



Defense Primer: Intelligence Support to Military Operations

Much of the *Intelligence Community* (IC), nine of 18 total elements, resides within the Department of Defense (DOD). This includes the National Security Agency (NSA), Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA), National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency (NGA), and the intelligence components of the Navy, Army, Marines, and Air Force. Non-DOD IC elements, however, also provide support to the military. Integrated IC support of the military includes strategic, operational, and tactical intelligence activities, products and services that are necessary for military strategy, planning, and operations.

The **Director of National Intelligence (DNI)** serves as community manager for the IC and the principal intelligence advisor to the President. The core mission of the DNI is “to lead the IC in intelligence integration” to ensure the IC’s 18 elements operate as one team. The Under Secretary of Defense (Intelligence and Security) (USD(I&S)) manages the DOD intelligence elements. His position is *dual-hatted*. When acting as the USD(I&S), the incumbent reports directly to the Secretary of Defense and serves as the Secretary’s principal staff assistant on intelligence, counterintelligence, security, and other intelligence-related matters. When acting as Director of Defense Intelligence (DDI), the incumbent reports directly to the DNI and serves as principal advisor on defense intelligence matters. Together, the DNI and USD(I&S) coordinate a number of interagency activities designed to facilitate the integration of national and tactical-level intelligence.

Types of Military Operations

The IC supports the entire spectrum of DOD missions, from peacetime operations to war. Joint Publication 2-0, *Joint Intelligence*, loosely groups DOD missions under three headings:

- **Military Engagement, Security Cooperation, and Deterrence.** Examples include military exchanges, arms control verification, sanctions enforcement, protection of shipping lanes, shows of force, and support to insurgency and counterinsurgency operations.
- **Crisis Response and Limited Contingency Operations.** Examples include noncombatant evacuation operations, stability or peacekeeping operations, humanitarian assistance, personnel or equipment recovery operations, and chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear response actions.
- **Major Military Operations and Campaigns.** These types of operations include U.S. operations in Iraq where military forces generally have a lengthy, multidimensional presence. The examples listed above (associated with more limited operations—such as humanitarian assistance) may also occur within this category as part of a larger military operation.

Intelligence Support

Table 1 summarizes the responsibilities of joint intelligence to assist commanders in deciding which forces to deploy, when, how, and where to deploy the, and how to employ them in a manner that accomplishes a specific mission. They are based upon development of an understanding of the commander’s priorities.

Table 1. Joint Intelligence Responsibilities in Military Operations

- Inform the commander
- Describe the operational environment
- Identify, define, and nominate objectives
- Support planning and execution of operations
- Counter adversary deception and surprise
- Support friendly deception efforts
- Assess the effectiveness of operations

Source: Joint Publication 2-0, *Joint Intelligence*, Figure 1-2, p. 1-3.

Intelligence to “**inform the commander**” may include providing information about actual and potential threats, terrain, climate and weather, infrastructure, cultural characteristics, medical conditions, population, and leadership.

Intelligence that “**describes the operational environment**” may help in identifying and characterizing variables such as the political context; governance; economy; social stability; critical infrastructure; communications; physical setting; and military capability, intentions, and tactics.

Intelligence to “**identify, define, and nominate objectives**” includes creating an intelligence collection plan based on the commander’s priorities, and creating possible battlefield targets focused on achieving the commander’s objectives.

Intelligence to “**support planning and execution of operations**” may include enhancing information sharing across departments and agencies of the government, and with international partners; allocating intelligence platforms to provide optimized support, establishing mutual support arrangements with host country nationals; and providing indications and warning of attack.

Intelligence to “**counter adversary deception and surprise**” may include providing information on an adversary’s capabilities and vulnerabilities; estimates of when, where, and how military forces could exploit their information superiority; and the threat an adversary poses to friendly information and information systems.

Intelligence to “**assess the effectiveness of operations**” may include conducting surveys of the extent of damage to targets or providing intelligence support to planning for follow-on strikes, deployments of relief forces, or related activities.

Defense Intelligence Organizations

Table 2 illustrates the variety of ways in which intelligence entities are organized at the service-, joint-, and national-levels to support military operations.

