US Army Intelligence and Security Command

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Changes Provide Troops With Better, More Timely Intelligence

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Drawing on lessons learned in combat in Iraq and Afghanistan, Army leaders are making dramatic changes aimed at providing better and more timely intelligence to troops in the field – and relying on soldiers to gather and forward information that will be combined with data from other sources to create the overall intelligence picture.

Senior military intelligence officials outlined the changes that are taking place in an effort to produce “actionable intelligence,” which is one of the Army’s 17 major focus areas, during a panel discussion held in Washington Oct. 26 at the Annual Meeting of the Association of the United States Army.

“Actionable intelligence,” according to a definition offered by a panel member, “provides commanders and soldiers a high level of shared situational understanding, delivered with the speed, accuracy, and timeliness necessary to operate at their highest potential and conduct successful operations.”

Changes are needed to enable such an understanding, panelists said.

“We’ve got to operationalize intelligence,” said Lt. Gen. William G. Boykin, deputy under secretary of defense for intelligence and warfighting support. “We’ve got to recognize intel as a war-fighting component.”

For example, Boykin said the Defense Intelligence Agency would become an operational unit, as the Joint Intelligence Operations Command for the national level, and there would be “tightly integrated” joint intelligence operations centers at lower levels as well.

In light of a new appreciation of the value of analysis, as the Army develops modular units of action, analysts are being assigned to every level, from theater command to tactical units.

Traditionally, the intelligence cycle emphasized collection of information, but under the new system, the cycle begins and ends with analysis. That sometimes leads to “fighting for intelligence,” or launching combat operations chiefly to obtain intelligence, the panelists said. This approach was used with great success in hunting and capturing Saddam Hussein.

Launching a series of raids and patrols to gather intelligence, soldiers were able to narrow the search area and eventually seize the former Iraqi dictator without a fight. An important step toward operationalizing intelligence, Boykin said, is the development of intelligence campaign plans rather that relegating intelligence to an annex in the operational campaign plan.

The first such intelligence campaign plan, for Iraq, was completed June 14 and is in use, he said. Army intelligence officials visited Iraq last year and found 127 opportunities for improvement, said Collin Agee, director of intelligence, sensors, and reconnaissance in the office of the assistant chief of staff for intelligence.

Citing one example, he said that the visitors found 400,000 patrols had been conducted, but only 6,000 reports had been filed to higher echelons, in part because many were filtered out at the battalion level.

The catchphrase for enlisting all soldiers – not just those serving in intelligence units – in the intelligence battle is “Every Soldier a Sensor.” Now, the Army is trying to make that vision a reality.

One way to keep soldiers in the loop and make it easier for them to pass on what they observe, Agee said, is to provide them a “digital point of origin.”

Specifically, tactical leaders in Iraq are in line to get the Commanders Digital Assistant, a rugged handheld device produced by General Dynamics that includes two-way satellite communications that they can use to send reports and receive current intelligence and, when appropriate, raw information.

In the first stage of fielding, the goal is to get 1,000 CDAs into the hands of soldiers down to the patrol leader level, officials said at a news conference after the panel discussion.

While the information these soldiers send from the field will be combined with other information to produce valuable intelligence, “The heart of our challenge is not collection,” said Maj. Gen. John F. Kimmons, commanding general of the U.S. Army Intelligence and Security Command. Rather, he said, the challenge is “to fully leverage the intelligence we’re already collecting.”

During the Cold War, aerospace surveillance and signals intelligence often were enough to monitor units of potential enemies, but in today’s world, the most pressing need may be for intelligence on an individual terrorist or insurgent.

To aid in that task, analysts are receiving software that helps them visualize relationships and detect patterns.

Maj. Gen. Barbara Fast, who recently served as the intelligence officer for Combined Joint Task Force 7 in Baghdad, said software such as Analyst’s Notebook, produced by i2 Inc., has been helpful.

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