A Thought Regarding"Company Level Intelligence Cells"of USMC

Lu, Wen-Hao

Abstract:
After terrorists' attacks on the September 11, 2001, the United States of America declared war on global terrorism. However, the failure of long-term operations in the Middle East demonstrates that the advanced military technologies would not guarantee to bring the victory. The fighting experiences against insurgents and guerrillas let Marines recognize that the large-scale war have been replaced by the small-scale regional conflict. Under this circumstance, conventional wisdom tells us that the battalion is the smallest tactical formation capable of sustained independent operations; current operations tell us it is the company. In the Middle East, the company has given a huge distributed battlefield that shows the province of the battalion commander and his staffs have devolved to company commander. Nevertheless, the company will not tolerate the time lost because of the traditional procedure intelligence delivering. In order to meet the critical need of the company level intelligence and satisfy the company commanders' urgent intelligence requests, USMC developed a concept "Company Level Intelligence Cells; CLIC" which focuses on supporting the company-level intelligence. The purpose of this paper is by studying the change of US military adapting to modern operations to bring a new thought to our military and anticipate that this new concept is able to guide a new direction to the role of our low-level intelligence capability.
Keywords:Intelligence, "Company Level Intelligence Cells; CLIC," the smallest tactical formation, "Enhanced Company Operations; ECO," the small-scale regional conflicts.

Introduction

The two documents "Long War" and "Marine Corps Vision and Strategy 2025" were published in 2008 in the United States Marine Corps (USMC) and detail the future battle needs of the USMC. The Marine Corps will fulfill its unique role and extends its legacy as the world's premier expeditionary fighting force in the future1. Marine Corps will fight informally and unconventionally in the distributed and extensive battlefield. The low level commanders will take much heavier responsibilities by facing insurgents and militants in the separate area of operations. The statement from Vince Goulding, director of the experimental division at the Marine Corps Warfighting Laboratory at Quantico, VA, indicates this circumstance: "In 1862, we put 100,000 Americans on Antietam… In Iwo Jima, we put 65,000 Marines… Today on a battlefield three miles by five miles, that would be a rifle company doing what three divisions did in 1945. We're asking captains and lieutenants to do today what we asked lieutenant colonels and colonels to do 20 years ago."2 Therefore, In order to adapt the change of battlefields and the shift of responsibilities, USMC developed a company-based concept "Enhanced Company operations" (ECO). This thought overturned the conventional wisdom that the battalion is the smallest tactical formation. James T. Conway, the Commandant of the U.S. Marine Corps, describes this in the paper "A Concept for Enhanced Company Operations." He said, "Conventional wisdom tells us that the battalion is the smallest tactical formation capable of sustained independent operation; current operations tell us it is the company."3 However, in order to strengthen company commanders' competences to qualify their significant responsibilities, Marine Corps has done a lot of efforts for improving several warfighting capabilities and requirements such as training, command and control, organization, and equipment, etc. The battle experiences from Iraq and Afghanistan show the decisive factor against terrorists and insurgents is how to get the necessary intelligence that company commander requests. Traditionally, Intelligence will pass down by superior formations, however, in today's irregular warfare, usually struggling on shortage of time, company-level commanders will not have time to wait for intelligence from their higher units.4 Moreover, the best intelligence resources come from Marines who actually conduct patrol operations, the concept "Company Level Intelligence Cells," (CLIC) which can fully support company-based intelligence capabilities, has been developed. The new initiative for pushing intelligence analysis know-how down to the lower echelons, however, is about to change all that. Rifle companies will now be able to access, analyze and disseminate information that typically had relied on battalion or regimental command to produce. This study

concentrates on the concept for the development of "Company Level Intelligence Cells" and this research is bases on the public information. The purpose of this paper anticipates our military service members who will recognize the change of modern war and, especially, refocuses on our intelligence capabilities of low-level formations which have been put off the spotlight for a long time.