Table 2. Selected Defense Intelligence Organizations

Service Intelligence Components
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • U.S. Air Force Intelligence, Surveillance, & Reconnaissance (AF/A2) • U.S. Army Intelligence (G-2) • U.S. Coast Guard Intelligence (CG-2) • U.S. Marine Corps Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance Enterprise (MCISR-E) • U.S. Naval Intelligence (N2) • U.S. Space Force Intelligence (S-2)
Joint Intelligence Elements within DOD
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Joint Operations and Intelligence Center (NJOIC) • Joint Staff Intelligence Directorate (JCS J-2) • Combatant Command Intelligence Directorates (CCMD J-2) • Joint Force Command Intelligence Directorates (JFC J-2) • Joint Intelligence Operations Center (JIOC) • Joint Intelligence Support Element (JISE)
Combat Support Agencies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) • National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency (NGA) • National Reconnaissance Office (NRO) • National Security Agency (NSA)

Source: CRS, adapted from 50 U.S.C. §3003(4), Joint Publication 2-01, *Joint and National Intelligence Support to Military Operations*, pp. xi-xv and II.

Service Intelligence Components

Service intelligence components are designed to provide the service-specific intelligence systems, personnel, training, and analytical expertise to optimize military strategy, planning, and operations. This includes responsibility for providing intelligence assessments of the capabilities and intentions of potential adversaries to support long-term defense planning and systems acquisition. Service intelligence elements are also responsible for assigning service intelligence personnel to joint intelligence and combatant command entities and combat support agencies trained to provide strategic, operational, and tactical-level intelligence support.

Joint Intelligence Elements

The National Joint Operations and Intelligence Center (NJOIC) attached to the Joint Staff in the Pentagon

maintains a continuous, all-source, multidiscipline intelligence alert center to provide defense situational awareness, early warning, and crisis management intelligence support. In addition, DOD joint intelligence centers (JICs) attached to each combatant command provide a common, coordinated picture of conditions in each theater of operations (such as the U.S. Central Command area of responsibility, ranging from northeast Africa to the Middle East to Central and South Asia) by fusing national and theater intelligence information from across the IC into all-source assessments and estimates tailored to the needs of the commander.

Combat Support Agencies (CSAs)

Combat Support Agencies with an intelligence function such as DIA and NGA provide intelligence products and services to support military planning and operations. Products may include current intelligence briefings; analysis of the geopolitical environment; foreign military capability assessments; geospatial products such as imagery or bomb-damage assessments; targeting recommendations and coordinates intelligence information reports; and signals intelligence.

(Note: This In Focus was originally written by former CRS Analyst Anne Daugherty Miles.)

Relevant Statutes

Title 10, U.S. Code, Chapter 21—DOD Intelligence Matters
 Title 50, U.S. Code, Chapter 44—National Security

CRS Products

CRS In Focus IF10525, *Defense Primer: National and Defense Intelligence*, by Michael E. DeVine

CRS In Focus IF10523, *Defense Primer: Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence and Security*, by Michael E. DeVine

CRS In Focus IF10470, *The Director of National Intelligence (DNI)*, by Michael E. DeVine

CRS In Focus IF10524, *Defense Primer: Budgeting for National and Defense Intelligence*, by Michael E. DeVine

CRS Report R45175, *Covert Action and Clandestine Activities of the Intelligence Community: Selected Definitions in Brief*, by Michael E. DeVine

Other Resources

DOD, Joint Publication 2-0, *Joint Intelligence*, October 22, 2013.

DOD, Joint Publication 2-01, *Joint and National Intelligence Support to Military Operations*, July 5, 2017.

Michael E. DeVine, Analyst in Intelligence and National Security

IF10574

Disclaimer

This document was prepared by the Congressional Research Service (CRS). CRS serves as nonpartisan shared staff to congressional committees and Members of Congress. It operates solely at the behest of and under the direction of Congress. Information in a CRS Report should not be relied upon for purposes other than public understanding of information that has been provided by CRS to Members of Congress in connection with CRS's institutional role. CRS Reports, as a work of the United States Government, are not subject to copyright protection in the United States. Any CRS Report may be reproduced and distributed in its entirety without permission from CRS. However, as a CRS Report may include copyrighted images or material from a third party, you may need to obtain the permission of the copyright holder if you wish to copy or otherwise use copyrighted material.