

Geospatial Intelligence at the Infantry Regiment

A required capability
by Capt Andrew Rozic

The Marine Corps is optimized to be *expeditionary*—that is, we are a strategically mobile force that is light enough to get to the crisis quickly yet able to accomplish the mission or provide time and options prior to the arrival of additional forces. Such a statement is considered common sense throughout the Marine Corps these days; in fact, this statement is a direct quote from our capstone concept, *Expeditionary Force 21 (EF 21)*.¹ This concept does not change what Marines do, but it fundamentally revises how we do it. Marine Corps intelligence has the ability to maintain the Corps' relevancy as we continually advance toward the "the future normal." *EF 21* provides guidance across all warfighting functions. This guidance can be implemented within the intelligence warfighting function with tangible results through further decentralization of the Marine Corps' organic geospatial intelligence (GEOINT) capabilities. Simply put, the Marine Corps needs a GEOINT capability at the infantry regiment. If implemented, this concept will be highlighted as future leaders beg the question, "How do we adapt to the increasing complexity we will see in the future normal?" The implementation of a GEOINT capability at the regimental level will support this necessity to deploy rapidly, arrive quickly, and begin operating immediately.

Support for such innovation in manning requires an understanding of the genesis of this idea. There are two unique infantry regiments in the

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A GEOINT capability can be effectively integrated into a regimental combat operations center. (Photo by author.)

Marine Corps: 3d Marines and 7th Marines. Obviously, each unit in the Marine Corps has its own unique history and storied past, but that is not the subject matter here. These two regiments are unique in the sense of their geographical location—neither is collocated with their higher headquarters. Being separated from the "flag pole"

may seem heaven sent; however, seeing firsthand the capabilities that division and higher units can provide in the way of intelligence production support, remote GEOINT support is a detriment. That being said, all infantry regiments would benefit from the support of a GEOINT capability. Within the context of this argument, this capability

would consist of—at a minimum—one 0241 (imagery analysis specialist), one 0261 (GEOINT specialist), and their associated workstations. Creating structure at the infantry regiment level for these specialized intelligence Marines is the ultimate goal.

How do we know this is a valuable use of our human resources? Fortunately, 3dMarDiv has done the legwork. Over the past two large-scale exercises conducted in the Pacific, 3dMarDiv has provided 3d Marines with just such a capability. During Exercise RIM OF THE PACIFIC 2014, and more recently during Exercise BALIKATAN/COMBINED VIGILANCE 2015, one 0241 and one 0261 were sent on temporary additional duty from Okinawa, Japan, to 3d Marines at Marine Corps Base Hawaii to provide immediate intelligence support to the regiment. The results are a resounding success. This GEOINT support team (GIST) provided over 600 man hours of production and analysis and created over 200 tailored intelligence products in direct support of 3d Marines and their subordinate units. The specialized skill set of each of these Marines and the availability of their expertise in a “knee-cap to knee-cap” role cannot be overemphasized. Observing the convoy commander looking over the shoulder of the imagery specialist prior to making a tactical movement or the engineer platoon commander working with the topographic specialist to develop the exact map needed for his training is invigorating. It is true operations/intelligence integration. We cannot detract from the great work that our 0231 intelligence specialists do; however, the niche role that an 0241/0261 can fill at an infantry regiment is astonishing. When these Marines are on hand, the staff integration is cultivated and exercised continuously.

The current *Marine Corps Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance Enterprise (MCISRE) Plan* states:

The commander’s plan for maneuver, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance must account for the dynamic, continuous, and interactive requirement for battlefield understanding. In the complicated human terrain of the modern battlefield, we

may conduct operations with the sole purpose of stimulating the enemy so we can gauge his response. Marines will “operate to know,” with integrated intelligence collection to sense the battlespace and the actions within it. This will be especially true in expeditionary operations, long-range crisis response, or denied areas. It is a relationship that must be habituated through fully-integrated training, even (especially) in peacetime. **Commanders must be prepared to develop and understand their own battlespace as a continuous task, with trained and ready ISR capabilities integrated with plans for maneuver and fires.**²

Providing a GEOINT capability to the commander at the regimental level plainly embodies the *MCISRE Plan* and the intelligence functional area in support of *EF 21*. Specifically, *EF 21* states,

Decisive knowledge at the point of action demands full integration of intelligence with operations across all echelons of command. When operations and intelligence are not integrated, intelligence does not receive the direction needed to be effective, and operations do not receive intelligence required for mission success.³

With both the Service-level capstone concept and the intelligence annex to the *Marine Corps Service Campaign Plan* acknowledging that commanders at all levels require intelligence support, the implementation of GEOINT capability at the infantry regiment is an opportunity to show tangible, tactical-level results of each strategic-level plan.

