LETTER TO THE EDITOR


The ASIC has long been the backbone of tactical US Army Intelligence operations, partly because US doctrine is that signals, image, and sensor intelligence assets have been organic to a formation’s intelligence unit since 1974 – not, as in Commonwealth armies, as part of combat and signal units.

The US organization makes maintenance of those assets more likely when governments impose austerity upon their armies, as the lobbying strength of a CEWI battalion is greater than that of its parts. There is, however, a benefit in grouping electronic warfare (EW) resources with signals (as in Commonwealth armies): the technical knowledge demanded of the operators is embedded in signal units and it permeates the EW officers and tradesmen.

Major Rémillard observed that intelligence elements should organize in peacetime as they intend to fight. So should intelligence procedures. An EW unit should report signals intelligence (SIGINT) directly to the intelligence staff. Offensive EW operations (jamming and deception) should be controlled by the operations staff, because the intelligence authority will always reject any activity that may interfere with SIGINT collection. Command of an EW unit can remain vested in the signal organization to which it belongs, but the chain of control and reporting must not be delayed by routing it through the signals staff.

The speed of military action and response has greatly increased since the First World War, when British penetration of the Zimmermann Telegram was followed by a delay of months before it could be exploited. Air Force EW responds in a fraction of a second to protect aircrews from radar- and IR-guided missiles. It can do so because the detection, analysis, reporting, and response functions are embedded in one platform. Recent improvements in communications and procedures now enable intimate mutual support among army and multi-service tactical and strategic resources.

Collection, analysis, and dissemination of relevant intelligence to all customers have improved as well. The key word here is “relevant.” At one time, US Army commanders were inundated with information because they were expected to study it personally and to draw the necessary conclusions. It should be the function of intelligence organizations to do the digesting and to highlight the significance of the information to the boss. A Canadian general serving during the Second World War once said: “You must believe your intelligence.” When a commander trusts his intelligence officer, he can leave analysis to him.

In fact, many of Major Rémillard’s recommendations repeat those expressed in a Canadian Army post-operation report from the Second World War. Perhaps there is merit in a study of military history!

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