



CompanyCommand

Building Combat-Ready Teams



To: Company Commanders **From:** Company Commanders

Company-Level IPB

"Remember that you know your area of operations better than anyone else—data that may be seemingly unimportant in the scope of a battalion operation may be very critical to your area of operations."
—Paul Stanton

Intelligence Preparation of the Battlefield: Given the fluid and complex nature of combat today, it's likely that your S2's template will not match the reality you and your Soldiers are facing on the ground. As a result, IPB is in so many ways a bottom-up process. We as company commanders along with our subordinate leaders are the intelligence officers for our unit. We are constantly observing, assessing, and predicting what we'll face on the next patrol—and how the enemy will react to what we do. We are also acting in real time on intelligence gained during our patrols. Our peers across the Army are refining their IPB processes by turning to each other through the CC forum to discuss this crucial and evolving skill set. We invite you to join the conversation.

Matthew Benigni

A/1-12th CAV & HHT/1-7th CAV, 1st CAV DIV

I think this is a discussion that maneuver commanders will continue to engage in for as long as we are in counter-insurgent operations. I always viewed the enemy in terms of an Order of Battle (OB), not just along specific danger areas of a route, but also within my company area of operations (AO). We looked at OB within the larger framework of the enemy's campaign plan. We also broadened our definition of the forms of contact to include the following: Information Operations (both oriented on anti-Coalition themes and Pro-Insurgency themes), Direct Fire, Indirect Fire, IED (including multiple forms: VBIED, Suicide Bomber, etc.), Visual, Electronic, and Obstacles.

The next facet we tried to look at was terrain. The enemy uses all of these forms of contact to shape his plan extremely well. I had quickly assessed that within my AO, his combat operations shape his Information Operations. That being said, the key terrain becomes people or spheres of

people. If the key terrain we are trying to win is *people*, the decisive operation is probably in gaining influence within those groups; therefore, collection became shaping operation #1. We conduct combat operations in order to shape our Information Operations, maintain freedom of maneuver, and limit insurgent freedom of maneuver.

As a troop commander I spent about 30 minutes per day with my S2. I shared with him what I thought the OB was in my AO, and asked him how that compared with other areas in the BN and BCT footprints. Together we developed a fairly solid link diagram and OB specific to my company area of operations. The S2 actually would work analysis tasks for us, and he was glad to do it. If I could do it all over again, I would have included my platoon leaders in this from the beginning. By the time I realized how significant this collection effort was, it took me two months to get my platoon leaders in the same mind-set with enough situational understanding to pick up on indicators and make assessments. If I were going to Iraq again, I would make time to get my platoon leaders talking about the enemy in terms of the complete OB. Once we started doing that, my platoon leaders started understanding the importance of cultural awareness, and their tactical questioning yielded much more intelligence.



CPT Joe Kuchan checks his map with his RTO, SPC Fulner, prior to assaulting into An Najaf during OIF I.

In hindsight, gaining influence ended up being the purpose of my decisive operation, but until I had enough situational understanding within my AO to effectively conduct humanitarian aid and information operations, collection should have been my first priority. Early in our campaign we focused on combat operations as the decisive operations, and it took a significant transition in mind-set to eventually gain influence in our company area of operations.

Paul Stanton

B/1-502nd IN, 101st ABN DIV (AASLT)

From a maneuver CDR's perspective...keep in mind that the "deuce" only knows what you tell him or her and the quality of the analysis will reflect the input. You are the one who knows what is going on in your AO better than anyone else—give the info to the S2. Priority Intelligence Requirements (PIR) are generated based on mission requirements—in this amorphous environment you have to keep the S2 informed so that you can adjust as necessary.

The S2 is supporting the BN—you have to focus what he/she gives you for your AO. There may be a tendency to inherit the S2's IPB and go with it—this would be a critical mistake. As the master of your AO, you MUST refine what you get. You are not absolved from answering the intelligence requirements, but you should not rely on it exclusively as you prepare for your own missions/patrols.

The S2 has limited people and assets to support him/her. If you overwhelm the S2 with "reports" that have little meaning, it isn't going to help anyone. I always gave the S2 the raw data, but I put my own analysis as a cover. Remember that you know your AO better than anyone else—data that may be seemingly unimportant in the scope of a BN operation may be very critical to your AO. The S2 won't know it unless you provide it. My experience was that providing my analytical insight to the S2 (along with all of the raw reports) helped focus the limited assets that the S2 had. The result was better input back to me.

I talked to the S2 every day, multiple times. I let him know what intel I needed, and helped him wade through the details of my patrol activity. Constant communication is a must.

Ted Stokes

A/6-9th CAV, 1st CAV DIV

Here are some helpful factors in IPB:

- First, detailed post mission briefs that provide insight and data to the S2. Without a constant, steady flow of information the S2 and his section cannot identify trends and conduct analysis.

- Detailed, accurate, and timely patrol debriefs from *patrols that were in contact*. The information that is gathered from these debriefs allows the S2 to, again, build data on attacks in an effort to identify trends. He can also identify enemy TTPs and methods of attack that are specific to certain cells or individuals.

- Patrols can also be tasked to gather information on Civil Affairs project progression, identify sites and requirements for future projects, and assessments of contractor

work schedules and productivity.

