

Leadership in Army Intelligence: Preserving Our Most Critical Capability

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Never forget that no military leader has ever become great without audacity. If the leader is filled with high ambition and if he pursues his aims with audacity and strength of will, he will reach them in spite of all obstacles.

Karl von Clausewitz
On War

Introduction

The leadership of Army Intelligence has overcome many obstacles in the past decade and has led the function through critical lessons of Afghanistan and other operations conducted throughout the world since 2001. Despite the increased limelight for the intelligence function in the army with Land Intelligence Modernization (LIM), concerning the institutionalization of critical intelligence organizations and capabilities, there remains an equally critical requirement for the development of its leadership in junior Officers in order to meet the challenges of this new environment. As intelligence leaders and professionals, we must commit ourselves to a greater focus on teaching, developing and demonstrating strong leadership amid the army collective. By encouraging bold and aggressive operational attitudes in young leaders, allowing them the opportunities to perfect the art of command in an exercise or operational environment, and by re-directing individual and collective training efforts it will solidify the importance of leadership in Army Intelligence at all levels. Leadership is the cornerstone of any military organization and is achieved through a combination of talent and training. It therefore requires the appropriate investment of time and effort in order to reap the immeasurable benefits for the trade in the future. Army Intelligence leadership has been outstanding in achieving the milestones necessary to move the function forward post Afghanistan, however, we must ensure that our junior leadership is equally ready to inherit the task of taking on the challenges of

these changes in whatever future threat environment that arises.

Attitudes and Perception

Part of the problem in Army Intelligence, and the army overall, is the predominant perception that intelligence personnel are the archetypal academics, rather than the archetypal soldiers. Typically, Army Intelligence Officers are not portrayed as hard-chargers in the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF), despite the incredible number of capable intelligence leaders the forces possess. The current leadership in Army Intelligence, and that of the recent past, has been extremely successful in breaking down barriers, challenging systems, and taking the Branch to a position of increased relevance and competence across the army. Army Intelligence has had the benefit of strong serving members, with various leadership styles and years of experience inside and outside of the trade. Given the increased intelligence footprint within the land force, it is necessary to ensure that those charged with moving it forward are portrayed in the appropriate light and given the relevant tools and opportunities to prove themselves as military leaders.

To a large extent the problem of perception can be solved by changing the attitudes of our own members, and those whom they serve. Intelligence Officers are often referred to as managers rather than leaders, invariably diluting their potential and their abilities by being characterised as something more administrative or academic than having to do with leadership.

Leadership and management are very different things and the more that members are confined by these roles, the less drive, dynamic problem solving, and overall effort you will see in their performance. Studies have shown that differences in leadership potential can be clearly seen from those who maintain a ground-level management approach to situations, solely reacting to events, from those who view problems or situations at a higher-level; seeking and devising preventative strategies or a long term plan as a true leader should. These are the types of personnel we must continue to produce. Military organizations require leaders, not managers, and leadership can be realised and developed regardless of your particular assignment. An environment that champions management sets the stage for complacency and severely undermines every potential leader by limiting new and imaginative ways of achieving their tasks and/or motivating their personnel. Leaders must still of course be competent managers in terms of resources and personnel, but must consider leading the intelligence mission and his/her soldiers as a primary objective. Army Intelligence must ensure those serving in any leadership capacity, including analytical roles, have the ability and opportunity to demonstrate their prowess.

Competent leadership in garrison or in the field is not solely the realm of a combat arms officer. To be an outstanding leader and exert command and control over an organization and its mission simply requires clarity of purpose and the opportunity or the encouragement to step into a Command role. Developing junior intelligence personnel to push through command challenges should be a primary focus in order to prepare them for the rigors and stresses of the trade.

Army Intelligence should not accept the perception that intelligence personnel are solely specialists or analysts behind closed doors. Our members hold senior leadership positions in the joint and land staff, are Commanding Officers of line units, Special Forces personnel, international representatives in the United States (US), United Kingdom (UK) and Australia (AS), and critical mentors in all environments. Every individual serving under the intelligence star should have the opportunity and support for exhibiting leadership in whatever capacity their employment allows them. Intelligence personnel are field savvy, physically fit, motivated leaders looking for challenges and solutions that will contribute to the completion of the Commander's mission.

So how are these perceptions and attitudes overcome? The existing intelligence leadership first must recognize this truth, and then push our peers and subordinates into roles that

complement the realities of our pool of talent in Army Intelligence. By promoting leadership roles in all areas of intelligence, academics, physical fitness, and other competitive ventures, the army can help our future leadership eventually fill the roles of our predecessors and continue to bring the function into the future.

