

Technical Subject-Matter Experts at the Tactical Edge

Integrating intelligence operations

by GySgt Benjamin S. Ferguson

The Marine Corps is advancing the capabilities of the infantry battalion through experimentation and modernization efforts. This initiative emphasizes the need for enhanced intelligence capabilities within austere environments. At the forefront of this advancement is the intelligence operations and fusion officer, formerly known as the intelligence warrant officer, whose role has evolved to support these cutting-edge requirements. Positioned as a critical asset within the Infantry Battalion Experiment (IBX), this officer maximizes IBX combat effectiveness by streamlining intelligence for both strategic and operational requirements. This proposal underscores the strategic importance of integrating intelligence operations and fusion officers into the IBXs to augment its operational capabilities and address the need for rapid, time-sensitive intelligence support.

The Role of Intelligence in Force Design 2030

Force Design 2030 prioritizes the Marine Corps Intelligence Surveillance Reconnaissance Enterprise in support of expeditionary advanced base operations (EABO), emphasizing a multi-discipline approach to intelligence collection and analysis to address national intelligence priorities. The IBX requires timely, accurate intelligence products across a wide spectrum of operations. The intelligence operations and fusion officer offers the expertise necessary for mission

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Integrating intelligence operations and fusion officers at the tactical level means more than adding drones like the R80D Skyraider and their operators to the infantry battalion. (Photo by LCpl Justin J. Marty.)

success by providing rapid, accurate assessments. Key areas of impact include:

- *Comprehensive Adversary Understanding:* Intelligence operations and fusion officers produce complete assessments of near-peer competitors' diplomatic, informational, military, and economic actions. These insights enable the IBX to allocate resources effectively and prioritize high-value intelligence.
- *Countering Technological Advancements:* As adversaries employ artificial intelligence, machine learning, quantum computing, and cyber operations, the intelligence operations and fusion officer equips the IBX to mitigate threats, employing countermeasures and coordinating with adjacent units to limit adversary impacts.
- *Information Warfare and Non-Lethal Effects:* With adversaries increasingly using hybrid warfare, the intelligence operations and fusion officer helps protect IBX infrastructure from disinformation, propaganda, and cyber threats while safeguarding national intelligence priorities.

Background and Expertise of Marine Corps Intelligence Warrant Officers

The intelligence warrant officer MOS, originally deactivated in the 1990s, was re-established to provide technical expertise across multiple intelligence disciplines, including signals, human, geospatial, and measurement and signature intelligence. Intelligence operations and fusion officers are tasked with synthesizing and analyzing intelligence data to reduce uncertainty for commanders. By fusing information across sources, they create actionable intelligence products that support tactical operations, realtime situational assessments, and analysis of adversary trends and capabilities.

Renewed Importance of Intelligence Operations and Fusion Officers

As the Marine Corps prioritizes intelligence for EABO, intelligence operations and fusion officers are vital for synthesizing information from diverse sources, adapting intelligence for IBX needs, and ensuring timely, accurate intelligence across disage-

gated units. These officers' expertise in data fusion streamlines intelligence for the battalion commander, promoting swift, decisive action regardless of the operational environment.

Integrating Intelligence Operations and Fusion Officers in IBX

Permanent billets for intelligence operations and fusion officers in the IBX enhance readiness and lethality in several ways:

- *Realtime Intelligence Support:* These officers provide time-sensitive intelligence, supporting commanders in alignment with *Force Design 2030* and EABO priorities.
- *Enhanced Battlespace Awareness:* Their ability to integrate intelligence across multiple disciplines provides the IBX with a comprehensive operational picture.
- *Intelligence-Driven Mission Planning:* By collaborating with battalion staff, intelligence officers develop courses of action, high-priority target lists, and intelligence-driven planning that enhances mission effectiveness.
- *Harnessing Technological Advancements:* Leveraging geospatial intelligence, UAVs, and cyber capabilities, intelligence operations and fusion officers increase the IBX's situational awareness and effectiveness.
- *Force Protection:* As experts in threat assessment and intelligence fusion, these officers provide critical early warnings and enhance force protection capabilities.

Operational Effects of Intelligence Operations and Fusion Officers in IBX

When intelligence operations and fusion officers are stationed within the IBX, they provide several operational benefits:

- *Enhanced Combat Readiness:* These officers prepare the IBX for a range of operations in various geographical areas.
- *Reduced Commander Uncertainty:* By providing expeditious intelligence, they create a more dynamic operational posture.
- *Advanced Targeting Capabilities:* Through detailed analysis, these of-

ficers refine target engagement criteria, minimizing collateral damage and maximizing operational impact.

- *Improved Staff Synchronization:* Intelligence fusion officers synchronize battalion staff efforts, streamlining intelligence and operational priorities across all levels.

Professional Development of the Intelligence Section

The intelligence warrant officer's extensive professional military education equips them with analytic tradecraft skills, technological expertise, and the ability to collaborate across U.S. intelligence and Service branches. Their knowledge transfer enhances the IBX intelligence section, fostering a culture of continuous learning and adaptation.

Future Outlook

As the Marine Corps adapts to a competitive global landscape, the role of intelligence at the IBX level will continue to expand. Incorporating intelligence operations and fusion officers will equip the IBX to address future operational challenges and maintain a high level of readiness.

Conclusion

Integrating intelligence operations and fusion officers into the IBX provides a tactical edge in complex operational environments. Their contributions to battlespace awareness, intelligence-driven operations, and rapid decision-making reinforce the Marine Corps' commitment to *Force Design 2030*.

Recommendations

To maximize the value of intelligence operations and fusion officers within the IBX, the Marine Corps should adapt training standards to focus on infantry tactics and joint interoperability. Battalion commanders should ensure these officers possess expertise in intelligence systems, doctrinal application, and analytic tradecraft. This integration will enhance the IBX's ability to operate at the tactical edge, supporting *Force Design 2030* objectives and sustaining combat readiness.

