Note from the Editor in Chief

This article inaugurates *Parameters* Now, a new venue from the US Army War College Press designed to deliver immediately relevant research to senior leaders, practitioners, and policymakers. Whereas *Parameters* traditionally emphasizes strategic analysis and conceptual scholarship, *Parameters* Now focuses on urgent national security questions—capturing lessons in real time and translating them into insights usable by today's force.

In this first edition, Major General Richard Appelhans and his coauthors examine the evolution of the Intelligence and Electronic Warfare Battalion–Next in the context of large-scale combat operations. More operationally focused than most *Parameters* articles, this piece fills a critical gap in emerging technology and force design research. Drawing on current experimentation, doctrinal adaptation, and lessons from the Russia-Ukraine War, it provides the broader research and policy community with timely insight into how the Army is applying hard-earned lessons to reorganize for intelligence dominance in contested, multidomain conflict.

Fighting for Intelligence in Large-Scale Combat Operations: The Role of the Intelligence and Electronic Warfare Battalion–Next

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ABSTRACT: This article contends the US Army's proposed intelligence and electronic warfare battalion–next concept constitutes an organizational solution essential for achieving intelligence dominance in large-scale combat operations. Transcending legacy formations that are predicated on specific intelligence disciplines, this innovative design furnishes a functionally oriented, modular, and layered architecture that affords the requisite analytic capabilities, agility, and endurance for the contemporary battlefield. The analysis incorporates lessons extracted from the Russia-Ukraine War, US Army experimental endeavors, assessments of peer threats, and doctrinal evolutions, thereby providing readers of US Army War College Press publications with vital insights into how the Army is adapting to the future of warfare.

Keywords: military intelligence, large-scale combat operations, electronic warfare, war fighting, intelligence and electronic warfare battalion–next

Introduction

The US Army confronts a modern operational environment defined by complexity, contestation across all war-fighting domains, and fluidity driven by technological advancements. Potential adversaries leverage every aspect of technology to gain a decisive advantage on the battlefield. As the Army transforms and adapts to these threats, the military intelligence (MI) enterprise must evolve as well, delivering capabilities and capacity at the speed of relevance to ensure commanders make timely and informed decisions. During large-scale combat operations (LSCO), the force that can sense first, make informed decisions faster, and act with precision will ultimately prevail.

This article addresses the evolution of Army MI formations, the needs of current formations, and proposed solutions within the new intelligence and electronic warfare (IEW) battalion–next division. To provide background information, this article examines how MI has undergone multiple organizational changes to keep up with the evolving needs of maneuver divisions. Part 1 describes how current developments in technology and doctrine have demonstrated three key needs that are not met in the current IEW battalion: (1) increased analytic capability, (2) greater intelligence-system agility, and (3) improved intelligence-system endurance. To answer these needs, part 2 articulates three solutions: (1) rebalancing for more analytics, (2) transitioning to functionally focused teams, and (3) creating layered, modular capability. These design updates would posture the Army's IEW battalion–next to meet the critical demands of LSCO and enable victory on tomorrow's battlefield.

Background

For the last 50 years, the Army has continuously evolved its approach to designing and resourcing intelligence support for the war fighter. The Army's 1975 Intelligence Organization and Stationing Study assessed attaching separate, discipline-specific intelligence units to divisions was dangerously inefficient, concluding divisions required a consolidated MI battalion.[1] This assessment led to the creation of combat electronic warfare intelligence (CEWI) battalions in the early 1980s, which collocated the distinct disciplines of signals intelligence (SIGINT), geospatial intelligence (GEOINT), and human intelligence (HUMINT) at the division level.[2] Nevertheless, this structure maintained separate intelligence chains that fed into all-source analysis late in the workflow.[3] Whereas this approach produced

detailed assessments, it required both permissive environments and extended timelines to be effective.[4]

The CEWI battalions were a strong improvement, but they were by no means perfect, with some analysts observing the Army had "created large, complex intelligence units that do not move fast, are very vulnerable targets and do not effectively deliver the required intelligence to the combat commander."[5] In the early 2000s, as the Army shifted from division- to brigade-centric operations, these CEWI battalions were transformed into brigade-combat-team MI companies (MICOs).[6] As shown in figure 1, this structural transformation embedded a MICO as an organic element within each brigade combat team, the Army's new primary tactical formation. The figure depicts the historical shift of tactical intelligence formations from the division-centric CEWI model to the brigade-centric MICO, the current two-tiered structure, and the proposed standardization under the IEW battalion–next concept.
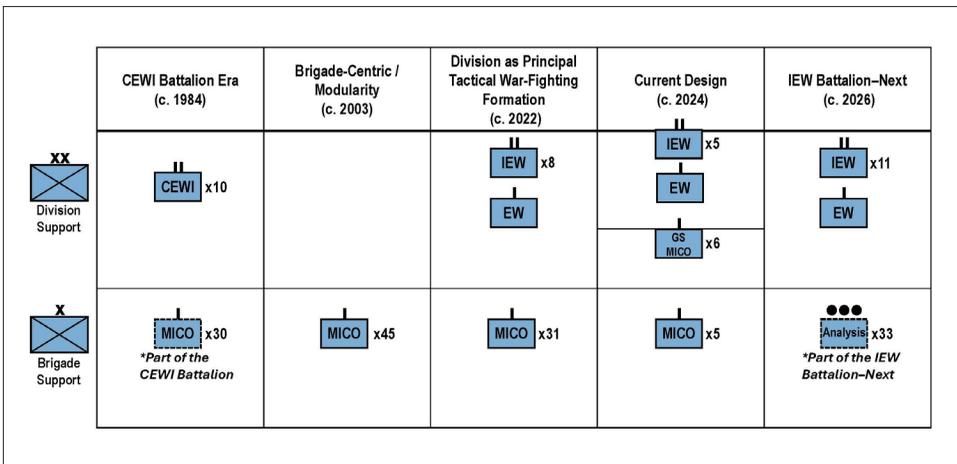

