

Redesigning CLICs

Improving intelligence support to riflemen through human-centered design

by 1stLt Eric J. Davids

The construct of an infantry battalion's intelligence section (S-2) and company level intelligence cells (CLICs) is worth reconsidering based on changes to operational priorities and requirements.¹ While the structure was appropriate for company- and platoon-level counterinsurgency (COIN) operations in Operations IRAQI FREEDOM (OIF) and ENDURING FREEDOM (OEF), intelligence in an infantry battalion has become a watered-down version of its former self rather than an optimization of low-level intelligence in preparation for future conflict.

I want to highlight some of the inefficiencies and corresponding opportunities for change in our current employment of 0231 intelligence specialists at an infantry battalion as well as contribute to the already vibrant debate concerning the 02XX community. Notably, LtCol Jeffrey Dinsmore and Capt Caleb Gowan clearly emphasize the enduring relevance of CLICs in the post-COIN era in "The CLIC in EF 21" (MCG, Aug15). However, the roadmap for 0231s assigned to infantry units needs to be redesigned, from the time they graduate 4207 Intelligence Specialist Entry Course (MISEC) in Dam Neck, VA, to when they are eligible for 4208 MAGTF Intelligence Specialist Career Course. Ultimately, the Marine Corps Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance Enterprise (MCISRE) should aggressively pursue a human-centered, building-block approach to how we man, train, and equip CLICs and battalion S-2s. Human-centered design principles can enable us as intelligence leaders to better employ 0231s within their capabilities in order to provide improved expeditionary intelligence support to riflemen in a

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conventional, information-degraded fight.

Background

CLICs were developed to address an identified capability gap for performing intelligence functions at the rifle company. OIF and OEF demanded this distributed approach to intelligence; the geographically widespread, low-intensity asymmetric threats in vast areas of responsibility necessitated disaggregated operations. David Kilcullen, the COIN theorist who advised GEN David H.

Petraeus, writes on this reality:

In counterinsurgency, killing the enemy is easy. Finding him is often nearly impossible ... Your operations will be intelligence driven, but your intelligence will come mostly from your own operations, not as a "product" prepared and served up by higher headquarters.²

Rather, it will be a feedback from your own actions.

This aspect of intelligence support to counterinsurgency was already nested in *MCDP 2, Intelligence*, which states, "Commanders should aim, to the greatest extent possible, to become self-sufficient in satisfying their own intelligence requirements."³

The need for low-level intelligence was the catalyst for innovative, HQMC-led changes to intelligence sections of



Marines attend the Marine Corps Intelligence Schools, Navy and Marine Corps Intelligence Training Center, at Naval Base Dam Neck, VA. The mission of the Marine Corps Intelligence Schools is to coordinate and integrate training and education requirements for all intelligence occupational fields. They serve as a proponent for intelligence language training and remote sensor system operators in order to provide technically proficient Marines to the Operating Forces and Supporting Establishments. (USMC photo by Cpl Laura Mercado.)

infantry battalions. In the early 2000s, a battalion's S-2 consisted of two officers, one SNCO, and four analysts. Infantry battalions adapted to COIN operations by increasing the authorized strength of 02XXs and creating CLICs. The number of intelligence analysts at an infantry battalion first doubled from four to eight and then eventually increased to twelve, and along with this increase in size, CLICs were instituted, comprised of a CLIC chief, a production and analysis element, and a collections element. These CLICs were doctrinally made up of one 0231 and five 03XXs, led by an 03XX sergeant.

This new model was effective for company operations at the time. Most patrol base operations were, by nature, intelligence driven. Therefore, it made sense for 03XX Marines to be intimately involved in the intelligence cycle. CLICs provided company-level basic situational awareness, collection management, map access and manipulation, tactical questioning, and debriefing. In addition, a proliferation of intelligence equipment, including biometrics enrollment and screening devices (BESD), small unmanned aircraft systems (sUAS), and the MAGTF Secondary Imagery Dissemination System (MSIDS), supported the fusion of intelligence and low-intensity infantry operations.

A Recent Lack of Innovation

The central challenge to U.S. prosperity and security is the re-emergence of long-term strategic competition with near-peer adversaries.⁴ The Marine Corps has fallen in step with this call to pivot away from COIN as it prepares for threats in the modern security environment. The Marine Corps' Infantry Officer Course completely dropped COIN from its curriculum, and predeployment workups focus almost exclusively on traditional combined-arms training with minimal emphasis on stability operations.

