

IADS – An Example of Collaboration in the Intel World

Collaboration is often practiced at the front line, by those employees who meet the customer and create the products and services they need. They collaborate for a good reason; these employees usually know that they have to in order to get the job done. Collaboration isn't as common at the middle manager levels. It's not as obvious how collaboration can help middle managers get their own work done. And when their direct reports want to collaborate with others (in different units), middle managers understandably wonder WIIFM (what's in it for me)? How does it help them and their unit to loan someone to a group that is working on someone else's project?

IADS, or Integrated Air Defense System, is a "virtual team" from intelligence, defense and related agencies who have found ways to collaborate at both the analyst and manager levels. IADS includes analysts and managers who work together to analyze the air defense systems of countries that pose threats to the U.S. There are three kinds of customers for this analysis: war fighters, policy makers (in Congress, Office of the Secretary of Defense, Air Force chief of staff), and the acquisition community.

The Move From Jigsaw Puzzle Pieces to an Integrated Whole

Prior to 1995, different intel agencies produced their own reports on particular aspects of another country's air defense systems. If a customer wanted to know how a country's entire defensive "kill chain" worked, the agencies couldn't respond. One agency could report on early warning radar, another could analyze surface to air missiles or study how a particular jet operates, but nobody integrated these reports for the customers, nobody described how another country's air defense worked, as a system. As one IADS analyst put it, "the customer got parts of a jigsaw puzzle and had to put the parts together to make sense out of it."

In the aftermath of the Gulf War, the need for more integrated analysis became very apparent. In 1994 some analysts at the National Air and Space Intelligence Center (NASIC) began discussing

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this need, and brought the issue to their supervisors. The supervisors agreed and explained the need to their senior managers. The senior NASIC managers met with leaders of other intelligence centers and described the need to provide more integrated analysis. When they learned that the other leaders agreed on the problem and need, the center leaders went to Joan Dempsey, who was then in charge of intelligence production at the Defense Intelligence Agency, DIA. They suggested forming an integrated team of analysts to work on missile defense, and that the Air Force could take the lead.

Dempsey agreed on the need and the value of an integrated team. But she thought that the DIA was in a better position to help lead it, since DIA works with all four military services and thus wouldn't be seen as favoring any one service. She also suggested a two-part structure, with DIA leading a coordinating group of managers from the agencies involved (which became the IADS Coordinating Group) and the Air Force leading a second group made up of working level analysts. The center directors agreed, and in 1995 IADS was born.

The Two-Part Structure

The Coordinating Group is made up of division chiefs from the IADS agencies. Twice a year the Coordinating Group identifies the highest priority countries for analysis – those that the group believes require new or updated studies (based on several factors, including the threat that they pose). Until 2004, DIA was the lead agency on the Coordinating Group (Air Force has replaced DIA), and DIA's IADS program manager ran the Coordinating Group (see p. 5).

At the next level, an Analyst Group is made up of air defense analysts who work together on a schedule for producing reports on each country (the schedule differs for each priority country), and they arrange for the studies to be done. When a new study is begun, the authors are invited to a kickoff meeting; after that, 90% of the communications is done via IT or phone. The major authors of IADS studies are analysts at the NASIC, the Missile and Space Intelligence Center, the Nat'l Ground Intelligence Center, and the Office of Naval Intelligence. Other authors and contributors (primarily providing data analysis) include NSA, DIA, CIA, National Geospatial Agency, and the Transportation Security Agency.

When the Analyst Group sets the production schedule, the Coordinating Group members obligate their agencies to meet that schedule (or change the schedule if external conditions or workforce availability require a change). NASIC is the executive agent for Analyst Group production; a NASIC analyst always leads that group.

NASIC also takes responsibility for pulling together the various pieces of analysis done on each country study; it seeks consensus when there are different opinions, acts as referee when consensus isn't achieved, and makes any necessary changes to the final products. Air Force, as the new lead of the Coordinating group, adjudicates any unresolved differences.

A Major Success During OEF

While much of the country was still reeling over the 9-11 attacks, the IADS analysts immediately went to work on an analysis of Afghanistan's air defenses. Within three days, the group produced a product ready for the war fighters in what came to be called Operation Enduring Freedom. It was an incredible response, and several customers remarked on the group's performance. According to one of the analysts involved, "there's no way we could have produced a quality product so quickly before we had IADS; it was only possible because of the years of experience working together and the existing structure to pull in whatever resources we needed." To be sure, Afghanistan did not possess a truly integrated air defense system (see p. 5). Still IADS provided a complete and coordinated analysis of that country's capabilities, quickly.

Some Hurdles ...

