

# Intelligence-Oriented Tactical Tasks

Bridging the gap between intelligence enablers and the commanders they support

by Capt Kevin L. Graving

**W**ithin the decisive area of the single battle concept, Marines “project power against enemy forces in immediate contact ... [and] operations require speed and mobility to rapidly concentrate overwhelming combat power at the critical time and place.”<sup>1</sup> Commanders do this through leveraging artillery, rockets, and aviation to accompany their maneuver. Furthermore, the decisive area is also a contested environment for the commander’s mind in which gaps in his knowledge regarding the enemy and environment are a constant requirement that must be satisfied through intelligence. Unfortunately, everything but intelligence has been decentralized for use in execution. The com-

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mander can spring on-call targets from artillery and call in close air support; however, the commander’s intelligence collection manager is in the rear—either at the combat operations center or the joint intelligence center. While the commander may have human intelligence (HUMINT) and signals intelligence (SIGINT) attached, his inability to task them is as simple as their lack of tactical tasks. To decentralize and support the commander, the Marine Corps must de-

velop intelligence-oriented tactical tasks (IOTT) aligned to the maneuver plan and instituted as doctrine through integrated training. Intelligence authorities within the Marine Corps have already identified the requirement to further integrate intelligence support into the MAGTF; however, they have yet to provide the solution.

The Marine Corps Intelligence Surveillance and Reconnaissance Enterprise’s number one goal is to

support MAGTF operations and battlefield decision-making through comprehensive integration into MAGTF concepts and the continuous provision of tailored intelligence that is timely, relevant, and predictive.<sup>2</sup>

Comprehensive integration cannot happen while intelligence support to operations is centralized in the intelligence section. Decentralization must occur not only in the form of task organization but through the form of tactics and doctrine used by the supported unit.

Within the MAGTF, HUMINT and SIGINT Marines are already employed in direct support to commanders. These intelligence professionals often spend their efforts selling their capabilities to the commander they support in hopes of convincing him of the relevancy of their intelligence collection discipline. Though these enablers have been sup-



**Decentralizing intelligence also requires examining the tactics used to support units in combat.** (Photo by LCpl Alexa Hernandez.)

porting the GCE throughout the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan,

due to a lack of education and integrated training regimental commanders, battalion commanders and company and platoon commanders do not have a comprehensive understanding of human intelligence operations and the employment of this intelligence asset ... Consequently Counterintelligence Human Intelligence Detachment [CHD]s are constantly being misemployed or not used altogether.<sup>3</sup>

The lack of proper employment and understanding of intelligence collection has plagued the Marine Corps for decades because the origins of employment are not rooted in mission tactics.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, commanders are not provided the necessary foundation to effectively understand or employ intelligence collection.

The development of IOTTs will allow for mission tactics to be effectively used by commanders, lessening the burden from the individual intelligence Marine to articulate his skill set. The talent of the individual Marine should not be the determining factor of effective intelligence support to the mission; rather, doctrine for intelligence support to the commander must be established and institutionalized. For this to be effective, IOTTs must be similar to tasks associated with essential fire support, in that the task “ties the artillery fire plan to the maneuver plan” and the purpose is “relative to the maneuver.”<sup>5</sup> Through the application of mission tactics, intelligence can be decentralized and put to use by the commander because it is tied to the maneuver of his forces. The IOTT must be tied to maneuver and developed with the intent of mission tactics.

Mission tactics enable commanders to task and provide intent. With a trade as complicated and safeguarded as intelligence collection, the ability for the commander to task without “specifying how the mission must be accomplished” is imperative.<sup>6</sup> For example, if a commander is concerned with determining which avenue of approach an enemy counterattack is likely to use, he uses an IOTT such as “identify” objective information to determine the suitability of travel on the multiple avenues of ap-

proach to determine the likely course of action by the enemy. The HUMINT Marine is now left to determine how, whether through document exploitation or interrogation, he can collect this information in accordance with the intent of the commander to accompany the maneuver. Defined IOTTs will translate the complicated methods of intelligence collection and empower the commander to task his collection assets without having to fully understand the often classified methods associated with intelligence collection. The development of IOTTs requires extensive thought and application in MAGTF training to effectively decentralize and integrate intelligence collection for the commander.

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### ***The integration of HUMINT and SIGINT into the tactical level begins with IOTTs and rests on the repetitions conducted with the maneuver unit.***

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Once developed by operational planning teams from equities within Marine Corps intelligence communities, IOTTs must be tested and improved by commanders in realistic and robust training environments to ensure comprehensive intelligence integration at the tactical level. According to the former Commandant of the Marine Corps, Gen Robert Neller,

The current and future fight may not be what we experienced in the past ... it will involve rapidly changing and evolving technologies and concepts, which will force us to be more agile, flexible and adaptable.<sup>7</sup>

In keeping with Gen Neller’s perspective, MAGTFs can no longer afford to train without robust collection opportunities derived from a thinking and evolving enemy; training must be as centric on the enemy as it is with developing operational competency for the MAGTF. Col John Boyd, USAF(Ret) described this model of thought in his own words as he began to understand the theory of war through the lens of Clausewitz and Sun Tzu: “Sun Tzu

tried to drive his adversary bananas while Clausewitz tried to keep himself from being driven bananas.”<sup>8</sup> Applied to the topic of predeployment training for the MAGTF, there needs to be balance between how Clausewitz and Sun Tzu are utilized to approach war. For Clausewitz, continued repetition at the core competencies of the MAGTF; for Sun Tzu, a focus on exploiting the enemy. With establishment and initiative toward the above-mentioned training model, the commander can effectively train IOTTs with his intelligence assets.