Despite these major shifts in operational priorities, the intelligence components within infantry units look very much the same as they did at the height of the COIN years. At full T/O, sections consist of twelve analysts, plus a chief and two officers. Battalions are

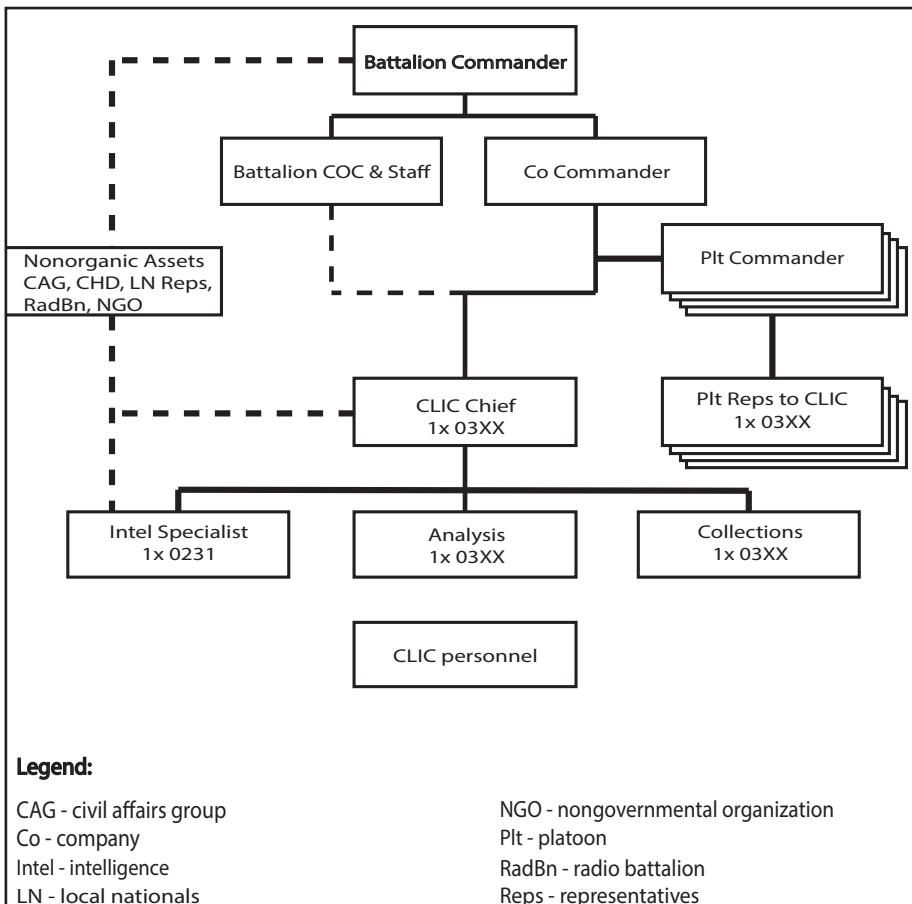


Figure 1. Notional infantry battalion CLIC organization.

still required to maintain a CLIC, so at least one 0231 is parceled down to each of the line companies. These CLIC chiefs are routinely augmented by a handful of 03XXs to provide basic intelligence functions to individual companies. COIN-centric gear, such as MSIDS, also continues to make up a significant portion of S-2 gear sets.

CLICs may be outdated in their design, but they are no less important ...

All told, there is a current lack of initiative to optimize 0231s in line with their capabilities to improve the combat effectiveness of a rifle company in preparation for future conflict. This absence of innovation is blatantly apparent in the most updated *MCIP 2-10.1i*, *Com-*

pany Level Intelligence Cell. Published in 2016, *MCIP 2-10.1i* serves as the basis for a unit's S-2 SOP. *MCIP 2-10.1i* acknowledges that OEF and OIF "led to the development of the CLIC" but does very little to recognize emergent challenges and opportunities for CLICs, which were so clearly highlighted in LtCol Dinsmore and Capt Gowan's article. (See Figure 1 for current CLIC T/O.)

CLICs may be outdated in their design, but they are no less important than they were at the height of OEF and OIF. The need to leverage information from rapidly developing ISR capabilities, the current proliferation of squad-level sUAS, and the distributed nature of future operations outlined in Marine Corps concepts such as *Expeditionary Force 21* and *Expeditionary Advance Base Operations* reinforce the importance of tactical intelligence. In order to remain relevant, small changes should be made to the current T/O and T/E

of intelligence components of infantry battalions. Redesigned CLICs can be the baseline for this transformation.

Developing Intelligence Marines

The Marine Corps often turns good ideas into reality through human-centered design. Human-centered design begins with focusing on the people we're designing for. Once we understand them, we prototype, test, and iterate possible solutions until we get it right. This form of design is particularly important in analyzing how we change our CLICs to ensure their continued operational relevance. The imperatives of tactical intelligence are rapidly changing and becoming more complex. Hence, if employed properly, the demands we levy on CLIC chiefs will increase. Commanders can endlessly posit what intelligence capabilities they want in a disaggregated, high-paced, information-degraded environment, but in order for these changes to become reality, we must ensure we appropriately prepare intelligence NCOs, who we expect to execute these big ideas.

