

Training the Intelligence Marine of 2030

Developing smaller more capable intelligence sections

by Col Seth E. Anderson

The way that Marine Corps intelligence operated in Iraq and Afghanistan is no longer effective for the current and future fights. We need to change how we train intelligence Marines to allow them to operate effectively under the new threats we face. In both the Iraq and Afghanistan fights, we had intelligence centers with dozens or even hundreds of personnel. Moreover, we could usually rely on stable communications capable of disseminating intelligence across the battlespace. However, with the proliferation of medium- to long-range precision-strike weapons, we will no longer have large intelligence centers anywhere close to the enemy. Also, with the increasing ability of our adversaries to jam communications, we can no longer rely on our ability to consistently communicate.

We will have to adapt to using small intelligence sections that move around the battlespace to avoid being targeted. These teams will need to be able to provide a maneuver commander with the wide variety of intelligence needed without relying on communications for reach-back support. This means that intelligence sections will need *brilliance in the basics*, an often-used cliché but the best descriptor of the requirement.

Officers have already started receiving a better grounding in the fundamentals. New intelligence officers attend the nine-week Tactical Intelligence Officer Course, and upon graduation, they receive the 0202 MOS. After graduation, they attend six weeks of follow-on training, where they earn a Necessary Military Occupational Specialty (NMOS)—either the Air

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For the future force, small multi-disciplinary intelligence sections, like the MEU-level staff pictured here, may be the standard. (Photo by Sgt Austin Hazard.)

Intelligence Officer Course (NMOS 0207), the Ground Intelligence Officer Course (NMOS 0203), the Signals Intelligence Officer Course (NMOS 0206), or the Counterintelligence (CI) Officer Course (NMOS 0204). Officers with 0203 status also attend the Infantry Officers Course, while 0204s attend an additional 28-week course that all Marine Corps counterintelligence Marines attend.

The Marine Corps initiated this training plan, often called the Van Riper Plan, in the 1990s. It created specialists versus generalists. Entry-level lieutenants were given a bitesize amount of intelligence to know whether it was intel support for aviation operations or ground operations or whether it was signals intelligence or CI. Over time, the need for a better understanding of the fundamentals led to the creation of

the Tactical Intelligence Officer Course, although separate NMOSs remained.

This training design has served its purpose, but it is no longer the best strategy to prepare for today's fight. For officers to truly have a broad understanding of intelligence, we need to switch from starting officers as specialists to starting them as generalists. All the officers' entry-level intel MOS would best be combined into 0202, with no more specialists at the entry-level. The Tactical Intelligence Officer Course can be expanded to cover the material from Air, Ground, CI, and Signals Intelligence Officer Courses. This training will create officers who can achieve *brilliance in the basics* of intelligence.

A few select 0202s could still attend IOC as 0203s have in the past. This would enable them to become effective ground reconnaissance and surveillance leaders in the context of ground combat. For example, future 0202s could be screened at The Basic School, and those who wanted to could attend IOC and then be sent to a GCE unit after MOS school.

Another major change is that there would no longer be second lieutenant 0204 CI officers. These lieutenants were often given the same billets as 0210 warrant officers, making them somewhat redundant. Because there is still a need for officers to have CI credentials, they could complete this type of training later in their careers. For example, after their first fleet tour as 0202s, officers could apply to attend the CI course. This would ensure some credentialed officers. More importantly, these experienced intel officers would be much better prepared to integrate CI into the overall intelligence effort.

A similar training concept could be implemented for enlisted personnel in both the 02XX and 26XX career fields. From the start, their MOS training should focus on a common core of intelligence knowledge that all intelligence Marines should have. For example, the first month of all enlisted intelligence training could be the same, focusing on intelligence fundamentals. Then, the courses could diverge into tailored

training for the different enlisted intelligence MOSs.

Another proposed major change for the enlisted intelligence MOSs is reducing their number so that there are fewer specialists. For example, the 0241 imagery analyst and 0261 geospatial intelligence specialists could be combined into one MOS. This way, when a commander needs imagery and topo support, they can rely on a smaller team.

Most entry-level Marines are eighteen or nineteen years old, and it can be difficult for someone that young to ab-

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sorb all the intelligence fundamentals. Training in the necessary core skills can be spread over a few years. While their entry-level school will provide some of the fundamentals, they will need additional instruction later. A course can be added for Marines who are starting their second enlistment that provides leveling and advanced training for the intelligence functions; all 02XX and 26XX Marines entering their second enlistment would be required to complete this course.

While this plan will provide a stronger foundation for intelligence Marines, they will still need to acquire additional areas of expertise throughout their careers. To do this, the Van Riper Plan can be modified and laid on its side. This means that instead of frontloading NMOSs, different NMOSs can be added throughout a Marine's career. Also, unlike today's Van Riper Plan, this new plan would apply to enlisted Marines as well as to officers.

Adding areas of expertise is already happening to some extent; it just needs to be expanded. Currently, intelligence graduates from Marine Aviation Weapons and Tactics Squadron 1 (NMOS 0277), Marine Corps Tactics and Op-

erations Group (NMOS 0233), and the Collection Managers Course (NMOS 0275) all receive NMOSs recognizing the areas of expertise they have acquired in these courses. This could be expanded further. For example, NMOSs could be developed for intelligence support and targeting, as well as for cyber, space, and numerous other areas.

Providing these NMOSs throughout a Marine's career has two main goals. First, it would allow a Marine's expertise to be tracked so that when a unit needed a target intelligence chief or a collection manager and would be able to find those Marines who have the specific NMOS. The right Marines could be put in the right jobs for which they are properly trained.

Second, this gives Marines a training roadmap for future development. Younger Marines often do not know what they need to do to expand their knowledge. A series of NMOS that they could work toward would help in their professional development.

A common complaint about intelligence Marines is that they are too stovepiped and do not know how they fit into the larger intelligence effort. Building a common core of intelligence knowledge from the start that focuses on analysis, collection, targeting, and systems would help these Marines break out of their stovepipes. This new training plan would result in junior Marines who can perform a wide variety of intelligence functions. With additional NMOSs, we would still be able to develop experts, and with their solid understanding of intelligence fundamentals, these experts would be better able to use their skills to contribute to the overall effort. Maneuver commanders at every level would be able to count on their S-2 section to provide them with the intelligence they need to make decisions. As our adversaries continue to improve, we must change our intelligence training to meet the threat.