If we look at the Five Eyes community, leadership and command in intelligence is questioned far less, and serving members do not have the same opposition in how intelligence personnel are perceived. In Canada, the culture of looking at intelligence personnel as analysts and managers vice leaders is engrained, and from this perception we write our doctrine and intelligence guidance based on these roles. Canadian doctrine on Intelligence in Land Operations describes the G2 or Intelligence Officer roles as simply "responsible for the functioning of the combat intelligence system." This does not represent strong leadership and offers the perception of management once again. It is only exacerbated by Intelligence in Land Operations Volume 2, which focuses on the organizational framework for deployed intelligence personnel. It too demonstrates that the words leadership and intelligence are not commonly used in Canadian documents. The words govern, advise, manage, and provide are all used to describe the functions of intelligence professionals from the J2 downward. This speaks to the nature of the problem which drives the perceptions within the Army. Leading this function should be the first critical task in any Officers Performance Development Review (PDR). As an Officer it is obvious that there is an overall expectation to demonstrate leadership, but every member has had a different career path, different opportunities, and different mentors. It is the chain of command's responsibility to ensure each of them individually knows what is required, and is pushed to excel in all forms of leadership.

Conversely, our allies' publications on intelligence doctrine and guidance demonstrate a very different approach. The US and UK push leadership to the forefront of their members intelligence responsibilities. The USMC Intelligence Operations doctrine describes an Intelligence Officer's duties as both "Leading" and "Directing" intelligence operations. This is clearly a different and more aggressive approach that creates a necessary mind-set in its members. In the US Army's Concept for Functional Intelligence 2016-2028, it states that they will, "Develop Soldiers and leaders. Future intelligence leaders will be required to support offensive, defensive, and stability or civil support operations simultaneously against both conventional and

unconventional enemies. The future requires Soldiers and Leaders with flexible mindsets who can work through ambiguity...". The emphasis here is important on both soldiers, meaning skilled in field operations and weapons, and leaders, leading their soldiers and the intelligence function toward a successful mission. We have never employed this use of leadership in Canadian doctrine and it clearly identifies a bolder, more aggressive role for intelligence personnel.

The UK has similar references in its Military Intelligence Battalion manual by describing the role of their operational Intelligence Officers as to "Lead on the provision of insight and understanding on all aspects of the physical environment, human terrain and adversary...and...Drive the intelligence cycle." It is the underlying theme of these similar approaches that we have to develop in our own cadre of intelligence professionals. Without moving forward as leaders we will inevitably fall behind and be forced to follow. Setting the tone for that leadership in the cornerstone Canadian Army intelligence documents and guidance is a necessary step in order to achieve this goal.

Tasks and Opportunities

This article is not a criticism of junior intelligence leaders in any form, but rather a celebration and recognition of the incredible pool of operationally savvy and talented members in the new Army Intelligence environment. Army Intelligence has been fortunate to reorganize itself not only to help the function, but to truly help develop its leaders in producing new leadership positions and opportunities across the country.⁵ Through the proposed creation of critical organizations such as the Canadian Army Intelligence Regiment (CA Int Regt), the All Source Intelligence Company (ASIC) in each Brigade, Land Force Intelligence Centre (LFIC) in Ottawa and Joint All Source Intelligence Coy (JASIC) in Kingston, Army Intelligence is providing the Branch an opportunity to bring its army leadership from behind closed doors, and allow its Officers the appropriate, and too often forgotten, art of Command. Although this article does not discuss the issues in Line and Staff functions that the Intelligence Branch has faced, it is clear that outstanding leadership transcends these delineations and will shine regardless of the organization one serves. Just as it is not necessary to be a combat arms officer to show leadership, equally, not everyone needs to be the Officer Commanding an ASIC to excel. Leadership is demonstrated at all levels and Officers should be recognized every step of the way. Bold leadership in this context does not mean that members have to physically lead the charge over

the trench lines. The author is not advocating intelligence personnel run Company live fire exercises or enter Cambrian Patrol competitions; however at higher levels, intelligence Officers should be an integral part of every operational planning group, be present at every board table with operations staff, and be aggressively represented in every possible scenario for the completion of the Commander's mission. Intelligence and Operations are inseparable and situational requirements should therefore present ample opportunities for members to become involved and excel in leadership roles.⁶ At a much lower level, fostering our junior leaders can be as basic as commanding physical activities, leading unit competitions, creating internal challenges designed to exercise personnel, or simply just showing community or volunteer leadership. In order for members to be comparable on some level to their peers in the Army, they must have the appropriate skills and opportunities to develop the fundamental elements of leadership.

Courses and Training

Institutional training is very difficult to change in any context, but is extremely important in order to re-develop a greater leadership focus within Army Intelligence. Despite most intelligence courses being solely focused on functional content, there are obvious opportunities to demonstrate leadership, to encourage personnel to seek non-traditional solutions, and to act boldly in the face of whatever problem presented. Understanding that the intelligence trade courses conducted at the Canadian Forces School of Military Intelligence (CFSMI) are in a joint environment, it therefore does not permit the focus of specific army leadership requirements to be addressed. However, an increased focus on leadership within the joint courses regularly offered, or more specifically in the elemental phases (army) of those courses, can significantly enrich training and students should be taught a baseline of leadership within the framework of the intelligence function. Regardless of the colour of your uniform within the school, leadership is a teachable and necessary skill to be employed in the various environments.

