Staff Sgt. David Jones (*left*), a counterintelligence instructor assigned to the 1st Brigade Engineer Battalion, 310th Infantry Regiment, 181st Multifunctional Training Brigade, facilitates an after action review 16 August 2023 with Army Reserve Sgt. Marian Alfahel, Spc. Cameron Turi, and an unidentified soldier, all counterintelligence special agents from Company B, 378th Military Intelligence Battalion, during Combat Support Training Exercise 86-23-02 at Fort McCoy, Wisconsin. (Photo by Sgt. Khylee Woodford, U.S. Army Reserve)

An Elegy for the Military Intelligence Officer

Chief Warrant Officer 5 Douglas D. Megenity, U.S. Army

How skilled should an Army intelligence officer be in signals intelligence (SIGINT) when directing Army intelligence missions? How skilled should that officer be in geospatial intelligence (GEOINT) when leading a unit with GEOINT missions? Or human intelligence (HUMINT) missions?

Compared to an average intelligence sergeant in one of those disciplines, how skilled should a captain or a major be? Are they even be required to be knowledgeable in their branch disciplines?

These questions stem from the issue that the Army, having deemphasized the technical training of its

intelligence officer corps for forty-plus years, must now depend on those same officers to lead an increasingly complex, scientific, and technical discipline but without career-spanning technical education in the mechanisms to make it work. When combined with the systematic delinking of junior and senior noncommissioned officers (NCOs) from their own military occupational specialty-related technical competencies and an overreliance on the warrant officer cohort to fill mission leadership roles, the result is in an officer cohort that struggles to meet new challenges in an efficient, coordinated, or informed manner.[1]

A test of the issue could be to challenge a cross section of midcareer Army intelligence officers to describe the general principles or taxonomy of the three main subdisciplines of intelligence: HUMINT, GEOINT, and SIGINT. The officer in question could be asked to:

> Describe the authorities under which each discipline operates; how each discipline functions in relation to each other and the national intelligence agencies; and how they feed operations through tasking, processing, exploitation of data, dissemination, analysis, and reporting.

It is a pretty tall order for anyone within the intelligence community, but it should be answerable by anyone who is selected to lead a multidiscipline intelligence mission or organization. Due to the methods in which we educate, assign, and promote intelligence officers, it is reasonable to suspect the results of any such survey would be rather dismal across the board.

Inversely, it's hard to imagine an infantry colonel who could not direct an infantry company in an attack, an armor lieutenant colonel who could not functionally direct the employment of an armor company in battle formation, or a fires major who could not functionally direct the fires of an artillery battery—all reasonably complex tasks. Some aspect of leadership in the fundamentals of their trade would have to remain in their skill sets because they could not have advanced in their trade without having to master them. I propose that, in the intelligence branch the opposite is true; it is hard to advance as an intelligence officer if you spend the time mastering one of the single-source disciplines that informs your own warfighting function. Generalization and a focus on staff positions over other, technically focused positions mean that an officer will likely never gain even an apprentice-level understanding of

the subdisciplines of intelligence operations, and that same officer arguably has no responsibility to do so in the centralized promotion system that is currently in place. Yet, at the discipline's top positions, we expect our leadership to make tough, master-level decisions on very technical questions related to force composition, system acquisition, and capability development.

A well-functioning intelligence mission depends on the interactions among three interrelated roles: leader, manager, and "doer." The *leader*, nominally a commissioned officer in the grade of O-1 to O-10, is in place to enforce Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ) and provide purpose, motivation, and direction to the mission. The *intelligence leader* works within, and through, the operations staff to understand the mission they are given in the context of the overall operation and the intelligence capacity they are expected to leverage (in this case, the context of the latter is the intelligence warfighting function [IWfF] and all its constituent technical disciplines).[2] Managers are those in place to ensure the leader's mission can be executed as provided. These are the seasoned, senior NCOs in the warfighting Army and are warrant officers in the technical Army. Managers examine the mission provided by the leader, coordinate and develop the capacity for its execution, and identify training requirements. The plan is passed back to the leader for validation and then passed down to the doer for execution. The *doers* are the NCOs and soldiers. NCOs train soldiers and then guide them to perform the mission—all under the management of the warrant officer and the leadership of the officer. This is how the Army works.

Leadership requires understanding, and understanding comes with education and practical experience through doing. This is

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where the gap in military intelligence (MI) leadership occurs—we do not expect our officers to understand the technical inner workings of our trade, nor practice the development of an intelligence mission that can then be passed on to managers. Army intelligence officers are very intelligent, bright, and keen to apply their trade. But they are provided only a very narrow view of IWfF by the officer education system and are encumbered with the severely limiting realities of the officer key development (KD) system outlined in Department of the Army Pamphlet (DA Pam) 600-3, *Officer Professional Development and Career Management*, which makes any real potential for consistent application of technical mission leadership within intelligence operations very difficult.[3]

