The Tactical Intelligence Officer's Role in the Stryker Cavalry Squadron

by 1LT Michael Dompierre

This article encompasses my personal perspectives, influenced by both doctrine and successful experiences at National Training Center (NTC) Rotation 15-10, on the role of the military intelligence (MI) lieutenant (or assistant S-2 officer) who is serving on the cavalry squadron staff as well as at the (forward) tactical command post (TAC CP). These perspectives focus both on what I view as our S-2 section's triumphs as well as shortcomings in the fast-paced, decisive-action (DA) environment of NTC.

Doctrinal lack

First, it should be noted that the role of the assistant S-2 at the squadron TAC CP is not addressed in the canon of Army doctrine. Field Manual (FM) 3-20.96, ***Reconnaissance and Cavalry Squadron***, as well as FM 6-0, ***Commander and Staff Organizations and Operations***, do not clearly define the role of the intelligence officer at the TAC CP. Army Technical Publication (ATP) 2-01.3 ***Intelligence Preparation of the Battlefield*** [IPB], fails to mention the forward TAC CP whatsoever.

ATP 2-19.4, ***Brigade Combat Team Intelligence Techniques***, does highlight the activities associated with the TAC CP but only at the brigade level, as the title suggests. In Paragraph 2-2, it states, "Commanders employ the [TAC CP] as an extension of the main [CP]. … The [TAC CP] relies on the main [CP] for planning, detailed analysis and coordination."[1]

This reference goes on to detail the responsibilities of the TAC CP, which are, in sum, current-operations battle-tracking and "short-range planning."[2] What this passage fails to account for is the role of the TAC CP when the main command post is "jumping," or re-locating closer to the forward-line-of-own troops. That is, what is not mentioned is what is supposed to occur when the forward CP has to replace the main CP and all its associated functionality to the greatest extent possible to support the commander's situational awareness and decision-making process until the time when the "jump" is complete and the main CP has been re-established.

If there exists a legitimate reason to outline doctrinally defined duties for the assistant S-2, the established practice of the TAC CP fulfilling the temporary role of the main CP and "taking the fight" would satisfy the need. Regardless, discussion of the role of the intelligence warfighting function (IWfF) at the forward CP is omitted.

Too often, what is lacking in MI doctrine is clear guidance about the roles and associated duties the MI junior officer must successfully perform to provide the commander intelligence that is timely, accurate and relevant – and with enough detail to enable situational understanding and effective decision-making.[3] Fortunately, throughout my time in 2nd Squadron, 1st Cavalry Regiment, I was never at a loss for what intelligence outputs my squadron commander expected of me and through what medium he expected me to deliver them to both the staff as well as our reconnaissance troops. However, that was because my squadron commander mentored me based on both his experience and expansive understanding of maneuver doctrine and made his intelligence requirements clear. As an MI professional, I consider this MI doctrinal void of clearly defined roles and responsibilities for my fellow junior MI officers in the tactical environment both puzzling and problematic.

Instead of merely observing this problem, I will next put forth my recommendations for what the assistant S-2 must be fully trained and prepared to do to contribute to the IWfF in support of the squadron commander's intent, underlying tactical objectives and the desired endstate.

What assistant S-2 should do

The assistant S-2 in a cavalry squadron, according to the 2-1 Cavalry squadron modified table of organization and equipment (MTOE), is billeted as the "tactical intelligence officer."[4] It makes the MI junior professional wonder where this term originated from because it certainly does not have current MI doctrine as a source. Army Doctrine Reference Publication (ADRP) 3-90, ***Offense and Defense***, defines the tactical level of war as "the level of war at which battles and engagements are planned and executed to achieve military objectives assigned to tactical units or task forces. Activities at this level focus on the ordered arrangement and maneuver of combat elements in relation to each other and to the enemy to achieve combat objectives."[5]

It is clear the tactical intelligence officer for the squadron, in performing his or her duties at the TAC CP, must focus on the enemy threat in relation to friendly maneuver. In other words, the focus should be on current operations. While this is a rudimentary interpretation of the role of the squadron assistant S-2, I will now outline what I consider to be the fundamental responsibilities of the squadron tactical intelligence officer, using my experiences as a foundation.

