



History Inspires, Teaches Military Intelligence NCOs

By Jonathan (Jay) Koester

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Established in 1962, military intelligence is one of the youngest of the Army's 15 basic branches. Despite that, military intelligence has a long, storied history, one that far predates its establishment as a branch.

Though there were intelligence successes going back to the Revolutionary War, military intelligence as a group activity really took off with the all-noncommissioned officer Corps of Intelligence Police, or CIP, during World War I. The CIP was started when Col. Dennis Nolan saw a need for a counterintelligence force within the American Expeditionary Force in Europe. Nolan asked Col. Ralph Van Deman for 50 NCOs to fill the corps.

"The CIP was all NCOs," said Paul Pipik, curator of the U.S. Army Military Intelligence Museum at Fort Huachuca, Ariz. "It really marked the first time in Army history that anybody had said, to be in intelligence, you have to have certain qualifications. Van Deman wanted people who spoke languages — French especially — because there was a lot of concern about subversion behind the lines in the AEF. He wanted people who had police experience."

The CIP set up field offices in major cities and monitored the border with Mexico, Pipik said. Along with Army duties, the NCOs of the CIP took on tasks that today are done by a variety of organizations, such as the FBI and Border Patrol.

"They were drawn directly out of civilian ranks, and they were all given a rank of sergeant," Pipik said. "A lot of them were deployed to Europe; the remainder worked within the United States. Law enforcement and security structure in the United States at that time was nothing like it is today. The bottom line was, with the country at war, the Army was the only organization that really had any sort of capacity to manage internal security. So they involved themselves with counter-espionage; they involved themselves with war-plant security. There were numerous sabotage incidents in the United States during World War I. The Germans especially were quite active in attempting to suborn immigrants and blow up war plants and things of that nature. It's not a big part of what you read about, but it wasn't a joke."



One of the displays on the Military Intelligence Soldier Heritage Walkway on Fort Huachuca, Ariz., celebrates the accomplishments of Sgt. Roy Matsumoto. Matsumoto used his knowledge of Japanese to listen in on Japanese conversations in Burma. He also several times sent confused Japanese troops rushing into an ambush. Matsumoto died this year at the age of 100. (Photo courtesy of Military Intelligence History website)

A total of 50 sergeants were chosen to ship out to Paris in October 1917. But the CIP mission immediately hit its first hurdle. Recruiting sergeants for the duty wasn't easy, and Van Deman ended up with "a questionable lot of ex-cons, French deserters, Communist agitators, mental defectives and confidence men mixed in with some Harvard grads," according to *The MI NCO: Winning Smart* by James Finley. The group was so motley, they "were immediately arrested upon their arrival in the war zone by U.S. Marines because of their suspicious character."

After that mess got sorted, these newly minted Army NCOs got to work. It wasn't an easy job, and because every person in the CIP was a sergeant, there was no hope for promotion. They were often unsupervised and expected to work under their own initiative, and the regulations and principles of the CIP spelled out a lonely existence.

"The work devolving upon Intelligence Police will leave no time to take part in social life," the CIP directed its NCOs. "Therefore private associates should not be cultivated. Your entire time will be occupied with your duties. Do not frequent military messes or canteens. Attend strictly to business."

That first rag-tag group of sergeants did a good enough job attending to business that Gen. John J. Persh-

ing asked for an additional 700 CIP agents. "By the time of the Armistice, there were 418 CIP agents in the AEF, and less than 250 working in the continental U.S.," Finley wrote. "By 1920, the corps had only six men and a dog, all eligible for discharge."

Revolutionary War

Though the all-NCO CIP was a large leap forward for noncommissioned officers in the military intelligence field, individual NCOs had important roles dating back to the Revolutionary War.

"World War I was really the first time that NCOs became heavily involved in intelligence," said Lori Tagg, the command historian at the U.S. Army Intelligence Center of Excellence at Fort Huachuca. "Prior to that, there were a few, even in the Revolutionary War. Sgt. Daniel Bissell in the Revolutionary War was a spy. He was one of the recipients of Gen. George Washington's Badge of Merit, which became the Purple Heart later." Only three Badges of Military Merit were awarded during the Revolutionary War, all to NCOs.

In 2012, as part of the celebration of the 50th anniversary of military intelligence becoming an Army branch, the USAICoE created the Military Intelligence Soldier Heritage Walkway.

“The Soldiers who most use this walkway are the Advanced Individual Training students,” Tagg said. “So we wanted to line this walkway with stories of enlisted Soldiers and NCOs to help inspire them while they are here at Fort Huachuca.”