Figure 1. Historical development of US Army tactical intelligence formations

Although the structural transformation of the 2000s bolstered MI support in the close fight, proving effective in counterinsurgency operations, it concurrently limited a division's ability to sense and analyze threats in the deep area. Since the 2022 doctrinal refocus on the division as the "Army's principal tactical warfighting formation," MI has undergone several years of rapid restructuring, experimentation, and assessment to keep pace with the changing character of war.[7] This effort has accounted for evolving technologies such as unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), artificial intelligence and machine learning (AI/ML), and space-based sensing, aiming to find the optimal balance between close- and deep-area operations and between collection and analysis capabilities. This article reflects these hard-earned lessons, detailing how Army

MI is changing—at echelons corps and below (ECB)—to deliver intelligence support for situational understanding, targeting, and protection.

The current MI force structure at ECB reveals three key needs: increased analytic capability, greater intelligence-system agility, and improved intelligence-system endurance. Like the Army's divisions and brigades, MI formations have undergone a series of rapid changes in recent years—changes driven by technological advances, manning considerations, and shifting strategic priorities. Today, only five of the Army's 11 active-duty divisions are resourced with an IEW battalion, with the other six possessing a general-support MICO that lacks significant analytic capability.[8] Additionally, most maneuver brigades lack the analytic capacity required to process the robust, close-in sensing data emerging from the proliferation of small UAVs and electronic warfare (EW) systems. Furthermore, the Russia-Ukraine War has starkly demonstrated the contested nature of the modern battlefield, which necessitates far greater intelligence-system speed and survivability.

Prone to significant battlefield losses, LSCO are fast-paced operations fraught with denied, degraded, intermittent, and limited (DDIL) communications. Whereas the current IEW battalion, with its single-discipline intelligence chains, provides detailed intelligence, it does so too slowly to meet the demands of LSCO.[9] Moreover, the battalion's complex organization presents too many single points of failure to ensure sustained operations in high-intensity combat.[10] The IEW battalion–next is the organizational solution designed to address these needs, posturing all the Army's divisions for intelligence dominance in modern LSCO.

Part 1 – Hard Lessons:
What Operational Reality Reveals About Current MI Force Design

The three key needs identified earlier reflect deficiencies in current MI force design. These deficiencies are not theoretical constructs; rather, they are gaps repeatedly validated by a body of evidence drawn from observations of combat operations, Army experimentation exercises, peer-threat analysis, and doctrinal assessments. Table 1 provides a summary of the key observations informing the needs in MI force design and shaping the refinement of those needs.

The three needs in MI force design—increased analytic capability, greater agility, and improved endurance—drove the redesign of the IEW battalion. Each need maps directly to the intelligence war-fighting tasks in FM 2-0 or the tenets of operations in FM 3-0: (1) analytic capacity enables depth by converting proliferated data into actionable intelligence; (2) agility enables rapid adaptation

and convergence under changing conditions; and (3) endurance sustains intelligence support despite DDIL communications and battlefield attrition.[11]

Table 1. Drivers of change: inputs informing the needs in current MI force design
(Source: Created by authors)