Why change the structure at a regiment when the MAGTF Intelligence Center (MIC) provides reachback support? No Marine leader can deny that “boots on the ground” can help reduce uncertainty. The same holds true for intelligence production, exploitation, and dissemination to reduce the commander’s uncertainty. The *MCISRE Plan* to utilize the MIC reachback capability has its merit in deliberate planning and the long-range intelligence requirements that are known. What can never be replicated or satisfied through reachback, however, is the fast-paced nature of the ever-changing

battlefield—the unknown unknowns. For example, an 0241 participating in an operational planning team (OPT) conference and beginning production and analysis on an annotated image that shows the best routes to the objective before the meeting is even over is the reality that commanders have come to expect in over a decade of combat in the Middle East and South Asia. What commander would accept regressing to a pre-9/11 centralized concept with reduced responsiveness? With geospatial specialists embedded in the staff, they are able to exploit data and develop intelligence that fully utilizes their capabilities and draws on the expertise within the battlestaff. This “shared consciousness” among the staff represents the systematic understanding of all parties.⁴ A request for information is no substitute for a planner or tactical commander leaning over the shoulder of the geospatial specialist telling him exactly what he wants. As GEN Stanley McCrystal asserts, “Efficiency remains important but the ability to *adapt* to complexity and continual change has become an imperative.”⁵

With the response time reduced due to analysis and production being collocated, the commander’s OODA (observation, orientation, decision, action) loop is not slowed by the intelligence production cycle; rather, the accuracy and tempo with which decisions can be made are increased.⁶ Again, this embodies goals of both *EF 21* and the *MCISRE Plan*. In fact, the *MCISRE Plan* states, “It has long been a truism that tactical elements closest to the fight have the need for the greatest fidelity in battlespace intelligence, while they lack the intelligence horsepower to generate it.”⁷ Rather than rely on remote horsepower, why not provide the commanders the horsepower they need? A common axiom is that commanders need “an 80 percent solution right now, rather than a perfect solution two weeks from now.” A GEOINT capability at the infantry regiment provides that. As stated in *EF 21*:

Decision advantage in combat is a function of rapidly acquiring high-value information, performing quick and accurate analysis, and achieving



A GEOINT capability is needed at the infantry regiment. (Image by author.)

immediate dissemination in the language of operations to generate speed in decision, higher-tempo operations, and combat effectiveness.⁸

As a multipronged approach, we must couple the in-depth, vast knowledge that the MIC and the MCISRE Plan tap into within the larger intelligence community, and join that with the immediate advantage of exploiting at the point of action with our capable, skilled, and proficient Marines.

How do we do it? Along with examining every other aspect of the structure across the MAGTF, as is continually the case, we should also examine the infantry regiment S-2 (intelligence) section to ensure we not only we have the right structure but also—more concerning in this context—the right MOSs represented. The current table of organization for an infantry regiment headquarters has eleven 0231 intelligence specialists including seven NCOs (excluding the intelligence chief).⁹ Would it be inconceivable that two of the seven NCOs are recoded as an 0241 and an 0261, respectively? As 3d Marines and 7th Marines are both unique in their geographic isolation, the table of organization of each already acknowledges this uniqueness through the various and sundry reinforcements they have across other warfighting functions. The value in the proposed structural change could

be evaluated by adding the GEOINT capability at these two infantry regiments. This experiment could then lead to change across all infantry regiments to increase the effectiveness, efficiency, and lethality of the GCE.

Neither MOS roadmap, as outlined in the *U.S. Marine Corps Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance 02 Series Enlisted Career Roadmap*, would be negatively affected by establishing modest GISTs at infantry regiments.¹⁰ The 0241 NCO already operates in the GCE (at the division level) with the transition occurring relatively seamlessly due to the lateral transfer nature of the MOS. In order to move into the MOS, there is already an expectation that the Marine has demonstrated the maturity to succeed. The current roadmap for the 0261's first tour should be at an intelligence battalion would be reinforced with a second tour at an infantry regiment. At this point, this Marine would also have the maturity and mentorship from senior 0261s and would be prepared for the added responsibility of operating as part of the GEOINT capability at the infantry regiment.

Commanders and decision makers will demand more accurate, more timely, and more relevant intelligence, regardless of the austerity in which they

operate. The expeditionary benefits of a GEOINT capability at the infantry regiment level have been demonstrated within 3dMarDiv. The ability for staff, subordinate, and adjacent decision makers to maintain direct access to a GEOINT capability provides a tangible realization of the capstone concepts for Marine Corps intelligence, and more importantly, the Marine Corps as a whole. The author submits that not only are regimental GISTs a feasible change, but for the above-mentioned reasons, they will create a more adaptable, more expeditionary, and more lethal fighting force.

Notes

1. Headquarters Marine Corps, *Expeditionary Force 21*, (Washington, DC: March 2014), 5, accessed on 5 May 2015 at www.mccdc.marines.mil.
2. Headquarters Marine Corps, *Marine Corps Intelligence, Reconnaissance, & Surveillance Enterprise Plan*, (Washington, DC: 2014), 10, accessed on 5 May 2015 at <http://www.hqmc.marines.mil>.
3. *Expeditionary Force 21*, 37.
4. GEN Stanley McCrystal, USA(Ret), *Team of Teams: New Rules of Engagement for a Complex World*, (New York: Portfolio/Penguin, 2015).
5. Ibid.
6. Robert Coram, *Boyd: The Fighter Pilot Who Changed the Art of War*, (New York: Little Brown, 2002).
7. *Marine Corps Intelligence, Reconnaissance, & Surveillance Enterprise Plan*, 20.
8. *Expeditionary Force 21*, 38.
9. Total Force Management System, Unit TO&E Report, HQTRS CO 3D MAR REG 3D MAR DIV, (Washington, DC: 28 August 2014).
10. Headquarters Marine Corps, *U.S. Marine Corps Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance Enterprise (MCISRE) 02 Series Enlisted Career Roadmap, Version 3.0*, (Washington, DC: September 2013).

