

AIR POWER STUDIES CENTRE

PAPER 25

Month Year

**THE RAAF COMMANDER AND THE INTELLIGENCE
RESOURCE**

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INTRODUCTION

‘One should know ones enemies, their alliances, their resources and nature of their country, in order to plan a campaign.’

King Frederick of Prussia 1747

In an amusing anecdotal offering to the 1993 RAAF History Conference, Group Captain Plenty recounted how he and his gunner had first experienced contact with the Japanese Zero:

I was one of the first blokes to be greeted by the Zeros in December 1941. We had been told by British Intelligence that the Japanese had no fighter aircraft that could overtake a Hudson. To cut a long story short, the first time I was chased by Zeros, my gunner kept saying ‘they’re gaining on us, they’re gaining on us, more throttle, they’re still gaining on us’. Until eventually, of course, the bullets started to go past.¹

This anecdote sparked discussion of a more serious vein: how and why was it that the Zero was such a surprise to Plenty and his fellow aircrew? Had no intelligence been obtained on this aircraft? It would appear not judging by comments made by RAF Air Chief Marshal Brooke-Popham, Commander-in Chief, Far East. Reflecting similar views to those impressed on Group Captain Plenty by his superiors, Brooke-Popham told the Advisory War Council in October 1941 that ‘the strength of the air force in Malaya was improving [thanks to the new Buffalos which] were superior to the fighters used by the Japanese’.² Yet this advice on the inferiority of the Japanese fighters clashed with intelligence which had already been collected. As RAAF historian, Douglas Gillison, correctly points out:

at this time there was Intelligence information to show the Japanese Zero was powerfully armed, had a maximum speed of 345 m.p.h [550 k.p.h.] and a range, with a maximum fuel load, of 1 500 miles [2 400 kilometres] - an impressive performance by any standards then known and one which, clearly, was far beyond that of the Buffalo.³

Erroneous views about the capabilities of an enemy’s aircraft could have dire consequences in war. Therefore, it is both remarkable and disturbing that intelligence which provided an accurate assessment of the performance of the Japanese Zero was apparently not disseminated to those most vitally interested in it. It is not a new problem but it is a profound one to which easy answers are not always forthcoming, even fifty years later. However, some solutions can be explored by examining the role intelligence plays in not only the conduct of air warfare but also in the planning of an air campaign.

An air commander⁴ planning a peacetime exercise or a wartime air campaign relies on many information sources to aid his decision making. Perhaps chief of these,

¹ *The RAAF in the South West Pacific Area 1942-1945: The Proceedings of the 1993 RAAF History Conference*, RAAF Air Power Studies Centre, Canberra, 1993, p 13.

² Gillison, D., *Royal Australian Air Force 1939-1942*, Canberra, AWM, 1962, p 170.

³ *ibid.*, p 170. Note: Emphasis added by authors.

⁴ The paper will refer specifically to the Air Commander Australia (ACAUST) throughout although the authors intend the points raised will apply to RAAF commanders at all levels.

particularly in war, is intelligence. This paper discusses the intelligence cycle, a process which ideally ensures appropriate intelligence is received by the air commander and is not simply locked in the security containers of his intelligence staff. The process involves the directing, collecting, processing and dissemination of information and, while any approach needs to be holistic, the paper will argue intelligence dissemination is the most vital element of the cycle if the commander, but especially his fighting airmen, are to maximise the benefits from intelligence.

The intelligence cycle does not exist in a vacuum but relies on personalities to make it work. The paper argues further that effective dissemination of intelligence is to a large extent dependent both on an air commander's sound understanding of intelligence and on the intelligence staff's having a good understanding of the commander's responsibilities, needs and intentions. Fifty years since the then Flight Lieutenant Plenty's encounter with a Zero, though aircraft and personalities have changed, the fundamental issue concerning intelligence remains the same: in peace and in war, intelligence must be disseminated if it is to be of any value.

To help place the issue of dissemination in context some discussion of the intelligence cycle is necessary. In the first place we should note that intelligence may be defined as 'the product resulting from the collection, evaluation, analysis and interpretation of all available information about foreign countries, their resources, capabilities and intentions'.⁵ By combining the specific functions of evaluation, analysis and interpretation under the general function of processing and adding the function of dissemination, we produce what is known as the intelligence cycle. While this cycle has been described in various ways,⁶ it is generally accepted as having the four parts noted here: direction, collection, processing and dissemination. Each part is discussed below in more detail. But before doing so, it is necessary to outline the organisational framework within which the intelligence cycle operates for the air commander.