One of those celebrated stories on the walkway is of Bissell. In 1781, Bissell was a 29-year-old sergeant in the 2nd Connecticut Regiment of the Continental Army when he posed “as a deserter and British sympathizer for a year to collect information about British operations and fortifications in New York,” reads the plaque celebrating Bissell’s MI efforts. “On June 10, 1783, Washington awarded him the Badge of Merit for conspicuous gallantry and sustained outstanding conduct related to his espionage operation. Washington’s presentation of the badge to Sgt. Bissell represents the first formal recognition of the role military intelligence Soldiers have played in combat operations.”

What the plaque leaves out is how little intelligence Bissell actually got during his year posing as a British sympathizer. Bissell was undoubtedly brave, but bad luck and sickness plagued his efforts from the beginning. Bissell was already sick with fever when he joined a British corps raised by Gen. Benedict Arnold. His sickness only worsened, and he laid in a British military hospital for 10 months. Fearing he may have incriminated himself while delirious with sickness, he eventually fled the hospital, making it back to Washington’s camp in September 1782.

The Civil War

There were several noncommissioned officers whose MI efforts stand out during the Civil War. One is Sgt. Thomas Harter, who was called on for a risky human intelligence, or HUMINT, mission. Though there had been some efforts at signals intercept and balloon reconnaissance, HUMINT was still the most-used MI tool during the Civil War.

In August 1862, Harter set out in civilian clothes to get intelligence on the position and fighting shape of Gen. Robert E. Lee’s troops. Harter’s mission was to get to Staunton, Va., and report back within three weeks. But almost as soon as he got started, he was arrested and put on a train to Richmond, Va. However, during a stop in Staunton, Harter talked his way into being put to work on the line supplying Lee’s advance.

On the morning before a planned attack by Lee, Harter left the Confederate camp, swam across the Rapidan River, and was lucky enough to run into the right people at the Union divisional headquarters, Finley said.

“One of the usual deficiencies of scouting work was the agent’s difficulties in returning to friendly lines through enemy pickets and cavalry patrols, finding the headquarters of the commander, usually to the rear, and unburdening himself of his information before the enemy could strike, [which would] render his intel-

ligence worthless,” Finley wrote. “But Harter found himself dripping wet before the commanders and staff of the Army of Virginia.”

The Army of Virginia was a shortlived unit of the Union Army. Its principal opponent was Lee’s Confederate Army of Northern Virginia. Harter’s intelligence report led to a quick retreat that protected the Union Army from the impending Confederate attack.

“This episode inspired an Army staffer to propose to the secretary of war that these kinds of dangerous espionage missions should be rewarded,” Finley wrote. “Such extra hazardous service cannot be measured by a money valuation, but [Sgt. Harter] should be compensated liberally, as a government expression that such services are appreciated.’ The sergeant would receive a \$500 award.”

In February 1863, Maj. Gen. Joe Hooker ordered his provost marshal to “organize and perfect a system for collecting information as speedily as possible,” according to Edwin Fishel’s *The Secret War for the Union: The Untold Story of Military Intelligence in the Civil War*. Col. George Sharpe was put in charge and was determined to fill his bureau with only Soldiers or highly qualified civilians.

Sharpe gathered a group of NCO scouts. It was U.S. Army policy at the time that officers could direct espionage operations, but not engage in them. “Presumably, it was thought that spying was a business suited to the lower ranks on the social scale,” Fishel wrote. “Fortunately for the Army, its ‘lower ranks’ were not wanting for men of wit and nerve.”



Pipik shows “what is known in the trade as a surreptitious entry kit, or better known as burglar tools. These kits were actually part of the training that you got as a Counter Intelligence Corps agent. There are booties so you don’t leave footprints, there are gloves, there’s a million types of key sets and tumblers. This is a European set; there was a different set for Asia.”

One of Sharpe's MI NCOs was Sgt. Milton Cline, who was responsible for one of the group's most daring behind-the-lines intelligence gathering efforts. "Wearing a Confederate uniform, he would enter the enemy camps and get a first-hand feel for their strengths, dispositions and intentions," Finley wrote.

"By the time he returned to headquarters 10 days after setting out, the sergeant had traveled 250 miles, the last 10 on a stolen horse; shared a bottle of whiskey with his Confederate hosts; been shot at by either friendly or enemy forces; and accomplished the deepest and longest infiltration of the Confederation Army recorded during the war," Finley wrote.

