

Company Level Intelligence Cell

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Company Level Intelligence Cell

In a counter insurgency, fight intelligence operations are more important than ever. The United States Marine Corps is not adequately supporting the company level intelligence cell (CLIC) concept that is proven to be effective in an asymmetric fight. To correct this problem, Marines must be properly trained, tactical collection understood, and the cross boundary fusion of intelligence or manning requirements facilitated.

Background

The Marine Corps recognized the importance of intelligence operations at the lowest level and published *Company Intelligence Cell in Stability and Support Operations* (CIC in SASO) and states the importance in the opening paragraph.

In the asymmetrical threat climate of the 21st century, stability and support operations (SASO) are often conducted from a company-level firm base. These company and platoon size units need immediate, on-scene intelligence support to deal with an enemy that can recruit, rest, and resupply amongst the population in a predominately urban environment. This requires an intense collection and analysis effort by even the smallest unit. And, because of the noncontiguous nature of SASO, it is unrealistic to expect that higher echelon staffs will consistently be available to support them. Therefore, Marines in small units must establish

and maintain a limited, but effective, capability for themselves.¹

Prior to and since its publication only a few deploying units have adopted the concept and have been able to shorten the commander's ability to decide, detect, deliver, and assess.

Training

To support the CLIC concept adequately the Marine Corps must ensure the Marines receive the proper training. Infantry Marines are designated to the company intelligence cell by the company commander. They are selected based on their abilities to collect, process, and disseminate intelligence to drive company operations. The company intelligence cell is then tied to the battalion for the higher level fusion, allowing those closest to the information the ability to process and make sense of it. The cell will send the information to adjacent companies for increased situational awareness and to the battalion to process and disseminate to the regiment and higher. Ensuring quality information is being supplied up and down the chain is from the perspective of those that live it daily. "First and foremost, intelligence should support

¹R. D. Alles, "Company Intelligence Cell in Stability and Support Operations", Marine Corps Warfighting Laboratory, 2006

the commander's decision making process by reducing uncertainty about the hostile situation."² The concept of the company intelligence cell is seriously hampered due to the lack of training. The Marines that live it daily are not trained in intelligence operations outside of a one or two day class prior to deployment. One or two days are not enough. Marines with an Intelligence military occupational specialty (MOS) receive one month of infantry training from Marine Combat Training (MCT). Then they are trained in intelligence for three to eight months, depending on MOS. This training gives them the basics in intelligence prior to arriving at their unit. Conversely, infantry Marines are trained at the School of Infantry (SOI) for three months in infantry tactics and weaponry prior to arriving at their unit. Similarly, the infantry and intelligence Marines begin their real training with the fleet unit. The result is that intelligence Marines can adequately understand infantry tactics and doctrine, but infantry Marines rarely understand intelligence. Examples of a few of the more than twenty functions expected to be performed by a company intelligence cell are, "Identify patterns and trends and conduct analysis, supervise the collection effort, coordinate and contribute to the targeting

² MCWP 2-1. *Intelligence Operations*. September 2003

process.”³ Conducting pattern and trend analysis is a skill that gets better with time and experience. This ability comes from connecting sometimes unseen dots between people or groups and is typically conducted by a trained intelligence staff led by an Intelligence Officer not two or less Marines without experience or training. To supervise a collection effort the Marine must be able to: “determine collection requirements, conduct collection requirements management with emphasis on effective integration of collection, production and dissemination activities, collection plans and tasking of subordinate units, conduct collections operations management with integration of the unit's collection efforts and subordinate units' maneuver, fires, combat service support, communications and information systems planners, collection requests to external forces, collection reporting and dissemination.”⁴ Again this process is typically organized and executed by a staff section with an officer in charge not one or two untrained Marines. Coordinating and contributing to the targeting process requires an understanding of all of the intelligence disciplines and how they are used in concert to make a targeting package.

³R. D. Alles, “Company Intelligence Cell in Stability and Support Operations”, Marine Corps Warfighting Laboratory, 2006

⁴MCWP 2-11. *Intelligence Collections Operations*. May 2000

The CLIC also has to have a thorough understanding of how to use, task, and position strategic and national assets to answer the commanders' tactical targeting questions. Additionally, the CLIC must have the credibility, training, experience, and sometimes rank to tell a commander when and where to target a group or individual. One or two untrained Marines cannot be expected to fulfill these three functions let alone all twenty of them, especially in the fast paced environment of combat operations. The Marine Corps is not adequately training Marines properly to fill the roll of the CLIC.

Intelligence Collection

Current asymmetric intelligence collection is the keystone to defeating an insurgency and the Marine Corps must ensure the Marines conducting intelligence operations in a tactical environment are trained in tactical intelligence collection for an asymmetric fight. However, updated tactical intelligence training is taking a back seat in initial training to conventional intelligence collection and processes. The Navy and Marine Corps Intelligence Training Center (NMITC) spends five months training, "Intelligence Specialists" (0231), in all aspects of traditional intelligence operations, including

collection, recording, analysis, processing, and dissemination up to the Marine Expeditionary Force level. However, the training does not ever focus toward the opposite end of the spectrum. As identified in the 1940 *Small Wars Manual* the focus of intelligence operations need to be at the lowest level for small asymmetric fights:

Even the battalion in small wars rarely operates as a unit. Its companies often occupy the more important villages in the battalion area and, in turn, send out subdivisions to occupy strategically located settlements and outposts. As soon as it is established, every detached post or station must organize and develop its own intelligence system. Each garrison must initiate active patrolling for the purpose of becoming familiar with the routes of communication, topography and geography of the district, the inhabitants, and the economic and political forces at work in the community.⁵

Marines attending the current initial training are not prepared for this kind of fight. Instead they are repeatedly tested on the structure and composition of cold war doctrine armies. The Marines must be able to template enemy units on a map representation of the battlefield and intelligently brief their capabilities. However, in the current operating environment, the enemy does not act or react according to any doctrine, and, as soon as there is a trend, it changes. The US Marine Corp is failing to

⁵ FMFRP 12-15. *Small Wars Manual*. 1940

broaden the education of young Marines and properly prepare them for the current operating environment.

