

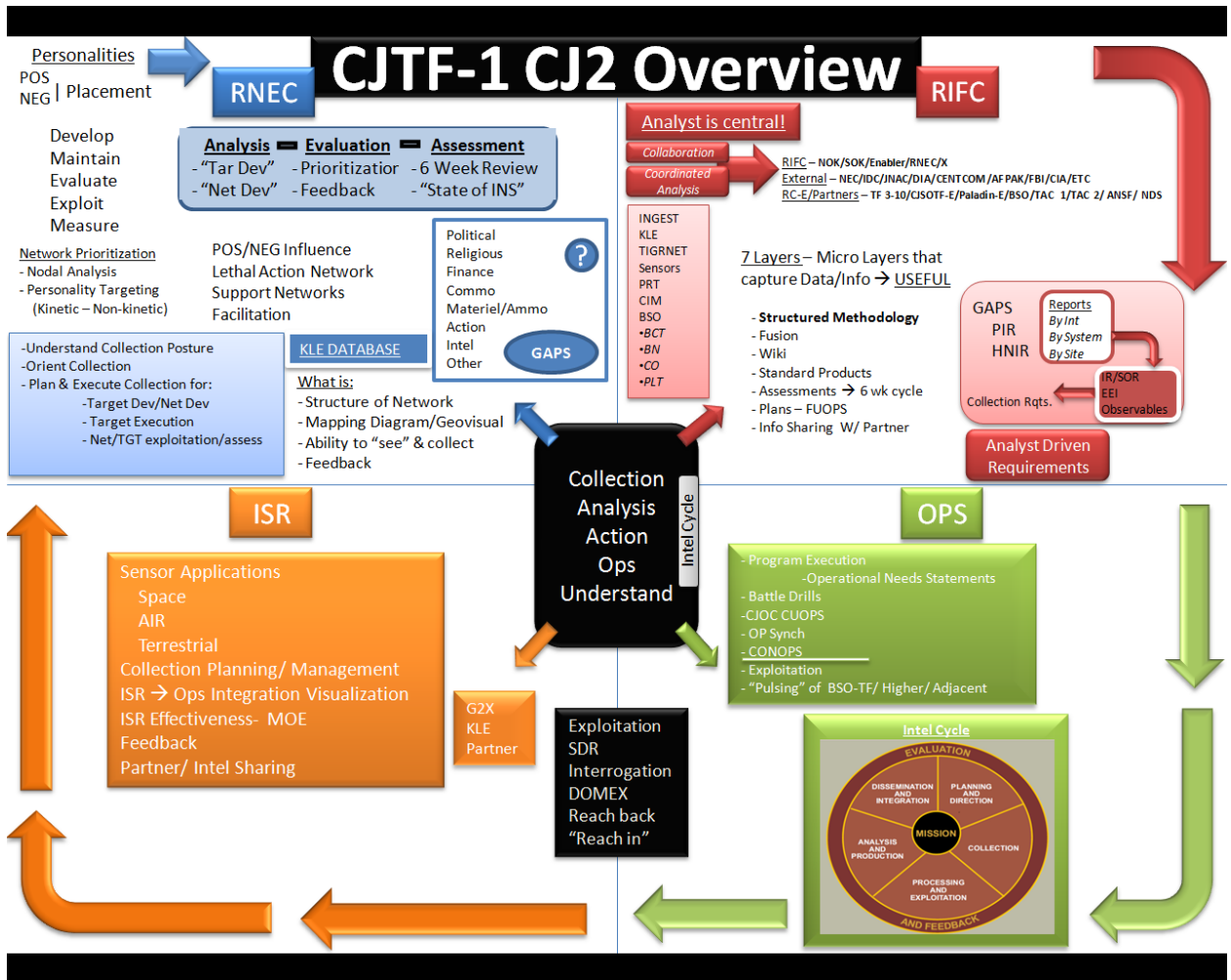
The Regional Command - East Regional Information Fusion Center (RIFC) in Afghanistan

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“What will matter to the military forces of the United States in the 21st century is how well American leaders at all levels understand their opponents: their history, their culture, their political framework, their religion, and even their languages.” – Williamson Murray

