

Regional Planning Program

by

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I'm tired of working harder without the tools to let me work smarter in this age of rightsizing, downsizing, and doing more with less. If you are too, then these next three words may change the way you want to have operational intelligence analysis work done.

Regional Planning Program.

Doesn't ring any bells? OK. How about this? A second lieutenant, fresh from Intel school walks in the door. You say, "Lt Jones. I need an analysis of the critical nodes of the electrical system for New South Bronzia." A look of panic crosses the Lt's face, but with a quick nod, he leaves. Thirty minutes later, the Lt's back, with the analysis and pictures of the critical Bronzian electrical nodes.

Regional Planning Program.

Or how about this? A one stop, user friendly, transparent organizational structure in a common automated environment that will allow even the greenest analyst or Intel tech to find needed information with just a few clicks of a computer mouse.

Regional Planning Program. A simple organization of available products geared to making intelligence professionals at all levels able to work smarter by giving ready access to needed information.

OK. Here comes the boring stuff. You know, where I describe data and information and the values of the right organizational structure. Those of you not interested in that sort of stuff can skip straight to the paragraph marked, "WELCOME BACK!"

Still with me? Then hold tight. Here goes.

Data. Information. Analysis. Data is just another in the long list of four letter words that are both a blessing and a curse. It's a factoid, an info byte that by itself is meaningless. Or if not meaningless is just another item in the long, flowing river of data that pushes past us every minute of every day. Information is a collection of data put together to tell a story, albeit perhaps a short one. Analysis is the gathering of information into a meaningful grouping that provides a decisionmaker with a means to differentiate, based upon specified objectives, what is important and what is not. This is a package of frozen

peas. Data. These frozen peas are \$1.90 for a 20 ounce package. Information. A 10 ounce can of peas is \$.35. More information. Get the most peas for the least money. Objective. Two cans of peas will be cheaper than one frozen package. Analysis. Data has been gathered into information and then analyzed by the shopper to achieve a specified objective, shop cheaply. Stores gather the data and information about what is on their shelves and place it in a structure, an inventory to help them analyze which products are selling and to enable them to make informed decisions to help their bottomline of the most profit for the least cost. We may use our data, information, and analysis to achieve different objectives, but the process is essentially the same.

Everyone, from the newest Airman to the most senior O-10 is faced with thousands, perhaps millions of bits of data every day. There is a fertilizer plant in Orangeland. Data. Meaningless by itself. It's just a factoid. This fertilizer production plant in Orangeland has just changed its springtime production run from 12,000 tons to 35,000 thousand tons of fertilizer precursor materials. Information, but still without meaning. It doesn't gain meaning until it is placed in context, put in an overall defining structure that allows a clear, rational, view of the data bit, the production plant, the entire industry, the effect upon Orangeland itself, and perhaps even some insight into the intention of Orangeland's leaders. But even the best analysis of information and all the various data bits is useless unless it is available to the right persons, at the right time, in a manner that is easily and readily useable.

It is the structure that takes good information and substantive analysis and places it in the hands of those who need to use it. The best information and analysis is useless if it isn't available in a timely fashion to the warfighting staff and ultimately to decisionmakers. So what's the big deal? We've got plenty of structure. We've got Intelink and Intelink-S, the classified versions of the Internet, loaded with data, information, and analysis just waiting for some intrepid staffer to ferret out. There's stuff from DIA, CIA, NSA, NAIC, and NIMA. Indeed, there's material from an entire alphabet soup of agencies in various locations on "the Web" just waiting for someone to find and use. So what's the deal with this structure thing?

Well in reality "the Web" and its classified counterparts are not structures, they are environments inside which data, information, and analysis exist. True, agency home pages do provide structure for this information but you must first know that it's there to use it or sometimes to even find it. There are wonderful databases like MIDB and imagery servers with the latest views of facilities from around the world. But these are no good to anyone if they don't know that these databases exist or can't access them because they don't have a password to get into the program site. Timeliness, access, usability, relevance, these are keywords in intelligence today. To ensure these four horsemen of the information age are on our side, we must have the correct structure, a framework that gives the user all of these things in one package. We must have one stop shopping, as it were, for information relevant to our area of concern. We must have access to that information in a timely manner and it must be useable for our planning and subsequent execution of that plan.