The origin of the concept of "Company Level Intelligence Cells"

In order to understand the process of the development of "Company Level Intelligence Cells", the first effort we should discuss how USMC to face the challenge of the change of the current battlefield. The event of "911 the terrorists' attack" in 2001 forced the U.S. to declare war on global terror. In addition to launch an immediate strong force invasion to topple Taliban regime, which ruled the states with extreme religious principles in Afghanistan, US and its allies launched the second "Persian Gulf War" against Iraq. Analyzing these two wars, the coalition force earned decisive victories by using the advanced military technologies and the overwhelming number of forces. Nevertheless, when the adverse formal military force turned into the underground organization, the coalition force faced the enemy with no uniforms. Instead of the regular force, the coalition force fought against its foe that hid themselves in a group of civilian as insurgents and militants. This war will be focused on countering insurgency and guerrilla warfare and an informal war. Area of operation for every unit expands several times because of this circumstance. The victory can no more count on the advantage of military technology. The outcome will decide on the combat capabilities of low-level formations.

Distributed Operations describes an operating approach that will create an advantage over an adversary through the deliberate use of separation and coordinated, interdependent, tactical actions enabled by increased access to functional support, as well as by enhanced combat capabilities at the small-unit level. The essence of this concept lies in the capacity for coordinated action by dispersed units, throughout the breadth and depth of the battlespace, ordered and connected within an operational design focused on a common aim.5 This combat concept emphasizes the capabilities of squad, platoon, and even individual Marines. By strengthening training and renewed equipment, Marine Corps will increase the independent combat capabilities on low-level formations. In doing so, it can be more capable to deal with the struggle of operating in an enlarged responsible of area and the possibly unexpected ambushes by insurgents and rebels. Furthermore, the combat capabilities of companies and battalions will be directly reinforced.

To enhance training and equipment, however, will dramatically increase squad and platoon level combat efficiency, in the same time, it also means that the unit will separate from its mother unit and conduct operations by itself. Under this condition, the low-level unit would suffer from higher risk and heavier casualty. Therefore, based on the result of experiments, the Marine Corps Warfighting Laboratory made its decision that the "Distributed Operations" was urgent to be revised. Colonel Vincent Goulding, USMC (Ret), director of MCWL's Experimental Division, conceded an important conclusion to the original DO concept: "A final consideration was the less obvious one that the company is probably the smallest tactical formation capable of conducting independent operations—and frequently does on today's battlefield."6

"The concept of distributed operations in the Marine Corps is dead," Brig. Gen. Andrew O'Donnell, the director of capabilities development at Marine Corps Combat Development Command, spoke at Marine Corps Systems Command's annual brief to industry sponsored by the National Defense Industrial Association.7 He also said that Commandant Gen. James Conway was "not comfortable" with "six-man teams going out on their own," and thereby advocated the change of focus away from distributed operations to enhanced company operations.8 In 2007, the "Marine Corps Warfighting Laboratory" developed a revised concept "Enhanced Company Operations," (ECO) which was based on the foundation of "DO" and promoted to be company-level operations. ECO describes an approach to the operational art that maximizes the tactical flexibility offered by true decentralized mission accomplishment, consistent with commander's intent and facilitated by improved command and control, intelligence, logistics, and fires capabilities. This new concept was designed on purpose of dealing the different combat situation and environment in the Middle East. In the larger battlefield, collective tasks and battlefield functions long the province of battalion commanders and their staffs

have devolved to the company commander.

Gen. Conway describes the importance of implementing ECO in the article of "A Concept for Enhanced Company Operations." He said, "intelligence is at the core of maneuver warfare and the first warfighting function that must be addressed in ECO capability development….The rifle company requires an organic capability to accomplish four broad intelligence-related requirements: increased situational awareness; collection and production of timely and accurate intelligence; collection management; and information management. Mission accomplishment in these areas will require a fresh look at how the company headquarters is manned, trained and equipped."9

In fact, a thought of increasing of the capability of the low-level unit have been placed importance since the beginning of the invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan when the model of combat operations transformed from the conventional style to the operations against insurgency and guerilla. "In counterinsurgency, killing the enemy is easy. Finding him is often nearly impossible, Intelligence and operations are complementary."10 In this long war, Marines are more realizing the vital role of the "Human Terrain," which can be a decisive factor in the counterinsurgency. For understanding the "Human Terrain" of the area of operations, the capability of gathering intelligence for the small formation who practically conducts patrol mission will surpass the capabilities of the regimental and battalion intelligence cells. Such as Goulding said, "what kills you on the battlefield is not what is 20 miles away coming at you in trucks and tanks, it is what's over the next hill that you don't know about."11 Under condition of development of the "enhanced company operations," Marines are facing the challenge of the increasing intelligence requests. The CLIC is one way that the rifle company improves the intelligence support for the company commander to manage the complex environment and increasing responsibility on the modern battlefield.12

