

NEWS FROM THE FRONT

Priority Intelligence Requirements (PIRs)



Can You Impact Your Unit's Success?



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Priority Intelligence Requirements: Can You Impact Your Unit's Success?

Lieutenant Colonel (LTC) Cole Erickson, G-2 (intelligence officer) of the Third Infantry Division, slumped into his desk chair. The tent walls seemed to close in on him as the desert wind circulated sand throughout the room. How had the opposing force (OPFOR) Donovanian commander bypassed his unit's defensive position? How had he not identified the signs? He wheeled his chair around and scanned the commander's critical information requirements (CCIRs), homing in on the priority intelligence requirements (PIRs). LTC Erickson observed that his collection manager had refined only two of the 13 PIRs during the last four days. Sighing, he made a note to talk to the collection manager the next morning.

While this is a fictionalized scenario, many intelligence professionals have experienced similar frustration. Frustration stems from not fully understanding the functionality of information requirements and how to answer them in an increasingly fast-paced planning cycle.

CCIR are time-sensitive, specific information requirements that inform a commander's decision for an operation. PIRs are a key element of CCIR; focusing on the enemy, terrain and weather, and civil considerations. Recent warfighter exercises have demonstrated a recurring challenge for intelligence sections and planners in defining, assessing, and refining PIRs to effectively inform commander decisions in large-scale combat operations (LSCO) execution. When PIRs fail to answer the "so what" to inform planning and execution, timeliness and quality of decision making suffer.

Units at every level within the Army have failed to successfully use PIRs to inform decision making. The reasons for this range from collectors not being tasked properly and individuals not understanding the focus of the information requirement to intelligence officers not updating or adjusting the PIRs. Research of trends at combat training center (CTC) rotations and multi-echelon warfighter exercises have shown intelligence officers will benefit from incorporating the following lessons: PIRs must be tied to the commander's decision points and collection plans must be robust and dynamic.

HOW DO INTELLIGENCE OFFICERS SUCCESSFULLY TIE PIRS TO THE COMMANDER'S DECISION POINTS?

Many times, intelligence officers (G-2/S-2) simply attempt to identify what they think their commander needs to know, or actions the enemy may employ, and create PIRs to answer those information gaps. Instead, they should take several key steps to ensure the PIRs can successfully drive operations and inform decisions.

First, the G-2/S-2 must adhere to the commander's guidance and include the commander in subsequent informal discussions relating to key decisions. The G-2/S-2 must continue to refine PIRs upon completion of the mission analysis brief and course of action (COA) briefs. Remember, if it is a priority of your commander, it should be your priority.

Second, the G-2/S-2 must nest the PIRs with the decision support template (DST). The DST is an often overlooked tool that should be built in collaboration with the entire staff. A robust DST provides text to recap expected events, decision points, and planned friendly actions. It describes where and when a decision must be made if a specific action is to take place. It ties decision points to named areas of interest (NAIs), targeted areas of interest (TAIs), CCIRs, collection assets, and potential friendly response options (ADP 5-0). Simply put, a DST allows the officer to nest the PIRs with all facets of the operation the commander deems critical.

Third, update often. An easily accomplished and yet rarely incorporated task is the simple act of updating and adjusting PIRs. This is a common theme across the Army at every level. The operational environment changes, and so must PIRs. As Mission Command Training Program (MCTP) personnel observed, “If PIRs don’t change, you’re fighting the plan and not the enemy.” One method by which officers may ensure PIRs remain relative is to adjust them by phase of the operation and then review during targeting working groups (20-15_MCTP FY19).

In addition to updating the PIRs, ensure PIRs are refined at planning working groups. This will allow the influence of the entire staff. Too often, PIRs are created only by the collection manager or the G-2. If operations are successfully driven by intelligence, all staff sections must contribute to and understand the significance of the PIRs. “PIRs aren’t just an intelligence function, they’re a whole-of-staff requirement to ensure that decision-quality information is getting to the commander,” (Joint White Paper INTEL Operation, SEP 2019).

Finally, the G-2/S-2 must limit the number of PIRs to those that only affect the commanders decision points. As it pertains to priority information, less is more. While friendly force information requirements (FFIRs) may be wake-up criteria for the commander, these are not PIRs. An example of a good PIR would be the location of a company of T-90s (Russian battle tanks) with indicators to give the collector parameters for reporting. An example of a good FFIR would be a friendly combined arms battalion (CAB) loses three platoons of combat power. A combination of the PIR and FFIR would result in a decision for the commander.

Remember, you can impact your unit’s success if you “link PIRs to decision points so that intelligence products and assessments provide decision-quality information that is timely, fused, analyzed, predictive, and answers the ‘so what’ to drive planning and support execution, versus simply ‘reporting the news,’” (Joint Whitepaper_INTEL Operations).