Input/Driver	Need One: Increased Analytics	Need Two: Greater Agility	Need Three: Improved Endurance
Russia-Ukraine War	Showed intelligence teams were fragile under attrition and could not sustain operations.[12]	Centralized intelligence chains underperform federated webs under battlefield losses.[13]	Intel-chains significantly underperform intelligence webs because of battlefield losses.[14]
Revolution in Military Affairs (UAVs)	Highlighted collection-analytic mismatch; sensor growth outpaced analytic throughput.[15]	Demonstrates the obsolescence of discipline-centric organizations in fused, multidomain environments.[16]	Cyber and UAV saturation overwhelmed centralized teams.[17]
Capabilities of the People's Republic of China	—	—	Long-range fires and DDIL capabilities place command posts and intelligence nodes at risk; centralized MI teams lack survivability and depth.[18]
Transformation in Contact / Experimentation	Demonstrates the proliferation of collection in the close area, but insufficient analytic capacity.[19]	Reveals MI formations are too complex and not easily organized for tasks or understood by commanders.[20]	Observed loss of capability when key platforms or personnel were degraded.[21]
Doctrine (Field Manual [FM] 3-0, FM 2-0, for example)	Establishes the division's focus on deep operations to set conditions for the close fight.[22]	Calls for convergence and integration; legacy MI design still favors stovepipes.[23]	Highlights the need for modular, survivable teams in contested environments.[24]
Guidance by Army Senior Leaders	Prioritizes decision dominance and deep effects; current balance favors close-fight intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) over analysis capacity.[25]	Stresses intuitive, easily tasked formations and streamlined structures.[26]	Emphasizes the need for endurance through layered capability.[27]

Need One: Increased Analytics

Existing IEW battalions (division) and general-support MICOs need structural rebalancing to improve analytic capability and capacity. Intelligence war-fighting tasks 2.2 (support to situational understanding) and 2.4 (intelligence support to targeting) fundamentally depend on the analytic capacity to convert proliferating data into actionable intelligence.[28] Drawing on transformation-in-contact exercises, Lieutenant Colonel William Swafford, G-2 of the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), states "the current MI force design lacks sufficient all-source analytic capacity at both the division and brigade levels to meet the commander's needs for situational understanding and targeting."[29] An after-action review of exercise Operation Lethal Eagle 25.1 observed the high number of UAVs overwhelmed the division with information, noting "too few analysts" were available—even though the division had an IEW battalion.[30] The 1st Infantry Division, which has only a general-support MICO, noted an even worse analytical shortfall in its January 2025 Division in the Dirt exercise.[31]

This analytical shortfall reflects a legacy MI posture optimized for close-area collection and permissive environments. In the last three years, the Army has fielded large numbers of UAVs and other sensors that have proliferated the battlespace, but Army MI has not rebalanced and synchronized its analytical capacity to process the increase in collected data. Today, formations collect far more raw data than they can exploit. This imbalance leaves commanders oversaturated with information but lacking the intelligence required to enable situational understanding, targeting, and protection.[32]

This structural issue already manifests itself across modern battlefields and training environments. In the Russia-Ukraine War, the scale of UAV employment has reshaped both the character and consequences of combat, highlighting the need to analyze the vast volume of data collected by tactical sensors. In 2025, Ukrainian forces aimed to employ approximately four million UAVs, integrating them across all echelons and war-fighting functions.[33] These systems—ranging from quadcopters to loitering munitions—now saturate the battlespace, with entire engagements conducted using unmanned platforms and UAV presence described as nearly constant. In some areas, UAVs also account for an estimated 60 to 70 percent of casualties in some areas.[34]

Increased tactical UAV sensing highlights the need for additional analytic capability in maneuver brigades. During Operation Lethal Eagle 25.1, the 101st Airborne Division's 2nd Mobile Brigade Combat Team demonstrated the integration of maneuver-controlled UAVs revealed a clear need for greater MI analytic capacity, with the volume of ISR feeds exceeding the processing

capacity of available analysts.[35] Whereas tools such as the Army Intelligence Data Platform (AIDP) improved data analysis and the conversion of information into intelligence, many workflows still relied on manual data processing, which proved difficult to scale for time-sensitive targeting and fires integration.[36]

Taken together, these lessons highlight a consistent structural flaw: Current MI formations at ECB lack sufficient analytical resourcing. Whereas the dramatic increase in sensors—particularly in the close fight— has greatly improved the Army's ability to see the battlefield, the proliferation of combat information has outpaced the ability of intelligence formations to process, analyze, and fuse that information. In sensor-rich formations with insufficient analytical capacity, the ability to support targeting and decision making at tempo is increasingly difficult. Until analytical capacity is rebalanced and synchronized with maneuver-sensor investment, MI formations will remain challenged to exploit ISR fully. Additionally, addressing this challenge is not a task AI/ML can solve alone; rather, the solution requires trained personnel and effective human-machine teaming.[37]

Need Two: Greater Agility

Current MI formations at ECB are organized around internal processes and disciplines, such as SIGINT, GEOINT, HUMINT, open-source intelligence, and counterintelligence.[38] This rigid, discipline-based structure is at odds with the operational tenet of agility, which demands the capacity to react and adjust to changing situations faster than the enemy.[39] Whereas the existing structure is effective at managing technical expertise, supporting strategic analysis, and facilitating career development in permissive environments, this structure is insufficiently agile and adaptable to support the dynamic demands of LSCO.

This limited agility results in a fragmented capability, wherein each intelligence discipline operates in relative isolation, under separate chains of technical control. Cross-discipline integration and all-source analysis occur too late in the process to be effective. Consequently, commanders receive disjointed or delayed assessments, and the process of organizing MI elements to meet emerging operational requirements becomes unacceptably cumbersome.

