The Field Artillery Battalion S2 and the Integrating Processes

By CPT Preston Quinn

Together, Field Artillery and Military Intelligence can be greater than the sum of their parts. However, to achieve their maximum potential organic, Field Artillery battalion (FA BN) S2s must sufficiently and accurately inform the FA BN commander's decisions and the brigade's lethal targeting efforts. The unit's mission cannot succeed if fires and intelligence fail to coalesce around their shared responsibility to lethally target capabilities on the brigade's high-payoff target list (HPTL). Unfortunately, some FA BN S2s – even the best among us – fail to make ourselves relevant to FA BN commander decision-making and brigade lethal targeting.

Armor and Infantry brigades are both assigned a 13A, Field Artillery officer, by the modified table of organization and equipment (MTOE) to fill the FA BN S2 billet – only Stryker brigades are assigned a 35A, Military Intelligence officer. Despite this, from my observation, Military Intelligence officers most often fill 13A slots and thus bring different skills and experiences out of primary military education (PME) to bear on the FA BN's operations than intended. Therefore, it is vital that post-PME development must establish a set of unified set of expectations on how a 35A or a 13A perform as the FA BN S2.

Based on rotational observations and doctrinal references, I make several recommendations to FA BN S2s – regardless of military occupational specialty (MOS) – that will make them more effective contributors to the unit's mission. On the other hand, to FA BN leadership, if your FA BN S2 is not meeting expectations, consider coaching them on the below points. They will often be the root cause from which a failure to meet expectations is just a symptom. I will introduce to S2s the concept of integrating processes defined by Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 5-0 as an informative perspective for understanding an FA BN S2's role and responsibilities.

The intelligence warfighting function is vital to the Army's integrating processes – a fact that is sometimes lost on its practitioners and is directly tied to the success of an FA BN. An integrating process "consists of a series of steps that incorporate multiple disciplines to achieve a specific end."[1] ADP 5-0 identifies the following five integrating practices:

- **Intelligence Preparation of the Operational Environment (IPOE).**[2]
- **Information Collection (IC)**
- **Targeting**
- **Risk Management**
- **Knowledge Management (KM)**

All five of these practices are well-nested inside the significant intelligence warfighting tasks. *(See Figure 1).*

Practice #1: Intelligence Preparation of the Operational Environment (IPOE)

The first cardinal error S2s make is typically a failure to fully understand their information gaps. Ask questions early and often. It is the mark of a good S2 to know their information gaps. Utilize an active

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1 ADP 5-0, *The Operations Process*, Headquarters, Department of the Army, Washington, D.C., 31 July 2019, para 1-71.
2 Doctrine is in the process of transitioning from Intelligence Preparation of the Battlefield (IPB) to Intelligence Preparation of the Operational Environment (IPOE). They are the same process. IPB and IPOE are used interchangeably throughout.

request for information (RFI) plan in IPOE step one to resolve information gaps whether the appropriate source is the higher echelon, national resources or the skilled and experienced staff that share the main command post (MCP) with the S2.

The second cardinal error many S2s make is to devote too little emphasis to topics that deserve it during IPOE or, conversely, to emphasize things that don't matter. This typically occurs for two reasons: first, Military Intelligence Captains Career Course (MICCC) trains its students to be a maneuver S2, not an FA BN S2; second, the S2 likely has not sufficiently acquainted themselves with Field Artillery doctrine.

Just because something is important to the S2 does not entail that it is important to the FA BN commander, staff or battery commanders. Doctrine recognizes this problem by explicitly stating that the mission analysis brief may consist of "Initial IPB [IPOE] products that impact the conduct of operations."[3] Restriction of IPOE products to those relevant to the commanders and staff in doctrine is a direct reflection of the reality that time is an omnipresent constraint on military operations. The S2 should be ready to brief it all and know it all, but the S2 cannot let the "so-what" become de-emphasized. By emphasizing everything, an S2 emphasizes nothing.

