

Military Deception and Reverse Intelligence Preparation of the Battlefield: How Staff Integration Creates Advantages for the Brigade Combat Team Commander

by COL Thomas M. Feltey and CPT Lance C. Rae

Mission analysis (MA) has colloquially become known as the S-2's show. Feverishly producing products for an important briefing, intelligence officers brief an enemy plan while the rest of the staff sits idly by (thankful they are not in the S-2 shop). Unfortunately, leaving MA to the S-2 shop alone is not working well in actual practice across the force.

Personal observations from time spent as a reconnaissance-troop observer/coach/trainer (O/C/T) at the Joint Multinational Readiness Center (JMRC) and as an instructor at the Cavalry Leader's Course (CLC) have highlighted a trend within training units and students in regard to intelligence preparation of the battlefield (IPB). We are failing at the squadron/battalion level and below to account for and integrate our enemy's analysis and adaptations to U.S. forces during MA. As a consequence, U.S. forces tend to create a "straw man" enemy when conducting MA and are then taken aback when they encounter an enemy who has been thinking about relative combat power and has taken advantage of their perceived strengths and U.S. forces' perceived weaknesses.

U.S. forces can reverse this trend by conducting integrated IPB, specifically focusing on the conduct of reverse IPB, during Step 2 of the military decision-making process (MDMP). Reverse IPB¹ is a commonly overlooked sub-step within Step 4 of IPB, "determine threat course of action" (CoA).

IPB review

Current doctrine describes IPB in four steps. In Step 1 we define the operational environment, determining the area of operations (AO) and area of interest (AI), and identify significant characteristics of the AO/AI that will require more analysis (enemy, terrain, weather, civil considerations). Step 1 of IPB helps U.S. forces identify the initial gaps in their understanding of the AO/AI and should generate assumptions, requests for information and requests for information collection (IC) necessary to continue IPB.²