HOW SHOULD INTELLIGENCE OFFICERS SUCCESSFULLY INCORPORATE AN INFORMATION COLLECTION PLAN?

Many times, intelligence officers merely build the information collection plan (ICP) during mission analysis and focus their efforts on using unmanned aircraft systems (UAS) to capture data, but there is much more to the ICP than UAS and enduring PIR. Below are several methods by which to build a dynamic ICP.

First, the G-2/S-2 must build the ICP (See Table 1-1). The ICP should include both aerial and ground collection assets, NAIs, indicators, and the latest time information of value. The ICP informs both the collector and the planner of what information is being requested. Further detail may be provided in the event template. The intelligence staff then updates the ICP and associated templates during regularly scheduled battle rhythm events and distribute in daily fragmentary orders (FRAGORDS).

Table 1-1. Example Information Collection Plan, ATP 2-01

PIR	Indicators	SIRs	DP	NAIs	TAIs	Start Time	End Time	Assets																	
								BCT						EAB											
								A Troop	B Troop	C Troop	HCT 1	HCT 2	HCT 3	CI	Prophet 1	Prophet 2	Shadow 1	Shadow 2	Shadow 3	COMINT	ELINT	GEOINT	MASINT		
1. How is the 85th SPF limiting freedom of maneuver in the area of operations	1.1. Presence of engineer assets	1.1.A. Visual identification of BAT-2 combat engineer vehicles	DP1: Bypass destroyed bridges and initiate gap crossing; clear and occupy bridges	3001	1	H+1	H+2	T	C	C	T	C	C					C	C	C			R		
		1.1.B Report thermal signature of vehicle emission of BAT-2 combat engineer vehicles		3001	1	H+1	H+2																	C	R
	1.2. Presence of LPs/OPs in the vicinity of bridges	1.2.A Report composition, disposition, strength, and activity of division reconnaissance team elements, each consisting of 5 to 7 man teams		3002	2	H-1	H+2	C	C	C	C	C	T						T	C	C				C
		1.2.A Report reconnaissance communications using R-173 radios		3002	2	H-1	H+2												T	C					C

Second, intelligence (INTEL) and operations (OPS) officers build the DST. This template identifies the decision point, event, and the subsequent action the commander will take (see Figure 1-1). A completed template will allow intelligence officers to build PIR subsets, which are essential elements of information that directly identify the specific event that must take place for the commander to make the decision.

