Logistics Intelligence Teams

Fight tonight intelligence for the LCE

by 1stLt Michael Donovan

>1stLt Donovan is an 0203 Ground Intelligence Officer. From 2019 until 2020, he served as the Regimental Intelligence Officer, Combat Logistics Regiment III in Okinawa, Japan. While serving in Okinawa, he worked closely with the National Reconnaissance Office to enhance logisticians' ability to sustain geographically dispersed small units in contested littorals. His primary focus was on structural design, covert sustainment, and technology integration and interoperability. 1stLt Donovan is a recent graduate of Marine Corps University's Expeditionary Warfare School Blended Seminar Program. He is currently a student at the Marine Raider Training Center's Individual Training Course.

In March 2020, the Commandant published *Force Design 2030*, a progress report of the Corps' changes to confront the institution's principal challenges. In response to the rapidly evolving modern battlefield, the Marine Corps is shifting its "focus from countering violent extremists in the Middle East to great power competition" and building a credible combat Force that is purposefully built "to support joint maritime campaigning."[1]

The Commandant's case for change has met much approval from a force desperate for institutional recognition of looming threats. Revisionist regimes are nearing multi-domain parity with the United States and have the advantage of instigating conflict at a place and time of their choosing. Meanwhile, the Corps is "not organized, equipped, or trained"[2] to participate in the high-intensity conflict expected to occur against these adversaries in the littorals.

While these sweeping changes are necessary, the Nation cannot wait until 2030 for the realization of *Force Design*. As the Nation's force-in-readiness, the Marine Corps "must be most ready when the nation is least ready." It is incumbent on Marines to improve their fighting positions and prepare their piece of the Corps to "fight tonight."

The scope of this article will focus on changes that are necessary for the intelligence enterprise of the LCE to support operations in contested littorals. The LCE's intelligence enterprise is not organized, trained, or equipped to support the distributed and non-mutually supporting command and control (C2) nodes inherent to these operations. Intelligence resources are too widely dispersed across the LCE, resulting in a dilution of capabilities. Entry-level intelligence curriculums lack any logistics focus, failing to prepare Marines for service in logistics units. Furthermore, LCE intelligence professionals lack the right equipment to access and disseminate intelligence in an information contested environment.

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The LCE needs an economy-of-force approach to distribute high demand/low-density intelligence resources "to create the virtues of mass without the vulnerabilities of concentration."[3] This approach must develop intelligence professionals who understand how to support logisticians and prioritize the acquisition and integration of technology to mitigate advances in adversary non-kinetic fires.

Logistics in Contested Littorals

To sustain combat operations in the littorals, the LCE will need to support geographically dispersed expeditionary advanced bases by leveraging a combination of long-range naval logistics, assault support, and contracting services to provide customers with all classes of supplies (Figure 1). The LCE will provide this support while operating deep inside adversary weapon engagement zones, making it vulnerable to long-range precision fires, offensive air operations, and information operations.

Our adversaries will leverage hyper-optimized collection systems to identify LCE operations and provide targeting data to shooters. Shooters will prioritize infrastructure critical to LCE operations and high payoff targets (such as L-Class ships) to disrupt sustainment in contested regions. Our adversaries will also use non-kinetic weapons to degrade communication systems to limit the LCE's ability to C2 forward-deployed forces. Overwhelmed by fires and unable to communicate, the LCE will find itself in a rapidly deteriorating situation.

