

CHASE-ing Excellence in Collection Operations

by Lieutenant Colonel John Wildt,
Staff Sergeant John Quinn,
Staff Sergeant Caleb Mazaika,
and Staff Sergeant Zachary Verrastro

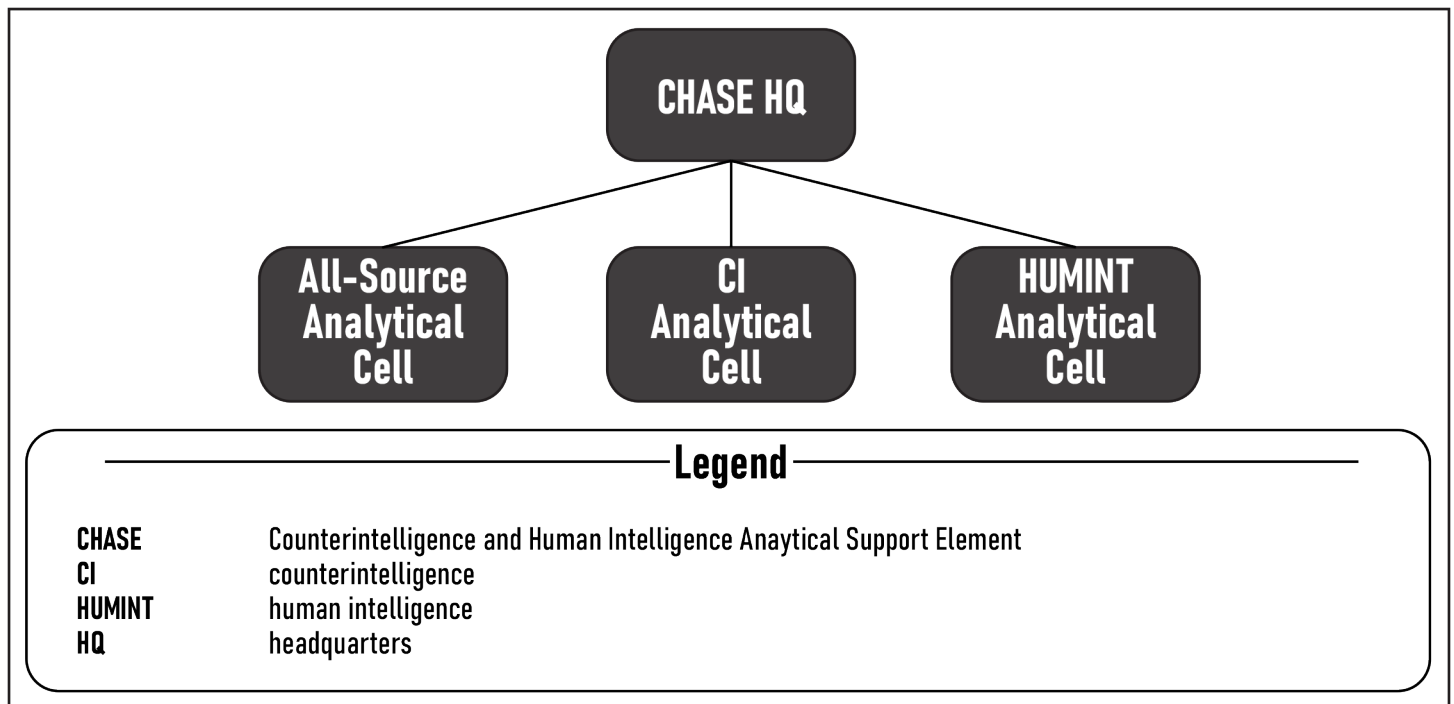


Introduction

In January 2023, the 207th Military Intelligence (MI) Brigade—Theater (MIB—T) task-organized the Counterintelligence (CI) and Human Intelligence (HUMINT) Analysis Cell from the 522nd MI Battalion (Operations) to the 307th MI Battalion (Forward Collection) to form the CI and HUMINT Analytical Support Element (CHASE). This element provided direct intelligence analysis support to the brigade intelligence collection teams. One year later, this experiment is a success. Individual collectors are better prepared for missions and can answer more priority intelligence requirements for commanders at all levels. The keys to its success are all-source intelligence analysis augmentation and talent management focused on getting the right people into the CHASE. Though the formation of the CHASE created some administrative friction, it also increased the quality of our collector's reporting. We encourage "CHASE-ing excellence" as a best practice for all MIB—Ts.

Staffing the CHASE

The 207th MIB—T's table of organization and equipment places the CI and HUMINT Analysis Cell in the theater Analysis and Control Element (ACE). The cell provides CI and HUMINT support to the U.S. Army Southern European Task Force, Africa. While the theater ACE appreciated the cell's expertise, the brigade leadership believed that the CI and HUMINT Analysis Cell could make a more significant impact by directly supporting collectors. As a small, often undermanned element of collectors not engaged in operations and assigned to the ACE, it was hard for the CI and HUMINT perspectives to gain traction. After moving to the 307th MI Battalion (Forward Collection), the CI and HUMINT single-source analytical cells were rechristened as the CHASE. The CHASE is divided into three sections: All-Source Analytic Cell, CI Analytic Cell, and HUMINT Analytic Cell. A noncommissioned officer (NCO) who provides technical expertise and mission guidance leads each section.



CHASE Organizational Structure (figure adapted from authors' original)

The CHASE resides in the Forward Collection Battalion, where it can streamline communication and coordination efforts between intelligence collectors and analysts. The team coalesced and developed an all-hands-on-deck mentality to support collection requirements. The Intelligence Analysts helped the CI Agents and HUMINT Collectors learn how to navigate intelligence community web portals; collectors helped analysts understand the nuances of their operational cycle. Gathering this group of motivated intelligence professionals together in the same space to work on the same mission resulted in outcomes more significant than the sum of the individual inputs. The team could not have achieved these results if the CHASE had not been integrated and collocated.

