

Enlisted Marine Intelligence Training

Maximizing the future

by GySgt Ryan West & SSgt Benjamin Ferguson

In 2014, the Corps created the Marine Corps Intelligence Surveillance Reconnaissance Enterprise (MCISRE) Plan. When the MCISRE was created, the proposed plan and design implied that sweeping adjustments were necessary to change the way the Marine Corps implements and trains its intelligence professionals.¹ Several of these initiatives hinged upon *Expeditionary Force 21 (EF21)*. One of the integral parts of *EF21* was how intelligence was going to be shaped and provided to the warfighter in the foreseeable future.² With *EF21*, the implied MCISRE tasks challenged the notion of intelligence professionals having the right equipment and—most importantly—the correct focus on the right areas with the proper tools to address potential issues.

The MCISRE is aligned with the *Marine Corps Operating Concept (MOC)*, and it can work past 2025 to improve the quality, training, and equipment of Marine Corps intelligence force throughout the DOD. Marine Corps intelligence is performing an essential role within the MOC, with intelligence professionals becoming increasingly relevant at the highest and lowest echelons by providing streamlined and quick battlespace analyses, rapidly releasable intelligence through integral advanced analytics tools, disseminated information management resources, and database repository management.

When the Director of Intelligence for the Marine Corps created, published, and broadly implemented the MCISRE, it completely revamped and revolutionized the way intelligence professionals conduct their work, maximized their capabilities, and improved their skills

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through a concerted effort in education and skills. One of the three major attempts at improvement and an essential cog to the MCISRE is, “We are professionals.” The operational environment constantly evolves, different threats emerge and subside, and technology progresses; however, intelligence analytic tradecraft does not generally budge. Analytic tradecraft and analytic essentials allow the enlisted intelligence

professionals the ability to improve their skills as well as the abilities of the Marines serving beside them, under them, and above them. Improving professionalism also allows Marines to function effectively through all elements within Marine Corps and coalition environments. The implementation of these tasks will accomplish an integral element of *MCDP 1, Warfighting*,³ and *MCDP 2, Intelligence*,⁴ to reduce the



Tradecraft essentials allow enlisted intelligence professionals the ability to improve their skills. (Photo by Cpl Laura Mercado.)

commander's uncertainty. The intent is to create the most professionally trained and equipped intelligence Marines.⁵

The MCISRE plan mentions how education must be continuous and start at the lowest ranks. One of the essential tasks for any enlisted intelligence Marine is to be cognizant of his MOS roadmap. Knowing your MOS roadmap will better yourself and your leadership, and it will help your Marines because you will know how to improve their MOS education. Regardless of whether you work at a squadron, infantry battalion, artillery battalion, MEB, special operations element, or joint command, pooling your resources and knowledge corresponds with the MCISRE plan.

Other aspects of education that cannot be ignored are off-duty and joint education. One of the best tools to maximize those educational opportunities is a thorough knowledge of the training and readiness (T&R) manual for all intelligence professionals. Knowing the unit training management and the specific MOS roadmap allows for a precise, structured, and correct approach to improving all training for enlisted intelligence professionals. The onus of that training management and proper educational knowledge is built through the basis of improving Marines at every rank, knowing what resources are available, and understanding the correct way to have Marines participate and annotate their own participation in these educational opportunities. Even though tuition assistance has dramatically declined within the past several fiscal years, the Marine Corps' persistent operational tempo at every echelon makes it difficult to continuously aspire for a college education and is something that should not be ignored. Other MOS-specific education should not be neglected because it increases a higher level of readiness to the intelligence section at that command. There are off-duty education opportunities that exist for intelligence professionals within the Marine Corps. The DIRINT created a reading list for all ranks that better serves the intelligence professional.⁶ The Central Intelligence Agency also has a reading list based upon different types of problem sets that employees of the



A precise and structured approach to training is a solid foundation for training. (Photo by Cpl Laura Mercado.)

agency often face.⁷ These fall in line with all disciplines that exist within the intelligence community. Whether it be human intelligence, signals intelligence, or geographical and imagery intelligence, the CIA's Reading List has something for every intelligence discipline and method of best practice. Several geographic combatant commands (COCOMs) have reading lists, mostly aimed at individuals who are not familiar with the COCOM area of responsibility and that allow the newly joined Marine to aware of the history of a specific region. COCOM reading lists can assist the Marine Corps intelligence professional to quickly familiarize himself to a brand-new geographic area. Being aware of a region's history helps the Marine better understand the culture and makes him more attuned to the commander's specific concerns.