The Trouble Starts in the Classroom

From the very beginning of their career in intelligence, officers are only given shallow instruction in the technical functions of the intelligence discipline. Instead, the bulk of almost all MI officer education and training across a career is centered around the development of products that support the intelligence preparation of the battlefield (IPB) method as it applies to the military decision-making process (MDMP).[4]
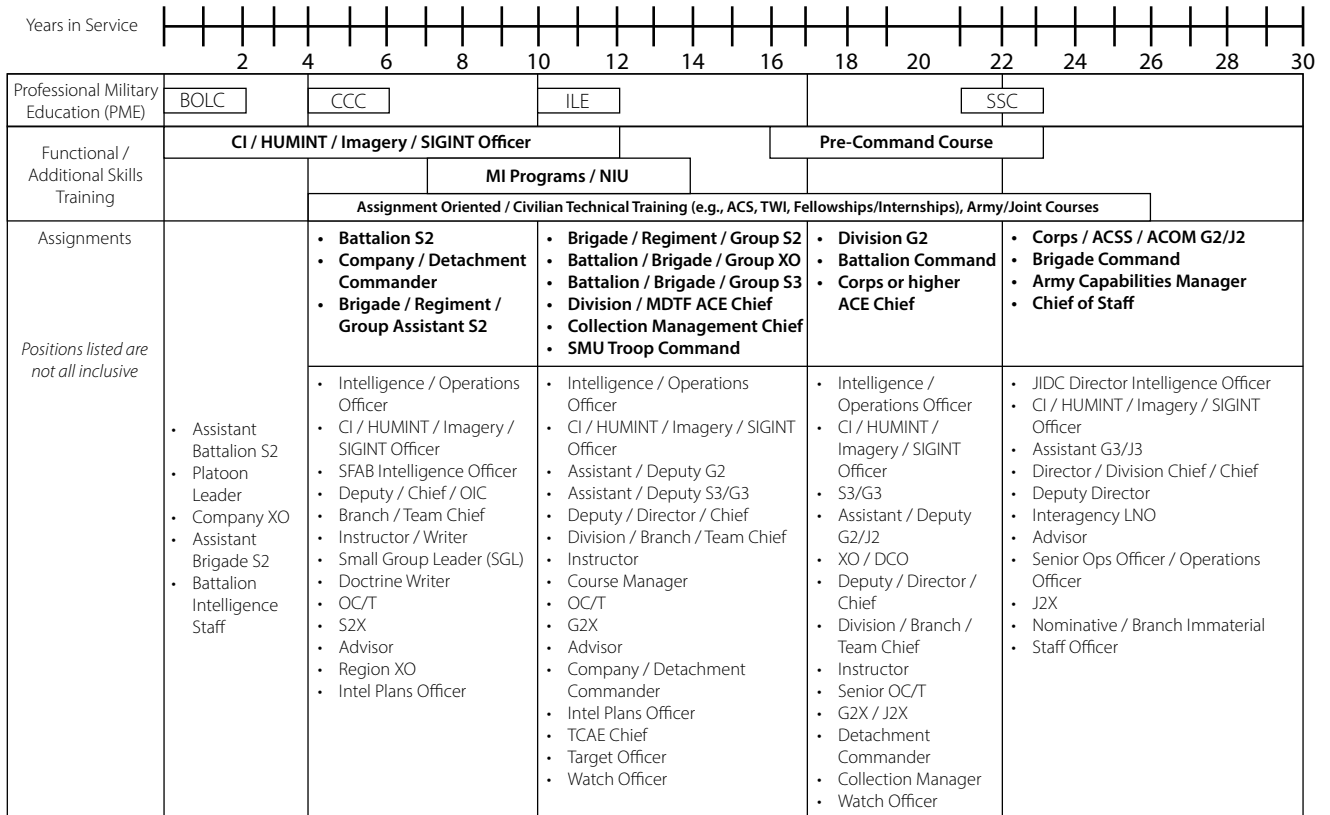
The MI Basic Officer Leader Course (MI BOLC) is a sixteen-week course designed to produce MI platoon leaders and assistant battalion chiefs of staff for intelligence (S-2). It is weighted heavily toward IPB, MDMP, and maneuver doctrine for large-scale combat operations. This does make some sense in the context of the available assignments for MI lieutenants who are by a wide margin assigned to battalions at echelons below brigade. Other portions of MI BOLC focus on tactical operations center operations, targeting, and mission command, each of which is also an important part of intelligence support to operations. These are the basic tools a MI officer needs to apply their trade at a combat arms battalion as they work to support the operations process through input to the MDMP, so it is proper that they should be introduced at this education level.

However, only one-tenth of the curriculum time of MI BOLC is dedicated to the doctrinal concepts of the intelligence single-source disciplines and the intelligence architecture that supports their operations. Arguably, in such a short amount of time, it is difficult to introduce these technical concepts at a practical depth that would affect their performance in a battalion S-2 shop. A battalion S-2 is not likely to encounter single-source intelligence data in its pre-fused form and likely relies on fused intelligence reporting that it can then compare to the combat information coming from the reconnaissance elements of its unit. But any intelligence organization will rely on a steady stream of single-source information that feeds the intelligence fusion process and results in disseminated information. Not knowing where it comes from or how it is produced makes it hard to evaluate its relative worth. From the very beginning, officers are given only a fuzzy understanding of under-the-hood intelligence production concepts.

Their next touchpoint in education is the MI Captains Career Course (MICCC). This twenty-one-week course is designed for captains and promotable lieutenants and is intended to prepare them for roles as battalion S-2s, brigade assistant S-2s, collection managers, and intelligence operations officers. Again, it is weighted heavily toward MDMP and IPB. As with the MI BOLC, these are concepts that are important to battalion- and brigade-level intelligence support to operations, but much of this is already covered in MI BOLC, and hopefully practiced as a battalion S-2 or assistant brigade combat team (BCT) S-2 (though individual results vary, of course). The course also offers some instruction on planning for intelligence operations and intelligence collection management, but again, less than 10 percent of curriculum time is dedicated to the single-source disciplines.