THE FRAMEWORK FOR THE INTELLIGENCE CYCLE

In the broadest terms, strategic direction is given by national intelligence committees whose members are drawn from agencies within the Australian Intelligence Community and other government departments. Some of these committees direct the way in which Australia's intelligence resources are used. In more specific terms, the air commander can identify intelligence requirements within his area of responsibility, direct his intelligence staff to meet these requirements and thus initiate the cycle. Having been given direction, collection agencies and personnel seek out and obtain information which is processed by the analytical bodies in the intelligence community. For the Australian Defence Force (ADF) the most significant of these is the Defence Intelligence Organisation (DIO). At DIO information is processed and

⁵ *The Air Power Manual* (2nd Edition), AAP1000, RAAF Air Power Studies Centre, Canberra, 1994, p. 142. This is the definition used here. There are almost as many definitions of intelligence as there are intelligence authors. For example, see footnote 6.

⁶ American intelligence texts usually refer to five steps in the cycle: direction, collection, processing, production (analysis) and dissemination. Processing is defined as the shaping of information into a form more suitable for production. However, the US Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms (1974) and the US Senate Select Committee on Intelligence (1976) subscribe to the four steps as described in AAP1000 and which are used here.

turned into intelligence which, in an ideal world, will be timely and of value to the joint commanders, their operations and intelligence staffs.

For example, Air Commander Australia (ACAUST) receives intelligence necessary to support his operations through the Air Intelligence Centre (AIC), located within Air Headquarters (AHQ). ACAUST's principal intelligence adviser is the Staff Intelligence Officer (SOINT), who in turn is supported by a number of intelligence specialists drawing on diverse resources to fill ACAUST's requirements. These resources range from formal national and allied intelligence agencies and arrangements to knowledge held by specialist RAAF personnel. Indeed, this day-to-day accumulation of information within the RAAF over a wide range of subjects is a substantial information and intelligence resource. Drawing on these sources of information, SOINT provides intelligence and information relevant to the operational concerns of ACAUST.

The AIC plays an important role in ensuring the intelligence cycle supports ACAUST's peace and wartime operational planning, taking his direction on intelligence requirements and processing them quickly and accurately. This may mean the AIC either undertakes some information collection and analysis of its own before disseminating intelligence to ACAUST, or that it tasks specialist agencies to undertake these functions. Most likely it will be a mix of both. Yet, however well ACAUST's intelligence needs are researched, the intelligence gleaned from within and without the ADF is of little use if it is not passed back to be applied by the commander.

The significance of dissemination is more readily determined when each phase of the cycle is examined in more detail. The examination which follows is based on the premise that intelligence exists after information has been subject to an analytical process. That is, intelligence, and not simply information, can exist within the cycle. There are some who argue that information is not intelligence until the person who needs it (in our case ACAUST) receives it.⁷ Rather, our contention is that information can be intelligence before it is disseminated - the real difficulties do not occur in defining what or what is not intelligence but in ensuring intelligence is disseminated in a timely fashion to those who can make best use of it. To return to Group Captain Plenty's account: since 1940, Zero fighters had been examined and analysed. Intelligence, not merely information, existed as to their performance but this had not been disseminated to those personnel in combat who needed it most. Each phase of the intelligence cycle is important, but if close attention should be paid to any it is arguably to that of dissemination.

⁷ In defining 'intelligence', one-time USN Pacific Fleet Intelligence Officer Rear Admiral Layton penned the quote: 'Information can be acquired and evaluated until hell freezes over, but it does not become intelligence until delivered to the commanders who can make proper use of it'. Intelligence needs to be delivered to the commanders, a point with which we have no contention. But to suggest that information is not intelligence until it is disseminated is to ignore the results of the analytical process of the cycle. Indeed, Layton fails to comply with his own definition of intelligence and thereafter continually refers to intelligence existing before being disseminated to those commanders who needed it. See Layton, E.T., *And I Was There; Pearl Harbor and Midway - Breaking the Secrets*, William Morrow & Company, New York, 1985, p 55 for Layton's quote and pp 76, 78, 87, 143, 144 and 298 for examples of his wider use of the term.