Intelligence Preparation of the Battlespace (IPB) in counterinsurgency operations follows a methodology. However, it places greater emphasis on civil considerations, especially people and leaders in an area of operations, than does IPB for conventional operations. IPB in counterinsurgency requires intelligence personnel to work in areas such as economics, anthropology, and governance that may be outside their expertise.⁶

Additionally, once these young intelligence Marines reach the fleet Marine force, they may have to be able to operate independently and even train a peer from the infantry community in their craft. The fight dictates how the Marines will operate: "Insurgencies are local. They vary greatly in time and space. The insurgency one battalion faces will often be different from that of an adjacent battalion. This shifting mosaic nature of insurgencies, coupled with the fact that all Soldiers and Marines are intelligence collectors means all echelons are both intelligence producers and consumers, resulting in a bottom-up flow of intelligence. This pattern also means that tactical units at brigade and below will require a great deal of support for both intelligence collection and analysis, as their organic intelligence structure will

⁶US Army Field Manual 3-24. *Counterinsurgency*. 2007

often be inadequate."⁷ The asymmetric counterinsurgency fight is not going away anytime soon. The Marine Corps will continue to face small units and their adaptive tactics and must be able to get out of a reactive mode and stay ahead of the enemy.

Cross Boundary Fusion & Manning Requirements

The Marine Corps is not facilitating cross boundary fusion of intelligence or manning requirements. Insurgencies are tightly tied across numerous areas of operation, and the sharing of information becomes increasingly important. Face to face meetings, network conductivity, and cross talk amongst intelligence facilitators are a necessity in counterinsurgency operations. Company areas and command posts in the current theaters of operation are typically secluded and are plagued with conductivity problems. It is difficult for analysts and commanders to push products, documents, and briefs to adjacent and higher commands. Products are typically hand carried on portable hard drives and discs to push and pull information and intelligence to the company level. Therefore, the products produced by a higher command rarely make it to the companies in a timely manner

⁷ US Army Field Manual 3-24. *Counterinsurgency*. 2007

for it to be actionable. All products reaching the lowest level should be the standard not the exception: "Effective, accurate, and timely intelligence is essential to the conduct of any form of warfare. This maxim applies especially to counterinsurgency operations, as the ultimate success or failure of the mission depends on the effectiveness of the intelligence effort."⁸

Best case scenario a battalion intelligence staff is made up of two officers, a staff non-commissioned officer and five or six "Intelligence Specialists" (0231s). The company intelligence cell would be best served having two 0231s per company to allow twenty four hour operations with an intelligence trained Marine per shift. Those two intelligence Marines would be augmented by designated infantry Marines. However, with four companies per battalion, the T/O does not allow for that requirement. Even if all of the 0231s were farmed out from the battalion, there would be no Marines left to complete the fusion for the companies as well as ensure the Battalion Commander is abreast and informed on intelligence operations. This requirement has been identified previously in *Company Intelligence Cell in Stability and Support Operations*: "In the absence of T/O billets, the

⁸US Army Field Manual 3-24. *Counterinsurgency*. 2007

manning of the (company) intelligence cell has to be assigned as a collateral duty for suitable members of the existing company staff. You are well served to staff the (company) intelligence cell with about six Marines.”⁹ The Marine Corps must facilitate cross boundary fusion of intelligence and manpower requirements to adequately support the CLIC concept.

Counterargument

Opponents argue that the current system of pulling infantry Marines from their platoons and applying them to the company intelligence cell is working in Iraq. Additionally, the companies do not to become any heavier than they already are and the current system combines maintaining size and adding function. While operations can continue to be done this way it is far more effective to increase the size of the company and improve the ability of the intelligence cell because in time the increase in size and function will decrease the workload for the infantry Marines conducting door to door operations. The increase is small but will save lives and make us an exponentially more effective force.

⁹R. D. Alles, “Company Intelligence Cell in Stability and Support Operations”, Marine Corps Warfighting Laboratory, 2006

Conclusion

The United States Marine Corps is not adequately supporting the company level intelligence cell (CLIC) concept that is proven to be effective in an asymmetric fight. Infantry and Intelligence Marines are not properly trained to be successful in the current theater of operations. Infantry Marines lack the training with intelligence systems, processes, and procedures to be effective intelligence operators without extensive training. Intelligence Marines lack the training to train augmented Marines to facilitate intelligence operations in the current operating environment. Cross boundary fusion of higher and adjacent intelligence will continue to remain difficult in theater without improvement in communications conductivity. Company intelligence cells provide the organic capability down to the lowest unit to gather, analyze, and process information to tighten the commander's decision making process, supplementing the lack of conductivity from higher. Finally, manning requirements must be solved by the Marine Corps. T/Os must be updated, and all available 0231s must be immediately assigned to deploying infantry battalions to allow enough time to train their respective cells prior to a deployment cycle.

Given the appropriate personnel, training, and equipment, the company intelligence cell will be the task organization to drive operations and to "support the commander's decision making process by reducing uncertainty about the hostile situation."¹⁰

¹⁰ MCWP 2-1. *Intelligence Operations*. September 2003

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