Unlike a battalion and/or a brigade S-2, collection managers have single-source sensors at their disposal. However, again there is no mechanism in the MICCC to train or educate officers in technical collection management concepts. The Captains Career Course curricula does not allow for learning to employ these systems, understanding and assessing the raw information that may be coming to them, or learning how to orchestrate the architecture that feeds their systems. It is difficult to assess the reliability of fused intelligence unless you understand at least some of the more intangible issues that affect single-source collection and its processing, exploitation, and dissemination (PED). The MICCC is the point in an MI officer's education where real technical learning could commence, but what the officers

Years in Service					
	2 4 6 8 10 12 14 16	18 20 22 24 26 28 30			

Professional Military Education (PME)	BOLC	CCC	ILE		SSC	
Functional / Additional Skills Training	CI / HUMINT / Imagery / SIGINT Officer			Pre-Command Course		
		MI Programs / NIU				
		Assignment Oriented / Civilian Technical Training (e.g., ACS, TWI, Fellowships/Internships), Army/Joint Courses				

Assignments

Positions listed are not all inclusive

• Assistant Battalion S2 • Platoon Leader • Company XO • Assistant Brigade S2 • Battalion Intelligence Staff	• **Battalion S2** • **Company / Detachment Commander** • **Brigade / Regiment / Group Assistant S2**	• **Brigade / Regiment / Group S2** • **Battalion / Brigade / Group XO** • **Battalion / Brigade / Group S3** • **Division / MDTF ACE Chief** • **Collection Management Chief** • **SMU Troop Command**	• **Division G2** • **Battalion Command** • **Corps or higher ACE Chief**	• **Corps / ACSS / ACOM G2/J2** • **Brigade Command** • **Army Capabilities Manager** • **Chief of Staff**
	• Intelligence / Operations Officer • CI / HUMINT / Imagery / SIGINT Officer • SFAB Intelligence Officer • Deputy / Chief / OIC • Branch / Team Chief • Instructor / Writer • Small Group Leader (SGL) • Doctrine Writer • OC/T • S2X • Advisor • Region XO • Intel Plans Officer	• Intelligence / Operations Officer • CI / HUMINT / Imagery / SIGINT Officer • Assistant / Deputy G2 • Assistant / Deputy S3/G3 • Deputy / Director / Chief • Division / Branch / Team Chief • Instructor • Course Manager • OC/T • G2X • Advisor • Company / Detachment Commander • Intel Plans Officer • TCAE Chief • Target Officer • Watch Officer	• Intelligence / Operations Officer • CI / HUMINT / Imagery / SIGINT Officer • S3/G3 • Assistant / Deputy G2/J2 • XO / DCO • Deputy / Director / Chief • Division / Branch / Team Chief • Instructor • Senior OC/T • G2X / J2X • Detachment Commander • Collection Manager • Watch Officer	• JIDC Director Intelligence Officer • CI / HUMINT / Imagery / SIGINT Officer • Assistant G3/J3 • Director / Division Chief / Chief • Deputy Director • Interagency LNO • Advisor • Senior Ops Officer / Operations Officer • J2X • Nominative / Branch Immaterial • Staff Officer

(Figure from Smartbook DA Pam 600-3, *Military Intelligence Branch*)

Figure 1. Military Intelligence AC Officer Career Timeline (Excerpt)

receive is a reinforcement of ideas previously covered in BOLC or the MI Officer Transition Course, a course designed for officers transferring into the MI Branch.

Thus, early in an intelligence officer's career they are shielded from the responsibility to understand the nuances of the single-source disciplines. Then, implicitly, they must learn to simply trust the intelligence information they are given by the intelligence soldiers they manage since they have no grounding in the technical aspects of production.

It doesn't add anything to the discussion to describe the single-source education presented in later educational opportunities such as the BCT S-2 course or intermediate level education for Army majors (both of which *again* emphasize IPB support to MDMP), the Command and Staff General College, precommand courses, etc., since the attention given to intelligence single-source disciplines is just as short, if present at all. All of this adds up to very little exposure in career-long educational terms to the disciplines that make up the bulk of intelligence operations output. Of the

intelligence process, the "process, exploit, and analyze" portions are all but forgotten.[5]

Assignments and Key Development—Leadership and Staff versus Technical Practice

A KD position, as defined in DA Pam 600-3, is one "deemed fundamental to the development of an officer's capabilities in their core branch or FA [functional area]" and "deemed critical by the senior Army leadership to provide experience across the Army's strategic mission."[6] It further stipulates that "the majority of these positions fall within the scope of the officer's branch or FA mission."[7] This would suggest that, if not during resident career educational milestones, an officer can receive a deeper education in the more technical aspects of MI "on-the-job."

The MI extract of DA Pam 600-3, found on the U.S. Army G-1 (Personnel) website, shows an active-duty officer career progression timeline that lists many *non-KD* jobs, but the ones that deal with the single-source

disciplines (e.g., "SIGINT Officer," "HUMINT Officer," or GEOINT Officer") are extremely generic and could encompass anything when it comes to actual job duties or scope of responsibility (see figure 1).[8]

What is the role of a SIGINT officer in an intelligence brigade or a HUMINT officer on a corps staff? There are answers to these questions, but they are not found in current Army regulations or doctrine. In contrast, the role of a G-2 and S-2 (a.k.a. the senior intelligence officer [SIO]) is defined, many times, throughout doctrine, and the roles of command are explicitly regulated.[9] But those officers in more generic positions lack the formal guidance to define their role and, more importantly, lack the institutional education that leads them toward constructing one that fits within the IWfF of their future organization.

