



# ISSUE BRIEF

No. 74

February 2016

## Intelligence Analysis Training: A Prerequisite in Current Scenario

*Whatever the complexities of the puzzle we strive to solve and whatever the sophisticated techniques we may use to collect the pieces and store them, there can be never be a time when the thoughtful man can be supplanted as intelligence divine supreme.*

— Sherman Kent

### The Changing Intelligence Landscape

The last few decades have seen a radical shift in the requirements of intelligencers. The focus has shifted from obtaining information on force levels, military hardware and military plans to penetrating the network of faceless non-state actors operating from uncharted territories, possessing capabilities that surprise the most powerful nations across the globe. The fight is ideological and cultural. Ideology is determining new alliances and the goal posts keep shifting dramatically, exasperating the most experienced analysts. The new warfare is witnessing a paradigm shift in the conduct of operations, relying on new tools for acquisition and technological developments. Alongside, new and diverse alliances and developments have made it difficult to connect the dots, and the task of intelligencers extremely hazardous. The



Brig **NK Bhatia**, SM (Retd) was the Chief Instructor at Military Intelligence School.

### Key Points

1. Intelligence is an Art but has to be processed in a scientific manner to make it of use.
2. Intelligence officers continue to grapple with the problem of information overload. In a complex scenario of fast paced changing intelligence landscape it is essential that they develop the art of analyzing at an early stage.
3. The article is an attempt to explain the nuances of intelligence analysis, highlight its importance and bring out qualities essential to become a proficient analyst to be able to assist decision makers to take informed decisions.

The Centre for Land Warfare Studies (CLAWS), New Delhi, is an autonomous think-tank dealing with national security and conceptual aspects of land warfare, including conventional and sub-conventional conflict and terrorism. CLAWS conducts research that is futuristic in outlook and policy-oriented in approach.

## Intelligence Analysis Training ...

intelligence community is at its wits end to keep pace with developments.

In the new global environment, especially post 9/11, intelligence analysis has emerged as a key qualification for an intelligence officer. Notwithstanding the requirements of preparing for conventional warfare, the current era of the Global War on Terrorism (GWOt), emergence of sub-conventional threats and new dimensions of warfare necessitate that emphasis is laid in preparing middle-level officers in the art of intelligence analysis to predict events. As rightly brought out after the Pathankot incident, by Mr P Chidambaram, "The key pillars of counter-terrorism are intelligence, analysts ..... More often than not, raw information lies as raw information and is practically useless. Honing information into intelligence is analysis and that is a specialist's function. In the complex world of counter-terrorism, high quality analysis requires a multi-disciplinary approach bringing together the skills of a guard, computer technologist, policeman, professor (of chemistry or engineering or psychology), spy and scientist."

### Analysis

So what is analysis? The process can be explained as detailed/systematic examination of the elements or structure of a problem or issue. It is also defined as a process of studying or examining issues in detail with explanations. The process may involve breaking up of the issue/problem in segments/parts and thereafter carrying out a detailed study to arrive at a logical conclusion. The essential ingredients would be to explore, describe and explain, as follows:

- **Descriptive Research:** It answers questions of who, what, when and how.
- **Exploratory Research:** The process attempts to gain a better understanding of different dimensions of the problem.
- **Explanatory Research:** It explains the causes of the problem.

### Intelligence Analysis

It is the process to evaluate data to arrive at a logical deduction to an intelligence problem. Depending on the situation, the genesis of the problem, current threats and future actions of the entities would be the primary focus of an analyst. In terms of the military, the analysis would entail assessment of the problem faced by the commander in a given tactical situation. It is aimed at giving a clearer picture of the situation to clear ambiguities based on inputs collated over a period of time. The picture so obtained is generally acquired piecemeal, in bits and pieces, and thereafter collated in a systematic way to be presented in a cogent manner to make sense of a situation or problem. Moving away from a tactical situation, a day-to-day assessment of threats having an impact on the security situation would be relevant for an intelligence staff officer and practitioner of the intelligence tradecraft. Intelligence analysis is a disciplined and consistent approach to problem-solving in determining accurate and unbiased conclusions based on available data. It is to be clearly emphasised that an intelligence analyst is a human being and is engaged in what is often a thankless job that may not always stand up to the scrutiny of the hierarchy. Nevertheless, an analyst would need to continuously work in a closed environment tirelessly, trying to convince policy-makers/commanders of his conviction of an issue/subject. According to Dick Heuer, "**Intelligence analysts should be self-conscious about their reasoning process. They should think about how they make judgments and reach conclusions, not just about the judgments and conclusions themselves**".

### The Intelligence Cycle

The intelligence cycle will always remain the primary tool, commencing with the commander's aim or requirement to address an intelligence problem in a systematic and methodical manner. The process is set in motion with plans to obtain raw data or information from multiple means or agencies and goes through numerous processes of checks and balances to be finally presented

to analysts, who are specialist in their field to enable them to prepare reports to be presented to commanders or policy-makers. The types of products chosen, the quality of the analysis and production, and the continuous tension between current intelligence products and longer-range products are major issues. Analysis and production include the integration, evaluation, and analysis of all available data, and the preparation of a variety of intelligence products, including timely, single-source, event-oriented reports and longer term, all-source, finished intelligence studies.

### Training to be an Intelligence Analyst

Essentially, the practitioners of the art of intelligence with a wide experience of field operations would be ideally suited to be trained as intelligence analysts. Besides, military professionals, suitably qualified with wide exposure to field operations, with area specialisation, imagery interpreters and language qualified professionals should also be suitable for the role. Whilst analysis training is necessary for all personnel assigned to intelligence tasks, a few of them display inborn capabilities for carrying out incisive and in-depth research on the job. This quality needs to be identified early in professional life, nurtured and then refined through appropriate training and assignments.