First and foremost, the assistant S-2 is considered (and must be) the subject-matter expert on all things that pertain to any potential threats the cavalry squadron may encounter within its area of operations. This is a big task; it requires at least several months of focused, dedicated preparation in formal and informal training contexts, including rigorous self-development outside of normal duty hours. This expertise also must be tailored to the squadron's mission.

For example, one of the priorities an assistant S-2 who is preparing for a rotation at NTC should focus on is 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment's Multiple Integrated Laser-Engagement System (MILES) ranges (as well as Donovian Red Book ranges for simulated weapon effects). Understanding the technical aspects of the MILES system and the actual ranges of those Donovian weapon systems helps the squadron and troop commanders better conceptualize possible enemy courses of action (CoAs) and associated tactics, techniques and procedures.

Of course, being able to communicate the "so what" to the squadron commander is of utmost importance. For example, knowing the Russian scout vehicle *Boyevaya Razvedyvatelnaya Dozornaya Mashina*-2 with mounted AT-5 Spandrel anti-tank guided missile has an improved MILES range of 5,000 meters is of less immediate intelligence value than understanding this is a contributing factor that explains why it has had a 20:1 kill ratio in prior rotations, according to information gathered in the Leaders' Training Program and from members of the Wrangler Team at the NTC. The endstate of communicating this may lead to its "high-value target" nomination in the military decision-making process (MDMP) by the squadron targeting and fire-support officers (FSOs). Understanding both the technical aspects of a defined set of weapon systems and how they relate to enemy tactics and decision-making should be what the tactical intelligence officer strives for in service to the commander's situational awareness.

Figure 1. The 2-1 Cavalry staff wargame as part of MDMP during NTC Rotation 15-10.

Second, the assistant S-2 must recognize that to synchronize the IWfF at squadron level, one must be closely tied to the S-2 – who traditionally will lead the intelligence section in IPB product development and dissemination through MDMP – as well as with the FSO in the target-nomination process. I place emphasis on this planning consideration because it is not always a given that the assistant S-2 will be present for most of MDMP at the squadron tactical-operations center (TOC) and may be forward for an extended time with the squadron commander and operations officer. This is crucial to understand because while advising the commander at the TAC CP, when there is a question about enemy attrition levels, threat-component identification (fixing force vs. exploitation force and so forth), or the enemy's timing on the battlefield, the commander will usually defer to the assistant S-2 and not the S-2 for the sake of time, expediency and occasional degraded frequency-modulation (FM) communication.

Thus one must understand all key outputs from the product-development period of mission preparation – from the analysis involved in developing the enemy most likely and most dangerous CoAs to critical enemy decision points, such as the trigger for Field Artillery Scatterable Munitions employment. The assistant S-2 can best inform the commander from a common baseline, enabling predictive assessments on threat activity at the TAC CP, by remaining consistently involved and synchronized with both product development (the process) and the products (the outputs).

Being proactively nested with future operations planning at the main CP or TOC while the TAC CP is not deployed is an efficient method for remaining on the same page as the staff, S-3 and, most importantly, the squadron commander. Our 2-1 Cavalry squadron staff realized from an early point in our training glidepath (Sustainable Readiness Model) that, due to time constraints unique to the cavalry mission, it was necessary to drastically reduce the length of the operations-order products we developed and to make them more packageable and complementary. We commonly referred to these products as the "eight troop-commander products." The S-2 contribution to this product package was the most-likely CoA (MLCoA), the most-dangerous CoA (MDCoA) and the information-collection (IC) matrix.

Ironically, the collective decision on the part of the staff, acting from the squadron commander's guidance, to focus on these products benefitted the staff as much as it did our troop commanders.

