



THE ROLE OF INTELLIGENCE IN MAINTAINING COMBAT POWER DURING CONTEMPORARY MILITARY OPERATIONS

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The contemporary security environment is undergoing periodical radical changes in which more and more diversified threats are emerging, determining that the age in which we live is marked by crises of a different nature. That is why the use of intelligence has become a concern of military and political decision makers, especially in terms of its integration into combat functions to ensure and maintain a high combat capability and thus the combat power necessary to achieve objectives/mission. The peculiarities and specific features of modern/contemporary military conflicts, as well as the influence of technological evolution or, as specialists call it, the revolution in military affairs has led to changes including in the field of military intelligence, which is essential to keep up with the present and anticipate the future. These changes have led to changes in the place and role of military intelligence in the military phenomenon, changes in doctrines, techniques, tactics and procedures, and the readjustment of requirements to the changes applied. Military intelligence structures must be conceptually integrated and not only with the other collection capabilities of the National Defence System, Public Order and National Security.

Keywords: security environment; intelligence; interagency; combat functions; threats; cooperation.

"The measure of intelligence is the ability to change" (goodreads n.d.), said the well-known scientist Albert Einstein. I think it is a good motto to start our topic, due to the essence of the phenomenon caught in these few words. We live in a world of continuous development and technological evolution, and the most important thing is that the contemporary security environment is undergoing periodical radical changes in which more and more diversified threats appear.

The current security environment is characterized "by a high degree of dynamism and unpredictability, as well as by the accentuated globalization of threats and risks, with varied manifestations and with unlimited potential of geographical propagation" (presidency.ro 2020, 19).

The age we live in is one marked by crises of a different nature, which produces societal imbalances. Moreover, we cannot ignore the results of the analysis of specialists in the field according to which "the unpredictability of the current security environment, the atypical nature of the new challenges, the almost uncontrollable diversification of risks and threats and the reduction

of time limits in which they can occur create the risk that decision makers at all levels might be taken by surprise by such potential risk generators situations" (Ionescu 2015).

War and, by implication, contemporary military operations are no longer what they used to be, but we are constantly forced to analyze the reality of the security environment, to identify new types of threats other than those we were accustomed to until recently, and in order to ensure a safe and stable climate, adequate responses to these threats are needed.

That is why I started the article with this statement of the great scientist, to emphasize the importance of the flexibility we need to show, the need to constantly adapt and readjust our way of thinking, how to analyze and synthesize, actions/reactions/counter-reactions to threats in the operational environment, and all this is very clear that they should also be based on the most complete and high quality intelligence products.

The role of intelligence, as a function of combat, in maintaining combat power is essential, I could say, because obtaining and maintaining the highest possible level of intelligence advantage is critical. Only by being at least one step ahead of the adversary/enemy can we have a more complete picture of the operational environment, base our

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decisions on quality intelligence products, and make our reactions to modern threats effective.

Defining features of contemporary military operations

We are contemporaries with a dynamic period, in continuous evolution and profound transformation, which requires flexibility in analysis and synthesis, so that predictability offers possible reactions as applicable as possible to reality at a given time. The contemporary security environment has deep risks and threats, of a complex nature, and the response to them, in my opinion, must be an integrated one because only by cooperating and collaborating inter-institutionally can we act synergistically.

As stated in the National Defence Strategy, "the strategic trends of recent years illustrate the accumulation of a substantial potential to reconfigure relations between actors with global interests, with direct effects on the stability and predictability of the international system, and the revitalization of global strategic competition confirms the transition to a new security paradigm. This will accentuate the tendency towards a more sustained activity of the states bilaterally, with momentary, conjunctural, interests and alliances, which will further affect the predictability of the international security environment" (presidency.ro 2020, 17).

These continuous transformations happening in the contemporary security environment "generate a number of challenges to the institutional capacity to formulate appropriate responses and enable effective measures to be put in place" (presidency.ro 2020, 38).

More than that, "the characteristics and dynamics of the current strategic and security environment require an inter-institutional and comprehensive approach, allowing the materialization of the concept of extended national security, by integrating public policies and state action in the field of national defence and security" (General Secretariat of the Government 2021, 8).

In the face of these realities that make/could make a significant mark, we cannot remain ignorant. There are events, phenomena that take place and can have effects in terms of national and regional security.

