

COISTs FOR THE DECISIVE ACTION ENVIRONMENT

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Today's Army, experienced at counterinsurgency (COIN) operations, cannot afford to lose the valuable knowledge garnered since 9/11. As the Army rapidly transitioned and adjusted to a COIN environment, Delta Company, 2nd Battalion, 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment created a company intelligence support team (COIST) as a direct reaction to the unique hybrid threats that our unit faced. Taking the success of a company's intelligence team in COIN and applying it to the current force is essential for readiness in the next fight. A properly led COIST in garrison will serve as a great risk mitigation tool in a decisive action environment and an essential tool for training squads and platoons on the latest enemy tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs).

Building a Needed Asset

Companies often do not have a trained collective element at their command posts (CPs) that commanders can dedicate to conduct enemy/terrain analysis, record significant actions (SIGACTs), pre/post patrol briefs, synchronize actions with higher and adjacent units, and proactively analyze their operating environment (OE). Often, fire support officers (FSOs) or the CP Soldiers who learn on-the-go take on these tasks as additional duties. While commanders will always be responsible for their companies, they are often unable to directly supervise intelligence collection. The COIST can serve as an extension of the commander's intent by executing critical intelligence tasks and ensuring platoons and squads retain crucial situational awareness.

Building a company intelligence team from the ground up is a very delicate task. The following technique worked extremely well in our Infantry heavy weapons company that did not possess a COIST. First, company leader emphasis on the proper selection of Soldiers proved extremely important in the early formation of the team. We looked for intelligent and motivated Soldiers who genuinely wanted to be part of this new enterprise. Some of these troopers had college degrees, and many had a genuine interest in world events. Second, we considered longevity in the company and selected two troopers from each platoon along with two from the company's headquarters platoon to ensure leadership at the top. Drawing two 11B Soldiers from each platoon ensured continuity of the COIST program and enabled each team member to advocate for intelligence analysis at the platoon headquarters level. Third, we formed a team of a dozen such Soldiers and conducted a 40-hour training

block of instruction using a U.S. Army Forces Command (FORSCOM) counter-improvised explosive device (C-IED) integration cell (CI2C) COIST instructor. The course focused on the basic intelligence analysis cycle for non-intel Soldiers and stressed the importance of predictive analysis to achieve actionable results. At the end of instruction, the team delivered an hour-long threat analysis brief to the COIST instructor and company commander to prove it was ready to bring what it learned in classroom to the real world.

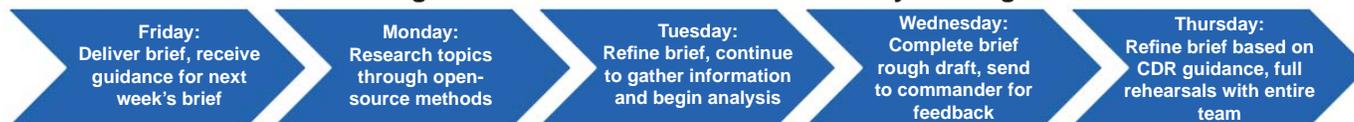
As the COIST progressed, we developed a weekly SOP for the production of the weekly briefing (see Figure 1). Over the course of our COIST weekly briefings, we covered diverse topics to reflect the ever-changing threats and hot spots to American interests. The regime and opposition anti-armor capabilities in Syria, the considerations of possible noncombatant evacuation operations (NEO) operations in Nigeria, and the fluid and dangerous actors in the Central African Republic, were just a few of the topics covered in weekly threat briefs.

With the future uncertain where the next deployment might be, units must be ready to hit the ground immediately. In the case of the 82nd Airborne Division, one battalion is always on an 18-hour alert to deploy. This does not provide adequate time for a unit to accomplish the reception, staging, onward movement, and integration (RSOI) tasks. Therefore, it is important to address these tasks before notification. While waiting for the call, the COIST fills the gap. A paratrooper needs to understand where he is, the enemy he faces, and the task at hand. In this context, the vision for our COIST was to ensure all Delta Company paratroopers were informed of the enemy threat, human terrain, and the overall operational environment. That way, every paratrooper hits the ground in a foreign country knowing the operating environment and enemy threat capabilities, how to survive, how to engage and partner with the local populace, and how to WIN!