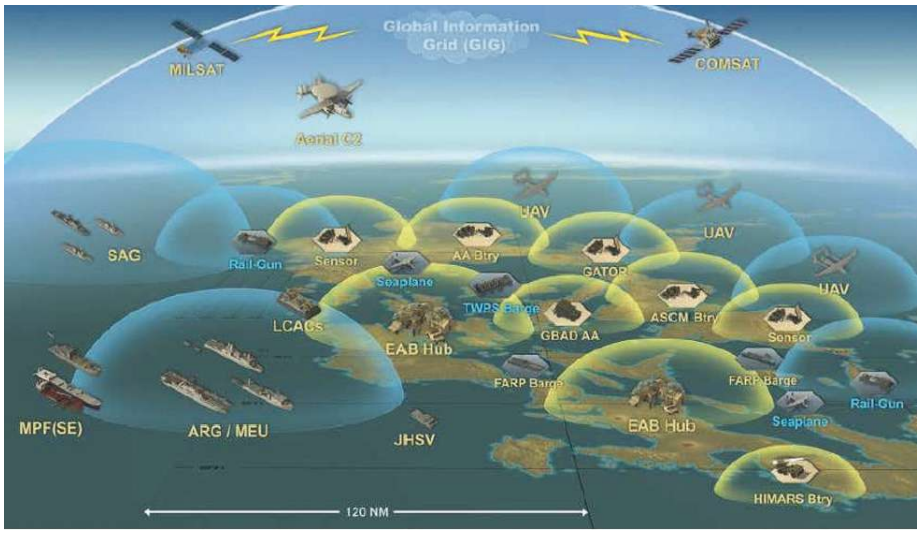

Figure 1. Expeditionary Advanced Base Operations Diagram: sensors, shooters, and sustainers work in concert to create a multidimensional bubble of anti-access/area denial to enable friendly maritime operations and deny adversary forces access to contested spaces.[4] ***(Figure provided by author.)***

To maintain operational viability, the LCE requires an intelligence enterprise capable of supporting geographically dispersed units in an information contested environment.

LCE Intelligence Enterprise

The challenges of the modern battlefield require self-sufficient, multi-disciplined intelligence sections that are equipped to support geographically dispersed commanders operating in information contested environments. The current LCE intelligence enterprise fails to meet these challenges. The enterprise seeks to provide as many commanders as possible with intelligence representation. However, in practice, it acts as a "hub and spoke" organization where manpower, equipment, and education limitations result in small intelligence sections at the battalion and regiment level that cannot support commanders, lack coordination and direction, and rely on external support for nearly all intelligence production (Figure 2). Additionally, intelligence resources are misallocated; some are given to commands with little need to make intelligence-based decisions; others spread across multiple commands that share similar intelligence requirements.

Manpower and equipment are concentrated at the group level, limiting the resources available to battalion intelligence sections. These sections, like Marine infantry squads, must achieve a critical mass to accomplish their missions. An infantry squad would be unable to overcome an enemy position without sufficient firepower. Similarly, a small intelligence section lacking MOS diversity or logistics intelligence credibility cannot generate sufficient "firepower" internally and must rely on external resources to support its commander.

Conversely, not enough resources are concentrated at the regiment intelligence section. The reality is that the intelligence requirements of a logistics battalion and regiment are closely aligned. Thus, so long as there is a way to disseminate intelligence to commanders, it is unnecessary to provide representation.

Resource shortfalls are exacerbated by intelligence support to stand-alone battalions (such as supply, maintenance, and engineer support battalions). These units will not operate as cohesive wholes. Instead, they will disaggregate to provide capabilities to other LCE units. As such, they do not require organic intelligence representation and can rely on their supported command.

The Marine Corps' entry-level intelligence curriculum primarily focuses on ground and air combat while neglecting to educate Marines on logistics-based intelligence requirements. Marines assigned to LCE units then must "learn on the job" with mixed results. Additionally, Marines are segregated into discipline-based cohorts (such as signals, human, all-source, and geospatial intelligence) and do not cross-train at the schoolhouse. The stovepiping of skillsets limits a Marines' utility, especially when coupled with the LCE's manpower issues. There is too much work to be done and not enough people for intelligence Marines to be one-dimensional.

Our adversaries' sophisticated collection capabilities, coupled with their long-range precision fires, are designed to target Marines using traditional communications networks. LCE intelligence sections are not equipped to access and disseminate information when traditional communications fail. Without resilient, low-signature, and risk-worthy equipment, intelligence Marines will be unable to support geographically dispersed LCE units when American information dominance is contested.

