

PIRs

What They Are...and Are Not

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There are so many different kinds of intelligence and information requirements that it's hard to keep them all straight—priority intelligence requirements, specific information requirements, commander's critical information requirements, information requirements, intelligence requirements, indicators. . . .

What most infantry officers would concede, however, is that there is a place somewhere in the coordinating instructions of the operations order (OPORD) for priority intelligence requirements (PIRs). Beyond that, there is little consensus on the purpose, utility, or implications of the requirement.

What we can agree on is that the seemingly endless list of unanswerable questions generated by a corps order, and dutifully passed down to each squad, is of little help to the soldier on the ground. In trying to resolve this issue, we find numerous references, but they are also contradictory, incomplete, and inconclusive.

PIRs are often misstated or mislabeled. Certainly, they are not defined in a way that is meaningful to the infantryman. I believe there are three criteria a PIR should meet:

- Someone must be specifically responsible for answering it.
- It must be collectable.
- It must be tied to a friendly action.

PIRs are too often a laundry list of questions that no one is held responsible for answering. And, according to an unscientific poll of instructors for the Infantry Officers Advanced Course, the average commander does not consider trying to answer PIRs an *implied task*. So if no one is specifically told to do it,

and no one thinks it is implied that they do it, how does it get done? If PIRs are "critical to the accomplishment of your mission," as stated in Field Manual (FM) 34-8, *Combat Commander's Handbook on Intelligence*, you'd think that, somewhere in the order, someone would be assigned the mission of answering them.

People who are not specifically tasked to answer a PIR will still know what PIRs are, understand their importance, and consider it an *implied task* to

*Somewhere in the order,
someone must be identified
as having the specified task
of answering a PIR.*

collect them if the opportunity presents itself. But I think answering a PIR must be a *specified task* for someone. It can be stated in the intelligence paragraph that contains the collection plan, in a reconnaissance and surveillance matrix, or in tasks to maneuver or combat support units.

This first requirement for a useful PIR will serve as a check for the second: It must be collectable. Thus, a commonly seen "PIR" such as, "Will the enemy use chemical agents?" really isn't very good. How is an infantry unit supposed to answer this question, short of finding the enemy commander and asking him his intentions? All a tactical unit can really do is answer a question such as, "Has the enemy used persistent chemical munitions against our main defensive area?" The unit can answer this one by putting out chemical alarms, and the information may generate some

friendly action, such as moving to alternate positions or using chemical weapons ourselves.

It may make you feel good to ask whether the enemy *will* do something, and you may, in fact, be able to find some indicators (such as the movement of chemical delivery systems forward or upgrades in protective posture); but when you get right down to it, such predictive PIRs usually cannot be collected at the tactical level.

Likewise, a unit that does not have the Chattahoochee River in its sector cannot answer the PIR, "What bridges over the Chattahoochee River are intact?" Someone else in the brigade may have the river in its sector, but you don't. Therefore, a unit cannot simply repeat PIRs from the higher headquarters order; some may apply to you, and some may not. The test is, "Can I answer the question, given my resources and limitations?"

The third requirement, that a useful PIR must be tied to a friendly action, is nothing new; FM 34-8 says the same thing. It doesn't make sense to go to the trouble of answering a PIR if no one is going to act on the information. "When has the enemy crossed Phase Line Lee?" is a good PIR if PL Lee is the decision point for launching our attack helicopters. Thus the PIRs should be traceable to the operational factors matrix on the decision support template (DST). In fact, FM 34-130, *Intelligence Preparation of the Battlefield*, calls the DST "the vital link between the commander's intelligence needs and the decisions and actions required of the commander and staff."

Other items of information are also

important, but if they do not meet these three criteria, I would suggest they are not PIRs and should be put somewhere else in the order. For example, if we are interested in those bridges over the Chattahoochee but cannot answer the PIR, we can identify who is answering it, in either the friendly forces or the intelligence paragraph. In another example, if the battalion commander wants to track the movements of his companies during an infiltration, he will make "Report crossing phase lines" a reporting requirement in the coordinating instructions.

He can do the same thing for common but ineffective so-called PIRs that are really nothing more than SALUTE report reminders. A key to identifying these are that they're usually listed as commands rather than questions. Consider a "PIR" such as "Report enemy of platoon size or larger along Infiltration Lane Blue." Does this mean I don't have to report a squad? I don't think that is the intent. A better PIR would be, "Is the enemy located in platoon strength or greater within Infiltration Lane Blue?" We can send a patrol out to answer this, so it is collectable. If the answer is no, we will use Infiltration Lane Blue; if the answer is yes, we will use an alternate lane. In this example,

the PIR is tied to a friendly action; it is not just a SALUTE report.

Indicators are definitely worth mentioning. These are pieces of the puzzle the intelligence analyst is looking for, and observations the average soldier can make. For example, a commonly seen PIR for a unit at the Joint Readiness Training Center is "Where is the enemy battalion supply point?" That might be a tough question for an infantry soldier to answer on the basis of his localized view of the world. But he can report indicators, such as an unmapped trail network with all-terrain vehicle tracks, a single-ship landing zone, a UH-1 hovering and dropping a bundle, an enemy that defends instead of breaking contact, and booby traps, mines, and obstacles around a concealed area. These might be listed as reporting requirements or indicators in the coordinating instructions. Indicators are "information," and that is what the infantryman can collect. An analyst can then process them into "intelligence." (See also "Intelligence Considerations for the JRTC Search and Attack," by Captain Richard A. Berglund, *INFANTRY*, September-October 1993, pages 7-9.)

A good PIR should be collectable, should have someone responsible for it,

and should be tied to a friendly action. If you have information you're interested in that doesn't meet these criteria, put it somewhere else in the order—in the friendly forces or intelligence paragraph (that is, a PIR of interest to you but being collected by someone else); under reporting requirements (SALUTE items, if you feel you must emphasize them, and friendly information); or under indicators (items of information that may seem unimportant by themselves but which collectively produce a picture).

You may choose to interpret PIRs differently, and there are certainly enough definitions in circulation to please almost everybody—that is, everybody except the guy on the ground. No matter how you choose to understand PIRs, I ask you to expose each PIR to this simple question, "Does having this in the OPORD help, and what are my subordinates supposed to do with it?"

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Four Ways To Increase Leadership Effectiveness

LIEUTENANT COLONEL HARRY W. CHRISTIANSEN

General George S. Patton once said, "Wars may be fought by weapons, but they are won by men." It is the human dimension of war—the integrated effort of the soldier's spirit and the leader's will—that wins battles. This philosophy is written into Field Manual 100-5, *Operations*, which states that leadership

is the most essential element of combat power.

Effective leadership is the ingredient that creates the combat-ready soldier teams that will bring mission success, both in war and in operations other than war. There are four ways you can become a more effective leader:

Exemplify Professional Ethics. Professional values and ethics are the foundation of service to the nation. They promote mutual trust, confidence, and understanding between the leaders and the led. Values—our attitudes about the worth or importance of people or ideas—are powerful. Your values, as