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# Defense Primer: Intelligence Support to Military Operations

Nine of 18 total statutory elements of the Intelligence Community (IC) reside within the Department of Defense (DOD) and provide integrated intelligence support to military strategy, planning, and operations. These elements include the National Security Agency (NSA), National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency (NGA), National Reconnaissance Office (NRO), Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA), and the intelligence components of the five military services (along with the Coast Guard intelligence element when operating as part of DOD). Non-DOD IC elements, such as the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), also support military activities.

The Director of National Intelligence (DNI) serves as community manager for the IC and as the principal intelligence advisor to the President. The core mission of the DNI is to ensure the integration of intelligence activities across the elements of the IC.

The Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence and Security (USD(I&S)) manages the DOD intelligence elements. This 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.

## The Intelligence Process for Supporting Military Operations

The IC supports the entire spectrum of DOD missions, from peacetime to combat operations. Joint Publication 2-0, *Joint Intelligence* (or JP 2-0, the Joint Chiefs of Staff publication that provides definitive guidance on intelligence support for military operations), notes that the intelligence process for supporting joint (i.e., multi-service, integrated) military operations consists of six interrelated categories of intelligence operations, all aimed at providing commanders and national-level decisionmakers with relevant and timely intelligence. These categories include planning and direction; collection, processing, and exploitation; analysis and production; dissemination and integration; and evaluation and feedback.

Intelligence professionals participate in the planning and decisionmaking processes to align intelligence resources with operational objectives. Collection management ensures that the appropriate collection resources are tasked to address specific intelligence requirements pertaining to

operational objectives. Because the operational environment is dynamic, the intelligence process is iterative: each category or phase of the process is ongoing and complements the other phases for the duration of the military operation or campaign.

## Intelligence Roles and Responsibilities

**Table 1** summarizes the roles and responsibilities of joint intelligence to assist commanders in deciding which forces to deploy; when, how, and where to deploy them; and how to employ them in a manner that accomplishes a specific mission consistent with the commander's priorities.

**Table 1. Roles and Responsibilities of Joint Intelligence**

**Role:** To provide information, assessments, and estimates in support of a military commander's decisionmaking.

**Responsibilities:**

- To support the planning of operations: Describe the operational environment; provide estimates pertaining to adversaries; analyze target systems and their vulnerabilities; identify, nominate objectives.
- To support the execution of operations: Monitor and provide warnings concerning the operational environment; enable target engagements.
- To assess the effectiveness of operations: Perform battle damage assessments; measure changes to adversaries and the operational environment.

**Source:** Joint Publication 2-0, *Joint Intelligence*, p. I-5.

According to JP 2-0, intelligence should support a commander's planning, execution, and assessment of the impact of military operations. It should, therefore, include a comprehensive analysis of the threat and relevant aspects of the operating environment in assessments enabling the commander to create and exploit opportunities to accomplish friendly force objectives.

In describing the operational environment, JP 2-0 specifies that intelligence should identify for the commander associated issues such as the political context; governance; leadership intentions; military capabilities and tactics; communications and critical infrastructure; economy; terrain; weather; cultural considerations; social stability; and health conditions. Intelligence should also provide military planners clearly defined, achievable, and measurable objectives that meet the commander's intent. Changes to the threat and the operational environment require intelligence professionals to continuously review their objectives to determine whether they remain relevant.

To counter an adversary's deception efforts, JP 2-0 specifies that intelligence should confirm previous analysis using multiple analytical methods and processes. This may

include multiple methods to confirm, for example, an adversary's capabilities and vulnerabilities, and the threat an adversary poses to U.S. and allied information systems. Intelligence can also identify objectives to deceive an adversary to complement the commander's operational objectives.

According to JP 2-0, intelligence must also help assess the effectiveness of military operations by objectively assessing their impact on an adversary and other relevant aspects of the operating environment with respect to the commander's intent. This 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"> <li>U.S. Air Force Intelligence, Surveillance, &amp; Reconnaissance (AF/A2)</li> <li>U.S. Army Intelligence (G-2)</li> <li>U.S. Marine Corps Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance Enterprise (MCISR-E)</li> <li>U.S. Naval Intelligence (CNO N2)</li> <li>U.S. Space Force Intelligence (S-2)</li> <li>U.S. Coast Guard Intelligence (CG-2)</li> </ul>
Joint Intelligence Elements Within DOD
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Joint Staff Intelligence Directorate (JCS J-2)</li> <li>National Joint Operations and Intelligence Center (NJOIC)</li> <li>Combatant Command Intelligence Directorates (CCMD J-2)</li> <li>Joint Force Command Intelligence Directorates (JFC J-2)</li> <li>Joint Intelligence Operations Center (JIOC)</li> <li>Joint Intelligence Support Element (JISE)</li> </ul>
Combat Support Agencies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA)</li> <li>National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency (NGA)</li> <li>National Security Agency (NSA)</li> </ul>

**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 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 combat support agencies (CSAs) whose mission is to provide strategic, operational, and tactical-level intelligence support to operational forces.

## 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 operations centers (JIOC) attached to each combatant command provide a common, coordinated picture of conditions in each theater of operations 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)

CSAs 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 packages; intelligence information reports; and signals intelligence.

### 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*, by Michael E. DeVine

### Other Resources

DOD, Joint Publication 2-0, *Joint Intelligence*, May 26, 2022.

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

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