Timeliness, access, usability, relevance. To get these things, we will need a common computer environment and a single standard framework/structure within which to place all this information and analysis. We must avoid re-inventing the wheel, using existing products wherever possible by incorporating them into the appropriate sections of the framework. We must organize the framework by regional/unified command AORs and country for ease of use and quick access to the needed information. Finally, we must make this framework accessible by users worldwide so that personnel from anywhere in the world can use the regional sites for review and planning in preparation for humanitarian and combat contingencies. In a sense, we must create a regional planning program (RPP) location where personnel can get all or nearly all the information they need to support contingency planning and regional training. Once an operation begins, the pace that new information becomes available can be overwhelming. This RPP site would be a common location for such information to be sorted and maintained for easy access by operators who, although intelligent, hard charging, well-intentioned, and trained, frankly may not have the experience or the knowledge base to search multiple locations trying to find the right information/analysis while under the pressure of tremendous time critical suspenses. A multi-level RPP site would certainly give them an in-depth location to provide most of their information/analysis requirements.

OK then. A single common computer environment is the starting point for creating the necessary framework. We're lucky there. Two already exist. Intelink and Intelink-S both meet the criteria for a common environment. Yes they operate at different classification levels; however, the same structure could be placed on both allowing for the existence of common collateral information/analysis (through a guard system as necessary) in both Intelink environments. Yes there may be more extensive information available on Intelink, however, users of both systems would have baseline information available on-line for instant access and use.

We must avoid reinventing the wheel. This is an excellent concept usually lost in the rush of improving on a good idea. There are thousands of excellent documents, assessments, studies, and so on that already exist with much more on the way. Hey, we don't need to have someone start working to recreate these. What is needed, however, is a quick way to access all these excellent pieces of work. It must be transparent to the user. Thus we must be able to hot-link from a common framework to these pieces. The user doesn't care which agency created them. All he or she is interested in is getting the information NOW. If there is no product for the required subject area, then of course, it should be created by the appropriate agency. But (with apologies to Cool Hand Luke) what we have here is a failure to organize effectively.

We must organize the framework by regional/unified command AORs and country for ease of use and quick access to the needed information. Easy to say. How difficult in practice would that really be? Answer: Not really very difficult if a common structure was adopted with niches for required information to be placed. The key is the organization. The RPP should be a multi-level structure extending from overview and summary information at the highest level down to in-depth assessment and facility information at the lower levels. What do we need to create the structure? The use of a team of Web-masters to shape the organizational structure and establish the http links

for each product type to be hot-linked to and the provision of that structure to producing agencies. What's required to make the structure effective? A commitment by producing agencies to hot-link their products to the structure provided and a reaffirmation of the concept of distributed production to identify and maximize production responsibilities. Finally, what structure should we use? At last the boring stuff is over and we can welcome back those who skipped this middle part.

"WELCOME BACK!" OK. We're done with all that background stuff now. Let's get to the meat of the Regional Planning Program (RPP) structure. How should we organize the RPP to achieve everything we've set forth so far? The simple and correct answer is to do it with common sense and logic, establishing an intuitively easy to understand structure. Starting with the Command AORs as the regional country base, one way to accomplish this would be the following multi-level approach. The categories provided are not all-inclusive but give a solid starting point for organizing available products.

Level 1: Regional Planning Program

- Executive Summary

- Command List

Here's where it starts. You've just clicked on the heading that says Regional Planning Program. Next up is a menu listing with two choices: Executive Summary and Command List. Clicking on the Executive Summary would give you an overview and explanation of what the RPP is and how to use it. The Command List would be a listing of each command (i.e.: EUCOM, CENTCOM, PACOM, etc.). Clicking on the Command List would then bring you to level 2.

Level 2: Country List

- This is just what it seems, a listing of countries within that Command's AOR.

- Clicking on one of these countries would take you directly to Level 3.

Level 3: Country Materials

- Quick Facts

- Country Studies

- Capability Assessments

- Leadership Information

- Force Protection

- Facility Database

On this level we find the basic headings to guide us to the info we need to do our work. The Quick Facts category gives us basic, solid information on this country in a short, easily readable format. You know, it might even look a lot like the CIA Fact Book info!