Hence, the CLIC can be considered as product of the concept of the ECO. If the company commander has taken over the job that used to put on the battalion commander and staff, in the intelligence perspective, the company commander would not satisfy the single access that only comes from his superiors. The time limit to get intelligence data will be critical and crucial. The CLIC has functions of collections and analysis the valuable intelligence and provides a clearer picture to company commander who has further recognitions of his area of operations. Moreover, the CLIC not only enhances company's intelligence capability, but reinforces the abilities of intelligence on every level of formations by linking to the intelligence network with energetic intelligence collection and useful intelligence data.

In fact, the concept of the CLIC is not only developing in the USMC. The Company Command Team of the United States Army surveyed 84 combat-experienced company commanders in Iraq from April through June 2007, as well as 25 company commanders from previous Operation Iraqi Freedom rotations, a total of 109 combat-tested commanders. The company commanders rated 10 challenges that would be most valuable to gain a deeper understanding of the term of their duty tours (see figure 1). There were two challenges, which are above 50% citing. One was "having a soldier killed or seriously wounded, and the other one was "developing your own company level intelligence cell or process." The fact shows that the United States Army has put a significant effort to develop the CLIC. This fact also provides the evidence that the company commanders had very high intelligence requests during their duty tours in Iraq. The following statement is words from one of the company commanders. He said, "Our battalion has the best S-2 I have ever worked with, yet higher intelligence still fails us daily. It is the nature of the war. In order to stay in touch with what is going on I have always devoted hours daily to figuring out the terrain (people) in my sector. It is a challenge to develop my subordinates and my command post to appreciate the importance of company level intelligence processes."13

The Current Implementation of the CLIC

Just a few years ago the CLIC was still an emerging concept designed to mitigate the tactical intelligence gaps that existed in Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) II. During the battalion's 2004 deployment, the CLIC concept played a significant role in analyzing census data in Babil Province in Iraq. Now widely adopted by deploying infantry battalions across the Marine Corps, the CLIC concept has matured considerably. Marine Corps to the CLIC concept has fueled efforts to

provide more structure and establish more formal tactics, techniques, and procedures for successful CLIC training and employment.14 In fact, USMC had made several significant approaches for a concept of the CLIC. Since 2007, the Marine Corps' Warfighting Laboratory and Marine Forces Command have invested in CLIC-specific gear sets and training. These efforts have enabled over 56 CLICs and 2,400 Marines to the trained as part of the Pre-deployment Training Program (PTP) cycle. New gear sets are being evaluated by deploying battalions to further mature proper gear sets for CLICs' human terrain mapping efforts. Since January 2008 Marine Corps intelligence schools has taken ownership of curriculum development and training for the CLIC concept.15 For CLICs' training, Training and Education Command (TECom) is revising the Infantry Training and Readiness Manual that reflects new tasks for infantry companies to organize and man a CLIC.

The Marine Corps' Warfighting Laboratory keeps putting its efforts on evaluating the CLIC's appropriated new table of organization (T/0) and gear. The following study will be based on the outcome of the first experimental unit, California-based 3rd Battalion, 4th Marines, which came back from Iraq, for the concept of CLIC.

The CLIC team and the commander

The experiences of most infantry battalions reveal one well-know truism: the effort the company commander places on company-level intelligence is correlated to the amount of actionable intelligence the company produces. With little attention placed on intelligence collection, the company will have little effort on the battlespace. Ultimately, the CLIC the commander builds is a direct reflection of the value he places on understanding and influencing his battlespace. If a battalion is operating in a distributed environment the companies will never be satisfied with the level of battalion level intelligence support. Only the company commander and his handpicked CLIC will focus their full efforts within the area of operations that is most critical to the company's success. One of the most influential decisions a company commander makes in collection intelligence if the selection of the CLIC Marines. Commanders must be willing to cut into muscle to build the CLIC. A stronger and more competent CLIC will result in a greater than for the company than the cumulative loss felt the squads. The counterinsurgent theorist, Cavid kilcullen, articulated this best, "put the smartest solders in the CLIC. You will have one less rifle squad: but the CLIC will pay for itself in lives and effort saved."16 After commanders build theirs correct thoughts for CLIC, "Who are the right Marines?" will be the new importance question. From the battalion's experience, successful CLICs possess attributes that include analytical ability, prior operational deployment, language training, and computer skills. Curiosity, "street smarts," and effective written and oral communication are also keys to success. Finding Marines who possess all of these traits is extremely difficult, so selecting the CLIC Marines with complementary skills is necessary. Future, the battalion's experience validated that noncommissioned officers from within the company are effective CLIC chiefs.