Troop commanders could attend the opord brief and receive all the products as handouts (instead of a 25-page written opord lacking enough operational graphics). This made it easier for them to clearly understand what was expected because it was clearly outlined in eight well-defined, manageable products. I affirm that this method of product dissemination saved the troop commanders time in their efforts to adhere to the "one-thirds, two-thirds" planning principle and ultimately reduced confusion.

From the staff perspective, the adoption of the eight troop-commander products enabled clear expectation management from the beginning of the MDMP. This helped the S-2 know exactly what products we needed on which to focus most of our efforts. Then we adjusted our planning accordingly.

I highlight the eight troop-commander products because this medium for understanding the underlying components of the traditional opord was best suited for maintaining situational awareness with the squadron commander and S-3 through successive battle periods at NTC, especially when I (as the assistant S-2) was absent from the MDMP while forward with the TAC CP. It is hard to argue an opposing viewpoint on this matter; when deploying with the TAC CP, it is most expedient to quickly review and refresh oneself on mission requirements and staff outputs while oriented on eight packaged, graphical products rather than trying to make sense of a 25-page written opord. This proved especially true during the later battle periods at the NTC when fatigue had become a fact of tactical life. In the end, tailored, refined opord products enable an assistant S-2 to remain the most value-added during the performance of his or her designated duties at the TAC CP.

Third, the assistant S-2 must have an intimate knowledge and a rolling assessment of the threat's disposition and composition at the ready for the squadron commander at all times. On occasion, this may require more than a verbal brief. It may require a graphical presentation on acetate to the S-3 and squadron commander for subsequent presentation to another battalion commander. It may require producing Joint Capabilities Release (JCR) overlays representing up-to-the-minute threat locations. Being successful in this duty to the commander involves leveraging the intelligence enterprise at all echelons, higher and lower. It involves establishing a squadron intelligence primary, alternate, contingency and emergency means of communication (PACE) plan (or being nested with the BCT S-2 PACE plan if one has been implemented) that facilitates quick, reliable access to company intelligence support teams (CoISTs) as well as to BCT S-2 via Lower Tactical Internet (TI) platforms.

Before sending our CoIST analysts to the reconnaissance troops, I would ensure they understood I would communicate to them first on the squadron operations and intelligence (O&I) net and second via JCR. I implemented this plan based on feedback I received from the CoIST from the collective-training events we conducted as a squadron in the months before our NTC rotation. I determined (based on their input) that it was usually easier for them to get on the O&I net than to communicate via JCR because of the other competing requirements at the troop CPs and the preferences of the troop executive officers.

In addition to establishing a communications plan with CoIST, I ensured that the BCT S-2 section understood that the only way to communicate with our squadron S-2 section during a TOC jump was through Lower TI via FM or JCR with me at the TAC CP. I intimated many concerns from the beginning of our rotation with our squadron S-2 about how effective intelligence-sharing with higher headquarters would be under these circumstances since the BCT S-2 section expected that battalions and our cavalry squadron almost always had established Upper TI platforms in place (which was routinely not the case because of the mission set). We had a superb S-6 and S-6 section, but veterans of cavalry organizations understand how often Upper TI platforms must be broken down and re-located in the midst of a DA fight. It took two battle periods at NTC for the battalions and BCT S-2 section to iron out these communication issues.

A solution to this problem is to ensure the BCT S-2 section has an active JCR (or FM) operator from the start of operations to ensure intelligence-gathering and analysis is captured and disseminated. This is important even when the cavalry squadron and battalions are re-locating their main CPs and exercising mission command from their TAC CPs without Upper TI.

Challenges

I begin the final section of this review of recommended responsibilities for a squadron assistant S-2 by considering the most challenging aspects of MI junior-officer duties from both the analytical and leadership perspectives. First, a major analytic challenge while conducting IPB and developing products for the squadron and troop commanders was creating quality assessments about the enemy's desired endstate. ATP 2-19.4 states – in a discussion of the critical functions of performing IPB Step 3, "Evaluate the Threat" – that "knowing how the threat conducted previous operations can provide insight into possible objectives and the desired endstate. … Against a conventional military force, the analysis should start at more than one level above the friendly echelon unit."[6]

Thus, what our squadron intelligence section should have emphasized in every mission analysis brief, wargaming session and MLCoA/MDCoA brief was what the enemy brigade tactical group – and, if possible, the division tactical group – missions were and what military, economic, political and social objectives served as the basis of these missions. Instead, our section and likewise the BCT S-2 section rarely discussed these threat higher-echelon mission statements.

