

# Source Operations at Company Level

Recent developments in the Army intelligence collection have emphasized pushing assets to lower levels. This is indicative in everything from giving UAS to battalions and making Every Soldier a Sensor (ES2).<sup>1</sup> This has been necessary because counter-insurgency demands more information at the lowest levels to attempt to spot and foil what amounts to, on a national level, minor actions. It is from these minor actions, however, that the insurgent scores his strategic victories.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, it is imperative that all available intelligence resources are used and used at the lowest level. It is for this reason that identifying information to support source operations, which are traditionally only handled by trained specialists, have a program similar to ES2.

The purpose of this article is to discuss leveraging more assets to increase the Army's ability to conduct source operations. After a short discussion on the reasoning and problems this proposition attempts to solve, the rest will be concerned with how to implement a proposed program in the Army.

The reason for the suggestion that elements of source operations be pushed down to lower levels is primarily because is because Soldiers that are out on patrol everyday are the closest to the populace and become intimately familiar with the local personalities. HUMINT is unique because, among all the intelligence

disciplines, only HUMINT allows the specialist to answer intangible questions that cannot be collected by the Army's superior technological assets. However, HUMINT is also one of the hardest to effectively gather on. A skilled HUMINT specialist is required to tell if the source is lying or fabricating the information that is being given or if the source has ulterior motives for divulging information. It is for this reason that a 'weeding-out' process needs to be executed by the companies before possible sources are forwarded up for use by source operation specialists.

In addition to time required to develop sources in COIN, gathering HUMINT in a COIN environment is more difficult because the information is gathered from the populace and the insurgents are generally much more closely linked with the population than the counter insurgent.<sup>3</sup> This can lead to sources being compromised, which results in the source being killed, receiving no information or, being fed bad information. However, counter-balancing this problem of compromising sources is the fact that source operators simply do not have the time or visibility to recruit new sources like the Soldiers on the ground can, by virtue of their continual contact with the populace during their patrols and other actions.

The average American Soldier, however, has generally one of two mindsets when it comes to source operations. One comes from their training, particularly in the Infantry branch where, "Fix and Destroy" could adequately sum up their corporate mindset. The other model of Source Operations most Americans would think of first would be the "James Bond" idea. Clearly neither of these models is viable for actual source operations but are, unfortunately prevalent. The Infantry's view leads to burning sources or acting before the situation is developed enough to

ensure successful recruitment. On the other hand, if the Soldier thinks he is an MI6 agent, he will make simple mistakes that can be lethal to successful HUMINT. Like asking to talk to a source alone, which will arouse the suspicion of anyone that knows the meeting took place.

To rectify these problems, what is needed is a 'clearing house' of sorts for source operations while at the same time training the line companies in proper source operations TTPs that would also serve as a repository of HUMINT knowledge down at the company level where it can be used to greatest effect. A Tactical Source Evaluation Team, or T-SET, would perform all those tasks and would be task organized down at the line company level for the BCTs. To successfully complete their mission, their M-TOE would be one O1, one WO1 and an E6. The officer would be responsible for the training the companies and coordinating with the S2 on source evaluations. The WO1 would be the lead on HUMINT and would usually be in command when the T-SET would evaluate a potential source. The E6 would also be source qualified and have the main responsibility of assisting the officer with the paperwork that would be sent up to higher and to accompany the WO1 and provide another perspective to double-check the source.

The curriculum to teach the company would include a simple method for assessing source usefulness before bringing it to the T-SET. The acronym would be RAI, which stands for Reliability, Accessibility and Importance. Reliability means how true the information has been in the past, in particular any information that had led to an ambush or otherwise purposefully misled coalition forces. Accessibility means how easy it will be for the personnel who will be actually running the source to meet with them on a regular basis. Are they a merchant on the main street or a female

that never leaves the house? Finally, Importance, which basically means how important the information has been in the past. Examples range from the person who spotted an IED and informed coalition forces of it to someone that assisted in the capture of a HVI.

The specialized T-SET training would be conducted as part of the basic courses for the officers and warrants and at the ANCOC for the sergeant. It would require that they have three days of training added on to their schooling in a joint style of training similar to the JICTC course at Ft. Huachuca. The costs would be the wages for the Soldiers for those three days, plus instructors and the rooms and materials being used. One of the benefits of this training, and using O1s and WO1s for the MTOE is that any Soldier can be put into a T-SET immediately after graduation, assisting in making sure they can be staffed quickly.

In addition to the curriculum on how to look for a source, the T-SET would also be responsible for instructing the company's Soldiers in basic practices of identifying a source and basic associated TTPs. Practices like always recording information that the source gives in a non-obvious way, for vetting purposes, the importance of disguising who they are talking to by making patrols that stop at several shops or other areas during a day. And, most importantly, covertly recording the names and contact information of people they would like the T-SET to evaluate. This would be conducted in a system similar to ES2 that is employed for general intelligence gathering.

Once the Soldiers have identified a person they think would be a good source and they debrief the T-SET with it when they return from that patrol, the T-SET, specifically the WO1 and E6, will first pull any previous reports on the person to be assessed and check any previous reports for both Accuracy and Importance. If the

potential source is deemed trustworthy, the T-SET will accompany the Soldiers on the next patrol that is going by the source's location. They will dress and be armed like all the other Soldiers in order to disguise the purpose of the visit. Once they're on site, the T-SET will evaluate the source for Accessibility and, if possible, hold a discussion in an attempt to get a 'feel' for the potential source. Upon returning from the patrol, the WO1 and E6 will write up their reports and give them to the O2, who will forward them up to the S2.

As far as the company is concerned, that is the end of their responsibility. They are told to conduct business as normal with the people they recommend for sources. If the source is approved, they will not know. If it is denied, they also will not know. The only purpose of the T-SET and the training of the company Soldiers to essentially practice ES2 for HUMINT is to increase the number of potential sources that are forwarded up to the higher echelons with the minimal number of mistakes during the process that would endanger the source's life or usefulness.

In conclusion, this is an important step to take because the United States has no technological rival on the battlefield. But, in a counterinsurgency, HUMINT and the information gathered from the population are absolutely pivotal and decidedly low-tech. In an effort to improve the Army's ability to gather HUMINT on the battlefield, organizing the T-SETs and carrying out training of the line companies should be a step forward in improving the gathering and safety for the sources. It is the information and trust of those sources that will win a fight in COIN.

Handing out supplies in Afghanistan to the local population. The support of the mass base is pivotal for COIN.

A colonel makes progress discussing in Iraq. Higher authority would be responsible for sources once they're located.

Soldiers already talk with people and are trained in ES2. T-SETs would enable them to be put this to use to evaluate potential sources.

COIN wars are won or lost on the front lines. That is why elements of source operations need to be pushed down as far as possible.

<sup>1</sup> FM 3-24, section 1-126: December 2006

<sup>2</sup> Gatdula, David. Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice. Westport, Connecticut: Praeger Security International, 2006. (Pgs. 33-34)

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. (Pgs 33-34)

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