfect, US military doctrine provides sound methods for achieving both...should we choose to read and apply it. Therefore, the US Army's centers of excellence, CTCs, and professional development schools must prioritize collection in their programs and emphasize staff integration as a vital, trainable component.

Admittedly, there are many challenges associated with injecting more operations and staff training into IC curricula. The inverse is also true. The Army has lost a great deal of large-scale warfighting proficiency, and very few veterans of Airland Battle still wear the uniform. Commissioned officer education is multi-faceted and commonly requires programs to balance ever-increasing requirements. More challenging still, junior enlisted and junior warrant officers typically have limited background experience with which to contextualize detailed mission planning. However, our current generation of service members is highly educated and adaptable. The Army must change its military staff culture, and force-wide change begins with our training organizations. The operations process must be the foundation on which the intelligence function is built. Information collection is the cornerstone that connects the two.

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