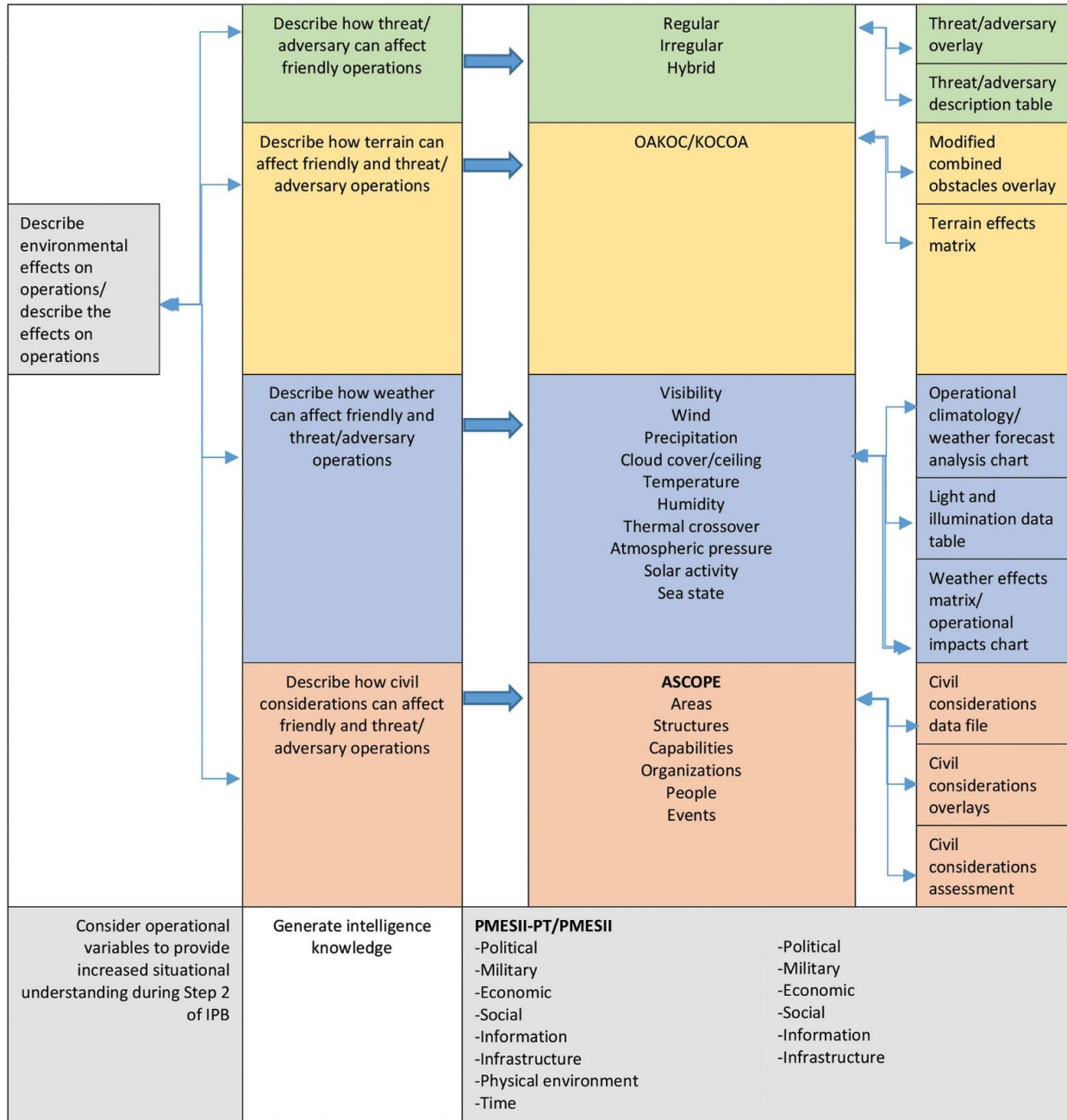


Table 2. Step 2 of the IPB process. (From ATP 2-01.3)

U.S. forces evaluate the threat in the third step of IPB (Table 3), using doctrinal templates and our pre-existing knowledge of the enemy based on their order of battle, how they traditionally like to fight or how they have been fighting in a specific area. U.S. forces also take into account the enemy's combat effectiveness, capabilities, limitations, composition, disposition and overall strength. U.S. forces can produce threat characteristics, threat templates, threat capabilities statements and an initial high-value-target list based on the analysis in Step 3.⁴

