

# Multinational and Combined Intelligence at the Division Level



by Major Ed Pecoraro  
Introduction

According to the *2022 National Defense Strategy*, close collaboration with allies and partners is essential for advancing U.S. national security interests and bolstering collective capacity to confront traditional challenges while managing recent threats.<sup>1</sup> Military operations will rarely be unilateral, especially in response to opposition from the People's Republic of China, Russia, Iran, North Korea, and violent extremist organizations.<sup>2</sup> Establishing defense relationships with allies and partner nations is crucial for accomplishing national security objectives, preempting conflict, and mitigating risks to U.S. military forces engaged in conflict.<sup>3</sup>

The U.S. Army should expect that all future operations will be multinational.<sup>4</sup> Intelligence will drive those operations, and they, in turn, will enable intelligence.<sup>5</sup> Successful multinational and combined intelligence at the division level requires executing the intelligence process in collaboration with mission partners. The opportunities presented by this collaboration, including legitimacy, cultural awareness of the operational environment, unique capabilities, and an added perspective on complex problems, can far outweigh the challenges.<sup>6</sup>

The United States and the Republic of Korea (ROK) have conducted combined operations since the Korean War. Their lessons learned and methods of operating as a multinational force can provide understanding to others working in mature alliances, as well as to those planning and implementing new organizations. Unlike the partnership between the International Security and Assistance Force and the Afghan National Security Force during Operation Enduring Freedom, which focused solely on information sharing, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division/ROK-U.S. Combined Division (2ID/RUCD) conducts comprehensive multinational intelligence operations as a combined team.

The 2ID/RUCD provides timely, relevant, and tailored intelligence to supported commanders by recognizing a shared purpose, using a combined workspace, employing a mature mission partner environment (MPE), and capitalizing on the capabilities of both nations' higher and adjacent headquarters. The insights and lessons in this article can benefit other divisions that conduct intelligence operations with multinational partners.

## Definitions and Doctrine

Discussing combined intelligence in Korea requires understanding key definitions: multinational, combined, and alliance. Multinational operations are "conducted by forces of two or more nations, usually undertaken in the structure of a coalition or alliance."<sup>7</sup> Combined is an older term used by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the ROK that shares the multinational definition.<sup>8</sup> An alliance is "the relationship that results from a formal agreement between two or more nations for broad, long-term objectives that further the common interests of the members."<sup>9</sup> Within Korea, 2ID/RUCD is a combined headquarters operating under the *Mutual Defense Treaty Between the United States and the Republic of Korea; October 1, 1953* and a 2014 memorandum of agreement between the U.S. Forces Korea/U.S. Eighth Army and the ROK Army Chief of Staff.

The doctrine that guides U.S. military forces employed in multinational operations is Joint Publication 3-16, *Multinational Operations*. It describes the strategic context, nature, and tenets of multinational operations at the joint level.<sup>10</sup> This publication also describes various command and coordination relationships and outlines how commands can conduct multinational operations in all domains.<sup>11</sup>

Army doctrine for multinational operations is Field Manual 3-16, *The Army in Multinational Operations*, which describes the fundamentals of multinational operations as they relate specifically to the Army. It includes considerations for command and control, intelligence, planning, sustainment, medical support, special operations, civil-military operations, and other operational considerations.<sup>12</sup>

Field Manual 3-16 identifies several concerns relating to intelligence in multinational operations including intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance synchronization, information sharing, and intelligence architecture.<sup>13</sup> The manual includes a checklist of questions that staff should be capable of answering while participating in multinational operations, such as:

- ◆ Has the military decision-making process been employed?
- ◆ Have liaison officers been identified and established?
- ◆ Have processes for intelligence exchange been determined?
- ◆ Have rules of engagement relating to intelligence aspects of the operation, such as human intelligence, been established?<sup>14</sup>

## **Combined Intelligence Operations**

Since 2014, 2ID/RUCD has been a combined division with the infrastructure of a mature theater to accommodate its multinational operations. Its C-2 succeeds at combined intelligence operations for several reasons, including:

- ◆ The analysis and control element (ACE) fully integrates the ROK Soldiers, specifically in the areas of fusion, targeting, and collection management.
- ◆ The network architecture enables collaboration for operations and intelligence.
- ◆ The U.S. and ROK forces both leverage higher and adjacent headquarters.
- ◆ The liaison officers (LNOs) are a priority for all combined theater exercises.
- ◆ The ROK Soldiers integrate easily into the division.

The combined division conducts at least three division or higher exercises yearly, so there are frequent opportunities for staff, command post, and digital crew process training. The ROK Soldiers within the C-2 are critical to executing all stages of the intelligence process.

## **Analysis and Control Element**

U.S. and ROK officers in the 2ID/RUCD ACE share workspaces during armistice and exercises. They jointly conduct intelligence analysis and production, knowledge management, information management, collection management, and intelligence architecture support. They also have a workspace in the headquarters specifically for combined intelligence operations, which includes workstations for the fusion cell, geospatial intelligence cell, and collection management. Additionally, all ROK Soldiers assigned to 2ID/RUCD are fluent in English and hold the appropriate security clearances, reducing barriers to sustaining rapid intelligence analysis. The ROK Army's investment in interoperability demonstrates its organizational commitment to the success of 2ID/RUCD. As a combined team, the C-2 updates the armistice intelligence estimate, with the U.S. and ROK analysts alternating weekly to provide a situation development brief to the division commander.

