



Integrating Intelligence and Information

“Ten Points for the Commander”

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PHOTO: U.S. Army CSM Greg Widberg of 1-182 Infantry Regiment provides security during a mission in the Shib-e Koh District, Farah Province, Afghanistan, 10 October 2010. (ISAF photo/ USAF SrA Alexandra Hoachlander)

AFTER TEN YEARS of war, there are a number of truisms that have been developed from hard-fought battlefield experience. One that has gained prominence is the concept of intelligence and information integration. Integrating intelligence and information means different things to different people, but one thing is certain: without integration, the entire decision-making process is compromised, rife with gaps that can lead to miscalculations. The following is a compilation of thoughts and ideas we call “Ten Points for the Commander.” There are no magic bullets or new ideas. However, unless we capture these lessons and begin to incorporate them into our training and education programs, we are likely to miss a critical opportunity and have to reinvent them during the next conflict.

1. Learn about and build fusion cells. Organizations called fusion cells built in Iraq and later in Afghanistan should be a focal point for integrating intelligence and information in the future. The birth of the modular army stripped the division and corps headquarters of their organic “fusion-like” capability found in the all-source control elements in their intelligence battalions. This created an environment where the volume and velocity of information from so many different sources forced organizations such as the brigade combat teams and below to collect and analyze data. This makes the development of these fusion cells a critical requirement.

Fusion is about focusing our intelligence and information collections systems, and about the speed of responding to the task, precision in addressing the problem with the best available capability, and understanding what the expected outcomes should be. Fusion is a leadership function. It must be top-down driven, and we must provide top cover so that the fusion element can have complete freedom of action. This element must be able to communicate rapidly up, down, and laterally across organizations without restrictions (flattening networks). The level of maturity in the team will grow over time as experience grows. It will grow much quicker if the right leaders are chosen and everyone on the team (service, interagency, or coalition) understands the commander’s intent.

As fusion cells became effective, more players wanted to be involved (joint, interagency, coalition, and indigenous forces) and these organizations became the “go-to” formations for integrating intelligence and fusing it with operations. We have yet to capture all of the lessons learned and pull together best practices. We must ensure we capture the “how to” based on a decade of intelligence and warfighting fusion experience.

2. Over-classification hinders. The over-classification of information by ill-informed headquarters and individuals continues to challenge our ability to be transparent across our forces, the services, the joint and interagency communities, and our international partners. The classification habit, as well as the inability to merge our servers and data, cripples us when we try to integrate intelligence. It inhibits building trust and confidence among the various military and civilian players that collaborate, share, and build relationships to make informed decisions. Complementary unclassified and open source intelligence can often be better than what we have in the classified domain. The fusion and analysis of open source information with other forms of classified materials is essential to understanding the operational environment. The emergence of open source information as an intelligence discipline is powerful, and one cannot overstate its importance. In the past, most intelligence came from the normal “INTs”: signals intelligence (SIGINT), imagery intelligence (IMINT), and human intelligence (HUMINT). In today’s information age, the old closed-loop system of intelligence, especially that which is over-classified, is rapidly becoming irrelevant.

3. Understand and learn to integrate ISR capabilities. As many are well aware, the integration of surveillance and reconnaissance assets is a maneuver commander’s responsibility, yet often this is left to S2s, G2s, and J2s to synchronize. Why? Either the commander doesn’t make the time to do the work, or he doesn’t understand the capabilities he has to employ. Senior and operational leaders do not know or understand intelligence collection, surveillance, and reconnaissance tools well. As we have matured with material solutions over these past ten years of war, our leader development, training, and education on these various systems has not. Often the only time we use and integrate



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MAJ Tom Sachariason, a training officer in the 27th Transportation Battalion (movement control), works in “the fusion cell,” one of the most important logistics hubs in theater, at Logistical Support Area Anaconda, Iraq, 23 February 2006.

these “tools of collection” is when we are in combat. Using and synchronizing these assets and understanding their capabilities should begin much earlier so that commanders are not wasting deployed units’ valuable time figuring out how to synchronize and integrate these assets and their collection plans; we must begin this training and education immediately.