INTELLIGENCE: THE CYCLE AND HOW IT WORKS

Direction

Direction is that part of the cycle in which the air commander will inform SOINT of his intelligence requirements of a particular subject. Where SOINT is unable to provide intelligence from sources to hand, the appropriate information will need to be collected. Therefore, collection agencies are tasked to fill the intelligence gaps. For example, should the air commander need to know about Kamarian⁸ F-5 deployment patterns, information which he considers to be critical to his mission, he will direct his intelligence staff to find out about the subject. This example may in fact be answered by numerous sources, so a number of agencies may well be tasked to help provide the answers.

Unambiguous direction is central to useful intelligence being disseminated at the end of the cycle, and in providing this the commander has a vital role to play - a point examined later. However, even if a commander does not articulate his intelligence requirements, intelligence production can continue if staff seek to produce intelligence which they anticipate will fill his needs. In fact, even within the disciplined and directed intelligence regime, it is accepted that some incidental intelligence will be generated without the benefit of specific direction.

A key lesson on the importance of direction is provided by Australia's experience in the years leading up to the outbreak of World War II. In spite of some attempts to provide its own intelligence on Asia during the inter-war years, Australia was largely dependent on British sourced reporting. This intelligence poured in but without any direction from Australia, resulting in intelligence which failed to meet Australia's requirements.

Intelligence assessments received in Australia suffered from being prepared from a British perspective and the subjects which were covered reflected Britain's vital interests. As these interests shifted away from Asia, the volume of reporting on Australia's region began to decline. By 1932, 296 intelligence reports had been received from Britain's Committee of Imperial Defence, but only three referred directly to Japan. Some were of wider interest, covering China and Singapore, but 'Mahdism'⁹ in the Sudan' for example, was reported upon more often than Singapore.¹⁰

Collection

In a balanced intelligence cycle information will not be collected at random if profitable intelligence is to be disseminated. Rather, through the collection phase some sort of collection management will be applied whereby the most effective sources of information are identified. It is through collection management that some tasking is refused - the tasking agency being guided to information which might

⁸ The mythical nation against which the ADF has regularly exercised.

⁹ Muslim insurrection.

¹⁰ Gobert, W., *The Origins of Australian Diplomatic Intelligence in Asia : 1933-1941*, Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Australian National University, 1992, p 11.

readily be found in open sources or to database information which they already possess. In our example, it may be that F-5 deployments have been discussed in unclassified aviation journals and, therefore, no specific intelligence operation need be mounted to learn about this issue.

While a collection plan is necessary for correctly harnessing resources, information will continue to accrue even without dedicated collection plans. This may result in the poor use of scarce resources and thus poor quality intelligence. If, for example, Imagery Intelligence (IMINT) is tasked to provide answers on the F-5 and the results are scanty, the analyst may assume there is little to be learned on the subject. In fact, there might be more comprehensive information available in open or other sources which careful collection management should have identified and obtained at a fraction of the IMINT cost. Careful collection management greatly contributes to a balanced cycle. However, the cycle will continue to function even under poor management.

Processing

Processing is that point of the cycle at which information is turned into intelligence. Information is assessed according to its relevance, reliability and credibility, helping to guarantee dissemination of only that which is applicable to the commander's mission needs. Inherent in these qualities of usefulness and relevance is the element of timeliness. Intelligence which is not timely is not useful.

However, not all information needs to pass through an analytical process. Many examples can be cited where no processing of data occurred before it was delivered to a commander. In these instances, information is needed only to add to the already existent intelligence picture. Most recently in the 1991 Gulf War, raw data such as imagery was passed directly to subordinate theatre commanders, and even to some field commanders, without being passed through a formal analytical process. In an operational environment, when pictures update earlier intelligence briefings, this has some validity. It may even be, of course, that some commanders are best placed to conduct their own analysis. For example, aircraft commanders are increasingly able to conduct their own analysis through the complex on-board data systems incorporated in modern aircraft, although this analysis should always be made in the context of a wider intelligence appreciation. However, for the air commander planning an air campaign, the processing phase will combine raw data, knowledge gained from previous operations and accumulated wisdom drawn from all available sources and agencies. This is a facility which the air commander needs to use when he can. However, the cycle can continue to function even if no processing of data occurs and it is simply passed directly to the air commander.

The processing phase of the cycle offers the air commander the benefits of the tools of intelligence, including such things as imagery analysis and battle damage assessment. Gulf War publicity should not tempt any thought that these tools are the sum total of, or the key to, intelligence. They are merely specific applications of the intelligence process to aid commanders to make decisions.

