

“Tell me, I forget.

Show me, I remember.

Involve me, I understand.”

- Chinese Proverb

The training an Army officer initially receives as a 2nd Lieutenant (2LT) has elevated in importance as the operating environment has changed. In an era where 2LTs are deployed almost immediately after graduating from their Basic Officer Leadership Course (BOLC), the training that they receive there becomes exceedingly important. Especially within the Intelligence profession (without whom maneuver units would be fighting with half a plan) is this principle particularly important. Military Intelligence (MI) is one of the largest branches in the United States Army and is also one of the most understrengthened branches for company grade officers (Trainer"). Brand new MI 2LTs are often expected to step into what was previously considered to be an Captain's (CPT) position. As the most junior ranking officers, they are in a position to have to be knowledgeable enough to manage across an expansive knowledgebase (more encompassing than any other branch) and often have to manage up to a position above their experience. However, in light of these demands, MI 2LTs initial training is inadequate. Military Intelligence Basic Officer Leadership Course (MIBOLC), MI 2LTs initial training, does not prepare its newly commissioned officers to the utmost of its ability. MIBOLC's structure, continuity, and teaching environment is not conducive to most efficiently prepare new MI 2LTs to immediately deploy into an asymmetrical counterinsurgency environment.

As one of the last remaining professions, military officers must regulate, train, and qualify their own (Snider) and MI officers are no different. In the American military, officers serve as managers in an organizational structure, which rely upon their leadership skills to

motivate their men to accomplish often daunting tasks. In the Army, these leadership abilities are evaluated on sixteen different attributes, skills, and actions: mental, physical, emotional, conceptual, interpersonal, technical, tactical, communicating, decision-making, motivating, planning, executing, assessing, developing, building, and learning. The theoretical concept behind the assessment of these 16 dimensions is that each comprises part of the whole that is considered to be the ideal Army Officer. In this manner of thinking, all dimensions share equal weight and importance. However, practical experience has taught many in management and leadership that some are more important than others. One such skill in particular is technical competence, “the necessary expertise to accomplish all tasks and functions” (Department of the Army). Without technical competence, a leader requires exemplary skill in all 15 other dimensions in order to thrive and excel as a commissioned officer, an occurrence that is extremely rare if not non-existent. However, a strong technical competence can compensate for inadequacies in multiple other dimensions.

As a culture, the Army relies upon its senior Non-Commissioned Officers (NCOs) to act as a social learning mechanism that counterbalances 2LTs’ training deficits from the schoolhouse. However, this process takes time and a certain amount of humility that may or may not be present in many new 2LTs. Also, the biggest inhibitor to this success is the high operational tempo (optempo) of the contemporary operating environment that requires 2LTs fresh out of BOLC to not only lead their soldiers, which many 2LTs will be experiencing for the first time, but to do so in some of the most intense situations to which a soldier can be exposed, combat. This requires BOLC training to prepare 2LTs to lead men into a combat zone immediately after completion of BOLC. This includes an operational understanding of all available positions to a 2LT within their given branch.

The MIBOLC cadre often states that the objective of the course is to prepare students to become Battalion S2 Intelligence Officers (Locke"). However, many students, some of whom have already completed over 12 weeks of the 16 week 4 day course, report feeling nowhere near prepared to become the S2 of a combat operation and other students with MI enlisted backgrounds claim that there is a wide knowledge gap between what is taught during the course and what actually happens with deployed units ("Cryptolinguist"). MIBOLC allocates approximately 12 to 13 weeks of instruction to actual MI related tasks (analysis, collection, etc.). However, this time allocation is not conducive to maximizing the learning process.

Human beings learn, especially higher level functions such as analysis, through associations and experience (Thorndike). Although human beings do not absorb or imprint a situation uniformly, context and associations reinforce ideals and intellectual systems. This is the reason why soldiers at every level are drilled and trained many tasks through repetition (Ermev"). This is learning through the Laws of Habit (Thorndike). Even though the mind approaches high level functions differently and imprints the information of external stimulus differently when training high level functions, the Laws of Habit still apply. The greater the exposure to a mental process, the higher probability of internalizing that task and process, and this holds true even more so as the mental processes become more and more complex (Locke").

The MIBOLC course is currently structured to model the Army training standard of "Crawl-Walk-Run." In other words, the processes or tasks are first slowly explained step by step through by knowledgeable professionals. Then they are walked through step by step and finally they are rehearsed and run through. MIBOLC's ultimate end state process is the ability to lead a group through the performance of predictive analysis on an asymmetrical battlefield in a time sensitive environment. This process begins with an introduction to battlefield analysis in the

form of Intelligence Preparation of the Battlefield (IPB). Then instruction progresses to Counterinsurgency (COIN) theory and finally into leadership and management within COIN scenarios.