Presumably this gives the appearance that an officer will enjoy a wide latitude of assignments, giving them the opportunities for the broadening they need for promotion while gaining the technical experience necessary to have real input and impact for the full scope of intelligence operations. A deeper look at MI KD shows it is not core branch MI capabilities that are emphasized but rather generic Army leadership experience. When examined more closely, the KD positions that count toward qualification for promotion of MI officers precipitate into two general categories: command and staff and SIO.

Command as a KD Position

Command is a KD position that is common to all branches of the Army and is consistently listed as a KD, or a KD-like position, as far back as 1987 and likely much earlier than even that.[10] However, why is command a KD position for MI officers?

A unit commander, loosely defined, is the officer responsible for the execution of the unit's mission, holding UCMJ authority for the purpose of order and discipline and for the purpose of providing the authority to carry out legal missions—in the case of this article, intelligence missions.[11] As in combat arms, this officer assumes many roles ranging from logistician to disciplinarian to the holder of authority for the mission itself. An infantry company commander, for example, leads their company into combat and is a combatant. However, the MI commander leads the unit but is not typically responsible for leading the intelligence mission. That role resides with the SIO, or the deputy chief of staff for intelligence, who by Army regulation, is responsible for the "propriety of command intelligence activities," or more plainly put, for making sure the IWfF is executed properly.[12] This is typically, by tradition and doctrine mainly, the unit's G-2 or S-2, who works within the staff to set the intelligence mission for the unit. But even so, the incumbent does not perform intelligence analysis, production, or mission management functions. Those functions are often given over to the analysis and control element or its equivalent. Either way, it is not the MI commander's role.

An Army intelligence unit supports the requirements of a combat commander at echelon. For example, a BCT military intelligence company (MICO) brigade intelligence support element (BISE) responds to the intelligence requirements of the BCT commander and staff as they fight their battalions and companies. The BISE does not respond to the priority intelligence requirements (PIR) of the MICO commander but rather those set by the BCT commander as developed by the staff during planning. Accordingly, the MICO commander does not participate in collection management or intelligence production. Rather, it is the role of the MICO commander to ensure the unit is organized and has the resources needed perform its mission. This comes in the form of logistics, UCMJ, training support, command and control, support to intelligence architecture, some aspects of asset management, and the other support roles necessary to enable operations. Without that intrinsic support it is unlikely the intelligence unit could operate. Regardless, the commander's responsibility is to support intelligence production, not participate in it. *The MI commander's job, therefore, could as easily be performed by a logistics or combat arms officer since it is at its base a resource management job.*

This is arguably true entirely throughout the echelons. The theater MI battalion commander manages the MI collection and analysis resources that support the theater staff, where the theater MI brigade commander orchestrates the alignment of intelligence resources across the Army Service component commands. But neither of these commanders themselves should have a hand in actual intelligence production. They are busy, in both competition and in conflict, managing the resources that produce intelligence on behalf of the SIO and the Army Service component

commands staff, who are the real conductors of the IWfF in support of operations.

Command KD positions are the gold standard for which MI officers strive, followed closely by G-2/S-2 positions. However, in practice, neither offer much regarding a deeper appreciation for the underlying mechanics of the MI trades. Other KD jobs such as S-3 or XO offer even less since their focus in practice is generally non-intel specific staff operations, but these two positions rank highly in the "hard KD" hierarchy, probably due to their proximity to command. KD jobs such as collection manager or intelligence planner come and go over time in successive versions of DA Pam 600-3 and offer glimmers of opportunity for a broader on-the-job education (even if they aren't single-source intelligence in nature), but they are not as consistent in the regulation over time as the other, less technically demanding (in the sense of the IWfF) jobs.

The emphasis on command and staff KD positions is likely because MI officer promotion boards are part of the centralized promotion board system. This means that non-MI board members will review and vote on MI officer files—only one of the five officers on a board must be from the competitive category of officer to be considered for promotion.[13] By cementing MI KD positions into similar patterns of other branches it makes it easier to translate officer accomplishments to those board members not familiar with other MI-related competencies. So, in a way, the army selects MI officers who resemble Army core competencies rather than those who resemble MI core competencies since that is what their KD assignment patterns develop.

Commanding an Army unit is not necessarily comparable to leading the IWfF. While the same leadership model components of "be, know, do" apply, there is a vast difference in application of those principles between ensuring mission support and applying the technical understanding of the application of various intelligence disciplines to the intelligence process.[14] Each are important in their own way, but each take time and practice to understand and master. It is very difficult to master both over the course of an arguably brief twenty-to-thirty-year career. Yet in the Army Intelligence Branch, the emphasis is always on unit leadership, which will take up half of an officer's assignments over a career between command and staff positions.

Accordingly, an intelligence captain, who spends their long developmental captain years in various staff jobs with only some perhaps tied to intelligence single-source disciplines, will always be focused on the golden ring of company command, which is key to promotion beyond major. In their five-or-so-year window before consideration for lieutenant colonel, an intelligence major who has limited opportunity and faces fierce competition to find precious KD jobs will tend to default to the S-3, XO, or detachment commander positions that will prepare them for understanding staff operations necessary for a battalion command.