For example, students on the Basic Intelligence Officers Course (BIOC) will see that there are no Performance Objectives (POs) on leadership.⁷ As it is considered a course of learning the function of intelligence, it assumes after completing qualifications which do promote leadership such as the Common Army Phase (CAP), there are no further requirements to focus on this skill. However, as intelligence leaders, how are members encouraged to use the leadership skills learned on previous training in

an environment as described above – one focused on the management of intelligence vice providing leadership to it. Other trades do not stop considering leadership performance as critical criteria for success once reaching the rank of Lieutenant. Both the combat arms and other support trades such as Signals, consider this aspect of training an integral part of their courseware.²³ This is an important consideration as it clearly shows the delta that intelligence professionals face against other trades who do not have the benefit of prior service or leadership experiences. Intelligence Officers are no longer ex-combat arms personnel with an already hardened knowledge of army units, structures and tactics. They do not necessarily possess the same skill set that the majority of intelligence personnel did coming into the trade throughout the 1990s. Some of these students come directly from The Royal Military College (RMC) or civilian universities, with little leadership experience or knowledge of the real army. The Branch can therefore not expect them to perform to the same degree without giving them the proper instruction and opportunities to develop. As a result, the members reach their respective postings unprepared, and the function, their subordinates, and the members themselves suffer failures from a lack of fundamental leadership abilities.

The Senior Intelligence Operations Officer Course (SIOOC), designed for senior Captains and Majors in the Branch, is no different in this sense. It does in fact show “Lead Intelligence units” as one of its POs, however, in practice the course has little scope to allow for this to actually happen given the nature of the classroom environment and the parameters set by staff and standards.²⁴ Although it states leadership as a priority, the course is wholly focused on the administrative and managerial elements of intelligence, analysing structures and producing reports. This is just another example where the assumption of leadership is there without the performance being necessary. As members are promoted to Major, the rank assumes a command presence and competence that may simply not exist. This situation creates a significant problem if members do not inherently possess the leadership skills to support their position, or if they have not had the opportunities and experiences to develop them.

So what is the solution to this institutional leadership problem? Although it cannot rest solely with CFSMI to completely reorganize its structure to accommodate the shortfall for Army Intelligence leadership, subtle changes in core or elemental (army) content will be one factor to assist in ensuring that all members of the Branch realize the continued importance of leadership in

the intelligence function. Understanding the challenges inherent in re-designing training within a school environment, the Branch is already on the right path in the drafting of the Military Employment Structure Implementation Plan (MESIP), which examines a critical need to re-evaluate how the army approaches its employment of intelligence personnel and its courses.²⁵ This effort, and the results of the recent Job-Based Study (JBS) review, which re-orient intelligence officer training courses overall to complement the specific duties and responsibilities of each rank, and in each environment, identified some of the potential short-comings in leadership and capabilities overall.²⁶ There are other potential options to consider which might address the issue as well. By including leadership performance on initial intelligence training, formalizing the leadership requirement in senior intelligence courses already identified, and/or possibly creating and conducting an additional intelligence leaders course aimed at truly learning the key positions within the ASICs or other leadership roles. In 2 Canadian Mechanized Brigade Group (2 CMBG) Petawawa, the Officer Commanding 12 ASIC initiated an outstanding program of rotating its newest officers into key positions in order to ensure they understood and could function in both intelligence and leadership roles. These junior officers, under the mentorship of a senior Captain, conducted and led intelligence tasks, various soldier skills, and physical training events through exercises and scenarios as a way of formalizing their understanding of command in intelligence organizations.²⁷ Including training of this nature from the beginning of an officer’s career will have enormous benefits in developing their leadership and their abilities to continue to push Army Intelligence forward. It is not necessary to re-write the entirety of existing courseware to include these principles. General leadership concepts and pushing members into command roles in both the classroom and exercise components will contribute to the development of its students and allow them the opportunity to excel.

Conclusion

The army cultural norms surrounding intelligence leadership being forced to remain behind closed doors is a complex issue and the result of a combination of neglect of the function and the overall necessity for personnel survival in times pre-Afghanistan. Throughout the recent past however, Army Intelligence personnel have demonstrated outstanding leadership with an abundance of operational experience while filling

key enabler positions throughout the army. This success has allowed the critical concepts derived from the lessons of Afghanistan to come to fruition. Now, Army Intelligence must take control of the critical task of developing its future leaders. By breaking down the army's perceptions of Intelligence Officers as academics, establishing fundamental training and exercises in order to give members the opportunities to excel, and institutionalizing leadership within a school environment, intelligence leadership will continue to achieve the necessary milestones in the future threat environment. As the intelligence function

moves forward to achieve its next critical developments, shaping the army cultural bias, proving the value of our skilled leaders, and creating the nuances of our intelligence operational framework will be key to the institutionalisation of leadership. The future of Army Intelligence will rest in those who push forward and accept the roles that are being developed for them. This new intelligence environment must ensure that the art of leadership is practiced, that opportunities are given to excel, and that this most critical of all capabilities is never forgotten.

Endnotes:

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