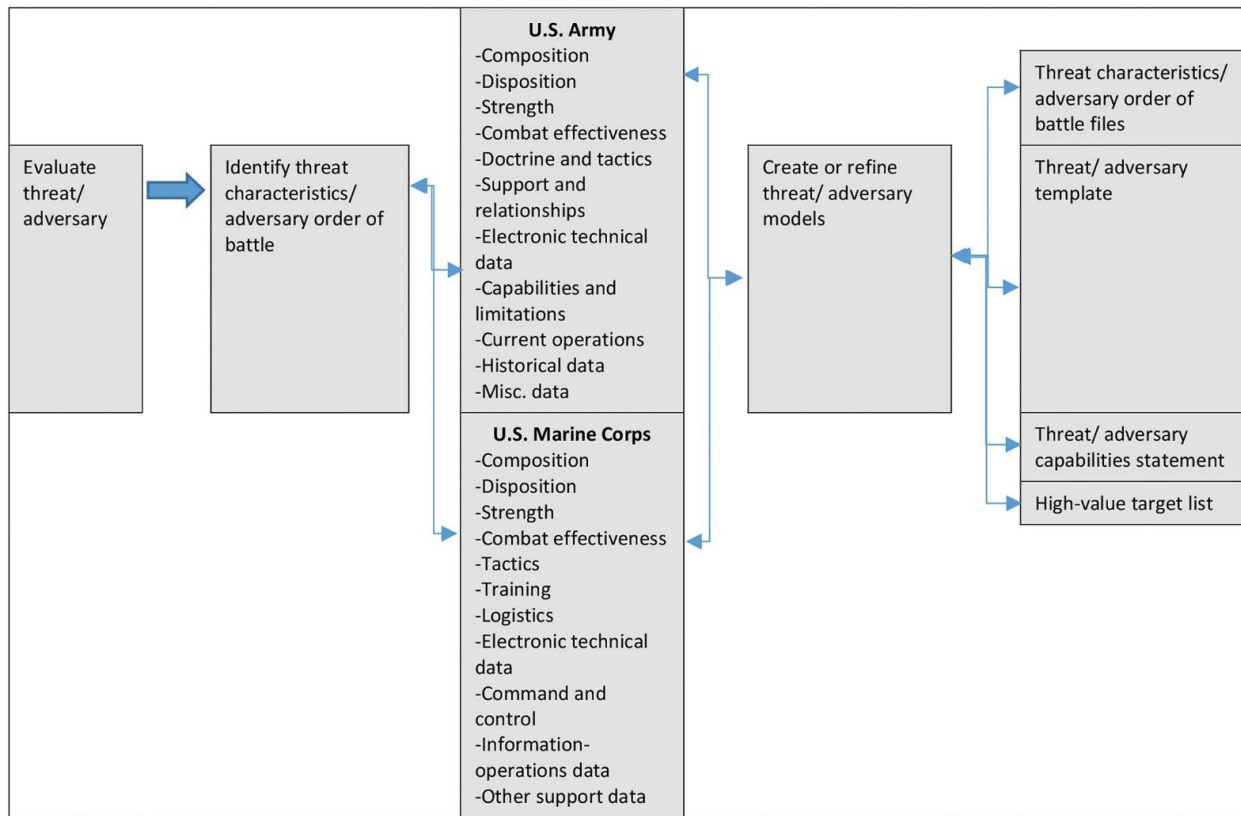


Table 3. Evaluate the threat/adversary. (From ATP 2-01.3)

In Step 4, U.S. forces determine the threat's CoA, taking into account the enemy's objectives, likely endstate and all the previous analysis from Steps 1-3 of IPB. Then, U.S. forces develop enemy CoA sketches and statements for each enemy CoA templated. U.S forces also produce the event template and matrix during Step 4 of IPB.⁵

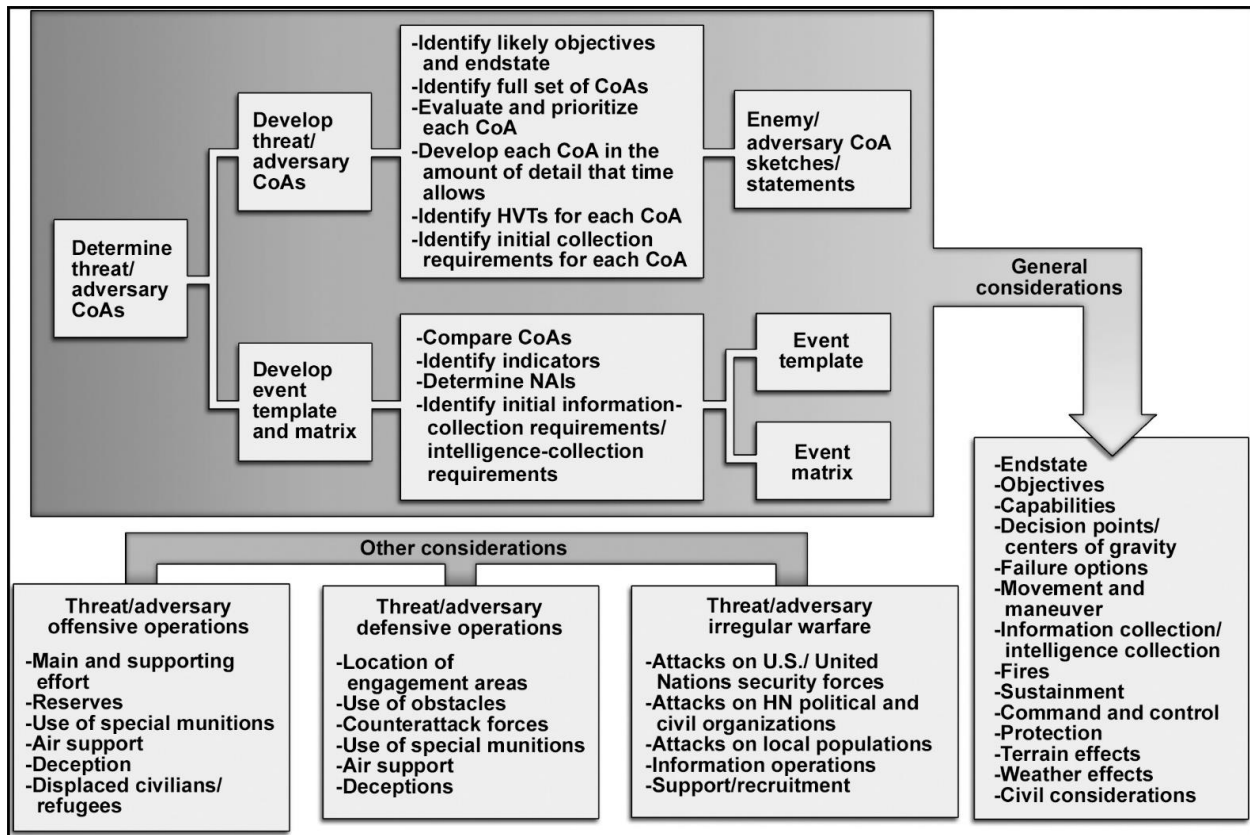


Figure 1. Determine threat/adversary CoAs. (From ATP 2-01.3)