In May 2011, the 1st Cavalry Division headquarters deployed to Afghanistan to assume duties as the Headquarters for Regional Command – East (RC-East) during Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) XII. Although the division had completed three successful deployments to Iraq, this was the unit’s first mission to Afghanistan. At the strategic level, OEF XII was a critical moment for the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), the Government of Afghanistan (GIROA) and the Afghan people. ISAF began to transition security primacy to GIROA and the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) through the tranche process. The commander of the 1st Cavalry Division, then Major General Daniel Allyn, placed more importance on combined operations with the ANSF and standardized partnership across the board. At all echelons, there was much greater emphasis on ANSF assuming the lead for planning and conducting tactical operations. Similarly, the Civilian Stability Platform, responsible for governance and development initiatives in concert with GIROA, began to demonstrate progress at the provincial, district and sub-district levels in select portions of RC-East. The 1st Cavalry Division G2 played a critical role through the entire deployment cycle, from pre-mission training to execution to transfer of authority to the 1st Infantry Division.

The heart of the 1st Cavalry Division intelligence enterprise is the Analysis and Control Element (ACE), a multi-source team comprised of Soldiers from the all-source intelligence, signals intelligence (SIGINT), geo-spatial intelligence (GEOINT), and targeting disciplines. While the ACE is an able, independent section, the Division G2, Lieutenant Colonel David Pendall, recognized the need for enhanced capability in order to better understand the entirety of the Afghan operational environment. LTC Pendall had a vision of a greatly expanded G2 in general, and the ACE specifically, which included enablers from across the larger intelligence community. He made numerous trips to the Washington D.C. area and leveraged connections across the intelligence community to include their participation in the 1st Cavalry Division’s deployment. Additionally, he went to great lengths to educate the command group and senior staff on the value these enablers would provide to the division’s mission success.



Picture 1 – The CJTF-1 CJ2 Overview

The above graphic displays LTC Pendall’s plan to develop an all encompassing approach to collecting, recording, analyzing, disseminating and **turning information into actionable intelligence**. This process was not limited to select RIFIC sections, but involved all elements of the CJ2 and, through the Seven Layers approach, ultimately the RC-East staff. A key point of this model is that the analyst is central to, and involved in, the entire process which provides SDR predictive analysis of the operational environment. This is not a linear model where each step rigidly follows in a sequential order, but is a living system where multiple actions will occur simultaneously. To be certain, there are regularly occurring requirements such as the daily intelligence summary, or products supporting the four week targeting cycle. The model, however, is highly flexible, providing the CJ2 ability to anticipate or respond to the dynamics of the RC-East operational environment. Finally, is not exclusively focused on the insurgency itself, but allows analysts to view the entirety of the battlefield.

Just as 1st Cavalry Division became RC-East upon arrival to Afghanistan, the ACE transitioned to a combined and joint intelligence organization known as the **Regional Information Fusion Center (RIFIC)**. Apart from the name change, the RIFIC also greatly expanded in personnel, including a number of enablers normally not normally associated with an Army ACE. In addition to the Soldiers, Sailors,

Airmen and Marines authorized by the joint manning document, the RIFC incorporated representatives from across the larger US intelligence community such as the NSA, NGIC, NRO, NGA, DIA, COIC and the CENTCOM Afghanistan-Pakistan Center. Additional analysts came from the contracting world, many of whom are retired military with previous experience in Afghanistan, Iraq or elsewhere. By itself, an Army ACE is a critical intelligence multiplier – but the RIFC structure afforded new capabilities which made it more effective, efficient and lethal. The RIFC was internally organized to develop a holistic common intelligence picture for the combined-joint (CJ2) enterprise and enable the command group to give well informed guidance for future operations. **The RIFC brought a Theater Intelligence Group (TIG) LNO and an RC-East NGIC analyst to enhance analytic efforts throughout the intelligence community.** The RIFC refocused and reorganized the enablers such as the Afghan Threat Finance Cell (ATFC), NEXUS, GOV/DEV, NRO, NGA, COIC and SOIC to be full partners in the organization supporting senior leaders, subordinate units and the greater intelligence community. Many of these professionals led working groups or analytic teams and briefed the commanding general, senior staff and VIPs.