That is why the use of intelligence has become a concern of military and political decision

makers, especially in terms of its integration into combat functions so as to ensure and maintain a high combat capability and thus the combat power necessary to achieve objectives/mission. "Combat capability provides a commander with the strength needed to perform an operation, and combat functions are functional categories of abilities used to generate specific effects during the execution of land operations" (*F.T. – 1, Doctrina operațiilor forțelor terestre* 2017, III-13). Also, „the fighting ability expressed by the fighting functions generates the fighting power and the potential of the action in question. In order to fulfill their mission, commanders, through estimates and the planning process, use this potential to establish tasks that lead to the performance of functions of combat power" (*F.T. – 1, Doctrina operațiilor forțelor terestre* 2017, III-12)

We cannot discuss about the revolution in military affairs of the last decades due to the technological progress that has had and has an exponential pace. As stated by military specialists, "increasingly consistent discoveries in the field of intelligence technology that ensure the gathering of intelligence by satellite or unmanned aerial platforms, the guidance of high-precision weapons of warfare have changed the face of military conflicts" (Stanciu 2016, 13).

These advances have given rise to what we now call artificial intelligence, which, although it has appeared in the literature for a long time, has had significant results in the last decade, due to the impressive technological progress, the evolution in the field "machine learning (subset of artificial intelligence / AI, focused on building systems that can learn – or improve their performance – based on the data they process)" (ORACLE. n.d.) at the same time increasing the accessibility of data/information and computing power.

As a result of the emergence of artificial intelligence, many activities previously performed by humans can now be performed in a very short time, much more efficiently and in a much larger volume. It is very clear that artificial intelligence will play an important role in planning and conducting military operations in the future. It offers many advantages, limiting human and material losses, ensuring precision and accuracy. We cannot ignore this phenomenon and even more so even if we did, then it would become possible for our

adversaries/enemies to use it which would create a real technological and obviously informational imbalance.

Intelligence, an important resource of power and at the same time a function of the struggle, is constantly subject to analysis from all points of view, in all forms and aspects, noting a constant concern of decision makers to modernize specialized capabilities of gathering, analyzing and processing intelligence, to maintain them at a high level and appropriate to the realities of the moment with an essential contribution in supporting and substantiating an effective decision-making process. In addition, it is imperative that the other components of intelligence systems, not just specialized structures, keep up with technology.

Also, intelligence is "the product resulting from the collection, processing, integration, evaluation, analysis and interpretation of available intelligence on hostile/potentially hostile forces or elements, as well as areas where operations are currently taking place or are potential areas of operations. The meaning of the term is dual because it also applies to the activity that aims to materialize this product, as well as to the organizations that are involved in such an activity. All this gear supports the General Staff and commanders in the process of planning operations, in establishing the course of action/COA, identifying tactics and techniques, the effective use of forces and means and ensuring force protection measures to achieve the objectives and achieve the desired final state" (APD ARMY PUBLISHING DIRECTORATE. n.d.).

Intelligence – combat function

The process of planning operations, in all its phases, is directly influenced by the provision of intelligence support. From this point of view, we consider that the integration of the intelligence activity is an essential requirement, which can be successfully fulfilled by the efficient use of the intelligence system available to the military structures at any level, especially considering that "obtaining accurate and timely intelligence is a real challenge for both the intelligence experts and the decision maker, both of whom are equally responsible for the active management of data and information on potential crisis situations, but also for the development of new ways of anticipatory thinking and strategic planning meant to confuse

both future expectations and opportunities" (Ionescu 2015).

Military intelligence is the basis for conducting military actions and protecting forces during their deployment, while ensuring that the situation is obtained and maintained. According to the defence intelligence doctrine, "the military intelligence activity is a set of actions and measures aimed at achieving strategic, operational and tactical warning and providing political, politico-military and military leadership with actionable intelligence on risk factors and external, military and non-military threats, which may affect national security in the military, as well as the prevention, countering and deterrence of risks and threats, through independent or integrated missions" (*I.A. – I.1., Doctrina informațiilor pentru apărare* 2017, 9).

During the planning and conduct of an operation, the commander has at his disposal various tools, capabilities that he can use, at the most appropriate times according to his decision, in order to achieve the objectives/accomplish the mission.

Thus, "combat functions are the main tools available to the commander, which he integrates and coordinates in the operation, to synchronize their effects in time, space and purpose" (*FT-1, Doctrina operațiilor forțelor terestre* 2017, III-13). We find among the seven functions of combat intelligence providing support for military operations, i.e. a more real picture of the combat battlefield/operational environment, as well as the capabilities and possible actions of the enemy. Achieving the highest possible level of intelligence advantage is a concern of commanders at any level to be able to plan effective responses to actions we say likely of the enemy, but we want to anticipate as accurately as possible and, moreover, to confirm the predicted ones.

The intelligence combat function has the following objectives: supporting the generation of force, providing support for the assessment of the situation, carrying out ISR operations/intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance, identification of targets and obtaining informational superiority.

