



TACTICAL

CONCEPTS

By Sid Heal

INTELLIGENCE PARADOX AND INTELLIGENCE AXIOM

Two little known characteristics of the intelligence function are the “intelligence paradox” and the “intelligence axiom.” A paradox is an assertion that exhibits seemingly inexplicable or contradictory aspects. In tactical situations it occurs when a commander acts on good intelligence to avoid an undesirable event, and if effective, prevents it from happening. Thus, it appears as though the intelligence was in error. For example, let’s say that reliable intelligence is received that a gang fight will occur after a school sporting event. In order to prevent it, a commander saturates the area with extra patrol coverage, stops and interrogates known gang members, or even cancels the sporting event. As a result, the fight is prevented and it appears as though the intelligence was incorrect. This is an example of the “intelligence paradox.” It is a paradox in that the better the intelligence predicting an undesirable event, the less likely it is to occur if properly acted upon.

The other characteristic is the “intelligence axiom.” An axiom is a self-evident or universally recognized truth. It manifests itself in tactical environments because the value of the information necessary for effective tactical decisions is proportionate to the difficulty in obtaining and evaluating it. This happens because tactical environments are not only dynamic, but satisfactory resolutions are inherently encumbered with harsh time constraints. Gaining good, thorough intelligence is often an intensive and time-consuming process. Yet, waiting for the intelligence requires decisions to be delayed, which may then be rendered ineffective because the situation will have changed. (For more information on this

aspect, see “Implementation [Tempo and Initiative], *The Tactical Edge*, Summer 1996, p. 75.) This is a fundamental predicament that confronts every commander at one time or another. It stands to reason then, that the faster and easier relevant information can be incorporated into the decision-making process, the more value and the greater impact it will have on the ultimate resolution. Thus an axiom is revealed which states that *anything that decreases the effort in obtaining information, automatically increases its value.*

DECREASING THE EFFORT

There are four predominant methods used to decrease the effort. The first, and most popular, is by expediting access. This is most often accomplished by arranging information that has been predetermined to have value for easier and faster access. This can be as simple as compiling a phone list with all relevant phone numbers provided in some easily understood arrangement. Other methods include pre-identifying points of contact, subject matter experts, or indexing after-action reports for reference.

Technology is now providing an even more powerful tool for expediting access via the Internet. With the use of e-mail and the World Wide Web, vast amounts of relevant information can be “book-marked” for almost instant access, providing the latest traffic and weather reports, statistical data and subject matter experts. The amount and variety of information obtained in this manner is virtually unlimited.

The second method is by incorporating specialized skills and expertise. This always

requires a trained staff. Personnel who understand the critical need for certain types of information are more adept and resourceful in obtaining it. They avoid ineffectual searches, duplication of effort and other unproductive efforts. They also tend to be more intuitive in seeking and discerning relevance from a hodgepodge of random data.

The third method is with technology. The use of computers to gather, store, analyze and display data is the most well known. Of particular benefit for prolonged operations or situations with precedents, is the use of databases and spreadsheets to track, analyze, compare and display information in a variety of ways. Other technological advances provide abilities to see in the dark, hear through walls, avoid detection, or silently communicate. In fact, the use of technology to increase the ability to gather and analyze information is limited only by imagination.

The fourth method is by using analysis tools. These provide an enhanced ability to quickly discern and display relevant information from a jumble of loose data. They do not have to be complicated or sophisticated. For instance, the use of a standard format is one of the most efficient methods for reducing effort, because it automatically arranges information into categories. This is especially important with field reports from untrained observers because it provides a mental checklist to ensure that nothing significant is overlooked. (For more information on a standard format for reporting intelligence, see “Intelligence [SALUTE Report],” *The Tactical Edge*, Fall 1998, p. 73.) It also provides an easy reporting arrangement to allow analysts to quickly

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review a large number of reports for a specific piece of information, without having to read entire documents. Matrices, checklists, spreadsheets, databases, maps, diagrams, charts and graphs are other examples of analysis tools for determining relevancy and integrating information into usable forms.

Intelligence is said to be the linchpin of sound tactical decisions because even the best decisions based on bad intelligence solve the wrong problems. An ability to quickly gain and evaluate information to provide timely, accurate and reliable intelligence for decision-making provides a substantial, and often decisive, advantage to tactical commanders. (Intelligence is one of the most critical components of any successful tactical operation. For a more thorough understanding of intelligence concepts, see “Intelligence, EEI, OIR and Assumptions,” *The Tactical Edge*, Summer 1997, p. 61 and “Intelligence, Trends, Potentials, Capabilities and Intentions,” *The Tactical Edge*, Winter 2000, p. 76.) ■

Editor’s note: Much of this article has been excerpted from the book, “Sound Doctrine: A Tactical Primer,” available from the NTOA Bookstore.

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