Why a COIST?

The COIST is the focal point for a maneuver commander to accomplish proactive detailed risk mitigation. Imagine a Soldier who receives COIST briefs for six months on three different countries. Within each country, there are five different enemies. These enemies use varying Russian or Chinese-made weapon systems. This Soldier has 18 hours to deploy and will jump into harm's way soon after. Those six months of intelligence briefs paired with a tactical standard operating procedure (TACSOP) book will build confidence in every

Figure 1 — SOP for Production of Weekly Briefing



Soldier. For a Soldier to hit the ground confident in where he is, the enemy he faces, and the tasks at hand will prove decisive during the opening hours of a conflict and essential for the remainder. Each Soldier will need to know generally what and whom he is facing as well as the environment in which he will face them. Coupled with terrain analysis, each Soldier will already be familiar with his objective and drop zone. This increases a Soldier's lethality and survivability. Most importantly, it allows for mission success.

A properly operating COIST will ensure a commander can synchronize his training plans with the most current enemy TTPs. This leads to more realistic training events and prepares Soldiers for future missions based on unique OEs and tasks. A COIST should conduct weekly current intelligence briefs (CIB) before weekly training meetings. Attendees should be platoons sergeants, platoon leaders, and platoon COIST representatives.

Based on recent world events in multiple hot spots, enemies use a wide range of weapons from small arms to antitank weapons that range from rocket-propelled grenade (RPG) launchers and IEDs all the way up to Chinese and Russian equivalents to the U.S.'s tube-launched optically tracked wire-guided (TOW) missile and Javelins. Knowing the exact capabilities of each weapon system (more than just its ranges — launch characteristics, employment methods, and launch signatures) will ensure U.S. forces can array their forces correctly and react accordingly, whether mounted or dismounted.

CIBs should primarily focus on enemy weapons systems, TTPs, enemy task organizations, and human populations. When dealing with most enemy weapon systems, whether small arms or anti armor, our senses will be our first indicator of defense of an enemy attack. Knowing these systems beforehand will ensure that when the call does come, your Soldiers will be ready. Through these briefs, each key leader

in the company receives intelligence that can enhance the overall preparation of the company. For example:

- A commander will be confident in knowing the number of American citizens to evacuate for a NEO, the ability of host-nation forces, and relationships with the U.S. State Department.
- A company executive officer will know exactly which electronic countermeasure devices, reactive armor, or extra survivability measures will be needed for the company.
- A first sergeant will know that his dismounted company will receive vehicles and he can start roll over and simulation training immediately in order to be ready.
- Platoon leaders will know to mitigate environmental risks immediately (weather, wildlife, illumination, etc.).
- Platoon sergeants will know how to plan Soldier's weight loads for a combat jump and follow on operations.
- Squad leaders will be aware of the capabilities of local police or army and how to integrate them.
- A mounted gunner will know the indicators for an enemy AT weapon launch.
- A dismounted Soldier will know how to implement counter-IED technology.

Knowing the human terrain is just as important as knowing the enemy weapon systems you will face. A company intelligence team is the best resource for a company to understand a foreign culture and region. A COIST brings to light the subtle nuances that separate multiple groups of people across a wide spectrum of cultures, religions, and communities. It will give every Soldier in a company situational awareness on the many distinct personalities in an OE. All Soldiers would know which host-nation forces they will potentially partner with, which governmental agencies the U.S. government will send in for disaster relief efforts, and which communities/tribes of people will be present. Knowing this in advance will build a flexible

Figure 2 — Worldwide Hot Spots