"The collection, processing, dissemination and use of data and information on the battlefield, before the start of the operation and during its operation, are vital activities to ensure success. Achieving a unique and clear image of the battle space requires the centralized management of the intelligence



acquisition process, its simultaneous development at all levels and the timely dissemination of data through the intelligence system" (*F.T. – I, Doctrina operațiilor forțelor terestre* 2017, III-16).

The military structures that carry out tactical operations have their own collection and processing capabilities, but at the same time, depending on the priorities and the allocation of resources, they also benefit from intelligence products from the upper echelons. It is necessary that they have as much intelligence and quality intelligence products as possible and in the shortest possible time to anticipate the possible action of the enemy in the confrontational/operational environment. And intelligence, as a function of combat, provides commanders and staffs with a complete picture of assessing the impact of operations and other military actions on elements of the operational environment by generating the desired effects and their implications on the evolution of operational systems.

As mentioned, we intend to obtain and maintain the highest possible level of informational advantage (informational superiority, informational dominance and informational supremacy). Obviously, it would be ideal to reach the maximum level, but this is a difficult goal to achieve, which is why the most widely circulated and perhaps the most realistic concept at the moment is that of informational superiority, which can be defined as "the ability to run all the processes of the intelligence cycle in a shorter time than the opponent with a higher degree of security" (Armistead 2004, 16). The other two levels of informational advantage, I consider as I mentioned, are much harder to obtain and maintain, but that does not mean that we do not want them and do not use the resources available to achieve this goal.

The intelligence cycle is the logical and continuous process through which we carry out military intelligence activities starting from the identification of the need for collection, taking into account the capabilities of the available structures, efficiently allocating collection tasks to them, processing data, information and even intelligence products, but also those already available and, finally, disseminating the intelligence results to the beneficiaries. This is a process that takes place throughout the planning process and continues throughout the operations so that the intelligence

structures permanently generate intelligence products useful to commanders and staffs.

The intelligence cycle takes place in four stages which "although distinct, they sometimes overlap and overlap, so that they often take place simultaneously, not sequentially. The stages of the intelligence cycle are:

- direction;
- collection;
- processing;
- dissemination.

Monitoring the efficiency of the intelligence cycle and coordinating the four main stages is done through Intelligence Requirements Management/IRM and Collection Management/CM" (*I.A. – I. I., Doctrina informațiilor pentru apărare*, 2017, 24).

I consider that it is essential for the intelligence function to contribute substantially during the planning process, but also during the conduct of modern military operations of any kind so that combat capability is maintained at the highest possible level. Anticipating, having a real picture of what our enemy is going to do in the operational environment helps us to plan effective responses that eliminate or limit human and material losses and contribute to the achievement of the objectives/mission received.

Integrating intelligence into contemporary military operations

The new image of the contemporary security environment, as stated in the National Strategy for the Defence of the Country for the period 2020-2024, requires appropriate and combined responses from the bodies responsible for ensuring national and regional security. "Unified action is the synchronization, coordination and/or integration of governmental and nongovernmental entities with military operations to achieve unity of effort" (Department of the Army 2019, 1-5). That is why inter-institutional cooperation is the basis for the functioning of these response activities in order to prevent, limit, counteract or eliminate the possible negative effects of the manifestation of modern threats that make their presence felt in the area of our country.

Atthesametime,"intelligenceisinherentlyjoint, interagency, intergovernmental and multinational... this intelligence effort is synchronized, networked, and includes collaboration with unified action partners" (Department of the Army 2019, 1-5).

Among the dimensions of achieving national security, we identify as a direction of action within the dimension of public order "the use at national level of modern concepts for the management of public order institutions, based on their equal performance according to standard operational procedures (police equal performance) and intelligence-led policing, which contribute to the efficient use of resources, simultaneously with the increase of the institutional performance level" (presidency.ro 2020) and, at the same time, the directions of action in the field of intelligence, counter-intelligence and security, of which I would like to highlight "prevention and counteracting of hybrid threats, embodied in hostile conjugate actions, carried out by state or non-state actors, in the political-administrative, economic, military, social, informational, cybernetic or organized crime plan" (presidency.ro 2020, 35) which obviously requires efficient and transparent interagency cooperation and collaboration.

I consider that only a combined and integrated inter-agency effort can be an effective response to the increasingly diverse and complex threats that are manifested in adjacent areas, but with effects on national and regional security.