Army doctrine places the concept of convergence at the center of multidomain operations. This concept requires commanders to synchronize fires, maneuver, and decision advantage across echelons and formations, in the appropriate domains, and at the speed of relevance.[40] The tenet of convergence is central to multidomain operations. It requires commanders to integrate their capabilities across formations at echelon and synchronize their application in time, space, and purpose faster than the enemy can effectively react. Intelligence capabilities

are essential to achieving this outcome; without them, convergence is not possible.[41] To achieve convergence, the intelligence discipline must be able to fuse information across all domains and support rapid decision making at the point of need.

Explicitly supporting this operational need, FM 2-0 frames intelligence as a war-fighting function intended to provide commanders and staffs with timely, relevant, and predictive intelligence that directly supports operations.[42] Doctrine calls for integrating intelligence outputs into the operational framework as a unified war-fighting function designed to achieve specific tasks, rather than as separate technical streams.[43] This guidance reflects a broader truth echoed in operational feedback—commanders do not need technical products; they need timely, relevant intelligence that answers their priority information requirements, identifies targets, and helps protect the force.

The extreme conditions of future combat underscore these doctrinal imperatives. The ongoing Russia-Ukraine War offers compelling evidence of how intelligence fusion, decentralized ISR integration, and functional alignment are critical to enabling tempo and survivability in large-scale combat.[44] The war demonstrates functionally organized forces capable of integrating information, space, and intelligence assets consistently outperform compartmentalized, discipline-based structures that inhibit synchronization across domains. Ukrainian forces—facing severe operational constraints—have shifted to a model of decentralized, bottom-up intelligence fusion.[45] Targeting and ISR activities are frequently integrated at or near the point of employment, enabling commanders to act decisively without awaiting higher-echelon validation. This approach is particularly evident in Ukraine's widespread use of small UAVs, tactical EW, commercial sensors, and the Delta situational awareness system.[46] The Delta architecture reflects the key attributes the US Army must achieve to enable convergence: fused ISR, decentralized access, and accelerated speed to decision.

In summary, current discipline-based formations at ECB—though effective in permissive, strategic, and counterinsurgency operations—are too slow and inefficient for the demands of LSCO. The formations' fragmented, stovepiped approach delays fusion, complicates tasking, and fails to deliver the agility, speed, and cohesion required for convergence. Army doctrine and real-world operational experience both arrive at the same conclusion: Tactical MI formations must transition from managing disciplines to delivering functionally focused intelligence.

Need Three: Improved Endurance

Current MI formations are not designed for endurance in sustained LSCO, in which significant battlefield losses and DDIL command and control are expected conditions.[47] This reliance on brittle, single-point-of-failure formations is fundamentally at odds with the operational tenet of endurance—the ability to sustain intelligence support and maintain momentum despite battlefield attrition and degradation.[48] Existing MI teams are highly specialized, niche elements designed to support narrow technical functions within discipline-specific intelligence chains. As a result, the loss of even a single critical node can severely compromise the IEW battalion's ability to execute its core intelligence war-fighting tasks of supporting situational understanding, targeting, and protection.[49]

The Russia-Ukraine War has repeatedly exposed the vulnerability of formations that cannot sustain intelligence operations in LSCO.[50] Belligerents on both sides have experienced significant operational breakdowns when their centralized intelligence nodes have been degraded or destroyed.[51] The Armed Forces of Ukraine, learning from catastrophic early losses, rapidly transitioned to a decentralized, federated intelligence architecture.[52] Rather than relying on large, consolidated intelligence centers, Ukrainian forces fielded smaller, modular teams with layered command and control and tactical reachback, thereby preserving essential functionality even while under persistent attack.[53] These adaptations markedly increased system survivability and improved the speed and quality of decision making under pressure.

Army experimentation reveals comparable vulnerabilities. In July 2025, during the 101st Airborne Division's Joint Readiness Training Center rotation 25-07, experimentation revealed deficiencies within Army MI formations operating under degraded conditions.[54] The division reported a severe disruption in intelligence continuity of operations when processing, exploitation, and dissemination cells were degraded or notionally destroyed. Furthermore, the survivability of command-post-based intelligence nodes constrained the division's ability to maintain an effective tempo of deep operations.[55] These disruptions delayed critical decisions and reduced situational understanding in support of targeting. According to the exercise's formal after-action review, the current IEW battalion lacks the redundancy, dispersion, and flexibility required to deliver intelligence endurance when communications are contested or when key personnel and systems are attrited.