- **Competing production requirements.** The analysts working on IADS sometimes are given tasks that take them off of products that the coordinating group had scheduled. If that means that a key piece of information is missing, it causes real problems. To address this, the analyst group tries to remain flexible and keep up with the people who have expertise in IADS-related areas. To use a sports term, they have to know where their "bench" is, and be able to go to it quickly.
- **Institutional motivations.** IADS agencies sometimes differ over which one has the responsibility and/or expertise to work a certain mission. In other words, turf. The analysts

deal with this by focusing on the importance of each mission, and the impact of doing it well. In addition, they believe in the team concept, and spend time forming relationships with analysts and managers in each of the contributing agencies. “You have to show that you’re willing to give sometimes,” as one put it. “That often leads to others giving a little too.”

- **Communications issues.** The analysts seem to work well together, as do those on the coordinating group. But how do you keep everyone informed, without information overload? This is a problem for most agencies, of course. There’s a balance between operating on a strict need-to-know basis, and copying hundreds of analysts and managers on every email. The groups are looking for ways to achieve this balance, but it’s a work in progress.

A senior manager at NASIC notes that there must be a consistent management focus and reinforcement on these issues for progress to continue.

And Critical Success Factors ...

1. They manage interpersonal relationships. Analysts give each other credit for good work. They let each others’ bosses know, too. The products are DoD studies authored by all agencies, not just by NASIC. They reciprocate when someone else helps, and they try to understand the pressures each operates under, and remain flexible when someone can’t contribute.

2. The two-part structure. The Coordinating Group functions well. It provides a forum for discussing issues, it deals with hurdles like those noted above, it provides leadership and helps anticipate and prevent problems. And the analyst group gets the needed subject-matter experts working together, and provides a means for resolving disputes.

3. Good answers to the WIIFM? question. IADS is briefed and marketed well within the agencies involved, which makes everyone look good. And the data generated by IADS are shared across the program, which means everyone wants to be involved. Further, IADS is generating real results; thus, the managers of these agencies put pressure on their employees to participate. They want to benefit from the program’s successes, and don’t want to be the only one not at the table.

THE IADS STRUCTURE

Coordinating Group

- Identifies highest priority countries twice/year
- Obligates each agency to meet the schedule
- Identifies who is needed for a particular task
- Does final review of Analyst Group's products

Analyst Group

- Determines production schedule of reports
- Does the analytical work
- Integrates analyses into one report on each country
- Analyst from lead agency seeks consensus if conflicts occur

Some questions about IADS (answered by a senior analyst on the IADS team):

1. How do those in the analyst group get their IT shops to "play nicely" with the other IT shops involved?

Most of us in the IC now have fairly standard systems, albeit at a very fundamental level. We all use WORD, OUTLOOK, etc. There was a time when DIA and its minions (the SPCs) were trying to use JIVA, while CIA and NSA were using CVW (Common Virtual Workstation) as collaborative software. None of this ever worked that well so we always reverted to meetings, VTCs, email. Ideally in the future we will be able to simultaneously input to a single master document and even to link up our modeling and simulation software within the same construct. This has never happened. However, the way to make strides here is to apply money across the entire community in a way to raises each piece up to maintain the same level of capability. We have done this in the past with supplementals we have received to do database development.

2. When the analyst group does well, are people rewarded as a team? Individually?

It happens both ways. Individual awards are strengthened by the team aspects of what they are doing, and the team is also put in for awards. We won a DCI Analysis Team Award in 2000 or so, as a team, and we all got good press for that. And each individual does it at their own organization, within their own award framework.

3. How are communications handled between the coordinating group and analyst group?

The members of the coordinating group are generally the supervisors of the analysts at each agency who work on the various analyst teams (country based). Thus communication happens quite naturally. If I am an analyst on Country A team, my boss goes to coordinating group meetings at which decisions are made about what we'll do and how we'll do it. When my boss

gets back he/she meets with me and my fellow analysts and articulates the message. Which means it fits right into the normal process of a boss giving direction to his analysts.

4. The example of quick production on the Afghans' air defenses after 9-11 doesn't seem that impressive, given that country's primitive air defense system.

This was actually an excellent example that showed a tremendous amount of work being accomplished in a short time. The questioner is correct, that country didn't have much in the way of an "IADS" but it sure as heck had a lot in the way of stuff that can shoot aircraft down, and there was NOTHING on this topic anywhere. So their air defense capability was more tactical, more spread around vs. being formalized through their military, but threat assessments were desperately needed. In fact, this tactical nature actually made the job a lot harder than it would have been for a nice, well-behaved organized system. So the AFG study grew larger and larger while we got our hands around some amazing data on MANPADS and so forth, and addressed concerns not just of heavies, not just of fighters, but of helos and UAVs as well -- in AFG as well as the surrounding countries.