
NOTE TO FILE—THE CHALLENGE OF CENTRALIZED CONTROL FACED BY THE INTELLIGENCE FUNCTION IN AFGHANISTAN

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From rugged and untried terrain to strange and unfamiliar cultures, from sudden ambushes to IEDs hidden near side roads, combat troops outside the wire face a diverse range of dangerous obstacles in Kandahar Province. To help them counter those obstacles, the intelligence officers and non-commissioned officers (NCOs) in theatre set out to collect, analyze and disseminate information critical to their security and safety as well as to the success of the mission. However, as much as the Intelligence elements in Afghanistan venture to assist and support the troops on the ground best they can, there are numerous challenges basic and complex, faced by the intelligence personnel in theatre. The way to meet these challenges is clearly identified in the “8 principles of Intelligence” (see Table 1). For this article, only the first, and arguably the most vital, of the principles will be focused on: centralized control.

The Problem: Not Enough Centralized Control

As per joint intelligence doctrine, centralized control is described as follows: *Intelligence is centrally controlled to avoid unnecessary duplication, provide mutual support, and ensure the efficient, economic use of all resources.* By this definition, the current Intelligence architecture in Joint Task Force Afghanistan (JTF-Afg) falls short of this ideal, and hinders the proper functionality of the intelligence cycle.

1	Centralized Control
2	Timeliness
3	Systematic Exploitation
4	Objectivity
5	Accessibility
6	Responsiveness
7	Source Protection
8	Continuous Review

Table 1: The 8 Principles of Intelligence

The purpose of this article will be to review the level of centralized control only at the Joint Task Force level, where two organizations with overlapping responsibilities support one commander, yet split collection assets between them: The All Source Intelligence Centre (ASIC) and the J2 section. As it stands now, there are personnel redundantly employed and multiple examples of duplication of effort and slow, cumbersome coordination with the current architecture. While individual solutions to individual problems that arise because of duplication can be and have been implemented on a one-by-one basis, to address the root cause of many of the problems arising from a

lack of centralized control, this article will propose a doctrinal-level change in the intelligence architecture that would mitigate the majority of these issues.

Given that some decentralization is necessary, the current architecture has a number of discrete organizations spread across the entire task force serving a number of critical functions. It is also fundamental that commanders, at both the unit and task force level, have their own intelligence staff to keep them informed, report their unit's observations / assessments, and set collection or production priorities. They must produce tailored products that meet their particular commanders' / organizations' needs. Naturally, the size of these staffs will be dependent on the responsibilities and scope of the unit and commander supported. However, this requirement does not mitigate the need for centralized control by any means, and the joint task force commander should have one robust agency providing advice, rather than two understaffed and redundant agencies splitting resources between them.

The Proposed Solution: Merge the J2 Section and the ASIC

The solution to the current problem is simple, if unorthodox; the J2 Section should be dissolved, and its manpower and assets absorbed into the ASIC. Current doctrine dictates that the commander and staff are to be supported by a robust J2 section with its own integral collection capability. However, our doctrine is not working as well as it should. It is counter-productive to keep an intelligence architecture that does not work as efficiently as possible only because it is doctrinal; when this is the case, doctrine must be amended or it will be discarded over time for the sake of operational expediency. The J2 section should be merged with the ASIC, and the robust, newly augmented ASIC should be the chief engine of the Sense function and the nexus for providing advice to the commander and his staff. Keeping the two organizations separate, yet constantly taking steps to mitigate the problems that arise from this duplicate architecture requires a significant amount of liaison and coordination, taking up valuable manpower and time.

The intelligence, surveillance, target acquisition and reconnaissance (ISTAR) section, currently attached to the Task Force J2 section, should be moved to the ASIC as well. The analytical staff for each organization should be grouped together to ensure an economy of effort and allow centralized control. Should there be surplus personnel in any particular function, they should be moved to address manning shortfalls either within the expanded ASIC or elsewhere in the task force's intelligence architecture.

In order to support the task force operations and plans staff, this enlarged ASIC would provide additional officers (perhaps on a rotating basis) and junior NCOs to the Provincial Operations Centre (POC). This would reduce the presence of what was once the J2 staff in JTF Afg HQ, while providing an unreduced level of support to operations and planning given the economy of effort that would come from centralization.

To reflect the increased responsibility of the ASIC CO, he or she should hold the rank of lieutenant-colonel, similar to the other units in the task force. If the task force commander insists on keeping an officer as a J2, he or she should hold the rank of major. This change would reflect the proven effective relationship that the logistics branch has demonstrated with the relative ranks of the Brigade J4 and the CO of a service battalion; the CO of the capability is traditionally superior to the commander's advisor. In our current intelligence architecture, for some reason we have inverted this time-tested relationship.

