Military Intelligence: Surveillance in the New World

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Abstract

Robust advances in technology have revolutionized military intelligence capabilities. The deployment of new systems of surveillance have necessitated a new perspective on physical reconnaissance but also on legal and ethical dictates guiding and governing their use. This essay traces the historical trend lines of surveillance in military intelligence history as well as its trajectory for the future.

Introduction

Some of the newest advances in intelligence gathering technology have come in the realm of domestic surveillance. Since 1973, the advances in domestic surveillance and in surveillance in general on the continent are staggering. On the hole, these advances are good for the Intelligence Community (IC), but they also bring challenges as well. (Aris A Pappas n.d.)

Advances in domestic surveillance technology have forever changed the way reconnaissance is conducted. For example, historically if the IC desired to know where a suspect went, that individual had to be physically trailed or followed. This created a whole set of problems for the operatives following the suspect. In the current environment, surveillance can be conducted remotely using drones, traffic cameras, or even satellite tracking. This has permanently changed the way surveillance is conducted not only physically but legally and ethically as well.

Impact on Military Intelligence

Advancements in technology have had a huge impact on military intelligence. In particular, the gathering sector has been effected. Historically, MI relied heavily on human assets either directly or indirectly to gather and collect data. For example, one early manifestation of overhead reconnaissance was the introduction of balloons by Joseph Henry in 1861, to gather information on Confederate troops during the Civil War (Central Intelligence Agency 2011). However, each vessel in the U.S. Army Balloon Corp required manning by a pilot and at least one observer to record observations of camp-

fires and to note the movement of enemy troops. The implementation of balloon technology, although not long lived, created a glide path for future innovations in overhead reconnaissance such as the A-12 and the U-2 during the Cold War. However manned missions were risky and, as the 1960s U-2 incident proved, could lead to policy compromising politically embarrassing situations (Pedlow 1998).

Since the Cold War, technology has enabled overhead surveillance to evolve beyond the reliance on manned or piloted programs by way of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) (Centre for Research on Globalization 2014). UAV implementation has provided improvements in various strata of reconnaissance spanning "theater-level" systems to tactical systems enabling military intelligence to expand its reach and increase efficacy at identifying enemies and realizing superior accuracy in striking targets, all with less human life at risk.

Early Impact on Military Intelligence

These technological advances have altered the way the military and other intelligence agencies are structured or organizationally designed. Intelligence officer's physical locations need not necessarily be dependent on suspect or enemy locations. For example, the use of satellite imagery, operated stateside, has been effectively deployed in conflicts like Afghanistan and Iraq to combat the growing Global War on Terror. Evolutions over time in these conflicts demonstrate that persistent surveillance can serve as deterrents to potential enemy combatants as well as plant seeds of paranoia yielding a crop of distrust among terrorist groups (Callam 2010). Remote capabilities

and unmanned vehicles have thus revolutionized and opened up a new landscape in the world of surveillance (Ackerman, Military Intelligence Looks Within n.d.).

The military saw new technology and in particular surveillance technology as an opportunity early in history and has over time relied more heavily on its deployment. Once MI realized the potential of such technology, the Defense Department and other agencies sought to invest heavily in development and deployment of new technologies. For example, there currently exist multiple agencies within the IC which operate and control numerous programs including the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency, the U.S. Air Force and the National Reconnaissance Office (Rosenbach 2009). Now military and intelligence agencies have fully adopted these technologies to such a degree that surveillance would be operationally impossible without them. These new surveillance technologies have made it not only easier to follow and watch suspected terrorist but also gather information on our enemies and even launch both offensive and defensive security measures.

As we have seen since this technology was adopted by various sectors within MI, it has greatly enhanced the military's capabilities and effectiveness. The world has been getting so much smaller due to technology and if the IC did not start using available technologies, it would have been severely handicapped. In a world where almost everything can be transferred digitally, the IC community would be way outmatched if it were not using the same or better technology than our enemies. A prime example of this is the growing asymmetric threat which demonstrates that acquisition of high-tech communications sensors and weapons systems are accessible even to non-state and splinter organizations. An even more sinister example of such an asymmetric threat, is

the deployment of cyberweapons unleashed to disrupt military logistics or used to bring attacks directly onto US soil by aggressing against a part of the critical national security infrastructure. These particular examples of asymmetric threats indicate the new technological battlefield which has and will continue to impact military intelligence (Ackerman, Military Intelligence Looks Within: A Re-examination of Goals and Capabilities in Forcing the Community to Focus on Human Assets 2000).

Historically, while some leaders have been skeptical about how well the new technology would work, others like Admiral Rickover, were eager to push for new technology implementation. As admiral Rickover said, "Good ideas are not adopted automatically." Rickover pushed the navy and our country to implement new technologies, in particular the use of nuclear power in both military and civilian contexts. His rationale was that he strongly embraced the vision that this technology would strengthen our military and enhance our country's national security as well as economic platform. Unfortunately not everyone was as forward thinking as Rickover, there were many leaders who thought that the old ways which were proven to work were better (Aris A. Pappas n.d.). Fortunately for the survival on our nation, purposeful visionaries won the day on issues of nuclear implementation.

Challenges for Military Intelligence

MI has traditionally viewed success in terms of the short-term horizon; this view is compatible with the pace of technological advancements but may be inadequate in the changing global warfare environment. One needed change is a modification to a more protracted timeframe. MI must begin to think in terms of a decades long protracted

confrontation (Cowan 2008, p. 12). Moreover, instead of terms such as decisive battles or corporeal combative defeats, MI must morph its mindset to incorporate that the agent of our non-state enemies and their use of asymmetric technological threats as extensions of an ideological conflict rather than a physical defeat (Joint Military Intelligence College 2010, p. 134). Ideology is difficult to thwart traditionally. Thus, as the name implies military intelligence could be well suited to utilize technologies to launch efforts targeted at resisting the ideas not just the visible enemies. Twenty-first century foes use tactics which are rooted in ideas, and ideas can be defeated only by intellect. As Clausewitz identified superior intellect, which he termed genius, is a "highly developed mental aptitude for a particular occupation" and is composed of "all those gifts of the mind and temperament in combination", " a harmonious combination" (Clausewitz 2000, p. 100).

Military intelligence still operates in the theater aptly described by Clausewitz as an "environment composed of "danger, uncertainty, exertion, and chance" (Clausewitz 2000, p.104). Thus as author Katherine Herbig asserts, MI must transform to operate with "the intellectual flexibility to take advantage of opportunities" (Herbig 1986, p. 108). The adoption of new technologies, even commercialized ones like social media, will be necessary in order to hurl assaults at the most vital level of the US's new adversaries. This can be described as the new frontier of surveillance. Therefore, in a war in which one of the most difficult tasks is even identifying which individuals are an innocent civilians and which are terrorists, evolving technology it is becoming increasingly essential to help ferret foe from friend and then follow the former.

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