How does the S2 know what is important? They should place an emphasis on the IPB products listed in Fires doctrine. An S2 must read Field Artillery doctrine to understand the decisions, capabilities and limitations of the FA BN and its commander. The Army Techniques Publication (ATP) 3-09 series is the best place to start. The baseline for IPB familiar to intelligence professionals is ATP 2-01.3; however, the most important additional reference specific to an FA BN S2 executing military decision-making process (MDMP) and IPB is ATP 3-09.23, para. 1-35 and para 1-49.

The best S2s can gather and synthesize information and judgements from the staff and integrate it into IPOE, IC and targeting. My observation from rotations is that S2s failing to adequately capture the expertise and good judgement of the staff can make inappropriate or irrelevant recommendations to the commander. To that end, S2s should execute continuous "reverse IPOE," a process in which the S2 gathers information from staff members and even enlists their assistance to design products – e.g., the modified combined obstacle overlay (MCOO), enemy courses of action (COAs) and the event template.

Just as the U.S. Army has its own language, each branch of military specialization also has its own language. An S2 that fails to speak the language of the commander and staff they serve will ultimately fail to achieve relevance. Does the S2 understand the logical basis and practical implications of the coordinating fire line (CFL) and fire support coordination line's (FSCL) locations on the battlefield?

How does the brigade's placement of intelligence control measures like the intelligence handover line impact how intelligence and fires coordinate?[4] Does the intelligence handover line adequately support sensor-to-shooter links to the FA BN commander's batteries? An FA BN S2 that speaks to these questions demonstrates that they understand the fault lines in the fires-intelligence complex and is identifying risks for the commander's consideration.

3   ADP 5-0, *The Operations Process*, Headquarters, Department of the Army, Washington, D.C., 31 July 2019, para 5-80.
4   FM 2-0, *Intelligence*, Headquarters, Department of the Army, Washington, D.C., 01 October 2023, para 3-39.

Practice #2: Information Collection (IC)

A fact that becomes obvious to all S2 sections attempting to plan information collection is the absence of any collection assets with reach beyond the forward line of own troops (FLOT). FA BN S2s seem to accept that this means their collection assets cannot be put to good use. This is not accurate. The FA BN's organic collection plan must focus on indications and warnings intelligence (I&W). All battalions in a maneuver brigade have collection assets that are intended for local reconnaissance and provide I&W intelligence – the reason a maneuver BN can collect beyond the brigade FLOT is because they are usually positioned on it, so I&W intelligence for that unit necessitates observation beyond the FLOT. The FA BN S2 can still derive value by using organic collection assets to monitor likely threats to the FA BN, albeit behind the FLOT. With appropriate line-of-sight, the S2 can establish an additional defensive perimeter using the asset as a ground-based electro-optical sensor. The FA BN MCP and batteries can mount their assets on tall poles (anecdotally, the OE-254 post has been used although that is not its intended purpose) to serve as an "eye-in-the-sky." In the event of an enemy penetration of friendly defensive lines, the FA BN should utilize their collection platforms to identify enemy movements within the brigade rear area for its own protection and to keep the brigade's response maximally informed.

Practice #3: Targeting

The assistant S2 (AS2) is the FA BN S2 section's targeting officer and counter-fire officer.[5] This reference is misleading. By MTOE, no brigade combat team is allocated an AS2 billet. One could infer that the BN targeting officer or counter-fire officer would be best positioned to serve additionally as the FA BN AS2. This point of doctrine requires clarification.

ATP 3-09.23 makes this interesting claim despite no FA BN being assigned an AS2. The targeting officer needs to have three distinct points of contact at brigade to sufficiently inform brigade targeting efforts: the brigade intelligence support element (BISE), the brigade collection manager and the brigade Field Artillery intelligence officer (FAIO).

The most important role the FA BN S2 section plays in brigade targeting efforts is their refinement of the brigade S2's assessment of enemy position areas of artillery (PAA). The FA BN AS2 should come to a common understanding with the BISE on the assessment of enemy artillery tactics, artillery capabilities and vulnerabilities and the probable locations of enemy PAAs. Similarly, as an interested party in the counter-fire fight, the FA BN AS2 should normalize assessments of enemy radar position areas (RPA), sectors of search (SOS) and frequency bands, frequency ranges with the BISE.