According to DA Pam 600-3, the typical MI officer career timeline has an officer presenting their promotion file to the colonels' board sometime in their twentieth year of service.[15] Given the education and KD-oriented promotion system, a colonel is arguably the first rank where an officer has the breadth-of-view through assignment as a program manager to make decisions for issues that affect the IWfF, if not the whole-of-Army. Colonels selected to these roles are instantly expected to have a depth of understanding that their careers to date, which mainly focused on command and staff, most likely did not prepare them. Consequently, they are forced to rely on the expertise of those around them (often civilians or warrant officers), whose depths may vary or may lack legitimate discipline skill. Not all civilians or warrants are the experts in practice that we expect in theory.

G-2/S-2—Not as Technical as One Would Think

The chief of staff for intelligence (G-2/S-2) is a coveted position, one that, at division or corps, is fulfilled through a highly selective process. But the role of the G-2/S-2 as SIO, which is an important role within the IWfF, lacks touchpoints of any real depth in the mechanics of the many single-source disciplines. The G-2/S-2 is a position that deals mainly with the input (collection requirements) and output functions (analysis of reporting) of the intelligence cycle; it has little to do with collection operations management, collection, or the PED of the data to be churned into an intelligence report, and then the analysis of the collection effectiveness that drive collection refinement. These functions are left to the warrant officers and senior NCOs, who through their career-long

• Battalion S2 • Company / Detachment Commander • Brigade / Regiment / Group / Assistant S2	• Brigade / Regiment / Group S2 • Battalion / Brigade / Group XO • Battalion / Brigade / Group S3 • Division ACE Chief • Collection Management Chief • Corps / Division Intel Planner (SAMS utilization only) • SMU Troop Command	• Division G2 • Battalion Command • Corps or higher ACE Chief	• Corps / ASCC / ACOM G2/S2 • Brigade Command • Chief of Staff • Army Capabilities Manager

(Figure from Smartbook DA Pam 600-3, *Military Intelligence Branch*)

Figure 2. Military Intelligence Key Development Assignments

technical assignments work to provide information to the G-2/S-2 deus ex machina. The NCOs, soldiers, and warrants who do the shovel work, often including the actual analysis and synthesis of different sources of intelligence and their value to military operations, leave the officers to focus on the staff work entailed in staff operations or on the outside of the IWfF.

The role of the chief of staff for intelligence is to ensure the intelligence mission has the operational guidance and resources necessary to achieve the collection (or access to the collection) processing and reporting that will inform command decisions in a meaningful way. This operational art thus involves fundamental intelligence decisions about when and where to employ the disciplines, but the actual intelligence analysis falls on the intelligence workforce and the chief of the analysis and control element. So, essentially, the S-2/G-2 is a functional staff position, much like the S-3/G-3, XO, or commander. It is a KD position, one that weighs heavily toward promotion but does little to enhance the officer's understanding of the technical depths of their branch. Instead, it focuses on developing the officer for further promotion upward into higher-echelon staff positions.

The Irony of Key Development

The problem presented here is ironic. Intelligence officers keen on an Army career seek those positions that assure the best potential for promotion, but those positions limit their technical understanding of their own discipline. Officers are trapped in a cycle of assignments that supposedly enhance discipline acumen but deemphasize technical expertise within the warfighting function and emphasize the skills that are common to all other branches. There is a compounding negative impact built into the KD design for MI. If only those officers with KD experience are selected for promotion, then promotion-worthy experience is confined to positions that do not expand understanding of the discipline's core competencies, then those with the least nuanced understanding of their profession are promoted.

Looking again at the current Smartbook DA Pam 600-3 for MI (figure 2), we see that about one-third of KD positions for MI officers are command or command staff, one-third are S-2/G-2/J-2, and one-third are acquisition or general intelligence operations.[16] None are tied directly to HUMINT, SIGINT, or GEOINT (or OSINT [open-source intelligence], an emerging intelligence discipline); and none are involved with PED operations, which is the mainstay of intelligence operations. If S-2/G-2/J-2 are counted as command and staff positions, then less than one-tenth of the KD jobs have anything to do with the technical distinctions of the profession.[17]