Borrowing from the model developed by the 101st Airborne Division during their time in RC-East, the RIFC geographically oriented the Fusion section into two teams by provinces in North of Kabul (NoK) and South of Kabul (SoK). The geographic areas matched the operating areas of coalition BDEs and Afghan partners. The teams were mirror images of each other with All Source, targeting, and SIGINT military personnel in addition to governance/development and COIC contractor analysts. Each team is focused on their respective areas to fuse information for a holistic understanding of their area of responsibility (AOR) and gave the analysts predictability on separation of duties. GEOINT provided support to both teams using one NGA analyst, with a reachback to the rest of the section focused on RFI completion. This proved to be extremely beneficial in our support to the RC-East Joint Operations Center (JOC) during battle drills such as mass casualty events, personnel recovery missions and large combat operations. The ability to activate one team of experts for a particular area and keep the rest of the RIFC on task ensured we never lost oversight of the entire AOR. Additionally, the wealth of enablers ensured RIFC leaders could leverage their reachback capability or analytical skills during a battle drill event.

In its RIFC configuration, the ACE became an integrated military, contractor, and interagency all-source information element responsible for receiving, processing and understanding intelligence and information pertaining to the RC-East AOR and the command's four lines of operation – Security, **Governance Development, Economic Development and Information Operations.** The RIFC's primary function was to provide short, mid and long range **predictive analysis** to inform the decision making processes of the RC-East Commanding General, command group, staff and echelons above, adjacent to and below. The RIFC was responsible for the analysis, production, presentation and dissemination of hundreds of standard and ad-hoc products per week including daily and weekly intelligence updates to the command group, daily and weekly intelligence summaries, innumerable requests for information (RFIs), lethal and **non-lethal targeting information** and a host of other products. These products are routinely **shared with the greater US intelligence community, and international coalition partners.** Additionally, the RIFC provided analysis and comment on intelligence products from US CENTCOM, ISAF, IJC and numerous other intelligence organizations.


By design, RIFC products were kept relevant to the RC's operational focus and what the command group needs to know, i.e. shapefile SITTEMPS vs. drawings on Powerpoint. Restated, we did not create products not directly contributing to operations or answering a CCIR. We strove to find product

efficiencies through the use of standard templates, using one product to answer multiple audiences or multiple RFIs, and updating existing products instead of continually creating new briefings. For example, the weekly security commander's update brief (CUB) slide was the same content as that used to brief CENTCOM during a AFPAK VTC held on the same day. The GOV/DEV CUB was prepared and presented by a GOV/DEV expert and used in the Seven Day Assessment intelligence summary. Our daily Commander's Update Assessment followed a standard format aligned on current threat streams and any pertinent updates of great importance to the command group. To assist incoming units in understanding their future AOR, the RIFC produced and periodically updated provincial overview papers reflecting the current situation with respect to governance, development, security and threat to the district level. We kept daily running estimates of five critical provinces to maintain situational awareness and inform their guidance to subordinate commanders. Best practice methods and products were created and reused on a routine basis for briefings to DVs. This alleviated stress and supported short notice or unannounced VIP visits. This last point cannot be emphasized enough. In its yearlong deployment, the RIFC supported visits by the CJCS, the directors of the CIA, NSA, NGIC, COIC, NGA, NRO, DIA, multiple congressional delegations, three Army division commanders and innumerable other DVs.

How was this change accomplished? One of our first steps was to clearly outline expectations and initial standards to the entire RIFC team. We drew no distinction between military and civilian personnel – all were afforded the same opportunities, were equally resourced, and held to the same high standards of intelligence production and analysis. Our primary intent was to prevent an “us and them” mentality between the uniformed and civilian personnel or the formation of small cliques of perceived elites. For example, nearly every intelligence product the RIFC developed was peer reviewed regardless of the author's position or rank. The civilian enablers attended all key meetings with their military peers and were encouraged to provide opinions, insights, thoughts and analysis. The RIFC's shift change template included input from all sections, and afforded sufficient flexibility for any enabler or analyst to contribute observations and insights.