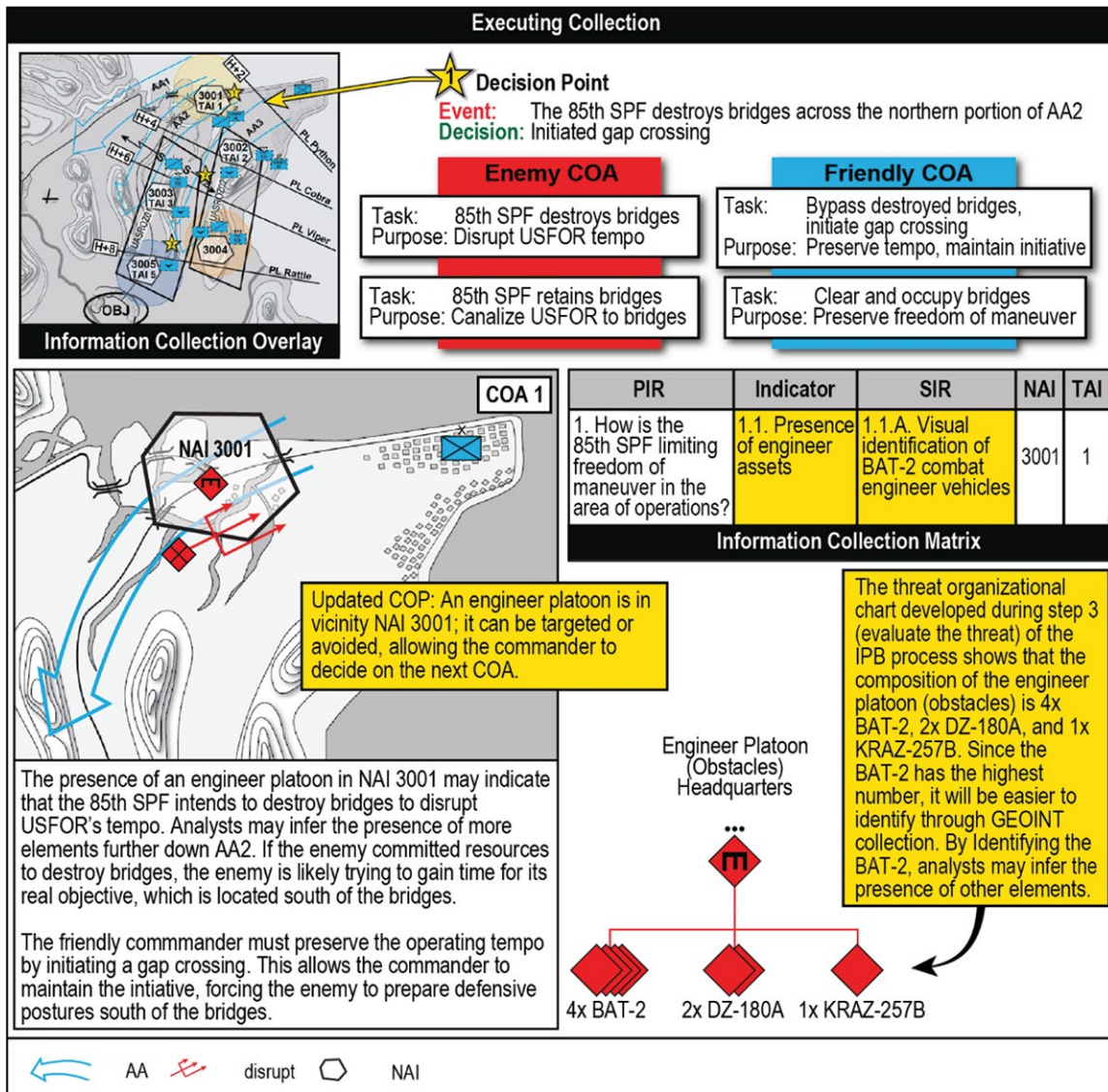


Figure 1-1. Executing Collection to Confirm the Threat's Course of Action Example, ATP 2-01

Third, officers must ensure PIRs remain synchronized with the ICP. Many intelligence officers simply create PIRs during mission analysis, and then forget to update and refine. PIRs should be adjusted by phase of the operation and nested with the ICP. Remember, collectors and analysts must recognize specific requirements to identify and report (20-15 MCTP FY19 Key Observations). The collectors will then report their findings to the point of contact (POC) within the given operations order.

Fourth, officers must refine large NAIs via enemy situation templates and event templates. Again, PIRs must support specific scenarios that directly affect the commander's decision.

Finally, the intelligence staff must continue to update and refine all of these products. These are not one-time products that will endure throughout the entire operation. As the enemy, terrain, and weather evolves, so must the intelligence officer's assessments and products. If you are going to affect your unit's success, you must refine and update continuously.

LTC Erickson closed the internet browser on his computer. Sinking back in his chair, he reflected on his review of the collection process. He realized he needed to make some immediate changes to his collection effort. His collection manager must not be the sole individual charged with responsibility of updating the PIR. Instead, he needed to get the entire staff involved in the process via one of the regularly scheduled working groups. He also needed to streamline the number of PIR and ensure they all tied into his commander's priority decisions. After locking his computer, LTC Erickson headed into the working group with a newfound energy and focus.

GLOSSARY

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ADP	Army Doctrine Publication
ATP	Army Techniques Publication
BCT	brigade combat team
CAB	combined arms battalion
CCIR	commanders critical information requirements
CI	counterintelligence
COA	course of action
COMINT	communications intelligence
COP	common operational picture
CTC	combat training center
DP	decision point
DST	decision support template
EAB	echelons above brigade
ELINT	electronic intelligence
FFIRs	friendly force information requirement
FRAGORD	fragmentary order
FY	fiscal year
GEOINT	geospatial intelligence
HCT	human intelligence collection team
ICP	information collection plan
INTEL	intelligence
IPB	intelligence preparation of the battlefield
LP	listening post
LSCO	large-scale combat operations
LTC	lieutenant colonel
MASINT	measurement and signal intelligence
MCTP	Mission Command Training Program
NAI	named area of interest
OP	observation point
OPFOR	opposing force
OPS	operations
PIR	priority intelligence requirement
POC	point of contact
SIR	specific information requirement
SPF	special purpose forces
TAI	targeted areas of interest

UAS	unmanned aircraft system
USFOR	United States Forces

TERMS

G-2	intelligence officer
S-2	intelligence officer
T-90s	Russian battle tanks

REFERENCES

20-15 MCTP FY19 *Key Observations*

ADP 5-0, *The Operations Process*, July 2019

ATP 2-01, *Collection Management*, August 2021

Joint Whitepaper, *Intelligence Operations*, September 2019



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