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Logistics Intelligence Team Concept

While waiting for the realization of *Force Design 2030*, the LCE can support forward deployed commanders on the modern battlefield by reorganizing limited resources into Logistics Intelligence Teams (LITs). A LIT is staffed by an intelligence officer, three

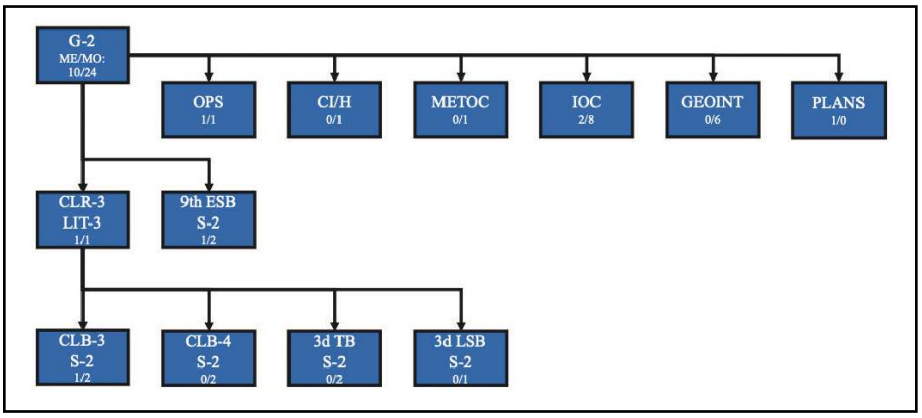

Figure 2. 3d MLG Intelligence Organizational Chart: 3d MLG is the LCE for III MEF. 3d MLG's intelligence organization is representative of LCE intelligence organizations across the four MEFs. *(Figure provided by author.)*

all-source analysts, and two geospatial intelligence specialists (Figure 3). A team's size and MOS diversity provide supported commanders direct access to resources usually held at the group level. The MOS diversity also makes a LIT self-sufficient, limiting the need for reachback to higher or adjacent intelligence organizations. Additionally, the concentration of resources into a team allows for a holistic approach in providing intelligence to supported commanders.

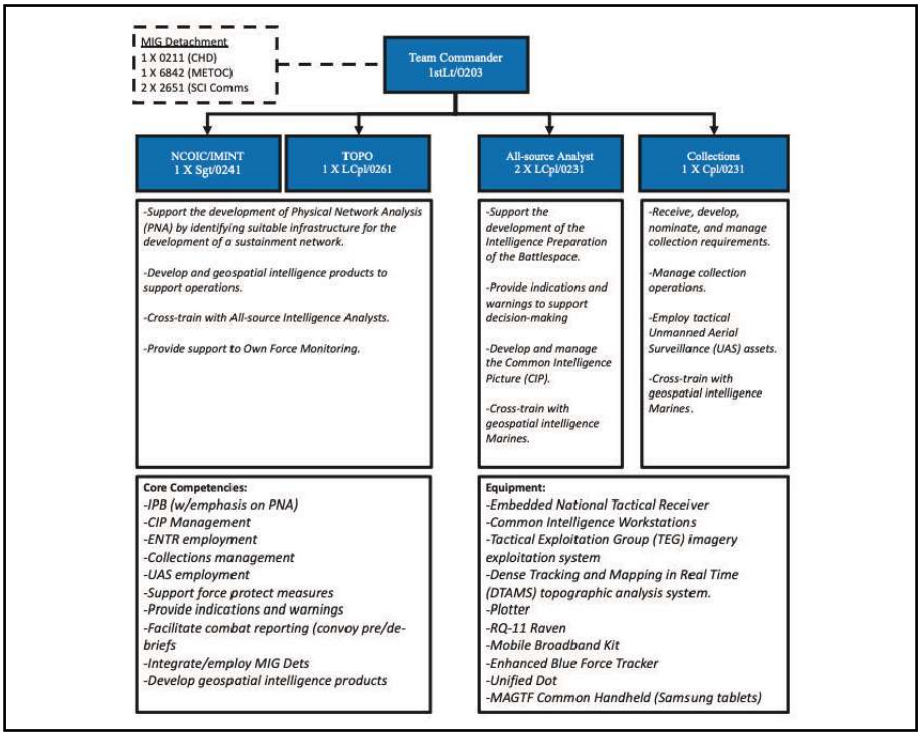

Figure 3. LIT template: a LIT is staffed and equipped to provide a supported commander with the full suite of intelligence capabilities. *(Figure provided by author.)*