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The Seven Layers of Analysis



- Geo-foundation (Sources; NGA/GEO-INT, Google Earth*)
 - Always orient to terrain; everything is on a geospatial foundation
- Social Layer (Sources; HTAT, CIM, APA*)
 - Tribes and social hierarchy
 - Grievances and conflicts
- Infrastructure (Sources; NGA, PRT, USAID*)
 - Roads, bridges etc.
 - Economics, logistics
- Political (Sources; HTAT, PRT, BSO*)
 - Formal (not all inclusive)
 - GIROA Leaders
 - Chief of Police
 - Tribal Elders
 - Maliks
 - Informal (not all inclusive)
 - Power brokers
 - TB Shadow Government structure

- Developmental (Sources; GIROA , IA/NGO, CERP*)
 - Completed, Planned and Projected
- Security (Sources; G3, G2 Ops, BSO*)
 - Friendly locations, capabilities; COPs, FOBs, combined teams, areas of influence and persistent presence
- Threat
 - Insurgent networks/nexus; targets both kinetic and non-kinetic

*Sources are not all inclusive

First Team

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Picture 2 – The Seven Layers of Analysis

A critical element of the CJ2’s vision was the incorporation of “The Seven Layers of Analysis” into our methodology. Within the first 60 days of deployment, CJ2 implemented the “**Seven Layers of Analysis**” within Terra Explorer integrating data from the DCGS-A architecture, TIGR, staff elements and various other data sources into one common operating picture (COP). Terra Explorer became the geospatial program of choice throughout RC-East as it showed clear and more frequently updated imagery, required little bandwidth, and was available by download rather than purchasing a specific system or license. Terra Explorer’s applications were limited only by the imagination of the end user. For example, our GEOINT section created 3-D fly-thru presentations to support multiple investigations for Afghanistan-Pakistan border incidents, overviews for DVs, and AOR orientation with incoming subordinate units. In February 2012, the RC-East Terra Explorer Field Service Representative (FSR) attended a USAREUR level conference to demonstrate the Seven Layers concept and capability.

Instead of analyzing only the kinetic aspect of the insurgency, the CJ2 made use of a far more holistic approach incorporating input from across the RC-East staff. Any staff element could include their individual or section data sources into the overall intelligence picture. This data was geospatially displayed via the Terra Explorer geospatial software program on both SIPR and Centrix networks

affording access to all coalition partners. Many of the data sources were updated dynamically, allowing Terra Explorer and the Seven Layers to be used in virtual real time in response to events on the battlefield as they happened. Picture 2 shows macro layers, and a portion of the micro layers which users could access by simply turning individual layers on or off as required. Terra Explorer was the perfect choice to launch this initiative as the software is intuitive, quickly installed and easy to learn. No longer were analysts forced to try and merge data sets from different (and all too often incompatible) sources into one coherent picture. With the Seven Layers approach on Terra Explorer providing hundreds of layered information sources, intelligence professionals could devote the bulk of their time to thought and analysis rather than data mining. It must be noted that this information was available, globally, to analysts at any level from COIST through ISAF.

Externally, RIFC personnel participated in numerous RC-East staff working groups, boards and meetings. We aligned a representative to several staff elements or assigned parts of the RIFC against recurrent problem sets to ensure continuity and increased efficiency of support. For example, early in our pre-deployment training at Fort Hood, LTC Pendall recognized the need for dedicated support to both the G3 Future Operations (FUOPs) and G5 Plans staff sections and created a “Lead Support to Plans” position within the ACE. A Chief Warrant Officer from the section assumed this role and effectively bridged the operational planning requirements against the needed intelligence products. The concept worked so well, that we kept the position in theater - despite reduced manning levels imposed by our higher headquarters. In fact, we expanded upon the idea when we assigned a reserve MI officer from an **attached civil affairs battalion**, as the RIFC Deputy for Governance and Development Support. He led a small team developing daily and weekly products through interaction with the CJ9, PRTs, CATs, ADTs and the RC-East Deputy Commanding General for Afghan Development. Apart from the daily contact via email or meetings, LTC Hilton and his team traveled to Afghan government offices or PRT and ADT locations for in-person visits. They focused on answering RC-East host nation information requirements (HNIR) by analyzing reports from CA teams, PRTs, IIRs and atmospherics reflecting a group of people and truly became a medium for lower tactical level governance and development issues to be brought to the command group.