This problem could be described as a fault in the trajectory of required career expertise in IWfF core disciplines. This imaginary trajectory resembles the glide path of an airplane as it takes off and climbs to its cruising altitude. This ideal graph represents the breadth of knowledge about individual disciplines that should grow in an officer over the length of a career, culminating in wide understanding when reaching the top of the corporation as a colonel or general officer (see figure 3). As the officer progresses in more technical roles, those not related to command or unit staff operations, they gain a better understanding of the nature of the IWfF through what Robert Heinlein would have called "makey-learny," or practical application of the actual discipline alongside their soldiers.[18]
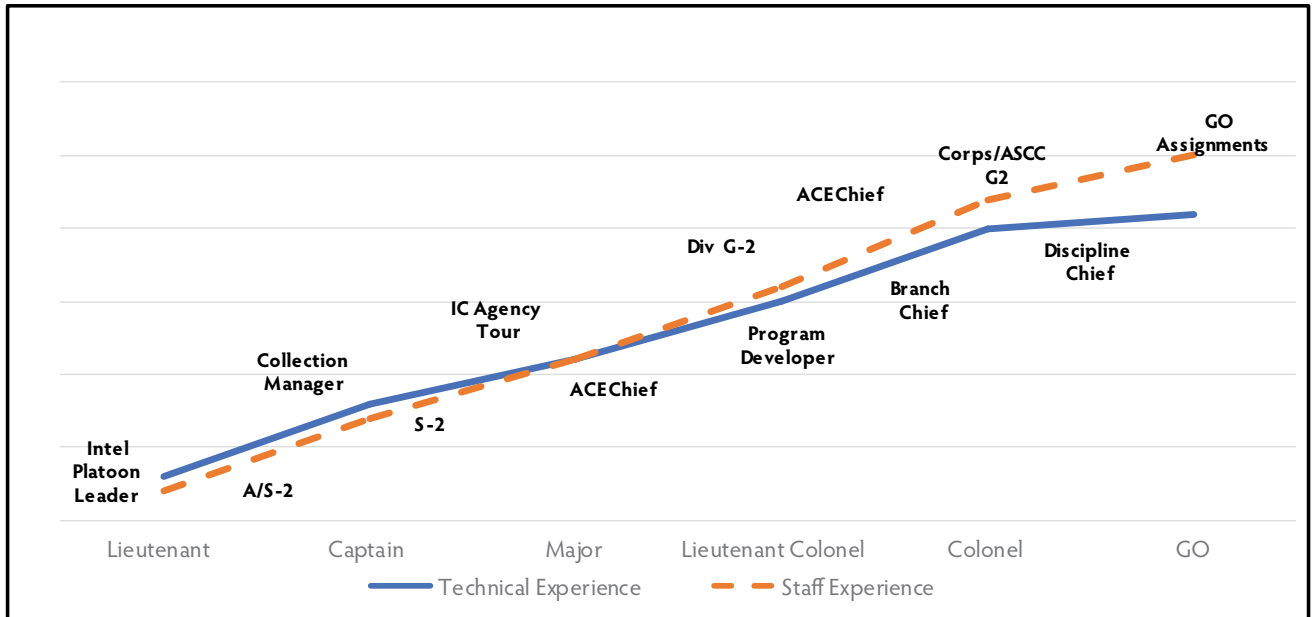
(Figure by author)

Figure 3. Trajectory of Required Career Expertise—Ideal

What commonly occurs though is a misaligned trajectory in which staff growth is constant while growth in technical understanding more resembles a hockey stick where, after a long period of slow growth, a sudden growth spurt of knowledge is required for technical depth (see figure 4). The graph represents an officer's lack of need for technical knowledge across the company and field grade ranks (representing the "shaft" of the stick) followed by a steady and sharp increase in *requirements* for deep understanding at the senior field grade and general officer ranks. The time frame where most learning must take place—between captain and major—are where the most diversity is provided with regard to KD. During that time, there is only room for four to five assignments, of which three must be KD.

As discussed previously, the positions an intelligence officer is encouraged to strive for—company, battalion, or brigade command, unit staff positions, etc.—are the kind of positions that have little to do with IWfF. Generally, any officer who is currently not in a KD position is waiting for an opportunity to fill a KD position. Permanent changes of station for all officers ensures that KD positions are usually opening in one form or another throughout the year. In practice, this results in officers filling non-KD positions only until an opportunity arrives, and then, if selected, they move out of whatever temporary job they are occupying to fill that position.

Accordingly, the non-KD jobs an officer should vie for in practice are those that correspond with the gain of command or staff positions. What does *not* help an officer gain KD command or staff jobs are a deep educational underpinning or understanding of GEOINT architecture, intelligence automation and processing fundamentals, or a deep understanding of SIGINT PED resourcing methods. The juxtaposition of these career trajectories, in which one (the technical path) leads to technical understanding and the other (the promotion path) leads to increased promotion potential, ensures that our senior leaders emerge into senior positions that require a broad and deep understanding of their own discipline without the education or experience over a career that serves them well.

The Problem with Overgeneralization of MI Officers

Overgeneralization is a problem that can hinder intelligence operations and make problem solving a laborious process. Often there is a reply to the statement that we need more technically grounded officers that goes something like "but that is what we have warrant officers for." The meat of this counterargument
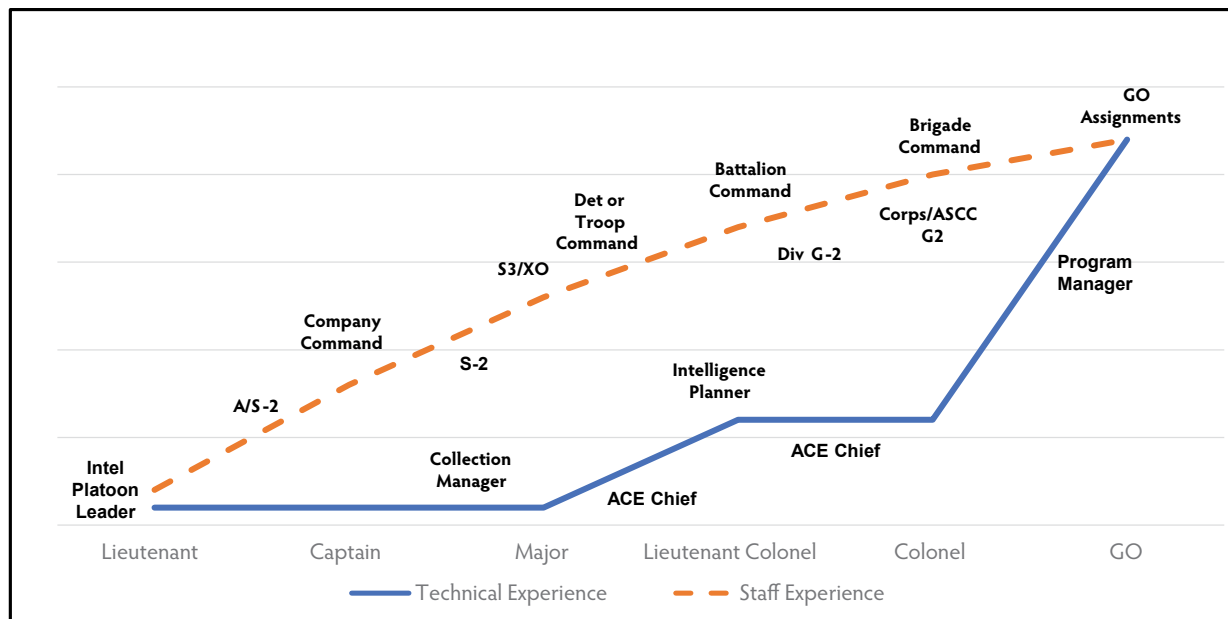
Figure 4. Trajectory of Required Career Expertise—Observed

