

Infantry Companies Need Intelligence Cells

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While a squad is out on patrol, a squad member receives information about a known insurgent leader traveling into their area of operation (AO). Upon completion of the patrol, the patrol leader sends his report up to the battalion intelligence section. The battalion intelligence section reads all the patrol reports provided for that day, and upon discovering the information on the insurgent leader, corroborates the information, which requires finding at least two other sources that claim the same. The intelligence section then disseminates the refined intelligence providing grid coordinates, pictures of the leader, and possible information about the known vehicle in which the insurgent leader may be traveling. In turn, the company sends out a patrol with the intent of killing or capturing the insurgent leader. Everything is going as plan except for one thing: The insurgent leader has come and gone through the area of operation, and while he was there, he met with other leaders and discussed future attacks on coalition forces.

The current operating environment calls for distributed operations causing infantry companies to operate in a somewhat autonomous role. However, without adequate intelligence staffing at the battalion level, information can not be quickly processed, and insurgents will elude capture. Therefore, infantry battalions need to develop an intelligence cell composed of 03XX due to the manning shortfalls of the 02XX and the required manning of intelligence personnel at the Tactical Fusion Center (TFC). The construct of the intelligence section serves to fuse and answer the battalion commander's priority information requirements, otherwise know as PIR's.

Infantry Battalion's T/O

The following is the table of organization (T/O) for an infantry battalion's intelligence section: One 0202 intelligence officer, and one 0203, who will either serve as an assistant intelligence officer, otherwise known as the alpha or as the scout sniper platoon commander. Sometimes the 0203 will hold both responsibilities. On the enlisted side, one 0231 seasoned and experienced staff non-commissioned officer serves as the intelligence chief, and four 0231s serve as analysts. However, the current operating environment has caused shortfalls and infantry battalions deploy to Iraq with only one intelligence officer and five enlisted. Sometimes that senior staff non-commissioned officer is fielded by a sergeant.

Intelligence Personnel Manning Shortfalls

The intelligence field is a low density, high demand MOS (military occupational skill). This means that the number of required billets that need to be filled is greater than the current number of Marines in the intelligence field. In a conventional fight, the intelligence section's manning is able to support the infantry battalion's requirements and the battalion's need for processed information. However, in a counterinsurgency (COIN) the T/O for an infantry battalion does not adequately take into account the dispersed nature of this type of warfare, in Iraq.

Required Manning

Census Patrols

In Iraq infantry battalions must know the human terrain as well as the physical terrain, and establish a common operational picture on multiple facets, gathering in detail as much information on an individual as possible. Traditionally or doctrinally such census collection is normally done by the intelligence section; however, in a counterinsurgency this needs to be done at the basic maneuver level, or at the company/platoon level. When a patrol leaves the wire (departs friendly lines) in Iraq, the patrol must know, understand and live the terrain that it will patrol. Patrol members need to know the smallest detail in order to increase their chances of

survival. Compiling all the information on the local population is an astonishing feat. The battalion intelligence section can perform this task; however, infantry companies will be competing with the two or three other maneuver companies and the battalion commander's intelligence requirements. It is important for infantry companies to also have a vested interest in compiling the information and being able once the information calls for such action.

Debriefs

Typically, companies send out patrols. Once those patrols return, they will debrief with individuals assigned to perform those tasks. The debrief will capture or document only information that the debriefer feels is pertinent, which will then be sent to the battalion intelligence section. The patrol debriefs are then sent to the intelligence section within 24 hours. However, due to operational requirements, this may take up to two to three days. Once the intelligence section receives those debriefs, they will start to analyze and process the information. Upon finalizing those debriefs into an intelligence report that can be disseminated, enough lag time can occur between the initial patrol debrief and the dissemination of the intelligence report that the ability to conduct operations based on the gathered information is degraded.

In a counterinsurgency, the information or census data that is collected serves much like the information that is collected in a conventional conflict – enemy and friendly units are overlaid with events on a map of the terrain to construct the operational picture. A difference between other conflicts and a counterinsurgency is the complexity of considerations. The operational picture in a counterinsurgency has other layers that need to be collected, analyzed, and evaluated. The company living autonomously in a combat outpost has the most up to date, accurate, and usable data. The battalion intelligence section, higher headquarters, or the tactical fusion center may make an attempt at collecting this data, but its usefulness and clarity fall far short of that which is needed to understand and then control events in a company's area of operation: "The fact that all units collect and report information, combined with the mosaic nature of insurgencies, means that the intelligence flow in COIN is more bottom up than top down. Conducting aggressive ISR operations and pushing intelligence collection assets and analyst to the tactical level, sometimes as far as company level, therefore benefits all echelons. It strengthens local intelligence, enhances regional and national reporting, and bolsters operations at all levels. Two techniques – either attaching a basic intelligence analytical capability down to battalion or company level, or forming a company information

management capability from assigned personnel – can help commanders handle the tactical information flow better.”¹