Dissemination

Dissemination is the crucial part of the cycle in which intelligence reaches the air commander in a timely and useable form. In the Kamarian example it may be copies of Kamarian Air Force F-5 documents outlining deployment histories, exercise plans for future deployments, operational plans, a brief based on an interview with a Kamarian air force pilot, or an Australian visitor's report which identifies plans for deployments which have all been analysed and distilled to reach the essence of the air commander's requirements.

However, no amount of distillation is of benefit to the air commander unless he receives the result of all this work. To do less is to have the rest of the cycle operate to no purpose or end. Agencies can direct, collect and process around the clock but if intelligence which results from all this work is not disseminated to the commander then we are engaged in intelligence for the sake of intelligence. Indeed, within the analytical bodies this can and does happen,¹¹ when the results of analysis are simply fed back into the analytical agencies without being disseminated to the operational commands.

In summary, the importance of dissemination is underscored when we note that any part, apart from dissemination, can be removed from the cycle yet the intelligence process will continue to function, albeit on a reduced scale of volume and efficiency. This is not to belittle other parts of the cycle, or even to advocate an unbalanced cycle, but simply to note that if dissemination is removed, from the viewpoint of an air commander, the cycle collapses. Dissemination is fundamental to the proper functioning of the intelligence cycle and hence in meeting an air commander's needs.

An example of the failure to disseminate concerns General Haig's head of intelligence, Brigadier-General Charteris. In this important lesson from World War I, Charteris withheld intelligence from Haig if he thought it would depress his commander or if the assessment ran counter to Charteris' own views. Accordingly, in November 1917, Haig was unaware of those intelligence reports which showed the arrival of new German divisions ready for battle. Ignorant of these reinforcements, Haig was counter-attacked at Cambrai by forces he did not expect and the initial British successes were turned to disaster. Charteris was replaced. The point is well made. The battle commander - he who makes the plans and puts them into action - and, indeed, his fighting force are not well served by intelligence which exists but which is not disseminated.¹²

¹¹ In testifying before the Senate Governmental Affairs Committee hearing on NBC proliferation threats in the 1990s (24 February 1993) CIA Director James Woolsey noted '... we're working to ensure that our collection is useable and accessible to the policy makers... too often the value of intelligence is measured [only] by how much it adds to our knowledge of a particular subject.' Reuters Transcript 02-24 1785.

¹² Gudgin, P., *Military Intelligence: The British Story*, Arms and Armour Press, Artillery House, London, 1989. p 49.

INTELLIGENCE CONTRIBUTION TO ACAUST

Let us assume then that intelligence for the battle commander has, in fact, been disseminated. How that intelligence is then used becomes critical since intelligence can still be ineffectively used, much in the same way that ammunition handed to a soldier is ineffective in battle if not discharged from a weapon. The practical use of intelligence by the battle commander depends on a number of factors. The contribution of, and rationale behind, the intelligence estimate are important factors, as are some concerns unique to Australia in using the estimate. In turn, how the commander and intelligence officer use the estimate is important because it influences how effectively intelligence is disseminated.

Within the Joint Force Command, ACAUST, the RAAF's battle commander, is responsible for planning and executing the air campaign. His tasks are outlined by the Joint Force Commander. ACAUST's battle staff comprises the commanders of each Force Element Group (FEG).¹³ 'It is the Battle Staff who are the principal advisers to the Air Commander during the preparation of campaign plans and the conduct of operations, and who are, ipso facto, the authors of any RAAF operational doctrine.'¹⁴ Intelligence is disseminated to ACAUST primarily to assist his decision making. This can take the form of intelligence for 'national defence tasks other than the direct defence of Australian territory', including meeting alliance obligations and supporting diplomatic initiatives, such as peacekeeping, natural disaster relief and protecting Australian nationals in the event of serious civil disturbance.¹⁵ It is important to realise intelligence is not simply a function of war but is a dynamic process also undertaken throughout peacetime.¹⁶ During peacetime, intelligence will provide details on another country's abilities and limitations which will assist in planning, say a cooperative United Nations operation. But it is also during peacetime that intelligence will provide knowledge of the patterns of activity and the performance capabilities of a potential enemy and his equipment. This will assist the commander in his wartime decision making because the 'basic task in using intelligence to develop doctrines and forces for deterrence and defence is to estimate threats posed by adversaries, in terms of both capabilities and intentions, over a period of years.'¹⁷

In planning an air campaign the air commander will consider the broad strategic setting,¹⁸ and make his own estimate of the situation. In order to minimise risk and loss and to help dissipate the fog of war, he will draw on his own intuition, experience, and knowledge, along with that of his multifarious specialist support staff.