The FA BN AS2 must also work with the brigade collection manager to ensure that the FA BN commander's chief concerns – enemy artillery, enemy weapons-locating radars (WLR) and HPTs – are addressed in the brigade IC plan. In particular, the FA BN AS2 should ensure that friendly WLRs are incorporated into the IC plan using cueing, cross-cueing and mixing. If possible, the FA BN commander's priority information requirements (PIR) should also be nested within the brigade commander's PIR to give better chances of answering those PIR since the organic FA BN collection assets are insufficient to address all the commander's PIR. The FA BN S2 can provide unique value to the brigade collection manager by ensuring that the brigade IC plan sufficiently pursues information that is essential for accurate target identification, target verification and combat assessment – all of which support the decide, detect, deliver, assess (D3A) targeting methodology.[6]

Lastly, the FA BN AS2 should provide input to the brigade FAIO regarding the brigade's HPTL, target selection standards (TSS) and target selection matrix (TSM).

Practice #4: Risk Management

FA BN S2 support to risk management falls under the intelligence warfighter's responsibility to support

5   ATP 3-09.23, *Field Artillery Cannon Battalion*, Headquarters, Department of the Army, Washington, D.C., 01 October 2023, para 1-49.

6   ATP 2-01, *Collection Management*, Headquarters, Department of the Army, Washington, D.C., 17 August 2021, para F-20.

protection operations. Essential contributions the S2 section needs to make to the FA BN are:

Recommend survivability move criteria to the FA BN S3 and MCP jump schedules to the staff to mitigate enemy targeting operations. The single greatest threat the FA BN faces in Large Scale Combat Operations (LSCO) is counter-battery fire enabled by WLRs. Following enemy artillery fire, the S2 must also consider the threat posed by enemy rotary and fixed-wing air assets, unmanned aerial systems, special purpose forces (SPF) and operational security (OPSEC) compromise from non-hostile actors in the operational environment (e.g. civilians taking photos of FA BN PAAs and posting them online).

Ensure subordinate and supporting units are kept informed of the enemy situation.7 The action elements of the FA BN are its batteries and WLRs. Leaving the batteries in the dark regarding risks leaving the FA BN's most forward element unprepared to mitigate the risk contingent with LSCO. Ask the battery commanders about their decision points and provide the relevant inputs to those decision points. This provides battery commanders a greater ability to design an appropriate PAA defense plan. In a similar vein, the FA BN S2 should provide input to the creation of the WLR's cueing schedule to prevent the enemy from acquiring and exploiting their positions.

Practice #5: Knowledge Management

There are three essential events which occur in the knowledge management life cycle of the FA BN S2 section. First, the acquisition of existing knowledge at the beginning of the operation. Second, the creation and storage of new knowledge during the operation. Third, the long-term storage and assessment of knowledge at the end of the operation in preparation for the next mission. These phases apply to both digital (sharedrive, SharePoint, portal, email, messaging services) and analog repositories (maps, acetate sheets, printed products, trackers, event logs, chit sheets used for transmission within the MCP). Ask the following questions:

How is information stored?
When are information trackers updated?
Who updates information on running products?
What sources of information are considered credible?
Who needs to know?
How is information transmitted to those who need to know?
What information supports the commander's decision points?
What information would trigger the use of fires to prosecute targets?
What information would be worthy of follow-up collection (cueing, cross-cueing, mixing)?

Conclusion

The combined intent of all the above recommendations is to ensure the FA BN S2's relevance to the FA BN commander and staff but also to the larger collection and targeting efforts that the FA BN commander relies on and supports, respectively. It is common for S2s to know their explicit responsibilities to their commander and staff. It is much less common for S2s to understand how their work influences beyond their immediate commander and to the larger organization. As a channel for influence, there is perhaps no BN S2 for whom the integrating processes are more important than the FA BN S2.

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7   ATP 3-09.23, *Field Artillery Cannon Battalion*, Headquarters, Department of the Army, Washington, D.C., 01 October 2023, para 1-35.