As previously stated, the Laws of Habit would dictate that the most time be spent training the most complex tasks. However, this is not currently the case. The most basic form of battlefield analysis, that is taught in the context of symmetrical warfare, consists of a five week module, the longest in MIBOLC. The second longest is COIN theory at four weeks in length and the shortest (which actually consists of three modules) is the COIN leadership and management scenarios at three weeks long. Even though this phase is three weeks in length, only approximately two weeks of it is actually devoted to the practicing of leading soldiers in MI related tasks. In other words, out of a 16 week 4 day course only approximately 10 working days are devoted to allowing a brand new 2LT to experience leadership in any sort of role in the MI field. This means that the most basic tasks are given more emphasis unnecessarily because the processes associated with these simpler tasks can be incorporated at higher levels of thinking in more advanced modules. In other words, while conducting analysis of a COIN scenario, an individual conducts the mental steps of IPB as it applies to an asymmetrical environment.

The time to task emphasis is not the only impedance to maximizing the educational experience. The courses logical flow of progression is disjointed. For example, throughout the course beginning in symmetrical IPB, students are required to have an operational understanding of how to task individual assets such as Human Intelligence and Prophet Signal Intelligence Systems. However, the classes that give an accounting of these assets' capabilities are spread throughout the course as are other random courses. This means that throughout the course students are reinforcing knowledge of an asset that is incomplete at best and is usually inaccurate

("Target"). The Laws of Habit also dictate that unlearning previously reinforced information can prove to be more difficult than learning information originally. In other words, it is harder to de-program the human mind than it is to program the human mind (Thorndike), making the dispersal of these asset classes counterproductive. Also because the asset classes are randomly dispersed throughout the course and the different modules, the continuity of the other blocks of instruction are interrupted as well, making the logical integration of material more difficult unnecessarily (Locke").

Also as MI, the understanding of the field requires much information that is classified at the very least SECRET/NOFORN, which means that only American personnel with proper clearance and access should have this information. Many of the assets capabilities that students are required to know upon graduation of MIBOLC are classified at the TOP SECRET/SECRET COMPARTMENTALIZED INFORMATION (TS/SCI) level (Archer"). Under normal circumstances, this would not be a problem as all American students are required to have at minimum an interim TS/SCI. However, the presence of international officers in these classes makes the conveyance and utilization of classified information very difficult. Once again, this creates an environment where students are not only learning incomplete or wrong information, which according to the Laws of Habit is counterproductive. This format also does a disservice to the international officers as many do not understand the material due to the pace of the course and the language barrier ("Afghan") and this gap impedes or eliminates any international collaboration experience of value ("Scout").

Fortunately, the solutions to these problems are two feasible adjustments. The first alteration would be to place the entirety of the course in a classified environment and train the international officers in their own separate class. The upgrade in classification of the entire

course is not a new idea and neither is the sole international officer class. In previous versions of MIBOLC when it was referred to as MI Officer Basic Course (MIOBC), the entire course, start to finish, took place in a classified environment (Trainer"). As for the international officers' classes, there already currently exists a small school contingent that trains Afghan Officers. Even though this would remove international officers from the class and lower the cross-cultural exchange, the classified environment of the course would allow students to consistently reinforce correct knowledge of assets and capabilities from the beginning to the end of the course. In addition, to regain some of the intended cross collaboration experience between the American officers and their international counterparts, one of the culminating exercises at the end of the course could be a joint operation with Coalition Forces representatives and periodically hold cross-cultural mixers and events with the international officer classes.

The second alteration, in order to allow a logical flow of information and a greater opportunity for optimal experience, would be a reordering of the module structure. Before the beginning of the conventional IPB, a one to one and a half week module devoted to collection asset capabilities, once again this would be in a classified environment to ensure the accuracy of information disseminated. Then devote another week and a half to two weeks to conventional IPB, followed by three weeks of COIN theory. Throughout this instruction phase of the course, the practical exercises would be coordinated across modules to ensure that each built upon the last to make a cohesive picture of the mental processes required and the theories necessary to apply. This creates an overarching continuity of instruction and exercises throughout the instruction phase, which helps consolidate and streamline the first two steps of the Army training standard, crawl and walk. The remaining four to five weeks of allocated instruction time can be devoted to assessment exercises and real life scenarios. This progression creates a necessity on

behalf of the student to reinforce what he or she learned in the earlier modules of the course, while simultaneously allowing the student the maximum prudent exposure to the dynamics of MI leadership.

Consistency of instruction and an efficient training progression are vital to any training plan. The MIBOLC format needs to be altered to further prepare 2LTs for a rapid immersion into the COE without much time to adjust to their new surroundings. By allowing instruction to be complete and thorough from the start, the instruction process becomes more efficient and less confusing for the students. Combining this efficiency with an instructional progression that cascades forward, reinforcing itself throughout every step of the training cycle, creates a course that has great potential to prepare future MI leaders for success in the modern dynamic battlefield.

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*The names of the interviewees have been changed as they gave their testimonies in confidence.