The LIT concept prioritizes the development of multi-disciplined intelligence Marines who understand the unique needs of logisticians. Through intra-team cross-training, teammates learn the basics of each intelligence discipline in a collaborative environment. Analysts learn how to use essential geospatial intelligence tools, and geospatial intelligence Marines learn how to conduct an all-source analysis. In this way, a team mitigates the risk of a potential loss of capabilities in combat, and Marines learn how they fit into the bigger picture of intelligence production. The LIT concept makes up for the lack of logistics focus during entry-level training by leveraging the Marine Corps Logistics Operations Group's Logistics Intelligence Planner's Course. At Logistics Intelligence Planner's Course, team members receive formal education on logistics operations and the intelligence support they require. On the modern battlefield, "to be detected is to be targeted is to be killed."[5] The LIT concept recognizes this reality and uses equipment that minimizes a team's physical and electromagnetic signature. LITs are equipped with a Low Signature Information Network (LSIN) that integrates existing programs of record with government and commercial off-the-shelf technologies. This network provides a resilient information conduit that connects sensors and decision makers through the access and dissemination of intelligence. It is composed of the Mobile Broadband Kit, the Embedded National Tactical Receiver, and low probability of detection/intercept technology. LSIN allows a LIT to support multiple commanders in an information contested environment.

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The LIT concept prioritizes resource management by doing away with organic unit intelligence (Figure 4). LITs are assigned to supported units based on mission requirements alone. In this way, resources are not wasted and are allocated to where they are most needed.

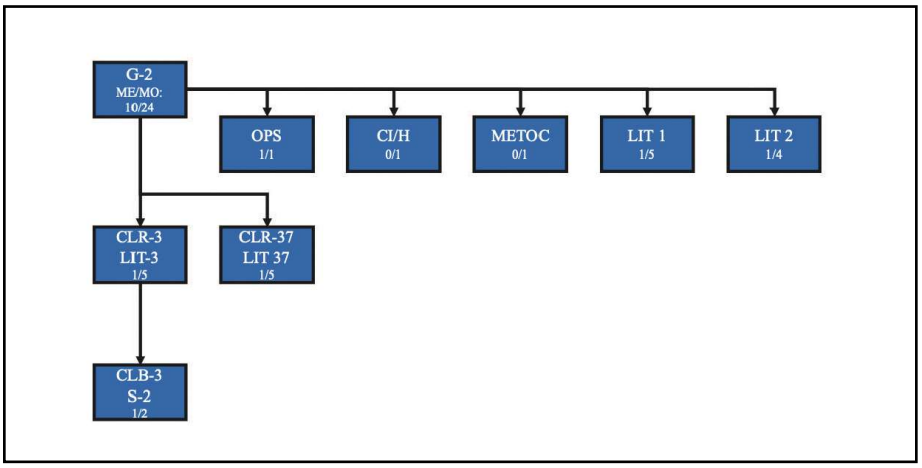

Figure 4. 3d MLG Intelligence Organizational Chart Post LIT implementation: LIT-1 and LIT-2 are in GS of 3d MLG. LIT-3 and LIT-37 are in DS of CLR-3 and CLR-37, respectively, based on the identified need for commanders to make intelligence-based decisions. CLB-3 retains a stand-alone S-2 due to geographic restrictions. *(Figure provided by author.)*