¹³ RAAF Air Command Forces are organised into five operational groups that are structured for independent air operations as well as support for maritime and land operations. The groups are : Tactical Fighter Group, Strike Reconnaissance Group, Maritime Patrol Group, Airlift Group, and, Operational Support Group.

¹⁴ Stephens, A. and Waters, G., 'Operational Level Doctrine: Planning An Air Campaign', Air Power Studies Centre Paper, Number 18, October 1993, p 5.

¹⁵ *Australia's Strategic Planning in the 1990s*, Endorsed by Government 27 November 1989, Departmental Publications 113/92, p 21.

¹⁶ While acknowledging the broader function of intelligence in peacetime, for the purpose of simplicity the paper will refer only to the intelligence contribution to planning war in the air.

¹⁷ Betts, R.K., 'Analysis , War and Decision: Why Intelligence Failures are Inevitable', *World Politics*, Vol. 31, Number 1, October 1978, p 38.

¹⁸ See Stephens, A., and Waters, G., 'Operational Level Doctrine: Planning An Air Campaign', p 12 for a more comprehensive discussion of this process.

The air commander's estimate will include an assessment of friendly and hostile ground and naval forces which may affect air operations and will consider the effects of recent operations on combat strength. In turn, the principal contribution to the commander's estimate by the specialist intelligence officer is the intelligence estimate.

Intelligence Estimate

The air commander's estimate is not an intelligence assessment per se - a commander is unlikely to have the time or other resources to indulge in his own intelligence analysis. Rather, his own estimate will be made with consideration given to the intelligence estimate provided by SOINT. The real significance of SOINT's contribution lies in the fact that it will be given from the viewpoint of the enemy commander.

That is, in providing the intelligence estimate the intelligence officer can best be described as the air commander's enemy staff member. To be most effective, the intelligence officer, playing the role of the enemy commander on a friendly staff, attempts to provide the most comprehensive picture of the enemy as possible. Most importantly he will be expected to provide the air commander with the enemy's intentions, aims, perspective and, if possible, plans. As Rear Admiral Layton, intelligence officer for the United States Navy's Pacific Fleet in World War II, noted:

one of the basic axioms of intelligence is to put yourself in the enemy's shoes and try to figure out what he would do. This was how I approached the task of assembling the information on [the Japanese reinforcement of the Pacific] mandates.¹⁹

Later, in the days following the attack on Pearl Harbor, and, preceding the Battle of Midway, Layton recorded that Admiral Nimitz demanded that he play the part of the Admiral Nagumo of my staff. I want your every thought, every instinct as you believe Admiral Nagumo might have them. You are to see the war, their operations, their aims, from the Japanese viewpoint and keep me advised what you are thinking about, what you are doing, and what purpose, what strategy, motivates your operations.²⁰

The picture and intentions thus constructed - part of the intelligence estimate - will help the commander avoid the situation recounted by Wellington after Crimea:

The Crimea was as completely an unknown country to the Chiefs of the Allied Armies as it had been to Jason and his Argonauts when they journeyed to the same place in search of the Golden Fleece ... the nature, strength and resources of the enemy lay almost completely in the region of speculation.²¹

¹⁹ Layton, E.T., *And I Was There: Pearl Harbor and Midway-Breaking the Secrets*, William Morrow & Company Inc., New York, 1985, p 182.

²⁰ *ibid.*, p 357.

²¹ Gudgin, *Military Intelligence: The British Story*, p 21.

Put a different way, General Schwarzkopf more recently observed:

The great military victory we achieved in Desert Storm and the minimal losses sustained by US and Coalition forces can be directly attributed to the excellent intelligence picture we had on the Iraqis.²²

The intelligence estimate is, therefore, a unique contribution to the Air Commander. On one hand the intelligence staff are simply part of a large team, another tool in the commander's toolbox. Along with operations, logistics, engineering, administration, legal, and security considerations, intelligence is a component of a broader machinery which contributes to the commander's planning. On the other hand, by virtue of the estimate, intelligence has a unique role to play. While the contribution by other staff predominantly revolves around his own capabilities, the intelligence contribution is likely to be the air commander's primary source of intelligence on the enemy, particularly in the planning stages of a campaign. Indeed, the intelligence officer is making the most significant contribution if he represents the enemy on the air commander's staff.

