

Intelligence Planner's Handbook

A guide to exercise design and scenario development

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Marine Corps exercises offer unique opportunities to fully integrate intelligence and operations while employing a unit's tactical decision-making cycle. Quality exercises require comprehensive intelligence support, to include exercise design, scenario development, and detailed intelligence inject scripting. However, Marine officers and SNCOs assigned these tasks often lack a detailed "how to" guide. This article serves as an overview of such a guide and expands on the intelligence topics addressed in Joint Event Life Cycle doctrine.

Initial Planning

The intelligence planner first studies the exercise concept established by higher headquarters and the exercise control group. This concept should include the type of threat (state actor, non-state actor, or hybrid) and the type of warfare (a conventional maneuver scenario, irregular warfare, or a hybrid environment) that will be replicated during the exercise. The exercise concept should also outline the operational setting, such as the exercise location, an operation plan or a contingency plan, and which elements of the exercise will be live, constructive, and virtual.

Next, the intelligence planner must understand the exercise force's task organization to include constructive units as well as all live elements. The exercise force's live intelligence assets will drive the level and type of intelligence injects. Live intelligence injects should be scripted to provide collection opportunities for each live collection capability. Message traf-

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fic injects should also be scripted to replicate virtual and constructive collection capabilities. For example, an infantry battalion field exercise typically involves live opposing force activity for the scout-sniper teams to observe and scripted materials—such as documents, electronic media, and pocket litter—for the rifle companies to exploit on their objectives. All other intelligence feeds typically involve scripted message traffic, to include

human intelligence (HUMINT) and signals intelligence (SIGINT) reports and full-motion video chat logs to replicate unmanned aerial system coverage.

With an understanding of the exercise concept and the exercise force's intelligence capabilities and limitations, the intelligence planner creates the exercise geography by overlaying the real-world physical and cultural geography onto the exercise training area.



The intelligence planner must understand task organization, the area of operations, and the exercise concept. (Photo by LCpl Scott Jenkins.)

Although it is virtually impossible to remove all exercise artificialities, the intelligence planner should attempt to match the real-world location's population densities, topography, and infrastructure to those features within the training area as much as possible. Exercise planners typically use Google Earth or similar mapping software to draw an overlay over the training area to create the political borders of the exercise geography. It is often best to modify the real-world political boundaries to match existing political borders within the training area, such as state and county boundary lines.

If these existing borders are not suitable, choose identifiable terrain features such as rivers, lakes, or mountain ranges. Use the real-world objective area country and province names when labeling portions of the training area, but retain the local names for cities, highways, and other infrastructure within the exercise training area.

Higher headquarters and the exercise control group must also provide a schedule for each critical training event to address a mission-essential task. The intelligence planner will use this information to backward plan intelligence injects to drive the exercise force to plan and execute each critical training event. Prior to scripting detailed intelligence injects, the intelligence planner must create an outline or storyboard of the opposing force's overall scheme of maneuver, to include political, military, economic, and informational objectives.

Detailed Intelligence Scripting

Detailed intelligence scripting tasks include developing orders products such as the Annex B (Intelligence), intelligence estimate, and other intelligence appendices for the higher headquarters operations order that will be provided to the exercise force. Intelligence injects for the master scenario events list (MSEL) round out the chief outputs of detailed intelligence scripting.

Since intelligence professionals should have a fair grasp of the orders products listed above, they will not be addressed in detail here. Instead,



Exercise planners use the time-event chart to create threat activities during training. (Photo by Cpl Destiny Dempsey.)

this article will devote more attention to the lion's share of the intelligence planner's work: the MSEL intelligence injects.

Upon completion of the orders products, some planners immediately turn to the detailed intelligence inject scripting. This approach may work for a two- or three-day exercise, but for longer exercises, the intelligence plan-

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ner will not be able to keep track of all the injects in his head. What often results is an incoherent exercise with "cross-threaded" or contradictory injects. To avoid these problems, the intelligence planner should expand on the overall opposing force scheme of maneuver to create a detailed time-event chart.