The operational lesson is clear: Brittle MI architectures are unlikely to survive first contact. Structural endurance—not simply technical overmatch—determines whether a formation can consistently deliver intelligence at the time

and place of need. This vulnerability of discipline-based stovepipes presents a known target for peer adversaries that fully understand intelligence drives operations. For example, the People's Republic of China (hereafter, China) emphasizes the dismantling of an adversary's ISR and command-and-control infrastructure in the opening phases of a conflict.[56]

China's Threat Characterization

China prioritizes the development and fielding of capabilities designed to create significant dilemmas for US forces. In its 2025 report to Congress, the US Department of War identified the People's Liberation Army's focus on EW capabilities—weapons that can impose DDIL conditions against US communications and sensors.[57] Keenly aware of the time-and-distance challenges confronting the United States in the Indo-Pacific region, China continues to develop capabilities intended to disrupt US power projection and combat operations. In an April 2025 testimony, General B. Chance Saltzman, chief of space operations of the United States Space Force, attested China has made substantial investments in a suite of anti-satellite capabilities.[58] Furthermore, China has demonstrated a capability to sever vital strategic undersea communications cables.[59] Such measures are designed to degrade US operations critically, from the outset of a conflict. Finally, China widely employs short-range ballistic missiles with the range, intent, and magazine depth to place corps and division command posts at extreme risk.[60]

These threats demand an intelligence formation capable of providing enduring support while operating under persistent DDIL conditions and battlefield losses. The IEW battalion—next is specifically designed to meet this requirement. Within the proposed formation, the intelligence data team (IDT), described later in this article, mitigates the operational impacts of DDIL. The collection integration and assessment team (CIAT), also described later, enables the integration of organic combat information from maneuver sensors when remote-sensing capabilities are disrupted or denied. Concurrently, the formation's numerous, distributed multidiscipline analysis teams (MDATs) provide a layered, interoperable analytic capability engineered to insulate the force from the loss of individual nodes.

The three needs in MI force design—analytic rebalance, increased intelligence-system agility, and enhanced system endurance—reflect distinct organizational deficiencies. Whereas these deficiencies are distinct, they share a common, critical consequence—limiting Army MI's delivery of timely, integrated, and actionable intelligence in LSCO. Operational lessons, strategic competition, evolving technology, and doctrinal modernization clearly indicate the current force design is no longer tenable. The next section outlines how the US Army Intelligence Center of Excellence has designed the IEW battalion–next to overcome this challenge within available manning and resourcing. This new intelligence formation is engineered to deliver greater analytic capability, agility, and endurance, functionally aligned with the demands of multidomain conflict.

Part 2:
Deliverables of IEW Battalion–Next

The IEW battalion–next is more than a structural rearrangement; it is an operational package designed to close the three persistent intelligence needs in large-scale combat. Each redesign change converts a specific shortfall into a measurable capability. First, the redesign increases analytic capability by rebalancing personnel, thus ensuring the IEW battalion–next leverages pervasive sensing to deliver actionable intelligence in support of commanders. Second, the redesign improves agility by shifting organizational priorities away from managing disciplines and toward producing fused intelligence that supports decisive action. Finally, the redesign creates endurance by introducing modular, layered architectures that preserve continuity when systems or nodes are degraded.

Figure 2 depicts the IEW battalion–next design. Centered around standardized functional teams, commanders can task-organize based on intent, the formation consists of four subordinate line companies—analysis and exploitation company, collection company, tactical intelligence company, and EW company. The analysis and exploitation company supports the division headquarters and G-2, providing analytic capacity focused on the division's deep fight. The collection company delivers SIGINT and HUMINT capabilities to enable situational understanding and targeting at the division echelon. The tactical intelligence company provides analytic support aligned with allocation to brigades. The EW company provides division-level EW support to augment brigade capabilities and enhance electromagnetic spectrum (EMS) sensing across the intelligence enterprise.

Overall, this transformation enables commanders to seize and hold the initiative across domains and echelons, shortens sensortoshooter timelines, and increases the resilience of the intelligence enterprise when losses and disruptions occur. In short, the IEW battalion–next turns doctrinal intent and lessons learned into intelligence deliverables in combat—situational understanding, targeting support, and protection support.
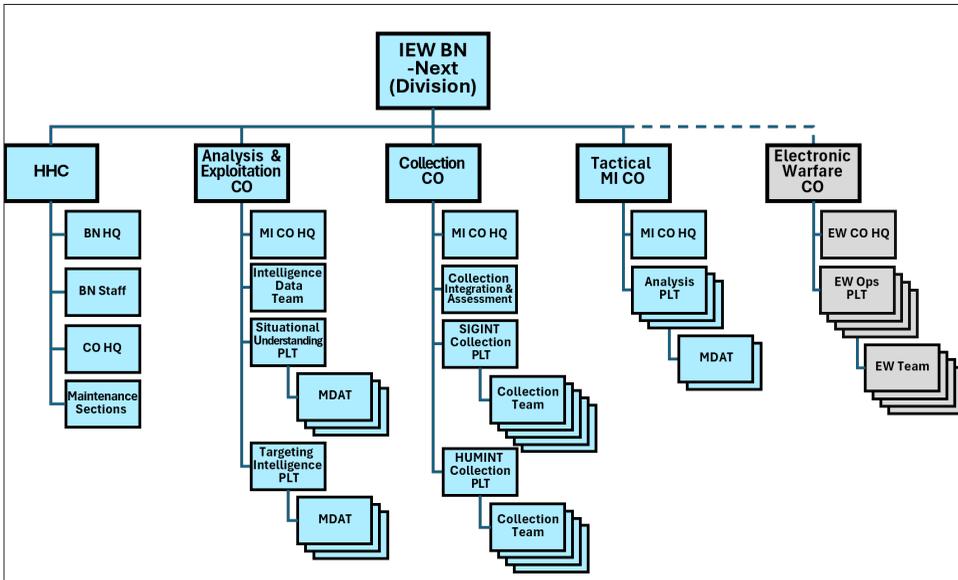