To plan and direct intelligence, the C-2 sections use the shared workspace and, as a team, produce intelligence preparation of the operational environment products to support the combined staff's military decision-making process. The ACE's ROK Soldiers have a better understanding of the threat, so their input is crucial to the C-2's ability to achieve situational understanding; however, both the ROK and U.S. Soldiers participate in planning briefings for the commander and staff. This ensures shared understanding within the ACE and guarantees equity in producing intelligence products that inform the commander's decision points. Any differences in analytical judgments and assessments are considered during intelligence production and are presented as necessary; however, disagreements are typically resolved through fair-mindedness and intellectual empathy.

U.S. and ROK Soldiers in 2ID/RUCD can leverage their nations' intelligence enterprises as well as other members of the combined staff. For example, when 2ID/RUCD was preparing for a division warfighter exercise, the area of operations (AO) differed from the AO in which 2ID/RUCD usually operates. The C-2 ROK officers were able to coordinate with adjacent ROK units to acquire existing products relating to the new operational environment.

Another area where the combined ACE team integrates well is in support of the targeting process and battle damage assessment (BDA). The ROK members coordinate with higher and adjacent headquarters to develop the high-value and high-pay-off target lists, ensuring that 2ID/RUCD aligns its analysis for enemy units and systems. Additionally, the combined team

cooperates on the ACE's BDAs, especially when developing and executing the mechanism through which the ACE evaluates the target system assessment during division exercises. The combined team then provides an accurate correlation of forces and means analysis daily during the commander's update assessment that helps inform senior leaders' decision making.

## **Network Architecture**

Another critical component of multinational operations is the MPE, and one of its key components is the mission partner network (MPN). The MPE is "an operating framework enabling command and control and information sharing for planning and execution."<sup>15</sup> The MPN is "a network portion of an MPE and is a specific partnership or coalition-wide area network, planned and implemented using standards and protocols agreed to by participants."<sup>16</sup> Each mission command and intelligence system exists on an MPE that the C-2 uses daily and during theater exercises. 2ID/RUCD operates daily on a robust MPE and architecture that enables combined intelligence.

2ID/RUCD executes the intelligence process on a single combined network. This greatly enhances its ability to analyze, collaborate, produce, and disseminate products to U.S. and ROK subordinates and higher and adjacent units. While an MPE can be limiting when working with networks of higher classification, the C-2 uses cross-domain solutions and cross-domain chat programs to process and disseminate data. This allows single-source cells within the ACE to quickly collect and process releasable reporting. The 2ID/RUCD ACE refined its knowledge and information management procedures to operate effectively within an MPE. It established sources and delivery methods for information and data to analyze and update intelligence estimates, situation templates, event templates, common intelligence pictures, and BDA.

## **Organizational Coordination and Liaison Officers**

Another strength of the combined intelligence team is its ability to leverage higher and adjacent military headquarters and intelligence agencies from each nation. The ROK Soldiers communicate directly with other ROK units to inform intelligence estimates and update the common intelligence picture and the intelligence portion of the common operating picture. The team quickly establishes intelligence handover lines with other ROK Army headquarters, allowing 2ID/RUCD to better posture its collection and targeting capabilities. Our nations' respective intelligence communities have unique capabilities and focus; through our combined efforts, the C-2 can better answer intelligence requirements.

A critical aspect of 2ID/RUCD's ability to coordinate with adjacent and higher units is its employment of LNOs. 2ID/RUCD provides personnel during command post exercises, including intelligence warfighting function representatives. These LNOs integrate with their supported headquarters to facilitate information collection planning and intelligence report dissemination and to provide both headquarters with a shared understanding of intelligence assessments. The adjacent and higher headquarters with whom 2ID/RUCD coordinates do not all have the same access to information and intelligence that is critical for large-scale combat operations. Since MPEs are not guaranteed to exist within some partner tactical command posts, LNOs are postured to share releasable intelligence, such as intelligence reports from division collection assets and finalized intelligence products.

## **Recommendations**

Recognizing that multinational operations are a realistic probability for U.S. Army divisions in the future, Army divisions should prepare to conduct multinational intelligence during the planning and preparation phase. Integrating into similar militaries should be a focus during planning for multinational operations, and divisions should perform regular assessments during enduring operations. Challenges such as language, interoperability, culture, caveats, and authorities are obstacles to address early. Overcoming them will make multinational intelligence possible.

