

TACTICAL CONCEPTS

Intelligence (Trends, Potentials, Capabilities and Intentions)

By Sid Heal

When confronted with the daunting task of processing information into intelligence,¹ an analyst can be quickly overwhelmed by the immensity of the task and the scope of the possibilities. In today's age of electronic data and instant communications, the relevant is easily obscured by the volume. When sorting through this myriad of data, any method which simplifies this task becomes a valuable tool. In order to be useful, intelligence must provide decision-makers knowledge that offers exploitable opportunities. At a minimum, intelligence must be reliable, relevant and timely.

Generally, there are three levels of intelligence. "Strategic," which supports the formation of policy and strategic planning; "operational," which contributes to the needs of planning for future operations, and "tactical," which is required for the planning and conduct of operations to resolve a current situation. For example, the "rate of crime" is obviously strategic in nature because it will influence long-range functions such as recruitment and budgeting. The "rate of residential burglaries in a given region" is operational intelligence because it affects things such as deployments and staffing. Knowledge that a barricaded suspect belongs to a gang known to have purchased hand grenades will definitely affect the conduct of operations and is tactical intelligence. While law enforcement uses all three types of intelligence, the most common is tactical intelligence because it addresses problems that are commonly crisis in nature.

When scrutinizing an agglomeration of data, four factors provide insight for assessing the impact. These are trends, potentials, capabilities and intentions.

Trends

Trends are a combination of measurement and prediction used to identify a general tendency, inclination or predisposition. Trends are identified by measuring events. An event is a single, discrete one-time occurrence which has an impact on a given issue. When two or more events can be identified as being related to an issue, a prediction can be made as to another. The more events and the greater precision that they can be measured with, the more accurate and reliable becomes the prediction. When time permits, as in strategic and operational intelligence, this might be done statistically and presented with graphs. Because of the harsh time constraints inherent in tactical operations, however, trends

for tactical intelligence are more often based on appraisals and estimates. In this case, events may be specifically related to the issue at hand or drawn from similar situations that have occurred in the past.

Potentials

Potentials describe the ability or capacity of something. Because the second, and most important, part of a trend is a prediction, they are always an approximation. Potentials set limits on the possibilities. These are often defined using a best-case scenario, worst-case scenario and most-likely scenario. The best-case scenario takes all factors into account but assumes favorable influences and effective actions. Similarly, the worst-case scenario assumes that there will be unfavorable influences and actions will be minimally effective and describes the worst possible outcome. The most-likely scenario describes that outcome which, based upon all the known factors, is most likely to occur. Since potentials delineate possibilities, they are used to assess the impact of trends. Thus, trends and potentials are inseparable and inter-related.

Capabilities

Capabilities describe the ability of a specific opposing agent to successfully accomplish an action. When the agent is an adversary, capabilities provide a measure of ability in terms of logistical support or operational sophistication. When the agent is a natural or technological disaster, capabilities provide a calculation of the degree of impact on a region, function or organization. It is important to understand that capabilities identify not only what an agent can do, but what it cannot do, because both are essential for the planning and conduct of operations. In many respects, capabilities are related to trends; however, where trends are used to identify a pattern or class of antagonist, capabilities are specifically applied to a discrete, identifiable opposing force.

Intentions

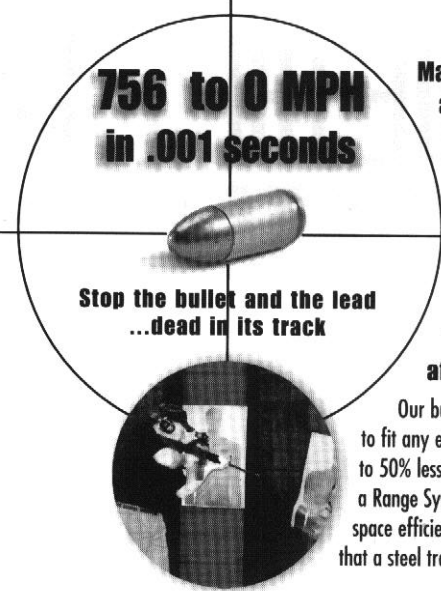
Intentions refer to the actual or potential activities of an opposing force: What is likely to happen? When applied to an adversary, they generally identify their aims and likely courses of action, and when applied to natural or technological disasters, intentions identify probable behaviors and consequences. For example, disasters such as fires and hurricanes have behaviors, while earthquakes and hail storms have consequences. Once an

opposing force can be identified, capabilities provide the possibilities and intentions identify the probabilities. Consequently, capabilities and intentions are also inseparable and inter-related.

When managing tactical operations, the most essential elements are planning and decision-making which are, in turn, almost entirely dependent on sound intelligence.² Not surprisingly, the process by which a boundless amount of information is distilled into useful intelligence becomes a critical factor. To develop effective intelligence an analyst must understand its purpose and characteristics because what he has is information but what he seeks is understanding. ■

Endnotes

- 1 For an understanding of the difference between information and intelligence, see "Information vs. Intelligence," *The Tactical Edge*, Fall 1994, p. 77.
- 2 For an understanding of the importance of intelligence in support of planning, and decision-making, see "EEIs, OIRs & Assumptions" *The Tactical Edge*, Summer 1996, p. 61.



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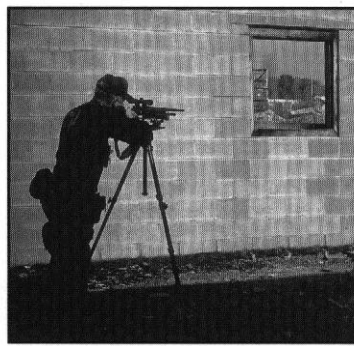
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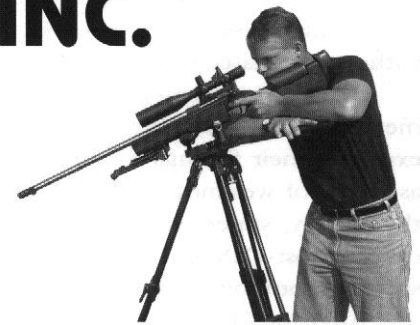


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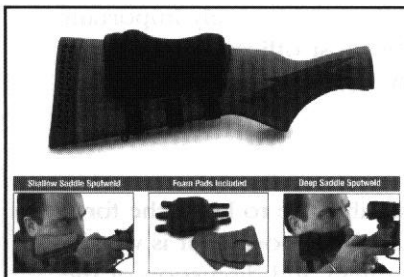


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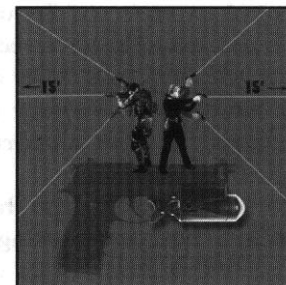


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