The CJ2 made use of other concepts to better portray and understand the complex social terrain of RC-East. Based on a system originally developed by 3rd Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division in Iraq, the CJ2 implemented network targeting which increased non-lethal targeting such as neutralizing/prosecuting criminals, narcotics traffickers, financiers, corrupt GIRoA/ANSF officials, and insider threats to ANSF/CF Combat Outposts (COPs) and Forward Operating Bases (FOBs). The robust Regional East Network (REN) diagram portrays eight overarching insurgent sub-networks and six criminal patronage networks, making justification for ISR assets simpler when communicating targeting efforts to the staff, command group and higher headquarters. Network targeting resulted in higher value nodal targeting for kill/capture operations and the ISAF JPEL process, and created the ability to have common understanding of networks in RC-East between the RC HQ and BCTs.

Given the increased emphasis on non-kinetic targeting, the RIFC teamed with other intelligence **teams dedicated to attacking the burgeoning corruption, narcotics and negative influence problems** in RC-East. Although the insurgents were certainly the most visible enemy of the Afghan people, they were not necessarily the most dangerous. To truly effect change, RC-East needed to address **the threat posed by corrupt GIRoA officials (many of whom were tied to the insurgency), narcotraffickers, and criminal**

patronage networks. Many of these individuals enjoyed political protection, which necessarily required a non-lethal, evidence based, targeting approach. To that end, the RIFC incorporated a number of enablers, bringing much needed capability to “see” the scope of the problem. These organizations included NEXUS (counternarcotics), Shafafiyat (counter corruption), TF 2010 (counter corruption), Rule of Law (counter corruption), and the Negative-Positive Influencer Program which removed negative GIRoA or ANSF influencers and rewarded positive members. Each team was manned by subject matter experts from the intelligence, law enforcement, staff judge advocate, or illegal drug enforcement fields.

As the RIFC developed and grew, we recognized the need to standup or integrate new analytical cells to better understand the environment’s complexity. The Atmospherics Program–Afghanistan (AP-A), for example, was charged with obtaining “the man on the street view” from Afghan nationals. This particular lens was critical to understanding how Afghan locals reacted to GIRoA, ISAF, ANSF, insurgents, criminal groups and the events that occurred in 2011 and 2012. AP-A reporting was of great import to our understanding on popular perception in areas transitioned to GIRoA control, or following major events such as CIVCAS, cross borders incidents or high profile INS attacks.

Similarly, the RIFC worked closely with a four-man Human Terrain Assessment Team (HTAT) comprised of social scientists to examine the complex human terrain extant in RC-East. As with many of the enablers, this partnership actually began several months before the division deployed to Afghanistan, as HTAT members attended our pre-deployment training. Early integration provided numerous advantages including team building, information sharing, and process development – all of which allowed the RIFC a “hot start” in combat.

The CJ2 stood up an internal assessments section within the RIFC, and aligned with CJ5 Assessments, to write “deep dive” products or perform long term analysis. CJ2 Assessments were responsible for the development of the weekly Seven Day intelligence summary (INTSUM), which included predictive analysis up to 60 days out, assisting the command group and subordinate units with operational planning. The assessments team was led by a senior all-source chief warrant officer and included a SGM and contract analyst. We consciously chose to move the assessments cell out of the RIFC to a quieter area affording time and space to think, read and analyze... and not be drawn into current production requirements. This is not to imply the assessments section was uninvolved in the RIFC’s intelligence process. Assessments cell members attended every RIFC meeting and had frequent interaction with analysts throughout the deployment.

The CJ2 also created a Partnership Cell responsible for the intelligence training of our Afghan partners, as well as ensuring Afghan analysis was fully integrated. To that end, LTC Pendall held weekly VTCs and quarterly “intelligence shuras” with senior ANSF intelligence officers. LTC Pendall encouraged the free flow of information and thoughts in both venues to enhancing the overall understanding of the Afghan operational environment. While the Partnership Cell was not a formal section of the RIFC, they worked in the same office space, attended all RIFC meetings and were considered full partners.

Our personnel footprint extended beyond the RC-East headquarters at Bagram through the assignment of intelligence liaison officers (LNOs) at critical locations across the battlefield. While most of the LNOs positions were enduring requirements, we regularly reviewed the need for each. LNOs assigned to our French, Polish and Afghan counterparts, for example, were enduring requirements

providing invaluable insights throughout our mission. Other LNO positions, such as two MI soldiers assigned to assist with the deployment of 1st Brigade, 82nd Airborne Division to Ghazni Province, were temporarily manned until the needs were met. In some cases, LNO support began before coalition units arrived as the RIFC sent personnel to attend both French and Polish military readiness exercises (MRX) at their home station. The officers and NCOs were charged to represent the entire CJ2 and prepare the units combat.