The 207th MIB–T's CI and HUMINT Analysis Cell consisted of CI Agents and HUMINT Collectors who provided CI and HUMINT perspectives to the theater ACE. When these elements transferred as the CHASE to the Forward Collection Battalion, the battalion also task-organized its limited organic Intelligence Analysts to the CHASE. While this removed personnel from the battalion staff, the increased analytic support and all-source intelligence perspective were crucial to the CHASE's ability to provide in-depth analysis. The personnel transfer from the Operations Battalion also included an additional Intelligence Analyst to increase the all-source intelligence support to the CHASE. The inclusion of Intelligence Analysts provides rounded all-source intelligence analysis capabilities to the CHASE that complements the tactical understanding of the CI Agents and HUMINT Collectors. The Intelligence Analysts provide operational coordination between the CHASE and the ACE, ensuring synchronization.

Managing Talent in the CHASE

Talent management and member selection are essential factors in the CHASE's success, but selecting the right Soldiers for the CHASE is only part of the process. Potential team members must also be at the right juncture in their assignments with the 207th MIB–T to maximize their skills and understanding. Junior Soldiers generally serve 6 to 12 months in the CHASE, while NCOs in leadership positions typically serve 12 to 18 months.

An Intelligence Analyst candidate for the CHASE should already be working in the 207th MIB–T ACE as a regional analyst or in the deployable intelligence support element. This placement gives analysts a basic understanding of all-source intelligence production, theater requirements, and operational and tactical intelligence. Following their time in the CHASE, these analysts may return to the ACE to refine and develop operational- and strategic-level intelligence production. Alternatively, they can move on a permanent change of station to follow-on assignments, bringing their new skillsets to further improve the intelligence community.

CI Agents and HUMINT Collectors coming to the CHASE have more flexibility because they generally serve their entire tour in the Forward Collection Battalion. We usually assign junior CI Agents and HUMINT Collectors to home station platforms before templating them for deployment. After a deployment, these CI Agents and HUMINT Collectors move to the CHASE to reset their dwell period, support currently deployed collectors, and develop their analytic skills to improve future collection efforts. After their CHASE assignment, they return to the collection companies to serve as team leaders, sharing their experiences with their teams and improving future collection efforts.

Overcoming CHASE Challenges


Though moving the CHASE to the Forward Collection Battalion has been successful, there are challenges to overcome. Our primary operational challenge is maintaining continuous ties with the ACE to ensure that the ACE receives CI and HUMINT support and that the CHASE's work is fully integrated into the analytical process. We mitigated this challenge by working closely with the CI and HUMINT staff element (G-2X) to ensure the CHASE fully supports the G-2's collection priorities. We also embedded G-2X personnel inside the CHASE and are working toward increased integration of CHASE leadership into the ACE and G-2X battle rhythms.

The main administrative challenge has been managing CHASE personnel assigned to the Operations Battalion while working in the Forward Collection Battalion. We have not yet found a systemic solution, but commanders at the company, detachment, and battalion levels constantly communicate to mitigate administrative issues.

Conclusion

The CHASE was originally realigned to increase support to intelligence collectors; as we pass the one-year mark, it has succeeded in that mission. The CHASE has successfully provided tailored and timely intelligence support to the current collection platforms both forward and at home station. After establishing steady-state support for current operations, the CHASE uses the successful practices developed over the last year to shift its priority focus toward future operations. Task-organizing Intelligence Analysts and carefully managing

the assignment of personnel to the CHASE ensured that we had the right Soldiers to test this concept. As we move into the second year with the CHASE in the Forward Collection Battalion, our priorities are maintaining strong ties with the theater ACE and preserving the CHASE's standard operating procedures.

The 307th MI Battalion's CHASE has been successful because of experienced, empowered, and motivated NCOs. Any forward collection battalion with strong NCOs who want to take ownership of their mission and increase the quantity and quality of the collection they support can replicate this framework. 

LTC John G. Wildt commands the 307th Military Intelligence (MI) Battalion in Vicenza, Italy. He deployed six times to Iraq and twice to Afghanistan, serving in positions with U.S. Army Forces Command (FORSCOM), U.S. Army Special Operations Command, Headquarters, Department of the Army, the interagency, and the Office of the Secretary of Defense. He holds a bachelor of economics from the University of Alabama and a master of policy management from Georgetown University.

SSG John A. Quinn serves as the 307th MI Battalion Counterintelligence (CI) and Human Intelligence (HUMINT) Analytical Support Element (CHASE) All-Source Analytic Cell noncommissioned officer in charge (NCOIC). He deployed to Iraq once, serving in support of a joint task force as a targeting analyst. He holds a bachelor of science in liberal arts from Excelsior University and is pursuing a master of arts in global security studies from Johns Hopkins University.

SSG Caleb M. Mazaika serves as the 307th MI Battalion CHASE HUMINT Analytic Cell NCOIC. He deployed once to Afghanistan and once to Africa, serving in positions with FORSCOM and the U.S. Army Intelligence and Security Command as a HUMINT collector, sergeant, and team leader. He holds an associate of applied science in computer graphic design from Carroll Community College in Westminster, MD.

SSG Zachary A Verrastro serves as the 307th MI Battalion CHASE CI Analytic Cell NCOIC. He previously served overseas in Korea, Kuwait, and Djibouti, holding NCOIC and Special Agent in Charge positions for CI sections. He holds an associate of general studies from the American Military University and is pursuing a bachelor of arts in psychology with a minor in family development from the same institution.