There are reasonable arguments that can be made for the status quo. For instance, the ASIC as a unit in its own right, currently has no official authority to task collection assets at a parallel unit such as the battle group (BG), NSE, PRT etc. The J2 in our current architecture is capable of directing all units in the task force to ensure centralized control of collection. Grouping the ASIC and J2 sections into one entity would raise the question; how would the new, amalgamated ASIC (itself a line unit), task the BG or NSE with collection or intelligence production tasks? Thankfully, there is a fairly painless solution for this issue.

First, it would be simple enough for the ASIC officers and NCOs who are assigned to support the POC to handle the responsibility of directing operational level collection tasks to the units as long as they are aligned with the approval authority. This could result in a slightly longer tasking process, but nonetheless significantly faster than the coordination currently required in order to prevent the duplication of effort that plagues us now. More importantly, it would also be a legitimate tasking system with the full authority of the task force behind any collection or production tasks. Alternatively, the Chief Ops could give blanket approval for collection management and tasking of BG / NSE / PRT / OMLT assets to the AISC for limited periods of time.

If blanket approval for collection is not given, an alternative is for the Task Force to generate orders for certain sub-units to transfer collection assets “taccon” or “opcon” to the ASIC when responsiveness is especially critical. There is precedent for this already, as the road goes both ways.

Ultimately, the meager advantages of keeping a separate J2 section at the task force level do not outweigh the disadvantages the status quo. Likewise, there are significant advantages to dissolving the J2 section and consolidating assets and manpower in the ASIC.

Effects of Merging The J2 Section With the ASIC

Duplication of Production Effort: In theatre, a division of labor allows for each specific intelligence organization to work on different aspects of intelligence, including force protection, battle tracking, situational awareness, and strategic / operational / tactical analysis. This focus should also be divided into current and basic intelligence.

Current Intelligence:
“Intelligence which reflects the current situation at either strategic or tactical level”

Basic Intelligence
“Intelligence, on any subject, which may be used as reference material for planning and as a basis for processing subsequent information or intelligence”

Table 2: Current and Basic Intelligence

Current intelligence has a greater requirement for timeliness than basic intelligence; therefore, the intelligence personnel in theatre should be focused almost exclusively on the former, while basic intelligence would be provided almost entirely by out-of-theatre personnel. This would allow for the already thin analytical capabilities in theatre to focus on actionable current intelligence. Meanwhile, the out-of-theatre intelligence assets could focus on operational and strategic level analysis.

The amalgamation of the J2 section and the ASIC would establish centralized control over the production effort, and would reduce the redundancy between the other organizations and the task force’s production as well, provided the expanded ASIC and

other allied / national intelligence agencies established a clear division of labour between them.

Multiple Discrete and Incompatible Collation Systems: Collation is arguably one of the most basic and fundamental of the intelligence tasks, as it ensures that information is not only gathered and stored properly and concisely, but is also delivered and/or accessible to the appropriate personnel for analysis and scrutiny. With numerous international mission intelligence organizations present in theatre, it is normal that there will be a multitude of collation systems, each group focusing on their respective areas of responsibility. That being noted, on a contingent level there is no need for multiple collation cells within the task force. However, as it stands now, several organizations have collation staffs as well as different collation systems; that in itself not only renders information duplication an everyday reality draining valuable manpower and resources, but it also contributes to wasteful circular reporting (discussed in greater detail below).

The ASIC gathers each and every bit of information from every possible source and continuously monitors all networks. The merging of the J2 section with the ASIC would include the fusion of their two separate collation systems, thus reducing the problem to one less redundant and isolated collation system. To achieve task force-wide access to this single beefed up collation system, the use of a format such as WIKINT¹ should be implemented on a network accessible to all units and sub-units; this would make all information easily accessible to the different intelligence as well as operations elements.

This, in turn, would make intelligence production, coordination, and especially dissemination of information much easier, and would trim down and eliminate to a great degree constant circular reporting and duplication of production effort.

Redundancy and Circular Reporting: Circular reporting will always be an issue in the intelligence function. One single event can and will be reported in a dozen different products (INTSUMs, INTREPs, DSRs, etc) and then re-reported yet again in the near future. Furthermore, because there are few standardized products and templates for modern counter-insurgency (COIN) agreed upon by all the nations contributing to ISAF, some organizations omit to put the source of the information whereas others rewrite the information itself (occasionally with mistakes or changes). For an analyst, this is a major problem to say the least. The screening process of the information as well as its analysis requires an immense amount of focus and crosschecking, taking time that could be better spent on more vital tasks.

The amalgamation of the ASIC and J2 would not eliminate this problem, since we have no control over our allies or other external reporting agencies. However, we can eliminate at least one source of internal circular reporting by having a single, common analytical and production effort to support the task force commander and his or her staff.