However, because of the traditional notion that the infantry is the best Military Occupation Specialty (MOS) for Marines, this will affect the intentions to join the CLIC team for Marines. Picking infantry Marines participate CLIC's training and even to become the members of the CLIC team will be difficult for some Marines who are afraid to lose their original MOS. Therefore, Marine Corps is working on to revise this notion. Currently, there is no formal recognition at Marine Corps Headquarters that a leatherneck has the training under his belt. Those going through the training are issued a certificate, a copy of which is kept on file at the Marine's division headquarters. Marine Corps is considering giving intelligence infantrymen the secondary MOS. Marines chosen for the CLIC team, however, could also expect a little more love from command in the short term. The benefit for the individual Marine is that it makes him a smarter war fighter. The skill set alone makes him, without exaggeration, twice as valuable as Marines without the training. Empowering grunts with the CLIC capability could also help improve survivability.

CLIC's table of organization and equipment

The 3rd battalion sent 28 infantrymen from its belonging companies to participate CLIC's training. Four of the 28 intelligence infantrymen will move up to the battalion's intelligence shop as manpower replacements for the

intelligence analysts headed to each company. The remaining 24 CLIC Marines will return to their regular companies, but in support roles, commanded not by the company officer, but the battalion's intelligence officer.17 (See figure 2: The table of organization (T/O) of the CLIC & figure 3: The role and responsibilities of the CLIC) According to the experience in Iraq, the chief of the CLIC is not necessary to be an intelligence specialist. Using an intelligence specialist, like a junior Marine, in a leadership position within the CLIC is not recommended because the Marine will not have the experience or the credibility necessary in company operations. He may be an unknown to the commander and his teammates causing further friction.18

In addition to focus on operation request in the Middle East, we can easy to see that Marine Corps value the concept of the CLIC. As part of the Marine Corps' growth to 202,000, the battalion S-2 section is slated to eight. This growth will enable the intelligence officer to provide one intelligence specialists to each company while still retaining battalion-level analyst recourses. This new table of organization strengthens company-level system, in the same time, it also maintain the intelligence functions of S-2 section.19 Further speaking, the development of the CLIC multiplies the intelligence capabilities of battalion-level intelligence.

In a separate but concurrent initiative, 3/4 also will get 48 Wasp micro-unmanned aerial vehicles, outfitted with night vision. The wasp is a backpacksized UAV, (See photo 1) referred to as "flying binoculars." This UAV also is equipped with night vision capability. By using this advanced gear, the company and battalion intelligence cells will significantly increase the surveillance and intelligence capabilities. Based on kind of check how it works, the Marine Corps Systems Command is getting ready to buy a lot of them and want to make sure them being trained and distributed properly. The new company intelligence roles will also translate into new electronic gear for the battalion, including nine laptops loaded with intelligence programs. They will also receive several printers, external hard drives, thumb drives, scanners and digital cameras.20

Moreover, regarding to intelligence collection, the systems and conectivity are boat anchors without Marines exercising excellent inflrmation management. MarineLink is the best single technology acquistion for the CLIC and the battalion S-2 section. MarineLink provides a common portal to enter and acess census data, pattern analyisi, and other components of mapping the human terrain. The information can be shared across Marine boundaries and passed on to imcoming units. While MarineLink is clearly a valuable tool for access to data and analytical tools, it does not provide a theater-wide database standard from which to collect population and human data across battlespaces. Most importantly it does not share data with the U.S. Army's comparable system, thus reducing situatiuonal awareness with adjacent U.S. Army's units.21