(Figure by author)

is that warrant officers are the technical experts in their field and are on the staff to ensure that the technical health of the mission is assured, leaving the leadership of the mission to the officer. This is a seemingly sound argument and is rooted in the description of warrant officers found in DA Pam 600-3 as "technical expert, combat leader, trainer, and advisor."[19]

The problem isn't that the responsibility for deep technical understanding of intelligence operations lies within the warrant officer realm; it certainly does. The problem is that unless the officer, who is the leader of the intelligence mission, can intuitively grasp the context of the technical details of a problem, then it becomes a new problem of convincing rather than explaining. The technicians face the issue of explaining to officers the technical basics again and again at all ranks. Since there is arguably no need for the officer to gain the technical knowledge for career progression, then there is no need to retain it when explained in detail; and if the technical explanation runs counter to their plans, they must then be *convinced* of the correct data. Since there is no need to retain what they have learned as it is not important for promotion, then the next time a similar problem is encountered, the issue must be explained again and probably in a different way by a different warrant officer or senior NCO.

Now, this is a very broad argument that gives very little agency to the MI Officer Corps regarding individual officers growing and learning the trade from the inside out. However, ask any warrant officer how often they must explain the basics of their trade to the officers over them and how often explaining turns into convincing, a pattern that confirms this statement will emerge.

So, What Can Be Done?

Forty-plus years of gradual generalization of the MI officer cohort means that the status quo is engrained in the rubric that defines career progression. Change is needed. For change to occur, new ideas about what makes a successful career, what positions make or break promotion potential, and what mission space the MI officer should occupy in the IWfF would all need to converge in a manner that prizes technical understanding and leadership in the form of mission management over unit operations and command and staff functions. This is not an easy thing to do since it would necessitate a clean break from the concept of organizational unit leadership found in combat arms and other branches where unit leadership is the touchstone of success.

Instead, the MI as a branch would need to embrace the concept of the professional "technical" officer over the generalist unit leader. It is an idea

that flies in the face of many strongly held ideas in the Army officer cohort who have grown up in the "Sam Damon" school of thought and leadership that seems to dominate conventional wisdom regarding officer career choices.[20] However, despite these challenges, steps could be taken to reverse the current career orientation of MI officers. In degrees of increasing challenge to the current promotion regime, these possible steps are as follows:

1. Change education to focus on the technical aspects of each discipline and leave IPB support to MDMP as a core portion of MI BOLC and the MI Officer Transition Course; do not repeat IPB in successive educational courses. Find the resources to develop functional areas courses for HUMINT, GEOINT, and OSINT to accompany the current SIGINT functional course, and perhaps combine them into a more mission management focused MICCC. Restructure the BCT S-2 course to focus on collection management, single-source intelligence operations, and the synthesis of intelligence products into operationally relevant assessments.

2. Increase single-source KD positions within DA Pam 600-3 and weight technical positions more highly toward promotion potential.

3. Eliminate command as a KD job. Outsource command to other branches and create a separate MI promotion board. If this is not possible, then change the culture to downplay the idea that a history of command has tangible relevance toward competency within the IWfF.

4. Change MI command positions to be branch immaterial or code them to be combat arms or logistics branch and create a separate MI promotion board. Free MI officers to focus on intelligence operations, leave logistics and UCMJ to officers who legitimately have no role within the IWfF other than support.

Conclusion

This article is not an attack on the Army MI Corps' leadership, but rather it is an appeal for change. MI operations need technical leadership informed with generalist knowledge, not generalist leadership with low technical knowledge. The idea that we are unprepared for future challenges from a technical leadership point of view is based on the results of decisions about officer training that were made decades ago, which were based, at the time, on what were viewed to be valid concerns about overspecialization. However, the pendulum swung too far. Inertia and custom are difficult obstacles to overcome. The current method of selecting and promoting MI officers does not have to change, and the branch will continue to haltingly but persistently keep itself only marginally apace of the modern threat. But it should change; we should be far ahead of that threat by means of visionary leadership that knows the technical limits of intelligence, and who can spearhead the development of the future MI force through technically driven foresight. Leaders should be experts in their trade, not just leaders of the experts. ∎

Notes

1. The Intelligence NCO Corps has experienced a long decline in technical proficiency beginning with the senior NCO drawdown of the mid-1990s (encouraged by early retirement offers) and continuing with the increase in Army Bonus, Extension, and Retraining (BEAR) Program that filled the senior NCO gap with nonmilitary intelligence (MI) NCOs looking for advancement; the elimination of Skill Qualification Testing for advancement and promotion; and most recently, the merger of single source discipline senior NCOs at the master sergeant/E-8 level. There is very little incentive for junior soldiers and NCOs to become technically proficient and remain an NCO when advancement in MI is not tied to your technical job.