Battlefield circulation and in-person analytical exchange were key components to the RIFC's ability to know and understand the battlefield. Virtually every soldier and civilian assigned to the RIFC participated in trips to outlying brigade or battalion headquarters, as well as ISAF and IJC. On occasion, RIFC soldiers traveled to outlying units for analytical exchange. This allowed our soldiers to see the battlefield firsthand and comprehend brigade or battalion S2 level capability. Similarly, it afforded the subordinate S2 teams to meet our soldiers, further developing relationships between echelons. The RIFC also contributed to Afghanistan-focused intelligence seminars or meetings in the US and Europe.

Internally and externally, RIFC leaders made use of available information technology (IT) platforms to provide shared understanding of RC-East on a truly global level. The Deputy RIFC Chief, revamped all CJ2 web pages to become more user friendly, displaying the most recent intelligence battle rhythm products customers would commonly seek up front. Completed products such as analytical papers and focused-topic Commanding General intelligence updates followed a standard naming convention sorted by the geographic area, making it easier to navigate to historic products (i.e. Province_Topic_Date). Section internal/administrative files were placed in section folders at the bottom of the page. The RIFC battle captain disseminated and published all completed desk notes and RFI responses.

Virtually all RFIs, regardless of requestor, were submitted via an electronic form on the RIFC portal pages. Only a handful of key staff officers were allowed to ask ad hoc RFIs for two reasons. First, it allowed RIFC leaders to carefully review each RFI and ensure they were clear, concise and relevant. Unclear or poorly written RFIs were rejected or returned for more information. In some cases, face to face discussion was necessary to best elucidate the requirement. Second, the RFI portal allowed RIFC leaders to prioritize the work load for each section. Had the RIFC been less disciplined in the RFI process, our analysts would have been rapidly overwhelmed by confusing, and sometimes redundant requests. To expedite requests, the RIFC portal automatically sent an email alert to the RIFC HQ, who then tasked the responsible section.

Further, the RIFC Chief distributed a daily email to all RIFC leaders and CJ2 HQ directors highlighting the non-routine tasks and their respective status to maintain shared awareness. Each section OIC was required to send a daily update of their assigned tasks. Over time, the email served as an historical record used to find previous products, tasks, or key dates. The RIFC Chief also sent the task list to the 1st Infantry Division (IID) G2 and ACE leadership as our relieving unit. Although the task list was a relatively simple product, it afforded the IID team advanced situational awareness on key tasks, the volume of production and the products themselves – which they could access for their pre-deployment training.

The RIFC SIGINT section made good use of technology based efficiencies by establishing the ACE Block II Single Source system – a first in RC-East. The system automatically transferred classified

reporting from high side to the SIPR network where it reached a much larger customer base. It also provided more time for SIGINT analysts, increasing their analytical workload by 50%. IT derived advantages were particularly important as ISAF began to reduce its military footprint and redeploy personnel back to CONUS.

There is no “one size fits all” solution to developing an intelligence enterprise to address strategic, operational and tactical requirements. The unique aspects of the commander, unit, mission and OE will drive how the enterprise is formed. Regardless of these factors, certain characteristics must be present. The RIFC’s success during OEF XII was built upon clearly articulated standards, flexibility, creativity, initiative, drive, and professional competence. Every analyst, regardless of rank or military/civilian status, was afforded equal opportunity to contribute and participate in the analytical process. Including the entire RC-East staff through the seven layers approach ensured intelligence products were not solely threat focused thereby allowing the unit to see the entirety of the OE. While no amount of analysis or collection platforms will eliminate the fog and friction of war, the RC-East RIFC structure greatly improved the commander’s ability to see the battlefield. The lessons learned and relationships forged in Afghanistan will continue to pay dividends in future conflicts and operational deployments. The RC-East CJ2’s plan fully supported the unit’s mission requirements and should be considered as a model for other intelligence professionals to follow.