The CLIC's functions

CLIC will be able to effectively tackle the problem of shortage of the battalion intelligence. As operations in Iraq and Afghanistan demonstrate, battalions will operate over hundreds of square miles on a distributed battlefield. Each company assigned battlespace within the battalion's area of operations will be confronted with unique human terrain that may or may not interrelate with adjacent villages and tribal areas. Assuming the battalion the battalion assigns battlespace to all four of its maneuver companies, an intelligence section without CLICs would be faced with collection and analyzing information for four distinct and disparate areas. This is a tall order even for a regimental S-2 section with more personnel, let alone that of a battalion. Consequently, the battalion commander must identify a main effort to ensure that the battalion intelligence section is focusing its limited resources on those areas that require the most attention to achieve the battalion commander's objectives. For the companies that are not the main effort, the necessity for a top quality CLIC will become critical. With the bulk of the battalion intelligence resources focused elsewhere, CLICs will need to provide their company commander with the information management of collection efforts and limited analysis to maintain an understanding of the battlespace.22

The purpose of the CLIC is to support the company commander with basic intelligence capability, such as estimates of the situation, indications and warning, and target development. It is not designed to let the S-2 section "off

the hook" of its responsibilities or to create a self-sufficient company S-2 section. The CLIC, comprised of young infantrymen, should not solely shoulder the burden of making intelligence preparation of battlespace; scheduling intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance time with higher headquarters; or coordination its intelligence support. Conversely, the S-2 section should not simply make map products and process security clearances; instead, the S-2 officer should view the CLIC as a force multiplier that allows the S-2 section to focus on the battalion's main effort. The company commander should also see the CLIC as a force multiplier, giving him a concentrated ability to conduct patrol debriefs, manage information, and conduct basic analysis to map the human terrain of his battlespace.23

By building the CLIC can really make the battalion's intelligence section concentrate on intelligence analyses and uses. When the CLIC is responsible for collecting intelligence and initial intelligence analysis for its own responsible operation, the battalion intelligence section will be benefited while the CLIC delivering useful intelligence data to the battalion. Based on formal assessments of Marine Corps Warfighting Laboratory, clearly indicated that the battalion's performance was enhanced by the CLIC organization, training, and equipment.24 The CLICs improved the integration of intelligence processes –intelligence preparation of the battlefield (IPB), targeting, and intelligence synchronization—into company level operations. Overall, this capability enhanced the company commander and small unit leader's situational understanding and enabled informed decision making in a complex and fluid environment. This ultimately created superior tempo against their enemy.25

Besides collecting and analyzing information, the CLIC gives the brief to the company, and then squad leaders in the company can start putting requests for information in. Squad leaders, team leaders, are starting to see what the CLIC's can produce for them. And then, in turn, 'here are areas where I'd like more information' and now it becomes cyclical. It becomes a process, a battle drill, where the guys who are down on the ground and are going to be conducting the patrolling can now go back and pull information from these CLICs.26 For example, a company commander wanted more information about roadside bombs and small-arms attacks in his area, the CLIC would compile and analyze recent recorded events, then present the findings to the company.

A thought for our intelligence capabilities (Conclusion)

Even though our operational patterns and geographical environments of homeland defense, comparing to the U.S.in the Middle East, has the distinctly difference and , moreover, the table of organizations and military equipment show the dissimilarity between two nations, the study of the progress of the CLIC brings us a new thought that the U.S. Marine Corps is timely adjusting its way to fight against the current treats in order to adapt to the need of the battlefield and win the war on global terror. The era of the U.S. Marine Corps realizing the significant and important role for the operational functions of the company level operations according its own fighting experience, we should set this change as an example to rethink the future direction of our military. Nobody will argue that the intelligence is the first Warfighting function for any kind of operations. As well as the long-term study of the PLA and the familiarity of the geographical environments of homeland defense create a significant advantage. However, we should think whether this advantage indirectly impact low-level formations' intelligence capabilities.

The purpose to research the development of the CLIC of USMC does not expect our military to build the same company-level intelligence capabilities, but to reconsider the real meaning of the CLIC by introducing a new operational concept. The future war may not possibly conduct as the USMC's large-scale amphibious operation at Iwo Jima in the 1943 Pacific war. The small-scale regional skirmishes will dominate the future operations. Since the role of the smallest tactical unit has been transferred to the company and the company commander will take the burdens that used to be on the battalion commander and his staff, we can anticipate that the company's role to operate independently has been dramatically increasing. In accordance with the new role of the company, we should profoundly reevaluate our low-level intelligence capabilities that have been ignored for a long time and find the correct direction in order to engage the future challenges.

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