In the absence of this assessment of the threat, our section proceeded to base our threat CoA development on prior threat activity in previous battle periods in addition to focused analysis from the outcomes of internally "playing red" and thinking in terms of how the threat would see U.S. forces in the given tactical situation. My squadron commander, LTC Steven T. Barry, emphasized that when I was conducting threat analysis to frame my thinking in terms of four points of view: "How red sees blue, how blue sees blue, how blue sees red and how red sees red." If ongoing IC efforts are unable to provide timely intelligence pertaining to formulating a predictive enemy endstate, these methods are used as a next resort from which the enemy threat model is built from the ground up, using what information is available.

This orientation on previous patterns of enemy activity – as well as an examination of the threat's understanding of the four points of view mentioned – facilitate creating IPB products that can much better articulate what the threat will most likely choose as a CoA in the absence of assessments based off recent IC efforts. One excellent set of resources that enabled us to create enemy CoA products that were commended by commanders at multiple echelons was threat doctrine manuals (such as FM 100-2-1, FM 100-2-2 and FM 100-2-3, which articulate Soviet land-warfare doctrine, as well as the Training Circular 7-100 series).

Figure 2. A TAC CP established during NTC Rotation 15-10.

As an MI lieutenant and leader on the squadron staff and as a representative of the IWfF at the commander's TAC CP, it is imperative one has a solid, clear understanding of what the Army pays you to do and what the MI Branch has trained you to do. Bob Kizlik artfully states in his definition of what embodies a profession that "[t]he profession collectively, and the professional individually, possesses a body of knowledge and a repertoire of behaviors and skills (professional culture) needed in the practice of the profession; such knowledge, behavior and skills normally are not possessed by the nonprofessional."[7]

Recap

The purpose of this review of my personal experiences as a squadron assistant S-2 at NTC is to enhance the MI professional's and maneuver leader's understanding of the role and duties that should be attributed to the assistant S-2 or squadron tactical intelligence officer. I used anecdotes of successful experiences, lessons shared from my squadron commander and a doctrinal foundation when possible to illustrate my points.

If MI doctrine, as embodied in the current canon, will not fully define what the tactical intelligence officer must do to be successful on both the staff and at the TAC CP – and likewise make it readily apparent – then junior MI professionals must take this task on and define it ourselves. The assistant S-2 must understand the repertoire of behaviors and skills, or professional tradecraft, necessary to both conduct the IWfF and to master the duties necessary to paint a predictive, accurate and timely intelligence picture for the commander.

As staff MI lieutenants who have not served any time “on the line,” it is easy to succumb to the psychological fallacy that, by extension, we provide less value during the MDMP, have little to base our assessments on during briefs and product development, and must be unduly influenced by our other staff peers into adopting their line of thought or assessment when providing feedback to the commander. This form of thinking must be discarded. The U.S. Army Intelligence Center of Excellence trains MI junior officers well; it is my aspiration that this review helps elucidate the principles and personal procedures the assistant S-2 in a cavalry squadron should adopt to fulfill the requirements of the commander. I also hope to describe what it means to be an MI professional, second to none.

Our credibility is established among our (usually) more experienced peers on staff through knowledge and articulation of doctrinally sound assessments; the capacity to describe the big picture for the squadron commander, executive officer, S-3, FSO and troop commanders; and our ability to remain adaptive enough to respond quickly and intelligently to updated information requirements from the squadron commander and troop leadership.

1LT Mike Dompierre is the executive officer of Company D (MI), 299th Brigade Engineer Battalion, 1st Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division. Fort Carson, CO. His previous assignments include squadron assistant S-2, 2-1 Cavalry; and intelligence analyst, U.S. Special Operations Command during Operation Enduring Freedom December 2013-April 2014. His military education includes the Cavalry Leader’s Course and the Military Intelligence Basic Officer Leaders’ Course. 1LT Dompierre has a bachelor’s of arts degree in political science from the University of Notre Dame.