Counter Intelligence Corps

After proving the worth of military intelligence in the Revolutionary and Civil Wars, NCOs took full control of the Army's counterintelligence role during World War I with the all-noncommissioned officer Corps of Intelligence Police. But when World War I ended, the CIP was close to being completely disbanded. Nolan, who helped originate the force, didn't want the Army to lose the valuable intelligence skills its NCOs had picked up, Pipik said.

"When the war ended — just like every war, there's a big drawdown in the military forces — CIP just about went out of existence at that point," Pipik said. "But Nolan ... managed to get Congress to fund the CIP in a very reduced state, which really ensured it survived. It was redesignated when the Second World War started as the Counter Intelligence Corps, or CIC.

"The continued existence of the CIP ensured that it had a management structure with people in command and some sort of organized presence in the field offices and so forth," Pipik said. "When World War II came along, that really formed the foundation for the Counter Intelligence Corps. The CIC, by the time the war ended, probably had about 14,000 people in it."

Though the CIC was no longer filled solely by NCOs, "it really was the point where NCOs put their stake in the ground in intelligence," Pipik said.

Many of the brave NCOs who provided intelligence to the U.S. Army during World War II were of Japanese descent. The need for intelligence on Japan's operations was great, but many of those who could help had been put in internment camps by the United States. Sgt. Roy Matsumoto, for instance, volunteered for the Army from a U.S. internment camp in November 1942.

After enlisting, Matsumoto was sent to Burma as part of a mission to clear the area of Japanese troops. Matsumoto climbed up into jungle trees and tapped into Japanese land lines to listen to their conversations. The Japanese assumed their conversations were secure because they used a little known dialect, but the dialect just happened to be one known to Matsumoto.

Matsumoto several times used his knowledge of the Japanese language to confuse the enemy and send them rushing into ambushes, Finley said.

"Once he caused the Japanese to rush unprepared into an American ambush by shouting, 'Charge!' in his native tongue," Finley wrote. "The enemy suffered 54 fatal casualties while his unit sustained none. He was awarded the Legion of Merit for that escapade. But it was not the last time he would impersonate a Japanese officer. In April 1944, his unit was surrounded at Nhpum Ga, Burma, for 10 days. At the end of the desperate siege, Matsumoto crawled into the formations of the Japanese attackers, jumped up and shrieked 'Banzai!' launching a suicidal attack into the teeth of the American defense. His comrades could not believe his bravado and credited their survival to Matsumoto's initiative and courage.

"One of his fellows, Sgt. Warrant T. Ventura, queried the commander, Lt. Col. George McGee, about why Matsumoto had not been put in for the Medal of Honor," Finley wrote. "McGee replied that 'he was only an enlisted man doing his duty.'"

Becoming a branch

On July 1, 1962, right as the Vietnam War was kicking up, the Army established the Army Intelligence and Security Branch. Five years later, the AIS branch was redesignated the Military Intelligence Branch.

On July 1, 1987, the 25th anniversary of the creation of the branch, the Military Intelligence Corps was activated as part of the U.S. Army Regimental System.

"Today, MI is really heavily working on the idea of creating this nonstop channel from the satellite right down to the guy at the front line," Pipik said. "It's all about all sources coming together for the commander at the moment necessary, with the information needed, to let him make a good decision on the battlefield. That's the way the MI organi-



Pipik holds an unattended ground sensor from the Vietnam War era. "They were literally just pitched out of a helicopter or airplane," Pipik said. "It has a big, heavy lead weight in the tip. ... Some had audio transmitters in them. You could hear trucks driving by, people talking, stuff like that. ... They worked pretty well, actually. Though they never really shut down the Ho Chi Minh Trail, they dropped zillions of these things around Khe Sahn. There's still thousands of them out there."



Paul Pipik, curator of the U.S. Army Military Intelligence Museum at Fort Huachuca, Ariz., holds an old license plate that was used during a military liaison mission in Europe. (Photos by Jonathan (Jay) Koester)

zation works today. MI is not fielding spies or running satellites. The intel organization is focused on getting whatever those other guys collect to the right guy, at the right time, in the right way. And vice-versa, pushing up what they know to the other people.”

Desert Storm to today

The years of building up a formidable intelligence force came to an impressive head in 1991 during Operation Desert Storm in Iraq.

“The important thing about Desert Storm was this was the first time that the Army went to the field with a fully prepared intelligence organization,” Pipik said. “It was structured from brigades on down to companies. They were pretty much in the same tactical configuration that you would find today. There are some differences in focus, because the Army today is very heavily focused on brigade-type structures. Desert Storm was a conventional, divisional, line-up-the-tanks-and-charge type operation. It was the last, so far, conventional war as we had prepared to fight throughout the Cold War. So intel was really ready to rock when they went to Iraq.