### Approach to Training an Intelligence Analysts

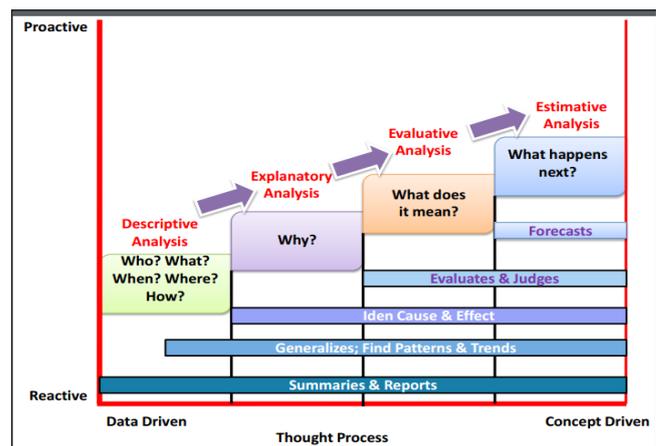
For a military professional, the most appropriate method of training would be the **Functional Approach**, wherein the requirements of a commander in the field would determine the task and methodology of an intelligence problem and follow the intelligence cycle, as explained earlier. At times, this may appear as a theoretical construct, yet it is most suited to the requirements of the armed forces, as, essentially, an analyst would always function in a military hierarchical system and seldom in an isolated position. An equally important teaching method is the **Historical Approach** wherein the analyst essentially plays the role of a researcher to establish a historical construct to a given problem, the past history of

the organisation, its earlier behaviour, method of operations, alliances and history of leadership. This is extremely relevant to situations of counter terrorism and insurgency. Additional methodologies as practised by a few other leading nations may not be relevant in our context.

### The “How” and “Why” for an Intelligence Analyst

The most fundamental question that an analyst faces is: “**What is the truth and how can we know it**”? The analyst proceeds to unravel this mystery for policy-makers/commanders in a systematic and methodical manner. Analysts should always begin with confirmed background information (**facts**), apply this knowledge to produce plausible **findings**, and come out with likely courses of action (**forecast**) with reasons thereof. Analysts should never engage in speculation or guessing that has no basis in fact. This has essentially also been the practice of teaching wherein the expertise of an intelligence staff officer is built on his ability to cogently ‘**Review the Situation**’. The Analytical Spectrum can, thus, also be explained (Fig 1.).

Fig 1



### Developing Qualities

To be a successful analysts, the following qualities will need to be developed/ingrained:

- **Critical Thinking:** The most important trait of an analyst is his ability to question the given situation with five Ws – **Who, What, Where,**

## ... A Pre Requisite in Current Scenario

**When and Why.** He/she needs to learn and develop a capacity to find a solution to a problem, analysing, brainstorming and conducting a post-mortem of the given task until he/she has all the relevant answers to the problem.

- **Connecting the Dots:** An intelligence problem is essentially connecting the dots, both visible and invisible. The experience of an intelligence officer combined with analytical tools would help connect the dots and come up with plausible solutions.
- **Continuity:** In the current scenario, when analysts are faced with grappling crises on a day to day basis, maintaining continuity has become the biggest casualty. The job of an analyst requires maintenance of momentum and is not to be based on a standoff incident. Towards this end, **collation of data** in a consistent manner is the key to success for an analyst. It is also proof of to the calibre of an intelligent analyst to collate in a manner that best meets his requirements, giving the analyst easy access to the database, maintained in a cogent and cohesive form.
- **Basic Analytical Techniques:** An **ability to generate hypothesis** is the most essential quality of an analyst, which is basically a “tentative assumption(s) made in order to prove a statement right or wrong”. Along with this, he or she will need to develop the ability to develop and monitor indicators, learn about analytical tools and analytical methodologies such as link, pattern, functional analysis, etc .
- **Biases and Blind Spots:** An analyst will occasionally run into situations where there are no clear answers to a problem, and is faced with the dilemma of contradictory results and feedbacks. The analyst will need to learn to

overcome such situations and explore alternate methods to get to plausible answer(s) to such situations. This would mostly come with expertise and experience.

- **Integrity:** This is a quality always at a premium. An analyst must not be blinded by the fog of operations or be influenced by the biases of the commander. It is to be remembered that being an analyst is not a popularity contest. An intelligence analyst has to learn to base analysis on facts and not on what a commander would like to hear. When convinced of reasons, the analyst must stand by them, though, at the same time, be willing to accept others’ points of view when presented in a logical and cogent manner. The example of false assessment of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMDs) being presented as justification for launching operations is a recent case in point. An analyst has to, therefore, base assessments on hard facts and evidence.

### Conclusion

The geo-political situation is evolving at a frantic pace. It is in our interest to keep pace with developments and to evaluate and analyse events as they impact us. We are transforming to an era of information overflow, and modern tools available provide us with round-the-clock real-time information. Towards this end, the role of the intelligence analyst is crucial. It is essential to emphasise and develop the skill of analysis, beginning from the formative years in a systematic manner so that by the time an officer reaches the mid-ranks he/she is fully prepared to fit into the role of an intelligence analyst.

*The contents of this Issue Brief are based on the analysis of material accessed from open sources and are the personal views of the author. It may not be quoted as representing the views or policy of the Government of India or Integrated Headquarters of MoD (Army).*



**CENTRE FOR LAND WARFARE STUDIES (CLAWS)**

RPSO Complex, Parade Road, Delhi Cantt, New Delhi 110010

Tel.: +91-11-25691308, Fax: +91-11-25692347, Email: landwarfare@gmail.com

Website: www.claws.in

CLAWS Army No. 33098