Notes

[1] ATP 2-19.4, ***Brigade Combat Team Intelligence Techniques***, Feb. 10, 2015.
[2] Ibid.
[3] Ibid.
[4] UIC WJHCAA MTOE, effective date March 16, 2016.
[5] ADRP 3-90, ***Offense and Defense***, August 2012.
[6] ATP 2-19.4.
[7] Robert Kizlik and Associates, ***Characteristics of a Profession***, Nov. 20, 2015, www.Adprima.com/profession.

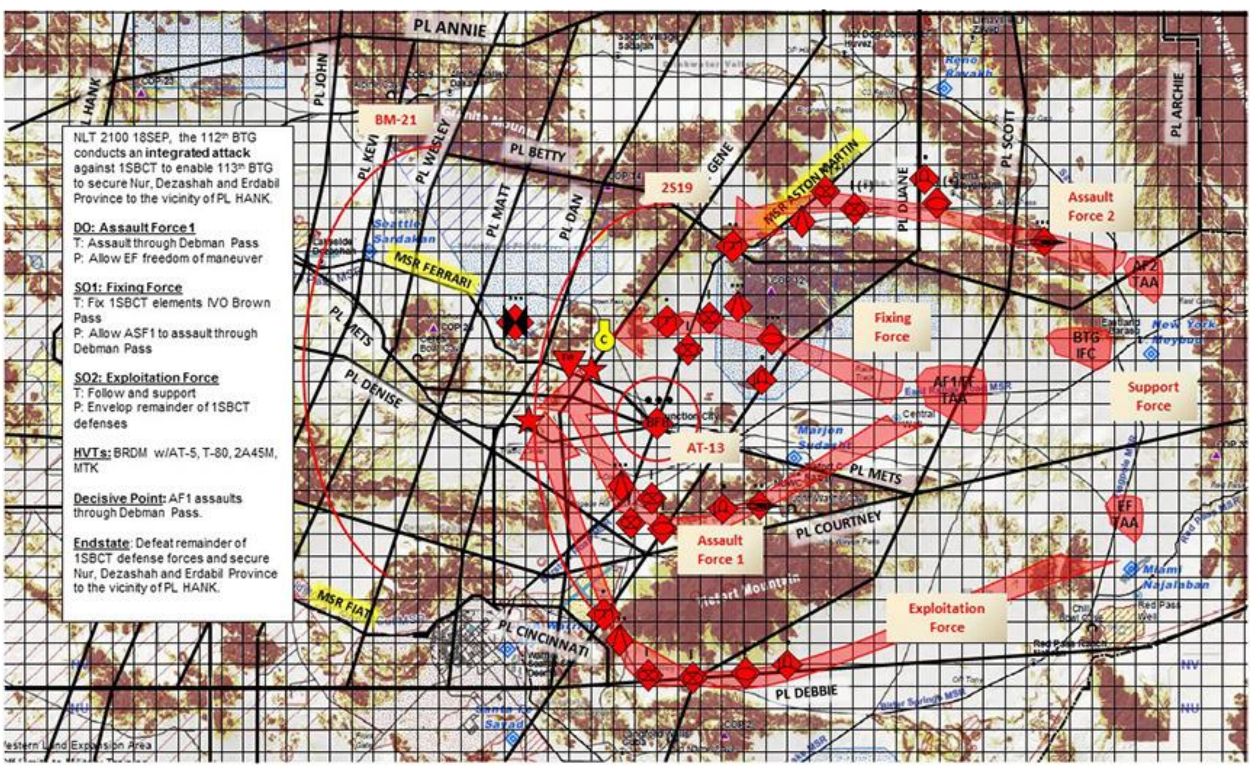

Figure 3. The MLCoA/MDCoA troop-commander product as part of the eight troop-commander products.