Figure 2. Organizational design of IEW battalion–next (division)

Solution One: Balancing Analytics and Collection

The IEW battalion–next explicitly focuses on providing analysis to deliver situational understanding, targeting support, and protection support. The battalion clearly aligns its companies to deliver either analysis or collection (figure 2). This battalion structure aims to balance capabilities for the division's deep and close areas. Additionally, the structure accounts for, and seeks to complement, the availability of close-area sensing from maneuver UAVs and EW teams (most combat sensors are not included in figure 2).

The analysis and exploitation company delivers six MDATs, which are designed to work for the division's G-2 and analysis-and-control element, leveraging top-secret-capable systems, such as the Tactical Intelligence Targeting Access Node. The company integrates and analyzes collected data from national, Joint, theater, and corps echelons, addressing the division commander's requirements. In support of G-2, the company is primarily designed to provide intelligence support for division deep operations.

The collection company provides organic SIGINT and HUMINT collection capability. Compared with the previous design, this new formation consolidates all MI information collection into a single company. Complementing the close-area EMS capability of the EW company, the collection company focuses on SIGINT processing and deep-area collection.

The tactical intelligence company provides additional analytic capacity, supporting subordinate brigades. The company's six MDATs–situational understanding (described later) use AI/ML to provide analysis and augment brigade S-2 sections in leveraging pervasive UAV sensing, EW sensing, and other combat information. Optimized to deliver situational understanding, these flexible teams are also capable of providing intelligence support to targeting, subject to brigade needs. The tactical intelligence company directly addresses the repeated assessment of maneuver brigades lacking analytic capacity. In support of brigades, this company is designed to provide intelligence support for the division's close fight.[61]

The IEW battalion–next will soon begin fielding organic EW companies. The inclusion of EW as a maneuverable, task-organized capability reflects an operational reality: The effectiveness of intelligence in LSCO is inseparable from control over the EMS. In contested environments, EW is not merely an enabling function—EW is a decisive contributor to situational understanding, targeting, and protection. These companies will provide capabilities in electronic support, electronic attack, and electronic protection, in the form of 16 EW teams.[62] These teams will significantly increase spectrum awareness, deliver jamming against enemy communication systems, and protect friendly networks from adversary EW activities. Furthermore, the teams' electronic support, coupled with the capabilities of SIGINT collectors in the collection company, will provide more EMS sensing at the division level. Crucially, the EW company is designed to collaborate with intelligence elements rather than as a subordinate function. Depending on mission and commander intent, EW capabilities may support maneuver brigades and electromagnetic protection. The IEW battalion–next design enables this interaction without prescribing rigid command relationships, preserving flexibility for the commander to employ EW as a maneuver capability while ensuring electromagnetic sensing and effects are fused rapidly with other intelligence sources. Electronic warfare teams are aligned with MDATs, the collection company, and the intelligence data team to ensure electromagnetic sensing and effects are rapidly fused with other intelligence sources.[63] This integration enables faster identification of targets, improved correlation of adversary signatures, and more precise employment of effects across domains. This increased capability in EMS sensing and electronic attack, along with the greater analytic capacity delivered by the new

IEW battalion—next design, postures the division to dominate the EMS more effectively than ever before.[64] This posture aligns with lessons learned and best practices from the Russia-Ukraine War, in which EMS dominance has become a central focus.[65]

In 2025, Russia demonstrated the military utility of using specialized UAV units equipped with sophisticated capabilities, dedicated training, and focused intelligence support to widen the kill zone and target key Ukrainian capabilities.[66] Although not resourced in the current IEW battalion–next design, a potential new capability could involve creating a dedicated aerial-collection analysis unit. This formation could leverage SIGINT, moving-target indicators, and other intelligence capabilities for future UAV aerial collection and operations from the division's combat aviation brigade. This conceptual unit could allow divisions to replicate the capabilities and operations of Russian Rubicon units on the Ukrainian battlefield.