This unique role is not to claim any special status for intelligence. But if the intelligence estimate is to be fully exploited - if intelligence is to be effectively disseminated by the air commander's 'enemy staff officer' - both the commander and his intelligence officer need to comprehend the strengths and weaknesses in the intelligence tool kit. This is often couched in terms of the commander/intelligence officer relationship.

THE COMMANDER'S INTELLIGENCE TOOL KIT

The challenge for the commander is how best to use the intelligence estimate and, in Australia, there are some unique concerns. The difficulty for commanders and intelligence staff, in a strategic environment in which there is no foreseeable threat, is to develop plans and doctrines for an adversary which does not exist. This places extra demands on intelligence agencies to provide realistic estimates about potential adversaries, to provide realistic models against which to exercise when no adversary exists and to be flexible enough, if battle eventuates, to produce credible intelligence. In this latter case, actual developments might not conform with any of the contingencies exercised during times of peace.

For a commander there may in fact be a temptation to imagine that, in Australia's strategic environment, there is not a great need for intelligence. Such things can pervade subordinate unit levels and can be difficult to eliminate in a peacetime training environment. A number of points should be raised against such thinking.

Intelligence will contribute to the picture Australian commanders have of themselves in relation to others. Australia's strategic circumstances require that intelligence and surveillance have a high priority. A thorough knowledge of trends and military

²² Schwarzkopf, General H. Norman, USA, Commander in Chief Central Command and Joint Force Commander Riyadh, quoted in Conduct of the Persian Gulf War (Title V Report), p 333.

capabilities in the region, and those which may impact on the region, provides a basis for judgments about our own military requirements and the time frame for their development.

More specifically, should battle eventuate, it is largely intelligence which will give the air commander an understanding of centres of gravity²³ against which he can most effectively direct air power, thereby reducing the overall campaign effort, and ultimately reducing losses of friendly forces. The most crucial centres of gravity are those which constitute the command structure of an enemy and the communications systems which support it. Examples from the 1991 Gulf War are those highlighted in the well publicised strikes against Iraq's command and control bunkers, its air force headquarters and the individual headquarters of each Republican Guard unit.

However, Gulf War examples of fixed and easily determined centres of gravity may not apply to Australia. More likely, the challenge for intelligence will be the need to provide the air commander with centre of gravity targets which may be highly mobile, scattered throughout areas of operations populated by friendly forces, and otherwise very elusive.

Finally, intelligence will greatly contribute to the air commander's knowledge of how the campaign against ground, air and naval targets has progressed. This may not always be a joyous task. In Korea, after attempting to conduct the second, less than successful, air interdiction campaign, Far Eastern Air Force intelligence had already admitted on 23 December 1951 that the communists 'have broken our railroad blockade of Pyongyang and [have] won ... the use of all rail arteries'.²⁴ However, what this intelligence allowed was a redirection in the air commander's plan and, arguably, a better use of air assets in a better interdiction campaign than had previously been flown.

Intelligence staff with new intelligence which may change a component of the air campaign plan²⁵ need to be sure of their information and have absolute confidence in the proper functioning of the intelligence cycle. So, too, does the commander need to have enough confidence in his intelligence staff to be able to receive intelligence which alters his plan. The dilemma of contrary intelligence can be mitigated by the air commander's past experience of reliable intelligence and the intelligence officer's understanding of the commander's responsibilities.

The commander's confidence in contrary intelligence will also lie on his understanding that his principal task is not to make intelligence assessments. If he tries to conduct his own analysis the commander creates a number of problems for himself. Time constraints may mean he cannot make any in-depth analysis at all. Perhaps worse, in attempting any analysis beyond that of receiving collateral information, the commander might succumb to preconceived notions, assumptions or prejudice with the result that his conclusions could be wrong. This is especially so in combat for:

²³ Centres of gravity can be described as those points which, if destroyed, reduce or even remove altogether the ability of the enemy to fight.

²⁴ Armitage, M.J. and Mason R.A., *Air Power in the Nuclear Age, 1945-84: Theory and Practice*, Macmillan, London, 1985. p 37.

²⁵ Stephens and Waters, 'Operational Level Doctrine: Planning An Air Campaign', p 11.

when a welter of fragmentary evidence offers support to various interpretations, ambiguity [created by the battle] is exploited by wishfulness. The greater the ambiguity, the greater the impact of preconceptions. There is some inverse relation between the importance of an assessment (when certainty is high) and the likelihood that it will be accurate.²⁶

Ideally, a separate intelligence staff will be able to minimise this fragmentary evidence by placing it against a broader and deeper knowledge of the enemy than the commander is able. However, even the analytical bodies conducting this sort of work also need to guard against producing assessments guided by wishful thinking rather than a commander's needs.