Duplication of Request for Intelligence (RFI) Management: The RFI system has been designed to help commanders get critical information that could help them understand and define a specific subject through the use of another unit or formation's assets and resources, which are for the most part scarce, yet in high demand. At this moment, there is a duplication of the RFI system between the J2 section and the ASIC. This not only siphons the time and effort of the organizations involved, but also renders the process redundant. The RFIs submitted to the J2 shop often ends up being forwarded to the ASIC. Thus, even with the use of powerful RFI management tools, the J2 remains an unnecessary middleman.

A tasking chain of Byzantine complexity has developed for RFIs that must leave the task force. The complexities arising from multi-layered tasks that must go to agencies in ISAF, Canada, and within the task force, dramatically slow RFI response time and complicate tracking. On other occasions, requestors will submit an RFI to both the ASIC and the JTF Afg J2, not knowing which agency is ideal to answer their query or which may do it best. This frequently generates duplicate taskings and complicates tasking collectors/producers. Lastly, with two RFI managers, there are two different and discrete processes of prioritization, which may result in conflicting priorities being given to the collectors/producers.

In order to avoid this glitch and stop draining time and manpower of two organizations, there should be one CCIRM/RFI management authority in theatre that is accessible to all. The merging of the J2 section with the ASIC would naturally result in the fusion of the RFI processes, and truly deliver a "one-stop shop" for all RFIs from both within the task force and from external agencies. This will make the process simpler for customers, eliminate double tasks, and allow the rational prioritization of RFIs by a single authority.

Uncoordinated Collection Management / ISTAR: Collection management is defined in the joint intelligence doctrine manual as *...the process of converting intelligence requirements into collection requirements, establishing, tasking or coordinating with appropriate collection sources or agencies, monitoring results and retasking, as required.* However, when there are multiple collection managers with assets divided between them, it results in a disjointed collection effort. This makes coordinated tasking, and coverage of gaps quite difficult.

The J2's ISTAR section controls a number of ISTAR platforms. Though these assets are vital and effective, they are currently not grouped at the natural intelligence nexus that is the ASIC. As it is now, with certain collection assets falling under a different tasking chain, the coordination and synchronization process is difficult and problematic. For example, a requirement for imagery over a certain area could be met through the ASIC's resources, or through ISTAR assets. Because of this, here in theatre we have witnessed collection tasks being bounced from one to the other organization as each was "too busy" to handle the task, while they duplicated each other's effort by working independently on another task of perceived higher priority. Were these assets grouped together under a single tasking chain, this would not have happened. Thus, in order to avoid miscommunication, task redundancy, delays and missed opportunities, it is preferable that all collection capabilities, from both ISTAR and ASIC, fall under the same command. This will allow better synchronization, scheduling, and more complete coverage of named areas of interest (NAIs) / responses to intelligence requirements (IRs). While it is possible to use frequent liaison and coordination to mitigate this problem, a single collection management authority would be much more efficient.

Conclusion

There is a natural trend in the intelligence community to decentralize, punctuated with occasional authority imposed direction to re-centralize. One of the most prominent examples is the national coordination of the United States' intelligence effort. The Americans after the Second World War established the CIA to be just that; a central intelligence agency, one that would coordinate and pull information from all other intelligence organizations. However, they slowly evolved, adopted a more operational mandate, and were no longer central in their control over other organizations. The US intelligence community had decentralized over time. Thus, sixty years after the creation of the CIA, the United States was compelled to restore centralized control by creating the Director of National Intelligence (DNI), and giving the new authority a mandate eerily similar to the original.

Likewise, on a smaller scale (and in a much shorter period of time), Canadian military intelligence in Afghanistan has followed a similar path; We established the ASIC concept in 2002, and designed the organization to be a singular nexus of collection, processing and dissemination; the current architecture, with collection assets, analytical power and collation cut off and integral to a separate J2 section has strayed from the first principle of intelligence. We believe it is time to return the ASIC to its "all source" status. If this change would violate CF intelligence doctrine, then doctrine must be changed.

In conclusion, it is evident that there is a variety of challenges that the intelligence function faces in Afghanistan. By failing to closely adhere to the first principle of intelligence, the other 7 principles are affected by consequence. In fact, not only does this impede on the tasks themselves, but also on our capacity to provide timely and reliable intelligence to fighters, staff officers and decision makers. We must use the most effective architecture to apply the principles of intelligence, in order provide the best support the commanders and the soldiers in the field.

Endnotes

1. WIKINT uses the same concept of WIKIPEDIA© which is a living encyclopedia that permits users to add information and contribute improvements to the content that is easy to browse and accessible to everyone.