An example, in this sense, can be the interinstitutional exercise Concordia 19, held between October 7 and 13, 2019 in several locations in Covasna and Harghita counties, as well as in Bucharest. This exercise was attended by structures from the Ministry of National Defence, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Romanian Intelligence Service, the Protection and Guard Service and the Special Telecommunications Service, structures with responsibilities in the field. The exercise had "as main objective the development of the cooperation relations, as well as the exercise of the techniques, tactics and procedures of joint action of the forces comprised in the National System of Defence, Public Order and National Security" (Army General Staff 2019).

Increasing the efficiency of national institutions for crisis prevention and management, internal and external, military or civilian, interagency cooperation entities/authorities/mechanisms and capabilities to combat asymmetric and hybrid threats, able to ensure state resilience in crisis situations and even conflict and to allow the continued functioning of essential institutions and services is thus one of the national security objectives.

The comprehensive approach, a modern concept used in NATO, proposes the involvement in crisis resolution of all structures/institutions/actors that can bring more experience, coherence, efficiency and effectiveness.

A hybrid threat that acts to achieve clear long-term goals may not be identified in the initial phase, thus delaying immediate effective reactions. Subsequently, only by constantly monitoring the sectors of society, collecting data and information using different and multiple sources, analyzing/processing and filtering them in order to assess their relevance and priorities can appropriate responses be planned from institutions with responsibilities in the field. But in order to identify it and find the most appropriate answer, we need an efficient and transparent intelligence support from all the entities involved.

We know very well that it is easier to prevent, to remove, and if not, to limit or reduce the effects and consequences of events that pose security threats. This can be achieved by improving early warning, alerting and warning systems, systems that must use modern and up-to-date technology, provide vital, geographically targeted intelligence in a timely and complete manner. And for this, the transparency of intelligence should be achieved permanently.

We cannot ignore, as we have described in this paper, the particularities and what modern/contemporary military conflicts mean, as well as the influence of technological evolution or, as specialists call it, the revolution in military affairs which led to changes in military intelligence, an area that is essential to keeping up with the present and anticipating the future. These changes have led to changes in the place and role of military intelligence in the military phenomenon, changes in doctrines, techniques, tactics and procedures, and the readjustment of requirements to the changes applied. Intelligence structures must be organized as efficiently as possible to enable them to carry out their specific tasks as efficiently as possible and, in addition, to make the most of the technology specific to contemporary intelligence systems.

Moreover, as analysed, intelligence is one of the combat functions, which is easy to understand that gaining and maintaining an informational advantage contributes substantially to the level of combat power. Being able to run a fuller and faster



intelligence cycle than the enemy or even limiting it to its own intelligence cycle prevents and limits the losses and risks of an operation, which will lead to a high combat power.

The informational advantage obtained from the operation of the intelligence combat function offers us the possibility of an overview as close as possible to reality and thus of more efficient planning. This presupposes that the activities planned for one's own forces and means be carried out in accordance with the probable actions of the enemy, and in this way the objectives and missions will be achieved/accomplished without substantially affecting the combat power. We need to rely on efficient informational systems so that human and material losses are minimized.

I believe that the exploitation of the intelligence function at the highest level is the key to success in contemporary military operations in order to maintain the highest possible combat power and ensure the successful fulfilment of the entrusted objectives / missions.

Conclusions

We estimated the current operational environment as an increasingly dynamic and complex one, due to the power of intelligence, the technological revolution and the changes that have taken place in the security architecture globally. We concluded that a number of specific characteristics lead to the need to integrate intelligence from the hybrid environment into a cognitive environment that provides a complex perspective on reality.

As the analysis shows, the contemporary security environment is a dynamic one that undergoes frequent changes, the emergence and evolution of new and increasingly diverse threats so as to predict/anticipate actions taken by various state and non-state actors that may cause imbalances in this environment is becoming more and more difficult to achieve. In other words, being a necessity, in order to achieve it, there is a need for permanent adaptation of the way of integrating one's own capabilities, including intelligence structures/capabilities and most importantly their education and training so as to cooperate and collaborate interinstitutionally for achieving national security objectives. I consider that military intelligence structures must be conceptually integrated (and not only) with the other collection capabilities of

the National Defence, Public Order and National Security System in order to provide an integrated and adequate response to the type and level of threats.

Also, significant changes in the dynamics of contemporary military operations, through the introduction of intelligent weapons systems and platforms, advanced sensors, command systems, control, communications, computers, interoperability, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance/C4I2SR and the digitization of the modern battlefield/operational environment, are elements that have profoundly changed the physiognomy of the contemporary military conflict. The implementation of modern technologies in military structures has allowed a "compression" of space and time in the tactical field, which has led to the imposition of a faster pace of execution of military actions in areas of operations, as well as faster and more effective response to threats which have made/are making their presence felt in the contemporary security environment.

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