4. Everyone must do intelligence and information integration. Integration has a different meaning for the intelligence community than it has for the operational community. The intelligence community sees integration with two components (collection and analysis), while the operational community seeks an outcome, an action, a result from the enormous amount of collection and analysis it performs.

The intelligence community must align its thinking with those who have to decide or execute the findings from collection and analysis. Think of it as a three-legged stool. The intelligence community has responsibility for two of these legs, when in fact, the third is the most important and least understood inside the broader intelligence community. The intelligence community needs to see itself as *the* critical enabling capability of decision making, whether tactical or strategic. The challenge in today’s complex world is knowing the difference between the two.

5. Leadership is critical. Rank doesn't matter in intelligence. A junior analyst inside an organization may have the most knowledge on a critical subject debated at the senior staff level. However, many times he is not involved in the discussion. In other cases, a young captain or major may have the best set of skills to run a fusion cell and direct operational elements on the battlefield, but some senior commander is uncomfortable responding to junior officers.

We have to understand that brilliance comes in all sizes, shapes, colors of uniforms, and ranks. We have an incredibly talented and young work force that has gained enormous experience over the past decade of war. How will we nurture them in the years ahead? They represent the best of our organizations and our future and see the world differently. They must be allowed to continue to thrive in this highly uncertain and complex world we live in. Our future training programs need to be developed in a way that allows for this type of environment and talent to flourish. Given diminishing budgets, we remain very concerned that first on the chopping block will be training, when in fact, it is training

that made us as good as we are today, and now is the time when training becomes paramount.

While we still need to prosecute the war, we will need to start looking very hard at adjusting our future priorities. Many of these are directed, some from Washington, D.C., all the way down to the company command level, but do they use the right priorities? The closer one gets to any problem, the more one understands it and can focus on solving it. That said, the leadership can and must focus, aligning our intelligence system to address priorities and solve problems we are likely to face in the future. This will require strong leaders at every level to believe their voice matters (the intelligence collection system is not a fair-share system—it goes to the highest priorities). If they see intelligence collection does not align with their desired outcomes, they need to speak up.

6. Everyone wants to “see” a map. Mapping cultures is probably the most difficult geospatial task, and we are going to have to do a better job at it. We're exceptional at mapping defense-related activities, facilities, homes, bridges, and the like, but how do you map a tribe, a culture, or an entire



(U.S. Army photo by SGT Rebecca Linder)

U.S. Army SPC Thomas Grady, left, and SSG Andrew Hanson, right, both geospatial engineers with the Directorate of Public Works, 196th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade, South Dakota Army National Guard, go over a map they made for a customer at Camp Phoenix in Kabul, Afghanistan, 4 December 2010.

Just because you can see imagery from miles above the earth doesn't mean you understand the problem.

society? This will take vastly more integration between the all-source community and the geospatial community. This also requires geospatial specialists to get out into the field. Just because you can see imagery from miles above the earth doesn't mean you understand the problem. We need to get our best and brightest into areas where we are operating or likely to operate. We need to build teams of area experts and geospatial analysts who can construct templates of societies. The burgeoning populations in the places most likely to experience conflict are those we understand least. We can do better in defining regions and areas of the world. We can determine gaps in our knowledge base, and then decide how to better focus limited collection resources.

7. Combine the different “INTs.” Intelligence integration combines different intelligence capabilities (often from different organizations and agencies) into a product that is better informed and more accurate. We often derived our assessments of things from a Central Intelligence Agency (HUMINT) or National Security Agency (SIGINT) perspective, and each organization's view was strongly biased by overweighting the intelligence it specialized in, leaving the all-source analyst to be the integrator. That works in effective fusion cells, but it's difficult elsewhere. It is human nature to want to get the golden nugget of intelligence that drives success, but one rarely does. We have to figure out how to better integrate all-source intelligence and to do it geospatially (and that information has to be sharable across an entire coalition).