Vignette: Ukraine's UAVs

The authors interviewed a Ukrainian officer who described the increasing synergy and criticality of integrating UAVs and intelligence. The officer described one engagement in which a Russian unit set up decoys of a battery of 2S19 MSTA-Ss (152mm self-propelled howitzers) complete with thermal and radio emissions. The Russian unit then used a real howitzer to fire live rounds to bait Ukrainian forces before exfiltrating the decoy site. This tactic appeared designed to lure Ukrainian counterbattery fire (presumably for prepared Russian counter-counterbattery fire) and compel Ukrainian UAV forces to expend limited and valuable strike UAVs on the decoys. The Ukrainian officer emphasized, "You must have dedicated intelligence UAVs to validate the target. Strike UAVs alone are not enough of cost effective."[67]

This same officer described another tactic—the increasing use of UAVs for stay-behind sensing, which creatively overcomes limiting factors for battery life and loiter time. With this tactic, UAVs infiltrate well past the battle line, then stop flying to take up perches on buildings or to leave stay-behind sensors. Subsequently, these UAVs or sensors can monitor key areas of interest, such as avenues of approach or potential artillery firing points, or they can wait to ambush enemy targets (directly or by queuing another shooter). Here, the officer stressed, "You absolutely must have a human to validate AI auto-target recognition from UAVs."[68]

The IEW battalion–next is tailor-made to exploit this evolution in UAV-employed sensing. The battalion's MDATs provide ready teams to analyze collection from ISR UAVs or deeply positioned stay-behind sensors. The battalion is postured to incorporate an aerial-collection analysis unit to integrate aerial sensing further, especially in support of the division's deep fight. The addition of this unit recognizes reconnaissance elements from maneuver units will leverage their own shorter-range UAVs in the division close area.

The IEW battalion–next balances analytics and collection in both the close and deep areas of the division. The battalion leverages the evolution of sensing capabilities within MI and combat formations, as well as AI/ML for greater human-machine teaming. In summary, as stated by Lieutenant Colonel Swafford, "the IEW Battalion–Next addresses the current critical analytic capacity gap," while also providing an IEW battalion for every division.[69]

Solution Two: Functionally Focused Teams

The IEW battalion–next addresses the need for greater agility directly, both by organizing for effects rather than technical stovepipes and by simultaneously reducing organizational complexity. Instead of being structured around SIGINT, GEOINT, HUMINT, and other specialties, the battalion is built around streamlined MDATs supporting three key functions: situational understanding, targeting, and protection. This function-focused design reduces internal friction, accelerates fusion, and aligns intelligence outputs with the decisions commanders must make at tempo. Commanders are already seeing the difference in employment and readiness clarity. As noted by Lieutenant Colonel Erin Stevens, commander of the 302nd IEW Battalion (Division), "In the legacy MI design, commanders struggled to grasp unit-level training and readiness across soldiers, teams, and formations. The IEW battalion's new structure is far more intuitive for commanders—it clarifies capability, streamlines readiness reporting, and improves commanders' ability to employ intelligence forces decisively."[70]

Organically, MDATs are designed for fusion from the start rather than for coordination after the fact. Each team is structured to bolster and augment existing G-2 and S-2 sections, without depending on higher-echelon synthesis. Commanders can attach, reassign, or mass MDATs at the point of need. Human-machine teaming is integral: AI/ML tools handle ingestion, triage, correlation, and icon management at machine speed, whereas analysts apply judgment, context, validation, and command relevance.

Each standardized MDAT delivers one of the three core outputs of the intelligence war-fighting function.

- Multidiscipline analysis teams (MDATs)–situational understanding synthesize information from multiple sources to produce timely, fused assessments of the enemy, terrain, and operational environment. The teams' output enables commanders to answer priority intelligence requirements, anticipate adversary actions, recognize opportunities, and make informed decisions at speed.

- Multidiscipline analysis teams (MDATs)–Targeting identify, assess, and validate high-payoff targets across the deep, close, and support areas. These teams generate targetable intelligence that enables precision effects by feeding timely, corroborated cues to the fires-and-effects enterprise.

- Multidiscipline analysis teams (MDATs)–protection identify and assess threats to friendly forces, including enemy UAVs, satellite collection windows, long-range-strike preparations, and irregular activity in the rear area. The teams' products support early warning, force hardening, and employment of friendly deception measures.

Designed to operate independently in support of 24-hour operations, each MDAT is tasked and employed based on its functional mission—not as a subordinate element of a discipline stovepipe. This modularity allows commanders to tailor the employment of MDATs across the battlefield, massing analytic effects where and when they are most needed. Confirming this need, Major General Patrick J. Ellis, commanding general of the 4th Infantry Division, highlighted the challenge of operating without an IEW battalion: "Our multi-nodal construct stretches the intelligence warfighting function thin. The multi-nodal construct is what is going to allow us to be more survivable on the modern battlefield and the IEW BN – next gives us the right mix of capabilities to enable us to fight that way."[71]

The IDT and the CIAT support the MDATs and the intelligence fight for situational understanding. The IDT enforces data hygiene and standards across systems, sustaining a coherent common intelligence picture controlled by analysts, not sensors. The CIAT pulls in combat information—notably, proliferating video and telemetry from maneuvering small UAVs—and measures ISR effectiveness, closing low-yield collection and retasking to gaps revealed by analysis. Inside this workflow, the IDT and the CIAT employ AI/ML human-machine teaming to accelerate triage, correlation, and pattern detection, letting analysts spend time on analysis rather than sorting.