The foundation for how we man, train, and equip our CLICs should align with the basic Marine Corps development model. When an 0311 rifleman graduates the School of Infantry and reports to his unit, his first job is to master his individual weapons system as the rifleman in a fireteam. Similarly, when a 1812 tank crewmember arrives to his unit after completing the M1A1 Armor Crewmember Course, he begins his initial tour as the driver. How does this model apply to 0231 intelligence specialists at infantry battalions? At present, our employment of these Marines makes the title of *generalist* seem much more appropriate than *specialist*; on any given day, 0231s face tasks ranging from producing geopolitical briefs to flying sUAS, printing maps, performing security management procedures, etc. What if, across the board, these Marines "cut their teeth" within a company with hands-on experience in tactical collections prior to rising in the ranks to think about larger issues at the S-2 proper and higher levels of command?

As intelligence leaders, we should seek to develop a viable road map through which 0231s are trained and equipped in line with the Marine Corps' building block approach. The key to design thinking is to prototype some potential models, test them out, and see what resonates. Here, I propose one model for updating CLICs to meet current operational priorities.

A Proposed Way Forward

I propose uniformly restoring CLICs at each company in a battalion (including the Weapons Company). In this model, the CLICs each consist of two 0231s—a CLIC chief and an assistant CLIC chief who also functions as the primary company-level sUAS operator. The presence of 03XXs in CLICs is a COIN-ism from patrol base operations that should be discarded. Complemented by this proposed change to the CLICs, the S-2 shrinks from its current size to six essential personnel, all with clearly delineated roles. Gear is procured to maximize the organic capabilities of the CLICs.

In this model, an 0231 Private First Class completes the 4207 MISEC in Dam Neck, VA, and is selected for an infantry battalion. En route to the infantry battalion, he receives some level of follow-on infantry training beyond what he received at Marine Combat

Training. Upon reporting to his battalion, he is immediately enrolled in Training and Logistics Support Activity sUAS courses to receive his qualification as a sUAS operator of all of the battalion's organic sUAS. Once he is sUAS-qualified, he is assigned to a CLIC to operate sUAS and assist the CLIC chief.

In the CLIC, the new 0231 falls under the direction of a more experienced CLIC chief, who has already deployed in a CLIC and is similarly qualified in each of the battalion's sUAS. By this point, the CLIC chief will have received formal and informal training in myriad skills, including long-range high-frequency radio operations and collections management. The CLIC chief will be very tactically focused and capable of satisfying the commander's basic and current intelligence requirements and will have the ability to produce maps and imagery in a garrison or expeditionary environment. The underlying successful advancement of this process is the effective practice of mentorship between the CLIC chief and the junior 0231.

In order for the CLIC to achieve its function, it needs mission-essential gear, including a tablet, a workstation with a video downlink capability, a small plotter, and a small laminator. The tablet can be loaded with mapping software and relevant threat information. The



Marines assigned to Marine Corps Intelligence Schools, Navy and Marine Corps Intelligence Training Center, participate in a Marine Corps Martial Arts Program grappling competition aboard Naval Base Dam Neck, VA, 17 January 2017. (USMC photo by Cpl Laura Mercado.)



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A Marine with Task Force Southwest launches the RQ-11B. (Photo by Sgt Sean Berry.)

video downlink capability aids a commander's rapid decision-making process by facilitating his access to higher-echelon ISR capabilities, which are intrinsic to the future operating environment. A ruggedized plotter and laminator can be used in a garrison and field environment to organically create time-sensitive, tactical products at a company level.

These two well-trained and well-equipped S-2 Marines, who operate what should be seen as a mission-critical weapons system (Group 1 UAS), offer a significantly greater capability than a 03XX-led CLIC, as currently suggested in *MCIP 2-10.1i*. The modification to the gear set would enhance the CLIC's responsiveness to the operational requirements of a company commander, mitigating the need to use battalion-level resources to satisfy company-level intelligence requirements.

Conclusion

A human-centered approach to modifying CLICs could capture the potential of individual 0231s. The end state is better intelligence support to infantry companies in today's security environment. The model proposed in this paper is limited in its scope, but it could significantly rectify some of the issues faced by battalion S-2s without requiring the complete overhaul of an infantry battalion's current 0231 strength. The

MCISRE should continue to aggressively war game this specific issue, as well as challenge other inefficiencies in the 02XX community that are a product of our institutional inertia to prepare for the last war. Human-centered design is one effective method to approach these challenges.

Notes

1. Headquarters Marine Corps, *MCIP 2-10.1i, Company Level Intelligence Cell*, (Washington, DC: 2016).
2. David Kilcullen, "Twenty-Eight Articles: Fundamentals of Company-Level Counterinsurgency," *IO Sphere, Joint Information Operations Center*, (Washington, DC: 2006).
3. Headquarters Marine Corps, *MCDP 2, Intelligence*, (Washington, DC: 1997).
4. This is a summary of page two of the 2018 National Defense Strategy.