“They had all through the 1970s to organize,” Pipik said. “They’d had several dress rehearsals in places like Grenada and Panama — contingency operations as they were called — throughout the ’80s. So intelligence had not only reorganized and rethought its whole approach to battlefield intelligence, it had a chance several times to shake things down and see how they went in actual operation.

“They had a tremendous electronic warfare impact in Desert Storm,” Pipik said. “They pretty much shut down, through jamming or deception operations, most of the Iraqis’ tactical nets. Anyone who was talking on the Iraqi side were being allowed to talk because they wanted to hear what they had to say. If they didn’t want them on the air, they weren’t on the air.”

After Operation Desert Storm came the Global War on Terrorism, with all new lessons to learn.

“The sad thing about it, if you will, is that as soon as [Desert Storm] ended, all those years of preparation to fight the European battle kind of went on the shelf because, just a couple of years later, we went into the war on terror, where we ended up rethinking human intelligence, rethinking surveillance, rethinking all these different areas,” Pipik said. “As an example, the linguistic issues: ‘OK, how many Pashtun speakers do we have?’ A lot of the Vietnam experience came back into play, where they had to relearn the idea of ferreting out intelligence by building networks among people, understanding how communication takes place culturally as well as verbally.”

NCOs learning lessons

The history of military intelligence, beginning with the all-noncommissioned officer Corps of Intelligence Police, brings pride and offers lessons to current MI NCOs. Staff Sgt. James Corry, an instructor of the 35M human intelligence collector course at the Military Intelligence NCO Academy at Fort Huachuca, said the CIP is something to look back on with pride.

“I think it said volumes about NCOs,” Corry said of the all-NCO corps. “We want professionals; we want NCOs.”

NCOs in counterintelligence were important then for the same reason they are important today, said Sgt. 1st Class Adam Jones, a senior group leader for the military intelligence Senior Leadership Course at Fort Huachuca.

“The benefit of that, as it applies to counter intel, is that those common guys, they can already blend in with other commoners when they are at the end of the day, chilling at the tavern, complaining about having to lug 30 cannonballs or something,” Jones said. “They come from that environment. That allows for more effective collection of counterintelligence.”

MI NCOs attempt to learn lessons from their history, including the failures and difficulties, Jones said.

“A lot of the failures come from intelligence Soldiers not being able to effectively sell their assessments to a commander,” Jones said. “So as a 35F intelligence analyst, if you have this great piece of intelligence that you can’t get the company commander on board with, believing you, then you are essentially useless. As an instructor, a lot of our students complain, ‘Why are we always briefing?’ It boils down to, if you can’t communicate your thoughts and assessments, then you’re not going to do well, especially when it comes down to just

you and that commander, and you're saying, 'Sir, the enemy is going to come from the south.'

"We can learn from the mistakes the intelligence community made during World War II, where we had the intelligence, we just weren't pushing it out because every unit or department wanted their name on the report," Jones said. "They wanted their piece of the puzzle, so they weren't sharing. ... We try to learn from those mistakes, incorporate those lessons into our toolkit. And impress that on our students."

Staff Sgt. Thomas Applebee, an instructor of the 35M human intelligence collector course, spoke of learning from more recent history.

"As a 35M, MI history has a big effect," Applebee said. "The entire Abu Ghraib scandal altered our [military occupational speciality]. Everything we do and how we are perceived as an Army interrogator is now cast in that light. That's one part of history that has affected us negatively. But here, we use that as a cautionary tale. We use that in our classes to prepare those Soldiers going out so they know, 'Hey, we are in the spotlight.'"

The many heroic stories, like Matsumoto tricking Japanese forces into a premature attack, help inspire Sgt. 1st Class Rafael Ayuso, an instructor of the 35L counter-intelligence agent course.

"Throughout MI history, to accomplish the mission, you have to think outside the box," Ayuso said. "You have to look at the enemy's perspective. You can't stay in your comfort zone. You have to be proactive, and you have to anticipate the enemy's actions."

NCOs have been leading the charge in military intelligence for so long, it helps in these modern times to know that their job can still be done the old way — without computers, cell phones or other gadgets, Applebee said. Just get an NCO to the field and get the job done.

"I think you'll find most 35Ms take a lot of pride in the fact that ours is the oldest intelligence discipline there is," Applebee said. "We don't need a computer screen. I need a pen, a piece of paper, and someone to talk to, to do my job. Every 'Mike' guy knows: I don't need your computer; I don't need your SIPRNet. We've been doing this for hundreds of years, and we can keep doing it." ■



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