Concept Validation

The LIT concept has seen success in MEF and regiment-level exercises. During VALIANT WORKHORSE 20 (Sept–Oct 2020),[6] a LIT was responsible for supporting multiple geographically dispersed commanders with intelligence support in an information contested environment. A white cell tested the LIT's ability to support force protection efforts by injecting realistic threats into the scenario (such as enemy aircraft and theater ballistic missiles). The LIT identified incoming theater ballistic missile attacks, offensive air operations, and enemy reconnaissance assets, providing commanders with the time and space to make decisions to shelter-in-place to avoid detection or displace to safety. Additionally, the LIT operated out of nonstandard locations (such as a hotel and the back of a 7-ton) and leveraged LSIN, reducing its physical and electromagnetic signature. In this way, the LIT concept significantly increased the survivability and resiliency of supported units.

A LIT participated in CLR-37's Marine Corps Combat Readiness Evaluation in October of 2020.[7] The LIT drove operations through the dissemination of time-sensitive intelligence. Additionally, the LSIN network allowed for the seamless displacement and continuous intelligence support of the regiment's TLOC.

VW 20 and CLR-37's MCCRE make four things very clear. First, small intel sections are not capable of sustained 24-hour operations. Small intelligence sections will quickly become fatigued, reducing their ability over time to identify threats. Second, tactical-level commanders who are not used to employing intelligence personnel, frequently neglect the value they provided and reduce their own unit's survivability by prioritizing traditional communications networks instead of low signature methods. Third, so as long as there is a way to disseminate intelligence, there is no requirement to provide organic intelligence personnel to supported units. Four, the LIT is a suitable, temporary solution to provide commanders with intelligence support across the range of military operations.

Reachback will be limited in an information contested environment; logisticians will need self-sufficient intelligence nodes at intermediary levels.

Conclusion

Establishing LITs is not an incremental change. It is a complete overhaul of existing intelligence resources to provide the LCE commanders near realtime access to time-sensitive information. While we wait for the implications of *Force Design 2030* to take effect, LCEs across the Marine Corps must adopt the LIT concept to more effectively use their limited intelligence resources and ensure the operational viability of their forward deployed units today.

Force Design 2030 Integrated Planning Teams (IPTs) must keep in mind basic principles uncovered by the LIT concept. Reachback will be limited in an information contested environment; logisticians will need self-sufficient intelligence nodes at intermediary levels. IPTs developing the TO/E of Littoral Logistics Battalion and Marine Logistics Groups must not make the mistake of understaffing intelligence sections. The LCE needs more geospatial intelligence, not less. Intelligence sections must be equipped with low-signature information systems and better ways to put intelligence in decision-makers' hands (such as putting maps on a MAGTF Common Handheld). Junior leaders must learn early how to incorporate all of the warfighting functions (specifically intelligence) to maintain the tactical edge and to better prepare them for future command. By incorporating LIT principles (self-sufficiency, signature management, and resiliency of information systems), *Force Design 2030* will go a long way to achieving its goal of fielding a combat-ready Corps on the modern battlefield.

Notes

1. Headquarters Marine Corps, *38th Commandant's Planning Guidance*, (Washington, DC: 2019).

2. Headquarters Marine Corps, *Force Design 2030,* (Washington, DC: 2019).

3. Ibid.

4. A. Corbertt, *Expeditionary Advanced Base Operations (EABO) Handbook*, (Washington, DC: Headquarters Marine Corps, 2018).

5. R.B. Neller, *Marine Corps Operating Concept 2016*, (September 2016), available at https://www.mcwl.marines.mil/.

6. See CLR-3 VALIANT WORKHORSE 2020 AAR.

7. See CLR-37 Marine Corps Combat Readiness Evaluation 2020 AAR.

7. I am grateful to CWO4 John Doreus (USMC), 1LT Skylar R. Croy (WIARNG), 1stLt Michael J. Sherman (USMC), Maj Sean P. Day (USMC), Maj George Hierro (USMC), and Col Travis T. Gaines (USMC) for their diligent editing and support.

Quote to Ponder:

The War with the Barbary Pirates, 1805–1816: "Why do they send wild young men to treat for peace with old powers?"

—The Bey of Tunis, 1815