Reverse IPB

U.S. forces are often satisfied, or are forced to be satisfied, with this initial assessment of the enemy because time is a finite resource. Doctrinally speaking, U.S. forces should make as many enemy CoAs as time permits. With that said, U.S. forces should develop the following two CoAs at a minimum: the most likely CoA and the most dangerous CoA. If neither of these enemy CoAs takes into account the enemy's analysis of U.S. forces' disposition and effects within the AO/AI, those CoAs are flawed and don't meet the CoA screening criteria of being feasible, acceptable, suitable, distinguishable and complete.⁶

The solution is to conduct reverse IPB during MA; specifically, it should be done within the sub-step of identifying the full set of CoAs (Figure 1). Reverse IPB recognizes and takes into account the enemy's assessment of U.S. forces operating in the AO/AI. This subtle, critical and often missed sub-step ensures that a much more realistic enemy CoA sketch and statement is produced during MA. This will logically carry forward to the later steps of MDMP, most importantly the wargame. Conducting reverse IPB during MA ensures that U.S. forces build in the enemy's initial reactions/counter-reactions, and it produces a much more logical and realistic enemy in the wargame. It also enables better results for U.S. forces on the battlefield.

This analysis can't be done in a stovepipe, though; the S-2 cannot do this tremendous amount of analysis alone. To successfully conduct reverse IPB, the staff must make an integrated and collaborative effort. This means each staff section must put on its red hat during MA and assist the S-2 by giving their relative combat power analysis⁷ and most likely enemy adaptation and actions in response to U.S. forces in the AO/AI (unique to their warfighting functions).⁸ U.S. forces are hesitant to invest the time and manhours required of collaborative IPB, but the benefits far outweigh the costs in regard to the quality of the MA being conducted, and therefore the entirety of MDMP. MA is the most vital step of good MDMP, and it will be made all the better if the staff makes a conscious effort to collaborate on reverse IPB.

As U.S. forces become more proficient and effective at conducting reverse IPB, they will gain the ability to anticipate and even shape the enemy’s tactical decisions. This more intimate understanding of the enemy will enable U.S. forces to employ the often neglected military-deception (MILDEC) plan.⁹

Military deception

An advanced step, and a natural evolution from reverse IPB, is the development of a MILDEC plan. After the staff conducts reverse IPB and identifies the enemy’s assessment of U.S. forces and likely adaptations, the staff takes advantage of the situation by distorting the enemy’s perception of our disposition, composition and intentions to the extent that the enemy starts reacting counterproductively. Effective MILDEC is crucial to a commander’s ability to shape, engage and consolidate gains.

MILDEC can be broken down into four techniques:

- **Feint** – an offensive action involving contact with the adversary conducted for the purpose of deceiving the adversary as to the location and/or time of the actual main offensive action.
- **Demonstration** – a show of force where a decision is not sought, and no contact with the adversary is intended. A demonstration’s intent is to cause the adversary to select a CoA favorable to U.S. goals.
- **Ruse** – a cunning trick designed to deceive the adversary to obtain friendly advantage. It is characterized by deliberately exposing false or confusing information for collection and interpretation by the adversary.
- **Display** – the simulation, disguising and/or portrayal of friendly objects, units or capabilities in the projection of the MILDEC story. Such capabilities may not exist but are made to appear so.¹⁰

At the lowest level, MILDEC is referred to as tactical deception (TAC-D). As explained in Army Doctrinal Reference Publication (ADRP) 1-02, *Terms and Military Symbols*, “[TAC-D] is deception activities planned and conducted to support battles and engagements. TAC-D is planned and executed by, and in support of, tactical-level commanders to cause adversaries to take actions or inactions that are favorable to U.S. commanders’ objectives. TAC-D is conducted to influence immediate military operations to gain a temporary tactical advantage over an adversary, to mask vulnerabilities in friendly forces or to enhance the defensive capabilities of friendly forces.” A further output from greater understanding during IPB is a commander’s/staff’s ability maintain and exploit the relative advantage.

How to take advantage

Brigade combat team (BCT) commanders can task their IC assets to answer priority intelligence requirements (PIRs)¹¹ about the effectiveness of their TAC-D activities. PIR are often tied to decision points.