This is important because the needs of the air commander are fulfilled more effectively if the commander appreciates the active role he plays in directing the cycle. Layton recorded the way in which Admiral Nimitz directed his intelligence staff during World War II:

In preparation for the hit-and-run carrier strikes in the Marshalls and Gilberts, Nimitz listed his critical intelligence requirements. We had to track the deployment of enemy carriers and carrier strike forces, the disposition and strength of the Fourth Fleet ... Accurate information was needed on the deployment and strength of the Twenty-fourth Air Force [and] Nimitz also wanted to be kept informed of the enemy reinforcements that were likely to reach the area by the end of January.²⁷

The activities of the intelligence officer will be directed by clear instructions and guidance from the air commander who should place his needs in order of priority, emphasising those which directly impinge on his conduct of the mission, and place them within a time constraint. In turn, the air commander's confidence in the intelligence process can only be raised when intelligence is disseminated to meet that unambiguous direction.

That confidence will only be strengthened as the commander receives the benefit to the broader and deeper knowledge of the enemy contained within the intelligence community. The air commander, through effective intelligence dissemination by his intelligence staff, will learn that he is able to tap into a far wider range of expertise that extends beyond the immediacy of his own headquarters staff. Ideally, such confidence in the utility of the intelligence resource will also flow down to the Force Element Groups. Here the commander, through exercising his direction of the intelligence process and receiving the direct benefits of his input, will learn best the strengths and limitations of the many aspects of the intelligence discipline.

Failing to gain confidence in the intelligence process at any level of command will be detrimental to the planning process. A useful example of this problem is found in the handling of Convoy PQ17. In World War II, Russia was supplied by the allies through Teheran, Vladivostok and Murmansk. In 1942, a convoy heading to the latter, convoy PQ17, was dispersed and its protection removed by Admiral Pound. Pound believed

²⁶ Betts, 'Analysis', *War and Decision: Why Intelligence Failures are Inevitable*, p 41.

²⁷ Layton, *And I Was There: Pearl Harbor and Midway-Breaking the Secrets*, p 357.

that the German battleship Tirpitz had left its anchorage and was planning to attack the convoy. However, through Enigma,²⁸ Pound's intelligence staff, represented by Denning, acquired enough intercepted radio traffic to deduce accurately that Tirpitz was in port and that the convoy need not be dispersed. Unfortunately, Pound had no real understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the signals intelligence at his disposal. He was not able, therefore, to exploit the material to its full potential or to conduct a risk analysis from an information base in which he had confidence. Most telling in this case was Pound's inability to trust the intuition and skill of Denning, which was ignored. Pound dispersed the convoy which was subsequently severely mauled by U-boats and aircraft. Of the original 34 merchantmen only 11 arrived at Murmansk.

In summary, senior officers who have to take the final responsibility, must not only fully understand the sources, methods and extent of their intelligence organisation, but also personally know their intelligence officers sufficiently well to assess their capabilities and to rely on their assessments or, if they are not satisfied, replace them.²⁹

UNDERSTANDING THE COMMANDER'S RESPONSIBILITIES

In his examination of convoy PQ17, Beesly hinted at the responsible role of the intelligence officer on the commander's staff. The confidence which the commander has in the intelligence being contributed to his plan - the dissemination of intelligence - will in part be determined by the confidence he has in his intelligence officer.

What does the intelligence officer have to do to ensure that confidence is warranted? Firstly, the intelligence officer needs to be fully conversant with the commander's intentions. If the intelligence officer has a faulty or incomplete understanding of the commander's mission and aims, and of the unique nature and problems of air operations, and associated command and decision making mechanisms, he is unlikely to interpret direction such that the most suitable intelligence is disseminated.

Secondly, the intelligence officer must have a good understanding of the resources that he can draw on in the intelligence community and in the RAAF. He must know how to set in motion a cycle which is responsive to the intelligence requirements of his commander. The intelligence officer must also understand the strengths and weaknesses of his own profession, above all encouraging his commander to understand that, while the intelligence estimate can contribute much, intelligence is not a panacea.³⁰ Furthermore, an intelligence officer, as well as his commander, should understand that accurate intelligence alone will not win the battle but that the correct blending of intelligence and operations is fundamental to success.