2. Field Manual 3-0, *Operations* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Publishing Office [GPO], 2022), 2-2. In this field manual, the intelligence warfighting function is described as "the related tasks and systems that facilitate understanding the enemy, terrain, weather, civil considerations, and other significant aspects of the operational environment."

3. Department of the Army Pamphlet (DA Pam) 600-3, *Officer Talent Management* (Washington, DC: U.S. GPO, 2023), 22, https://armypubs.army.mil/epubs/DR_pubs/DR_a/ARN36110-PAM_600-3-000-WEB-1.pdf.

4. Army Techniques Publication (ATP) 2-01.3, *Intelligence Preparation of the Battlefield* (Washington, DC: U.S. GPO, 2019), https://armypubs.army.mil/epubs/DR_pubs/DR_a/ARN31379-ATP_2-01.3-001-WEB-4.pdf.

5. Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 2-0, *Intelligence* (Washington, DC: U.S. GPO, 2019). For information on the Army intelligence process, see chapter 3.

6. DA Pam 600-3, *Officer Talent Management*, 22.

7. Ibid.

8. Smartbook DA Pam 600-3, *Military Intelligence Branch* (Washington, DC: U.S. GPO, 14 April 2023), 6–7, https://www.army.mil/g-1#org-g-1-publications.

9. ADP 2-0, *Intelligence*, 3-6; ATP 2-19.1-1, *Echelons Above Corps Intelligence Organizations* (Washington, DC: U.S. GPO, 2022), https://armypubs.army.mil/epubs/DR_pubs/DR_c/ARN35955-ATP_2-19.1-1-001-WEB-2.pdf (CAC-enabled website; unclassified content). The role of the G-2 as the senior intelligence officer (SIO) is referenced numerous times in this document; ATP 2-19.3, *Corps and Division Intelligence Techniques* (Washington, DC: U.S. GPO, 2023), ix, https://armypubs.army.mil/epubs/DR_pubs/DR_c/ARN37687-ATP_2-19.3-000-WEB-1.pdf; Army Regulation (AR) 600-20, *Army Command Policy* (Washington, DC: U.S. GPO, 2023), https://armypubs.army.mil/epubs/DR_pubs/DR_a/ARN32931-AR_600-20-004-WEB-6.pdf. Chapter 1 defines in detail command and its characteristics.

10. DA Pam 600-3-35, *Military Intelligence* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1987), https://irp.fas.org/doddir/army/pam600-3-35.pdf. This publication detailed the job codes, titles, and skills necessary for intelligence officers. Command is among the job examples listed for ranks of captain through colonel, but the term "key development" was not yet in use.

11. The author understands that this is not the definition of "command" as noted in AR 600-20, *Army Command Policy*; the definition used here is paraphrased for context and coherence within the article's framework.

12. AR 381-10, *The Conduct and Oversight of U.S. Army Intelligence Activities* (Washington, DC: U.S. GPO, 2023), https://armypubs.army.mil/epubs/DR_pubs/DR_a/ARN33573-AR_381-10-000-WEB-1.pdf. AR 381-10 does not stipulate that the deputy chief of staff (DCS) for intelligence is necessarily the SIO for any organization other than the Army DCS for intelligence at the Pentagon, implying that the two roles can be separate functions executed by separate individuals in units with an intelligence mission, as determined by the commander. AR 381-10 defines this role individually for each SIO or G-2, which are referred to throughout the document.

13. "Composition of Selection Boards," 10 U.S.C. § 612(a)(2)(A) (1980), https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/10/612.

14 ADP 6-22, *Army Leadership and the Profession* (Washington, DC: U.S. GPO, 2019), 1-17, https://armypubs.army.mil/epubs/DR_pubs/DR_a/ARN20039-ADP_6-22-001-WEB-5.pdf.

15. Smartbook DA Pam 600-3, *Military Intelligence Branch*, 6–7.

16. Ibid.

17. Ibid. There are fifteen total key development (KD) positions as listed on the career timeline of DA Pam 600-3. Of those fifteen, only three are not directly tied to command and staff positions: division and corps analysis and control element (ACE) chief, division or higher collection manager, and Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) capabilities manager. Of those three, the ACE chief deals with the *output* of the intelligence cycle and a TRADOC capabilities manager deals with *managing* systems development and acquisition. Only the collection management position (6 percent of the total KD positions as generically listed in the pamphlet) routinely deals with the technical details of the intelligence cycle due to the need for an understanding of collection tasking (since the collection management positions are limited to division and higher, the actual number of these slots compared to the number of brigades and battalions with KD-related S-2 slots means the percentage is actually much, much lower). While the same technical focus could be argued for the intelligence planner positions, planners are part of the operations staff and in my experience the use of officers as "intelligence planners" dealt with exercise planning, or general principles of organizational management related to the execution of operations, not the specific details of the operations themselves.

18. Robert A. Heinlein, *Starship Troopers* (New York: Ace, 2006), 294.

19. DA Pam 600-3, *Officer Talent Management*, 6.

20. Anton Myrer, *Once an Eagle* (New York: Harper & Row, 1968). In Myrer's book, the protagonist, Sam Damon, is portrayed as officer who, through successive command positions, demonstrates what the author envisions as the archetype of selfless service and officership. His foil, Courtney Massengale, is conversely portrayed more darkly and as gaining authority through intrigue and successive staff-oriented positions. *Once an Eagle* is a regular on many senior Army officer reading lists.