The BCT commander may establish the following PIR: Will the enemy commit forces against our feint force? The cavalry squadron can answer the indicators associated with the PIR by conducting reconnaissance-and-security operations. The cavalry squadron collects indicators in its assigned named areas of interest according to the IC matrix and reports information to the brigade. The brigade conducts analysis, turning the information reported into intelligence.¹² In this case, the BCT assigned the PIR as a commander’s critical information requirement (CCIR). Therefore, the CCIR will have an associated decision point.¹³ As a result of effective reconnaissance, the BCT commander can make a decision to commence a planned attack based on the fact that the enemy has committed forces toward the feint and away from the BCT commander’s true decisive operation.

PIR (if)	Friendly-force information requirement (and)	Decision point (then)
Enemy commits a battalion (+) against a feint force	Brigade’s decisive operation is prepared to attack	Initiate attack with brigade’s decisive operation

Table 4. PIR and decision point.



Figure 2. CCIR and essential elements of friendly information. (From FM 3-98)

In summary, reverse IPB is a critical and often missed step of IPB. Staffs must factor in the enemy's assessment of U.S. forces and the adjustments it will create within the enemy's CoA. This collaborative effort must be done during MA by the entire staff to create a realistic enemy CoA statement and sketch. As a result, this enhanced MA will lead to a more feasible, acceptable, suitable, distinguishable and complete enemy CoA during the wargame. Knowledge of the enemy's CoA will inform and shape the U.S. forces' MILDEC plan and how its inclusion at the tactical level can take advantage of the enemy's assessment of U.S. forces.

Finally, we discussed how a cavalry squadron can assess the effectiveness of the MILDEC plan for its BCT commander by conducting effective reconnaissance-and-security operations. Ultimately this will lead to more informed decision-making by the BCT commander, resulting in success on the battlefield.

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Notes

¹ Reverse IPB is defined in ATP 2-01.3, *Intelligence Preparation of the Battlefield*, November 2014, as "how the presence and actions of U.S. forces will affect threat/adversary operations."

² ATP 2-01.3.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ For more information on CoA screening criteria, see Field Manual (FM) 6-0, Chapter 4.

⁷ For more information on how to assess relative combat power, see FM 6-0, Chapter 9.

⁸ For more information on of staff responsibilities during integrated IPB, see ATP 2-01.3, Chapter 1.

⁹ ADRP 1-02, **Terms and Military Symbols**, November 2016, defines MILDEC as “actions executed to deliberately mislead adversary military decision-makers as to friendly military capabilities, intentions and operations, thereby causing the adversary to take specific actions (or inactions) that will contribute to the accomplishment of the friendly mission.” Joint Publication 3-13.4, **Military Deception**, January 2012, defines MILDEC as “applicable at all levels of war, across the range of military operations, and can be conducted during all phases of military operations.”

¹⁰ From ADRP 1-02.

¹¹ FM 3-98, **Reconnaissance and Security Operation**, July 2015, defines PIR as “an intelligence requirement, stated as a priority for reconnaissance, security tasks and [IC], that the commander needs to understand a threat, enemy, adversary or operational environment (for example, terrain or civil considerations).”

¹² ADRP 1-02 defines CCIR as “an information requirement identified by the commander as being critical to facilitating timely decision-making.”

¹³ According to ADRP 1-02, a decision point is “a point in space and time when the commander or staff anticipates making a key decision, concerning a specific [CoA].”

Acronym Quick-Scan

ABCT – armored brigade combat team

ADRP – Army doctrinal reference publication

ASCOPE – area, structures, capability, organizations, people and events

ATP – Army technical publication

AI – area of interest

AO – area of operations

ATP – Army technical publication

BCT – brigade combat team

CLC – Cavalry Leader’s Course

CCIR – commander’s critical information requirement

CoA – course of action

EEFI – essential elements of friendly information

FFIR – friendly-force information requirement

FM – field manual

HN – host nation

HVT – high-value target

IC – information collection

IPB – intelligence preparation of the battlefield

JMRC – Joint Multinational Readiness Center

KOCCOA – key terrain, observation and fields of fire, cover and concealment, obstacles, avenues of approach

MA – mission analysis

MDMP – military decision-making process

MILDEC – military deception

NAI – named area of interest

OAKOC – observation and fields of fire, avenues of approach, key terrain, obstacles, cover

O/C/T – observer/coach/trainer

PIR – priority intelligence requirement

PMESII-PT – political, military, economic, social, information, infrastructure, physical environment and time

TAC-D – tactical deception

USMC – U.S. Marine Corps