²⁸ Enigma was the German encryption/decryption machine reverse engineered by the Allies, most notably the Polish, French and British, in the early days of World War II.

²⁹ Beesly, P., 'Convoy PQ17: A study of Intelligence and Decision Making', *Intelligence and National Security*, Volume 5, Number 2, April 1990, p 318.

³⁰ Intelligence should never be viewed as a panacea. Before the battle, information can be ambiguous and thus assessments provided by intelligence can lead to errors in the air commander's plan.

A most useful contribution in ensuring that intelligence is disseminated is for the intelligence officer to have a good knowledge of the commander as a person. General de Guingard, one of Montgomery's intelligence advisers, noted this about the relationship with the commander:

It was my task, as I saw it, to know my chief, to know how his mind worked so well that I could happily deputise for him in his absence, either in the field or at the conferences he so hated to attend; to know him so well that I might sense when to put forward a suggestion and when to bide my time; when to wake him or let him sleep.³¹

Apart from that 'knowledge of the chief' which will only come with time and is grounded in accurate assessments anyway, possibly the most profitable undertaking of the intelligence officer is simply that of ensuring accurate and timely intelligence is disseminated in the estimate, during the planning phase as well as during the conduct of the operation. In the latter, the greatest demands placed on intelligence staffs are those relating to demands for details of the enemy's dispositions, performance, state of equipment, communications effectiveness, rates of effort, capabilities, damage to infrastructure and so on. (In part, it is a process of validation of earlier intelligence assessments.) The commander will need to know the effectiveness of enemy operations in order to conduct his own counter operations. Above all, the commander needs to receive timely intelligence which is relevant to his strategic assessment and his concept of operations. In any battle, but especially in an air campaign, even accurate intelligence can perish rapidly. The requirement for constant updating of intelligence underscores the vital need for its dissemination to the commander. Josef Goebbels' diary entry for 10 September 1943, after the Citadel operation at Kursk was ground to a halt by Soviet armour, reflects the failure to develop the intelligence assessment as the battle proceeds. He noted: 'The depressing thing is that we haven't the faintest idea what Stalin has left in the way of reserves.'³²

SUMMARY

The function of disseminating timely, reliable and accurate intelligence is a complex one. It relies on a balanced, well coordinated intelligence cycle. But it does not simply concern the flow of information through the component stages of the cycle. The human element is also a vital element in the provision of intelligence to air commanders at any level, assisting them to plan and execute the air campaign.

In all this, dissemination is a vital component, taking intelligence from the realm of ideas and academic study into support for real outcomes and objectives. In the RAAF, the AIC links collection and analytical agencies to ACAUST, injecting indigenous 'corporate knowledge' along with results of formal analysis and collection. While it is only part of the input which a commander receives from his staff, that information which is provided by the intelligence officer is unique, contributing through the intelligence estimate the greatest portion of knowledge the air commander is likely to

³¹ Handel, M.I., 'Intelligence and Military Operations', *Intelligence and National Security*, Volume 5, April 1990, Number 2, p 29.

³² Cross, R., *Citadel: The Battle of Kursk*, Michael O'Mara Books Ltd., London, 1993, p 219.

have on the enemy. In this the intelligence officer performs the function of being an enemy staff officer on the commander's staff.

However, it is ultimately the commander who stands or falls on command decisions. On one hand it is imperative that he gains as much intelligence as he can through his specialist intelligence staff. On the other hand, it is equally important that he has an understanding of the strengths and weaknesses inherent in the intelligence process, but especially of his role in the intelligence function through his provision of unambiguous direction.

But just as the commander should understand intelligence as a planning tool, so too the intelligence officer must understand the objectives of the commander, and the limitations and capabilities of the operations staff. The intelligence officer must understand the commander's area of responsibility in a campaign, comprehend the commander's objectives, and fully grasp how the commander plans to meet these. He must know the strengths and weaknesses of the operations in which he is involved. In this way, he can best identify specific information requirements which are critical to the commander's plans.

The challenge for the intelligence contribution to the planning staff is that intelligence, originating from accurate direction, is collected, analysed but, above all, disseminated. For the intelligence officer this means his active involvement in a process which is subjected to all the vagaries of air operations, but which, if properly applied, will ensure present and future RAAF aviators will never find themselves in a position akin that of Flight Lieutenant Plenty in 1941.