There is a plethora of resources to assist a Marine intelligence professional in improving his proficiency. These resources also allow the Marine to follow the integral wickets of professionalization described in the MCISRE plan. There are numerous places that conduct training to include the Joint Special Operations University, the Air Force Special Operations School, the Marine Corps Raider Training Center, the Defense Intelligence Agency, Joint

Military Intelligence Training Center, the John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School, and the Joint Human Intelligence Training Center. Lastly, the Expeditionary Warfare Training Centers in Coronado, California, and Joint Expeditionary Base Little Creek-Fort Story in southeastern Virginia offer courses that cover conventional and unconventional threats and analysis, targeting, collection, open-source intelligence, cyber intelligence, and core functions of MAGTF intelligence and Marine Corps operations. The onus is the now on the units sent to the courses. Lack of training is the greatest hindrance for improving the T&R levels of the intelligence section. Utilizing the proper unit training management via the Marine Corps Training Information Management System allows the effective analysis of where that intelligence section falls in line for any T&R event.⁸ Regardless of whether a Marine is in an infantry battalion, a squadron, or higher, two to three weeks of training at any of these locations can improve the ability of Marines within the intelligence section.

While the MOC is the most current operational concept for all Marine forces to consider and use, EF21 was instrumental in nesting the MCISRE Plan with a Service-wide operational plan.



Intelligence support for operations is a tight unit relationship. (Photo by Cpl Laura Mercado.)

EF21 has its own section that describes the way to properly use intelligence and the best practice to strengthen the capabilities of all intelligence professionals across the Marine Corps in all intelligence disciplines. One of the essential subcategories of this intelligence is, “Operations-Intelligence Integration.” The intelligence-operations relationship is one that must be tight knit. A truly successful intelligence-operations relationship should be predicated on intelligence driving operations and operations driving intelligence. When operations orders and large campaign plans are built, the intelligence section drafts the Annex B to describe a textual explanation of the intelligence preparation of the battlespace. That Annex B, regardless of what is and is not included, is not solely derived and dictated by operations. Likewise, to truly enhance the capabilities of that intelligence and operations sections, there are particular circumstances and a larger scheme that necessitates operations driving intelligence. While the Marine Corps is ultimately built, trained, and operated as a tactical organization, intelligence and operations sections should always look one and two levels up from that current command.

Having just completed a year-long deployment in Afghanistan with an advising team that was fortunate to have a

great working relationship with its operations officer, I noticed that missions were sometimes dictated by operations orders with some input from the higher headquarters intelligence section. Information was derived from the operations section of operational requirements that needed to be completed. If a Marine at any formal or informal training masters the art of intelligence driving operations, he is already ahead of the curve. A Marine can perfect his art by realizing that the operations-intelligence relationship is give and take, and that you must have intelligence drive operations—and vice versa—to truly reach a unit’s operational capability. Thus, a reciprocal relationship similar to the intelligence preparation of the battlespace should be circular so that all warfighting functions and sections are abreast of the operating environment.

One of the six warfighting functions is intelligence. Similar to warfighting, intelligence problem sets, analytic problem sets, and the tools used to conduct timely, concise, and relevant analysis evolve over time. As this evolution takes place, the education of the intelligence professional needs to be able to reduce the commander’s uncertainty as well as evolve and improve in order to reach the goals found in the MOC. This will allow the intelligence professional to drive operations past the MCISRE

Plan. The battlefields and threats will change, and the best way to determine the next threat will be through a well-trained and well-informed intelligence section providing all-source intelligence products and using multiple-intelligence disciplines to fuse to those products and determine the courses of action one can take. We do not use all of the educational tools, resources, and courses available, we will be grossly behind the power curve. Multidisciplinary training eliminates tribalism between the different intelligence disciplines (geographical intelligence, signals intelligence, imagery intelligence, human intelligence, open-source intelligence, measurement and signals intelligence) and allows cross-training to reduce the commander’s uncertainty and provide timely and productive analysis of the battlespace.

Notes

1. Headquarters Marine Corps, *Marine Corps Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance Enterprise Plan 2015-2020*, (Washington, DC: September 2014).
2. Marine Corps Combat Development Command, *Expeditionary Force 2021*, (Washington, DC: 2014).
3. Headquarters Marine Corps, *MCWP 1, Warfighting*, (Washington, DC: 1997).
4. Headquarters Marine Corps, *MCDP 2, Intelligence*, (Washington, DC: 1997).
5. Headquarters Marine Corps, *Marine Corps Operating Concept: How an Expeditionary Force Operates in the 21st Century*, (Washington, DC: 2016).
6. Headquarters Marine Corps, *Director of Intelligence Reading List*, (Online), available at <https://www.hqmc.marines.mil>.
7. Central Intelligence Agency, *Intelligence Literature: Suggested Reading List*, (Langley Park, MD: April 2011).
8. Headquarters Marine Corps, *MCTP 8-10A, Unit Training Management Guide*, (Washington, DC: 2017).