The intelligence planner's time-event chart is similar to the execution

matrix for threat actors, such as opposing force units in a conventional maneuver environment or individual actors in an irregular warfare environment. In other words, the time-event chart is the enemy playbook. It provides details of threat activities for each day, which should be designed to lead up to a critical training event. The time-event chart also provides depth and breadth to the scenario by addressing each of the warfighting functions.

The time-event chart should also reflect opposing force pre- and post-operation actions and continuing actions. For example, each threat operation typically requires intelligence collection and reporting, rehearsals, staging lethal and non-lethal aid, lodging for fighters and support personnel, bribing or coercing local security forces and political leaders, transportation, training on communications, explosives, marksmanship, tactics, first aid, and vehicle acquisition and maintenance. For transnational criminal networks and threat financing for insurgent networks, the intelligence planner should script front companies to launder funds or serve as avenues for funding irregular forces. Assign a date and a time to each of these tasks, for each tactical thread leading up to a critical training event. These items

provide the anchor points from which intelligence injects are created.

A well-crafted time-event chart allows the exercise control group to avoid a single point of failure that often occurs when one planner does most or all of the scripting. If the lead scripter is unavailable, other intelligence planners or response cell members can respond to the exercise force's requests for information or complete dynamic scripting tasks by consulting the time-event chart, which serves as the benchmark for the scenario. This product also enables the exercise control group to build on branches and sequels or react to unexpected exercise force actions.

Subject matter experts from all warfighting functions can and should help to build the time-event chart by scripting opposing force events or simply providing ideas and operational details. For example, a Marine Raider is ideally suited to sketch out the activities of the auxiliary, support cells, and other elements of an insurgency to match the terrain and the situation. Likewise, an artillery officer can provide tactical and operational depth to the intelligence scripter's depiction of opposing force fires. A broad concept of operations developed by maneuver subject matter experts is enough to guide the intelligence planners in the right direction. As learned from experience, when soliciting input from maneuver subject matter experts, it is often best to ask them to "develop an opposing force plan" rather than to "script opposing force MSEL injects."

The time-event chart assists in debriefing the exercise force intelligence section after the exercise, as it allows them to see the ground truth as it was being depicted via intelligence injects throughout the exercise. It also builds credibility, as the intelligence section of the exercise control group "shows its work" via the chart.

In conclusion, sketching out a detailed opposing force plan in some manner that depicts a scheme of maneuver, daily operations, and tasks across all warfighting functions will make the intelligence scripting effort much easier. Much of the "thinking" associated with exercise scripting is

addressed when crafting a time-event chart.

As the exercise planner completes the time-event chart and begins intelligence inject scripting, he should determine the "no later than" time and date the exercise force must begin detailed planning for each critical training event. Then, backward plan the intelligence injects to ensure enough corroborating information is collected by the exercise force to meet the timeline. Intelligence planners must allow enough time for the intelligence cycle (planning and direction, collection, reporting, analysis/production, dissemination, and utilization) and the operations-intelligence decision-making cycle to run their course. Exercise planners must be mindful of the exercise force's battle rhythm, especially the timing and frequency of its targeting boards. For example, if the exercise force must begin planning

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at H minus 72, a sufficient number of injects must be received (collected or pushed via message traffic) by H minus 96, or perhaps even H minus 120.

Exercise planners should link injects to specific events on the time-event chart. For example, an intelligence inject should include the spreadsheet cell (column/row) that contains the specific event. Likewise, the time-event chart entry should include the MSEL inject that corresponds to the event. Each event can have more than one intelligence inject; in fact, many should to provide corroborating information to drive exercise force mission planning. This is tedious work, but the investment is worth ensuring all injects are mapped to an opposing force event. Such an approach will also allow the intelligence scripter to identify op-

posed by intelligence injects. Exercise planners may choose to avoid scripting injects for certain events to create intelligence gaps for the exercise force to address. In this case, consider color coding these events on the time-event chart to visualize which events will appear as information gaps for the exercise force more readily. This approach also ensures that intelligence gaps are intentional rather than happenstance or the result of poor planning.