Integration of HUMINT and SIGINT into the tactical level begins with IOTTs and rests on the repetitions conducted with the maneuver unit. The capacity for HUMINT and SIGINT to

accompany maneuver lies within their ability to develop SOPs at the basic level with their supported unit. According to *MCDP 1, Warfighting*, “Collective training consists of drills and exercises [and] drills are a form of small-unit training which stress proficiency by progressive repetition of tasks.”<sup>9</sup> Therefore, it is essential that HUMINT and SIGINT enablers are integrated and drilled while attached to their supported maneuver unit and while attending the predeployment training plan. Drills are sufficient for the operational competency of the unit and its enablers. However, enablers must also be employed by the commander in a dynamic training environment with a thinking enemy.

Each of the IOTTs must be tested in training through the perspective of the commander. The enabler cannot bear sole responsibility for exploiting the objective; he requires support from the commander controlling the objective. It must be “clearly establish[ed] that these commanders own the training objective.”<sup>10</sup> In training, the success of the raid or patrol must hinge on the ability of the commander to identify

gaps and exploit them through effective tasking and the use of commander's intent with his intelligence enablers. The Marine Corps' theory of war suggests that through

exploiting opportunities, we create in increasing numbers more opportunities for exploitation. It is often the ability and willingness to ruthlessly exploit these opportunities that generate decisive results.<sup>11</sup>

Intelligence collection at the tactical level, when leveraged by the commander, is synonymous with exploitation and will yield greater opportunities for the commander to bring his will upon the enemy—making the enemy commander go bananas. Therefore, a training environment must have opportunities for exploitation, whether in the form of document exploitation, human exploitation, or signals collections. The lack of training in the exploitation of opportunities prevents commanders from reaching their potential as articulated in the Marine Corps warfighting philosophy of maneuver warfare. The decentralization of intelligence collection through IOTTs given by the commander does not free intelligence officers and sections from their responsibility to the commanding officer.

Critics of the concept of the decentralized tasking of intelligence enablers by commanders are likely to question the redefined role of the intelligence officers within the MAGTF. However, intelligence officers and the Marines who work in the intelligence section will remain the subject-matter experts on all matters pertaining to the intelligence cycle. The creation of IOTTs does not divorce the intelligence officer from intelligence collection or his responsibilities to the commanding officer; rather, the creation of IOTTs enables the execution of collection to accompany maneuver—especially beyond the line of departure. Intelligence officers will continue to have oversight on mission planning, rehearsals, and concepts of intelligence support to operations. The submission of operational proposals outlining authorities for intelligence collection will remain centralized within the intelligence section and

will address the authorization of specific IOTTs. Furthermore, intelligence officers will work alongside commanders to ensure IOTTs are understood and lawfully practiced. While IOTTs will encourage commanders to have the authority to effectively and lawfully task intelligence collection, the sensitivity associated with intelligence collection must be maintained.

Intelligence professionals guard their tradecraft from exposure and vulnerability in all aspects of their work and may consider the development of IOTTs as a threat to their profession. Therefore, safeguarding tradecraft must remain a top priority, especially when accompanying maneuver within the decisive area of the single battle concept. To do this, IOTTs must focus on support to maneuver in terms that maintain the integrity of intelligence tradecraft.

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Commander's intent protects the sensitive nature of tradecraft because the commander is not prescribing "how" to meet his intent. Rather, the method of collection is left to the intelligence enabler who is trained to operate within clandestine means and who practices operational security. Decentralizing intelligence to accompany maneuver is not sharing sensitive methods or tradecraft; rather, it is empowering commanders with approved concepts of employment for their intelligence enablers.

In conclusion, Marine Corps intelligence does not effectively accompany maneuver at the tactical level. Though in direct support, HUMINT and SIGINT Marines are often left to determine the scope of their support to the mission without commander's tasking or intent. One of the key considerations in collection-asset tasking conducted by the MAGTF collections manager is "ensuring sustainability of intelligence collection operations to support current and anticipated future opera-

tions."<sup>12</sup> The development of IOTTs compliments the anticipation of future requirements and the MCISRE's main goal. Additionally, IOTTs will encourage greater understanding of the intelligence collection discipline while allowing for effective tasking and intent from commanders during orders development and for *ad hoc* tasking of their direct-support intelligence enablers, ultimately allowing the speed necessary to gain the advantage over the adversary.

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**Notes**

1. Headquarters Marine Corps, *MCDP 1-0, Marine Corps Operations*, (Washington, DC: 2017).
2. Headquarters Marine Corps, *Marine Corps Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance Plan*, (Washington, DC: 2016).
3. Capt M.S. Wilbur, *Rethinking Tactical HUMINT in a MAGTF World*, (Quantico, VA: January 2006).
4. Headquarters Marine Corps, *MCDP 1, Warfighting*, (Washington, DC: 1997).
5. Headquarters Marine Corps, *MCWP 3-16.1, Artillery Operations*, (Washington, DC: 2016).
6. *Marine Corps Operations*.
7. Headquarters Marine Corps, *Marine Corps Operating Concept: How an Expeditionary Force Operates in the 21st Century*, (Washington, DC: 2016).
8. Robert Coram, *Boyd: The Fighter Pilot Who Changed the Art of War*, (New York, NY: Back Bay Books, 2004).
9. *MCDP 1, Warfighting*.
10. Brian P. Hallberg, *Effective Task Force Integration: Lessons Learned from the National Training Center*, (Fort Irwin, CA: 2017).
11. *MCDP 1, Warfighting*.
12. Headquarters Marine Corps, *MCWP 2-2, MAGTF Intelligence Collection*, (Washington, DC: 2016).