The Country Studies link brings us to the latest information available on the country in question. Terrain, hydrography, weather, social factors, history, in short - all the basic background information that you'll need to make sense out of, for example, which faction supports which leader as well as why no one goes walking on the Sylvan Plains during the full moon (crushing flood tides perhaps?). Capability assessments should

give you everything from a comprehensive look at their military forces and how they use them to how many hospital beds are available and the state of emergency services (if any). The Leadership Info choice would bring you to a section where you could examine the leadership structure and any information that might be available on the leaders themselves. The Force Protection link would bring you to a section containing relevant information for the country you were examining. Finally, there would also be a link to a Facility Database area that would contain (hopefully) everything you ever needed to know for planning of humanitarian and other missions within a specific country.

Choosing the facility database link would bring you to a new screen with the following choices:

Level 4:

- Center of Gravity Analysis
- Database Categories

Selecting Center of Gravity Analysis would bring you to a well thought out analysis of what the most important sectors and strengths of the country are. For example, the island of Tropicsland relies 100% on tourism to maintain the robust economic growth that has brought prosperity to 75% of the population. The economic center of gravity would be tourism. Those things that allow tourists to come and go with ease from the island and make their stays pleasant are important to maintain that center of gravity and thus the economic well being of Tropicsland. Thus, for example, if hurricane Slim hit the island and knocked out all power, this would directly impact their economic center of gravity by shutting down the tourist industry.

Clicking on Database Categories would bring you to a listing of data categories. There is a commonly accepted, exhaustive category listing put out by DIA. I would suggest using this as a starting point. But for our purposes here, let's just give a couple of examples for everyone who doesn't happen to have that tome right at hand. Two nominal categories might be, for instance, airfields, and power systems. Choosing one of the categories would bring you next to the following choices:

Level 5:

- Critical Node Analysis
- Inter-Category Impact Analysis
- Facility Information

Critical Node Analysis describes the category chosen and indicates the most important elements that comprise it, telling why they are important and the effect that would occur if they should be inoperable for one reason or another. This certainly would be very important to anyone trying to figure out why power hasn't been restored to Tropicsland's capital after the hurricane. Analysts engaged in humanitarian and other operations would certainly benefit from having a ready, at hand, analysis of a system's critical nodes.

Inter-Category Impact Analysis would give the analyst a look at what effect failures in the category (power systems) would have on other data categories. Again, if that hurricane took out 90% of Tropicsland's electrical grid, what effect does that have on the airfields? Do the airfields have independent power capability? Are the traffic control radars down due to power failure? Will the TACAN and ILS systems continue to function? Can aircraft bringing in humanitarian relief supplies refuel? When can the tourists come back to Tropicsland? This area would have the background information and analysis necessary for these and other questions to be answered.

Selecting Facility Information would bring you to RPP Level 6 with a listing of, for example, Tropicsland airfields. Choosing Crepe Suzette Airport would then carry you to level 7 of the RPP where you would find a facility folder with relevant information about the airport, with an image of it as well if one is available.

Well that's the Regional Planning Program. Let's look at those levels one more time. Again, remember the categories here are not intended to be all-inclusive.



Adopting this common sense approach to structuring available information and analysis would create a comprehensive, one-stop source of information contained within a single common computer environment. With standard data and product formats that used existing products to the maximum extent, we would have an information structure accessible by users worldwide in real time with the products necessary to support their operations. Now no system will have all the information needed all the time. But this system would, in a manner transparent to the user, provide the best information available in one centralized location. You don't know what you don't know. But now Lt Jones doesn't have to spend fruitless hours learning WHERE to search in an attempt to

find relevant information. New information and products could be linked into the RPP structure as soon as they became available in response to on-going or new requirements by planners and operational commanders and their staffs. The Regional Planning Program would increase the timeliness of access to available information. This gives the analyst more time to transform relevant information into a format useable by the commander and staff.

Tired of working harder without the tools to let you work smarter in this age of rightsizing, downsizing, and doing more with less? Let's change that. Let's create the Regional Planning Program.

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