- Patrols need to gather data on population demographics, religious sects, and civilian popular opinion in your patrol areas.

The key to all of this is for every patrol to have a detailed and specific PIR list prior to ever leaving the FOB gate. This allows the patrol to focus on what the commander needs to know (both lethal and non-lethal effects and targeting) and assist in gathering intelligence for the unit attachments that usually are minimally manned and overtasked.

Bryan Carroll

B Co and Rear Detachment/1-24th IN, 1/25th ID (L) (SBCT)

Before you deploy:

- Find two or three really smart guys in the company and get them ready before the deployment. Teach them pattern analysis, debriefs, and link them up with the intelligence guys.

- Set up an area within your company command post (CP) in garrison the way you want your CP in Iraq to look. Start battle tracking things in garrison the way you will in Iraq and test your systems. You just can't jump into combat and do it differently then. What you do "day in and day out" becomes what you learn and do always.

- Hammer out your SOPs for debrief before you deploy, and practice them. This gets your guys in the rhythm and it constantly shows you areas to sustain and improve.

In Country:

The company CP needs to be doing duties that usually the battalion S2 is doing. I listed some below:

- Battle/Incident Tracking: both enemy and friendly. This will begin to form your clock methodology and geographic methodology to tracking enemy forces.

- Make sure you have the right NCOs in the CP. Guys get wounded, things happen; don't just leave these guys to recoup in the dark—use them to man the CP. That way you put their experience to work and you keep them spun up on what's going on out there.

- Conduct extensive patrol debriefs (in conjunction with battalion). Don't just let battalion debrief your boys. You know the area better than anyone (or you should) and usually take all that information in. If I wasn't on a patrol for whatever reason, myself and the operations officer sat in on the debrief. The battalion got their information, but so did I (to go back and plan future ops).

"The key terrain becomes people, or spheres of people. If the key terrain we are trying to win is people, the decisive operation is probably gaining influence within those groups."

—Matt Benigni

Stacey Lee

169th Port Operations Cargo Company

A typical S2 Shop isn't manned to gather intelligence on every location or site in a unit's area of operation. The

shortfall is compounded in transportation and logistics units where routes can span several individual unit AOs. A smart “2” will tap into the assets that are out on the ground every day.

During my last deployment we found that one of the best sources of intelligence was the truck drivers who spent five or more days each week on the roads and routes. A good debrief passed to the “2” after a mission helped identify areas of concern for future missions. Our higher headquarters took this a step further and required weekly or bi-weekly updates and specific areas of interest. Every aspect of the mission, from requesting modified routes to justifying additional armor and security, benefited from the intelligence gathered.

A few fringe benefits of the intelligence gathered were the identification of roads in need of repair, very specific additional security requirements, and “dead spots” for comms that we were able to correct. Ted’s point about the importance of a detailed and specific PIR list is relevant not only to units conducting patrols but every unit in an AO. A good convoy commander will always end a convoy briefing with the disclaimer that if it doesn’t look right then it probably isn’t.

Art La Flamme

B Co (TES)/302nd MI BN, V Corps

There’s always strength to be found in knowing the Battalion Commander’s decision points. As a commander, knowing what it is that your own boss faces, and what it is that he is having his staff work to answer, can go a long way in steering both the mission of your own company, as well

as its intelligence collection. Stacey is right, in that often it’s being able to reach out and tap into the people who are out and about, but a big part of that is linked into the pre-brief, knowing what to cue people to be on the lookout for and what to come back and brief. Yes, a good S2 and crew will be all over this, but it need not be at the exclusion of a company commander—the commander has as much of a vested interest in the success of the company and battalion mission as the S2 and other staff have. As a young S2, back in the KFOR 1A days, my PFC and I made some great gains also in working with LOGPAC crews, but it took a lot of work, before and afterwards, to fully prepare for and fully leverage all that they could collect for us, and things only improved as we involved the company commanders (and 1SGs) in the process more and more.

Additionally, a basic understanding of intel collection and intel analysis helps. It’s a simple enough process, extrapolating from a decision point to the PIR and all the way on down to the information requirements and actual tasks to be done to collect intelligence. There is skill, though, in doing, skill that must be refined, skill that must be sustained.

A Note to Company Commanders: *We invite you to log in and join your peers in conversation on the subject of Company-Level IPB. It is one great way to capture your experiences and to help advance the profession!*

Finally, we would like to thank the leaders who have participated in and shaped this discussion. Your contribution is making a difference, and it is greatly appreciated by company commanders and those who are preparing to command now.

Here are a few references that Company Commanders are finding most useful in their own IPB:

FM 34-8, Intelligence For Commanders <https://www.us.army.mil/suite/doc/269244>

ST 2-50-4, Commanders Intelligence Handbook (Updated version of the above) <https://www.us.army.mil/suite/doc/703793>

“The Twenty-Eight Articles,” by David Kilcullen, <http://tinyurl.com/ft8ua>

Connecting leaders

CC is Company Commanders.

The CC forum is a voluntary, grass-roots forum that is by-and-for company commanders. The forum is positive and practical—focused like a laser beam on the practice of company command and those things that are important to company commanders. Send article ideas to nate.self@us.army.mil.



Company Commanders, connect at <http://CompanyCommand.army.mil>

in conversation

Art by Jody Harmon