8. Mission command will affect the decision maker as the ultimate consumer of intelligence. The decision maker is the ultimate consumer of intelligence. That person or group of people must be intimately involved in the intelligence collection, integration, and analysis process—it's too difficult and dynamic to understand otherwise. This is an

all-consuming endeavor and nearly an impossibly tall order, but strategic decisions still require senior leaders to take that approach. It's their responsibility and duty, especially when lives are at stake. Since we demand this type of “mission command” on the battlefield, we should also expect it all the way up the chain. Training in this discipline must begin at the earliest stages. Commanders at every level must mentor and coach subordinate commanders on this integration work. A deeper understanding of both the tools of collection and the operational understanding that the senior commander is trying to achieve is a good start point. These lessons carry over as the younger generation of leaders move up the ranks. Knowing the fundamentals of this work early in a career helps to create integrators at senior levels.

9. Create context and shared understanding. Context is king. Achieving an understanding of what is happening—or will happen—comes from a truly integrated picture of an area, the situation, and the various personalities in it. It demands a layered approach over time that builds depth of understanding. We achieve greater levels of understanding and context by transparency; we may need to develop a process that requires us to involve outside experts to comment on different reads from the area under review. If we do this effectively, we could increase our understanding ten-fold. It may be much like posing a specific thesis to people to see if it passes their common-sense test. For many years, we were prisoners of the reports we got, and had precious little depth or nuanced analysis by natives of the region or people closer to the problems. Good intelligence does not always come from the intelligence personnel on a staff or from within a headquarters. Outside expertise or local expertise is of value to an organization and can help build expertise within the wider command over time. We did this poorly in the early years of the war and only really expanded into this type of expertise in recent years. It is still rare to find a subject matter expert at the company, battalion, or even BCT level. Most of these experts are typically at much higher echelons. While they are helpful and of value at those levels, we need them most down where the proverbial rubber meets the road.

10. Synchronization of intelligence over time is critical. The final task is to pull it all together in

order to execute the assigned mission effectively. This is not an easy task. In fact, it is a tall order for even the most experienced commander and staff. As we develop our plans, we need to consider how to integrate intelligence capabilities and the associated intelligence assessment throughout each component of the plan, synchronizing it in time and space to meet the commander's intent. Whether it is for a small unit patrol or a theater campaign plan, we must integrate intelligence into each aspect (i.e., pre-, during-, and post-operation). Did we answer the "commander critical information requirements," "priority intelligence requirements," and other information collection related tasks? How reliable are the answers? How credible are the sources? Not working through the why, how, when, and where of each allocated or assigned asset a command receives places the mission at greater risk. Synchronization has been part of our thinking for many years now, but it usually falls short within our higher headquarters, especially once we make contact with the enemy. If we do more synchronized planning with greater rigor right from the start, using our operations planning process, we can provide our subordinate units greater flexibility and

less uncertainty. At the end of the day, we achieve success in combat when subordinate units collectively understand the mission and higher commands have properly resourced them for success. Then and only then can they accomplish a well-synchronized campaign plan.

Conclusion

Intelligence and information integration is a critical warfighting skill in today's complex and rapidly changing operational environment. As an Army, we have made huge strides, but we still have work to do in the joint, interagency, and multinational areas. With the speed of technological changes, speed of war, and the scale of modular Army Force adaptations, it would be irresponsible not to capitalize on all of the extraordinary gains we have achieved throughout this decade of war. We still have enormous strides to make, and we hope these "Ten Points" provide an azimuth to assist commanders and leaders at every echelon. They are the ultimate integrators of intelligence, those who build teams, build trust, and build relationships. Our strongest desire is that these "Ten Points" can help to start and accelerate that building throughout our Army. **MR**

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