Once the time-event chart is complete, exercise planners are ready to begin scripting intelligence MSEL injects. The intelligence planner should avoid allowing one intelligence inject to provide all of the five Ws (who, what, where, when, and why) to drive an operation; this is often referred to as the "golden source." Instead, planners should parse intelligence injects for the same opposing force event among the different intelligence disciplines (HUMINT, SIGINT, geospatial intelligence, measurement and signature intelligence, and open-source intelligence). For example, SIGINT may provide the time (hour) of an opposing force event, while HUMINT may provide the date of the event. Multiple sources and intelligence disciplines should indicate opposing force composition, disposition, strengths, and weaknesses. Exercise force all-source analysts must fuse these various injects to determine the opposing force situation and drive tactical planning.

In addition to scripting injects that provide the five Ws for each opposing force event linked to an exercise force critical training event, intelligence planners should provide injects that indicate the significance of each target. These injects will drive the nomination process for emerging targets as well as the prioritization of targets and missions. In short, the intelligence injects should allow the exercise force to analyze the entire opposing force network as a system and determine which elements of the system will deliver the highest payoff when actioned.

Include injects to drive "white" targeting and to support exercise force information operations. Script open-



Alliances may play an important role during the exercise. (Photo by LCpl Scott Jenkins.)

source news media reports that include political and economic topics, as well as articles that reflect political competition between the host nation's ruling government and opposition parties—or rifts between rival insurgent factions or leaders. Open-source reporting could also indicate shifting alliances among political parties within parliamentary systems of government, which could lead to new governing coalitions, particularly in response to coalition force operations within the host nation.

Attributes of an Intelligence Scripter

An intelligence scripter must be able to visualize not only the entire opposing force construct but the timeline and sequence of events as well. This can be compared to a fire support coordinator's ability to synchronize air and surface fires with ground maneuver units in terms of time and space, or an aviator's ability to not only fly but also "fight" the aircraft. Intelligence scripters must also be at least familiar, if not a subject matter expert, in each intelligence discipline. A solid understanding of intelligence collection management concepts is also required. The scripter must not only visualize the opposing force but also think in terms of signatures—observables and collectibles—that would

be detected by exercise force intelligence collection assets. Therefore, the scripter must understand the capabilities and limitations of those assets and script injects consistent with those capabilities. Ultimately, intelligence scripters must be able to reverse engineer indicators of enemy activity and break them down into specific reportable information.

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A seasoned all-source analyst is a logical candidate for intelligence scripting but is not always the best choice. Intelligence scripters must build the entire opposing force construct—in other words, the overall answer key or whole picture of the puzzle—then determine where to cut up that picture with a jigsaw. Therefore, intelligence scripting involves visualizing the comprehensive opposing force composition, disposition, scheme of maneuver, doctrine, tactics, techniques, procedures, and objec-

tives, and then artfully deconstructing and decomposing elements of the opposing force situation into quality intelligence injects. For these reasons, intelligence scripters need experience with collection management as well as opposing force doctrine and all-source analysis.

Creativity, imagination, and visualization skills are also important because virtually all exercise scenarios involve a fictitious scenario. In many cases, the scenario is based on a potential threat actor, but the specific elements of the exercise scenario must be created to fit the exercise design and drive the exercise force to meet its critical training objectives.

Conclusion

Intelligence planners have a key role in exercise design, scenario development, and intelligence inject scripting. They must be engaged in the initial phases of exercise planning to help shape the type of threat actor and threat environment that will be replicated during the exercise. In addition to drafting the more common intelligence portions of the exercise operations order, intelligence planners must possess creativity and the ability

to visualize the entire opposing force scheme of maneuver across all war-fighting functions. They must capture this information in a detailed opposing force time-event chart that drives intelligence inject scripting and helps avoid exercise contradictions while also providing redundancy during exercise execution and avoiding a single point of failure within the exercise control group's intelligence section.