Solution to the Intelligence Problem

Infantry battalions need to maintain a robust intelligence cell at the company level. “The rapid processing and dissemination of intelligence are essential. The elusiveness and mobility of small guerrilla forces quickly outdates information concerning their location. Reaction time of the conduct of combat operations is a critical factor, and reaction must be based on reliable intelligence.”² By tasking an 0302 infantry officer within each company, along with four to six 0311s (infantry Marines), prior to the deployment, the battalion intelligence section can provide the following training:

1. Process security clearance so they may receive and read classified information and briefs.
2. Receive basic training in intelligence.
 - a. Falcon View
 - b. Analyst Notebook
 - c. Pattern analysis
 - d. Develop a collection plan
 - e. Develop skills in conducting mission briefs and debriefs
 - f. Basic imagery and map production

¹ US Army Field Manual. Field Manual (FM) 3-24. Counterinsurgency. (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, December 2006) 3-2, para 3-123

² US Marine Corps. Fleet Marine Force Manual (FMFM) 8-2. Counterinsurgency Operations. (Washington, DC: Department of the Navy, January 1980) 56, para 8

3. Apply task and practical application during battalion field exercises (FEX)

These dual tasked Marines are a force multiplier to the company. They understand the language and requirements needed by the infantry Marine on the ground, but are also intensely versed in the collections and intelligence of their area of operations. Having an intelligence cell at the company level does not take away manpower from the company. On the contrary, those same Marines will conduct patrols and raids since they know what is needed in collections and are well read into the plan for a suspected target. The company intelligence cell needs to be led by a leader and manager, who is dedicated to the purpose of accomplishing the six steps of the intelligence cycle -- not a working party picked by the company first sergeant.

Counterarguments

Company Commanders have difficulty tasking infantry Marines to conduct intelligence work. A common response is "That is the battalion intelligence section job! Instead, why not push down a couple of intelligence analysts to the company level?" The battalion intelligence officer agrees that intelligence Marines should be sent from the battalion section down to the company level to help those Marines gain situational awareness and to understand the requirements and needs from the end user of intelligence.

However, the battalion intelligence cell also has the responsibility for the other companies as well as the battalion

commander. It must conduct in-depth analysis and link charts, fuse collection requirements and coordinate with other agencies across the area of operations while deliberately targeting individuals. The battalion intelligence cell can assist the company intelligence cells in performing those functions as well; however, the main difference between the battalion and company level is in the reduction of lag time between receiving the patrol debrief to dissemination of intelligence.

Unfortunately, without a company intelligence cell, the outcome will be less than favorable for the battalion intelligence section. Intelligence Marine at the company level will lose focus on the battalion's priority information requirements and serve as a computer or administrative clerk for the company first sergeant.

Infantry battalions located in a low threat environment in Al Anbar, Iraq, are having difficulty identifying or tracking current threats. This is a recent issue that has surfaced since the surge of forces and the dwindling of insurgent activities in Al Anbar. This recent lack of intelligence driven activity has caused commanders to abandon their full support of company intelligence cells and rather use all Marines for other functions within the battalion, i.e. assisting mortar transportation Marines in the repair and upkeep of wheel vehicle assets.³ Without a defined threat, the company intelligence

cells do not have anything tangible to track and thus will not be employed to their fullest extent. A current intelligence Marine officer stated, "right now, our company intelligence cells are more or less just a reach back for the battalion intelligence cell to when something happens we have a conduit to get the ground truth of what just occurred."⁴

Conclusion

The Small Wars Manual calls for intelligence gathering to be conducted at the lowest unit level in order to be successful in a counterinsurgency. Company intelligence cells will provide the companies with the capability of collecting, analyzing, and prosecuting targets identified by the intelligence cell quicker than providing the information to the battalion intelligence section and waiting during the turnaround time. The company intelligence cell will serve as a model for future counterinsurgency operations.

1886 words

³ A source, entry level intelligence professional at an infantry battalion, who wishes to remain anonymous, interview by the author, November 2007.

⁴ A source, mid-level intelligence professional at an infantry battalion, interview by the author, 08 February 2008.

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