The IEW battalion–next fuses intelligence at the team level, breaking silos and allowing commanders to receive ready-to-use intelligence rapidly. This fusion is the core mechanism by which the battalion enables decision dominance, accelerates targeting, and enhances survivability—both in theory, and through its daily employment in the fight.

Solution Three: Modular, Layered Architecture

The third core deliverable of the IEW battalion–next directly addresses the need for increased intelligence-system endurance. Instead of being centered on fixed structures such as single-purpose nodes that fail hard under attrition or in DDIL environments, the battalion is built around flexible teams. Commanders can employ these teams independently or combine them to meet mission requirements, eliminating single points of failure and preserving intelligence continuity when systems are degraded, personnel are lost, or priorities shift at speed.

Modularity means each MDAT is largely self-sufficient in its function, delivering effects without relying on external fusion nodes or centralized analysis. Manned to sustain independent 24-hour operations, MDATs execute the full process for their assigned function—planning and collection integration, analysis and validation, and dissemination and assessment—operating forward, distributed, or in reachback as mission and risk dictate.

Each team is led by a warrant officer and is supported by soldiers from three different intelligence disciplines (for example, all-source intelligence, GEOINT, and SIGINT). This compositional overlap gives all MDAT types a moderate-to-high ability to perform one another's tasks. When conditions change, one team can reinforce or assume another's responsibilities, preserving coverage despite attrition, degraded communications, or rapid shifts in priority.

Layering is the deliberate dispersion of MDATs in depth—forward, distributed, and reachback—so no single loss removes a critical intelligence function from the fight. This design provides redundancy, operational reach, and scale, enabling the battalion to sustain effects across time, terrain, and mission sets without overreliance on any node. If a forward team is cut off, a distributed or reachback team immediately assumes the load with shared standards and common workflows; if systems are jammed or disrupted, another layer maintains the picture and the pace.

Modularity and layering shift the formation from centralized, discipline-centric architectures to a distributed, effects-oriented design that absorbs disruption and maintains tempo without organizational churn. Instead of depending on fragile, high-demand assets, commanders gain a catalog of interchangeable, effects-producing teams—trained, empowered, and employed to deliver decisive intelligence in support of maneuver and fires. The resulting formation is numerically redundant, functionally robust, operationally flexible, and built to deliver continuous intelligence support across the depth and

duration of large-scale combat. As Major General Curtis Taylor, commanding general of the 1st Armored Division, assessed based on operational employment, "Multidiscipline analysis teams [MDATs] are a proven concept that give divisions the agility and endurance to support Division and Brigade intelligence requirements."[72]

Conclusion—Road Ahead

The IEW battalion–next is more than a formation—it is a capability-based approach reflecting the Army's commitment to continuous learning, ensuring an enduring posture to fight and win in a new era of warfare. The battalion meets the demand for analytic capability, agility, and endurance in a contested, multidomain environment, aligning with the Army's evolving doctrine and lessons learned from combat and experimentation.

Organizational change is demanding but necessary, and transformation demands it. The IEW battalion–next is not a repackaged formation. This concept is a radically different way of fighting for intelligence—led by analysis, balanced between deep- and close-area support, and organized for delivering effects at the point of need. The battalion design avoids legacy patterns of complexity, vulnerable team structures, and close-collection bias— attributes punished on the modern battlefield.

By organizing around functional requirements—situational understanding, targeting, and protection—rather than legacy disciplines, the IEW battalion–next enables the intelligence war-fighting function to deliver effects with speed, depth, and resilience. The formation pairs disciplined tradecraft with human-machine teaming, as well as AI/ML ingesting and fusing high-volume feeds, enabling analysts to focus on analysis. The result is increased analytic capacity, survivable architecture, and operational reach required in LSCO— both for understanding the fight and for shaping it.

The IEW battalion–next is an adaptable formation with a path forward. Currently planned experimentation with the new formation will take place during the 82nd Airborne Division's rotation in the Division in the Dirt exercise. Additional assessments will occur during the 3rd Infantry Division's Warfighter 26-03 training event, the 4th Infantry Division's Concept Focused Warfighting Experiment, and the 101st Airborne Division's deployment in support of the Southwest border mission. These events will provide critical insights to validate and refine the new formation under the full spectrum of LSCO conditions.

The IEW battalion–next represents a decisive step in closing the Army's most pressing intelligence gaps in large-scale combat operations. It is not presented as a terminal solution, but as an adaptive formation designed for continuous refinement through experimentation and operational employment. As the character of warfare evolves, so too will the formation.

Whether at division or corps, the IEW battalion–next is the organizational answer to the Army's most pressing intelligence gaps. The formation enables decision making forward, at the decisive point, ensuring the Military Intelligence Corps remains relevant, ready, and "Always Out Front!"

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