**Critical Thinking.** Critical thinking is an essential skill that must be developed in a multinational team. When conducting multinational intelligence, differences in doctrine, culture, equipment, and history can impact the ability of a combined intelligence organization to share knowledge and build consensus.<sup>17</sup> Logical fallacies, such as fallacies of relevance, can lead to poor assessments and cause friction within a multinational team.<sup>18</sup> Specifically, the genetic fallacy (claiming that a report or assessment is right or wrong because of its origin) and an appeal to tradition (asserting that an idea must be accurate because one has always believed it) can make working in a multinational team delivering assessments to a commander more difficult.<sup>19</sup> To address this, a multinational intelligence team must value the essential intellectual traits of fair-mindedness and intellectual empathy.<sup>20</sup>

Military intelligence professionals should strive to appreciate the strengths and weaknesses of reasoning from the point of view of others, especially those from a nation that may be closer to the threat or who have studied the threat longer than U.S. Soldiers.<sup>21</sup> Additionally, one must actively consider assessments from different perceptions and strive to reconstruct the reasoning behind those assessments.<sup>22</sup>

**Write for Release.** Another recommendation is that the Army must prioritize writing for release as it increasingly operates with unified action partners.<sup>23</sup> Army Techniques Publication 3-16.02, *Write for Release*, outlines the importance of this practice, as it improves shared understanding with a partnered force, makes sharing information faster, can be adaptable to sharing requirement changes, and facilitates MPE usage.<sup>24</sup> The 2ID/RUCD C-2 creates a releasable version of all intelligence products when possible. Writing for release is essential to creating shared understanding among the combined staff. Because it writes for release, 2ID/RUCD can better integrate ROK units into the division and rapidly enter a command or support relationship with a higher ROK headquarters.

Although both Army and joint doctrine emphasize the importance of writing for release,<sup>25</sup> it is not a widespread practice. However, an intelligence organization *must* write for release. Finalized intelligence reports or information collection reporting often cannot be shared within 2ID/RUCD because external organizations do not write for release when even a single sentence tear-lined report can enable a combined headquarters to create shared understanding.<sup>26</sup>

One way to improve writing for release is reviewing and revising how the U.S. intelligence community classifies open-source reporting. Intelligence agencies, combatant commands, and Army Service component commands regularly publish open-source intelligence (OSINT) reports with restrictive distribution caveats. For example, unclassified open-source reports on relevant threats to 2ID/RUCD that can inform the commander's decision-making process often have restricted distribution caveats that inhibit production and dissemination. Every request for release for an OSINT product has been approved, but it takes time, and often there are no changes to the original report. OSINT regularly answers 2ID/RUCD's intelligence requirements, but restrictive distribution caveats impact collaboration and the ability to have shared understanding.<sup>27</sup>

**Prioritize Use of the Mission Partner Environment/Network.** During multinational operations, as much of the intelligence process as possible should exist on an MPN. Establishing an MPN can be costly, time-consuming, and difficult due to compatibility and security issues.<sup>28</sup> Additionally, the functionality of MPNs can be limited solely to information dissemination rather than allowing collaboration. Nevertheless, the Army should prioritize intelligence systems capability and fielding on MPNs. Intelligence systems are often established first on U.S.-only networks with little initial consideration for MPNs. These systems, however, have limited use in 2ID/RUCD's combined environment. The Army must consider MPEs when testing and fielding new digital systems—2ID/RUCD provides an excellent testing environment for MPE implementation of new intelligence systems. The division's C-2 is postured to provide the best bottom-up refinement as it operates daily on an MPN and conducts up to three division- or theater-level exercises yearly.

## Conclusion

The integration of multinational and combined intelligence at the division level, as demonstrated by 2ID/RUCD, is crucial for the future of Army operations. Successfully executing the intelligence process with mission partners ensures prompt, relevant, and tailored intelligence support to commanders, which is essential for shared understanding and operational success in a multinational context. The experiences and methodologies of 2ID/RUCD highlight the importance of shared workspaces, mature MPEs, and leveraging higher and adjacent headquarters to enhance intelligence capabilities. Divisions can foster a collaborative and effective multinational intelligence team by proactively addressing challenges such as language barriers, interoperability, and cultural differences. Additionally, prioritizing writing for release and integrating it into MPNs are pivotal for facilitating collaboration. As the Army prepares for the complexities of future operations, these insights and recommendations may aid divisions in collaborating with multinational partners to achieve mission success.

## Endnotes

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3. Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Publication (JP) 3-16, *Multinational Operations* (Washington, DC: U.S. GPO, 01 March 2019), I-5. Change 1 was issued 17 June 2024.

4. Department of the Army, Field Manual (FM) 3-0, *Operations* (Washington, DC: U.S. GPO, 01 October 2022), 2-13.

5. Department of the Army, FM 2-0, *Intelligence* (Washington, DC: U.S. GPO, 01 October 2022), xi.

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8. Department of the Army, FM 3-16, *The Army in Multinational Operations* (Washington, DC: U.S. GPO, 15 July 2024), vii.

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21. Ibid.
22. Ibid., B-8.
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24. Ibid., 1-2.
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27. Ibid.
28. Todd C. Lopez, "Mission Partner Environment Cuts Decision Making, Kill Chain," News, Department of Defense, November 29, 2021, <https://www.defense.gov/News/News-Stories/Article/Article/2854238/mission-partner-environment-cuts-decision-making-kill-chain/>.

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