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15. Abstract: This paper discusses some of the unclassified success stories that the intelligence community has made in the Global War on Terrorism as relates to Maritime Interdiction Operations. It includes ideas for modification of the boarding team organization of surface vessels to better glean information to help with the intelligence community's collection efforts. Appendix A of this shows a system I recommend to facilitate boarding teams collecting intelligence.			
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INTELLIGENCE OPERATIONS IN MARITIME INTERDICTION OPERATIONS AND THE
GLOBAL WAR ON TERRORISM

by
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The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.

Signature: _____
17 May 2004

A major element of the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT) is the ability of the intelligence community to collect, interpret, and disseminate intelligence to Maritime Interdiction Operations (MIO) units to impact the ability of terrorist organizations to freely use the high seas. Further MIO units have a unique opportunity to collect valuable intelligence information on the vessels they board that can be used by the intelligence community to further focus their efforts and support the warfighter. The synergies created between the operational MIO forces and the intelligence community will continue to grow and influence the terrorist organization's ability to use the high seas while ensuring that the global economy is not seriously impacted. The intelligence community and MIO units cooperating together in the GWOT ensures that the National Counter Terrorism Strategy (NCTS) is carried out.

Our NCTS focuses on a number of areas where the MIO and intelligence intermingle. The "Denial of Sponsorship, Support, and Sanctuary to Terrorists"¹ is a key element to the destruction of terrorist networks. As such the MIO units and intelligence community need to ally themselves as never before to ensure that we are in alignment with the goals as set forth in the NCTS. Using information, collected by intelligence and MIO operations, governments can be leveraged to deny the terrorists their tools. This paper will discuss some of those success stories which are in the public domain and reported via open sources, as well as some solutions for MIO units.

The sheer volume of shipping traffic world wide causes the intelligence problem to be extraordinarily complicated. The vast majority of commercial traffic in the world is legitimate traders carrying cargo as part of the global economy. However there are insidious groups which utilize the world's sea lanes to transport their brand of terror to the far reaches

of the globe. Take for example the hundreds of ships that transit the Strait of Bab El Mandeb off the coast of Yemen and Eritrea. Any number of these vessels may be carrying illicit material or terrorist to their destinations. Finding terrorist related shipping in this high density environment is the proverbial "needle in a haystack". Yet targeting vessels in this area due to the natural convergence of traffic reduces the area that must be searched to yield positive results.

Even with this daunting task there have been major intelligence successes in GWOT. These successes illustrate the wide range of options available to the terrorists as well as the payoff for the hard work of the intelligence community, MIO units, and our allies. The first major victory was the M/V Karine A, a small coastal freighter, which was captured by the Israeli Navy on 02 January 2002. As reported by Israeli media and the New York Times, the Israeli intelligence community was able to track the purchase of the vessel from Bulgaria, where it eventually traveled to Sudan to pick up its crew of Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) terrorists. The Karine A then traveled to the Iranian island of Kish where it picked up its cargo before traveling to Israel via Yemen. In addition to the 13 terrorists, the Israeli military netted a "cache of Kalashnikov rifles and ammunition as well as 211 antitank mines, 735 hand grenades, and 62 122-millimeter Katyusha rockets, all bound for the PLO."² The Israeli intelligence services were able to utilize their all source intelligence to intercept this vessel 300 miles off the coast of Israel. The political leverage gained by this seizure was an important element in future Israeli government dealings with the Palestinian Authority.*

* For additional information on Karine A see Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs website at the following: <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Government/Communiques/2002/Seizing%20of%20the%20Palestinian%20weapons%20ship%20Karine%20A%20->

In June of 2002, the M/V Sara was captured by Italian authorities in Sicily with 18 suspected Al Queda members on board. Cooperation between the Italian government and the United States was critical the success of the operation as reported by the Sydney Morning Herald.

“The suspects on the Sara, all men, face charges of conspiracy to carry out terrorist and subversive acts, following an investigation by Italy's anti-terrorist police assisted by a unit of the United States Naval Criminal Investigative Service based in Sigonella, Sicily.”³

After inspection of the ship Italian authorities were able to put together an investigation to bring these suspected terrorist to justice as reported by the Washington Post.

“Italian investigators found one hint that the men might be terrorists in coded notation on the ship to someone "united in matrimony." It's a conventional reference to indicate membership in a terrorist organization," prosecutor Francesco Messineo told reporters. He said the 15 men, who had been held since Aug. 5 in a detention camp in Sicily for illegal immigrants, probably belong to Osama bin Laden's al Queda network... A U.S. Navy representative present at the news conference, Samuel Worth, told reporters that the coded reference to marriage was especially worrisome. "We are alarmed," he said, "because it's a word that was intercepted during the first attack on the twin towers, in 1993. It is one of the elements that induced us to intervene.”⁴

This capture coupled with the M/V Karine A forced the Tongan government to close it's Tongan International Registry of ships, seriously impacting the ability for terrorists to use a flag of convenience.⁵ As part of the strategy on terrorism it is critical to deny terrorists a safe refuge, and by denying them the use of legitimate vessels they will be forced increasingly to use stateless vessels which are prohibited by the International Maritime Organization.

Following the initial war in Afghanistan the coalition forces set up a cordon off the coast of Pakistan in an attempt to intercept fleeing Al Queda and Taliban forces. This coalition was nothing more than impressive, and it wouldn't have been nearly as effective if it were not for intelligence collected as indicated by this article below:

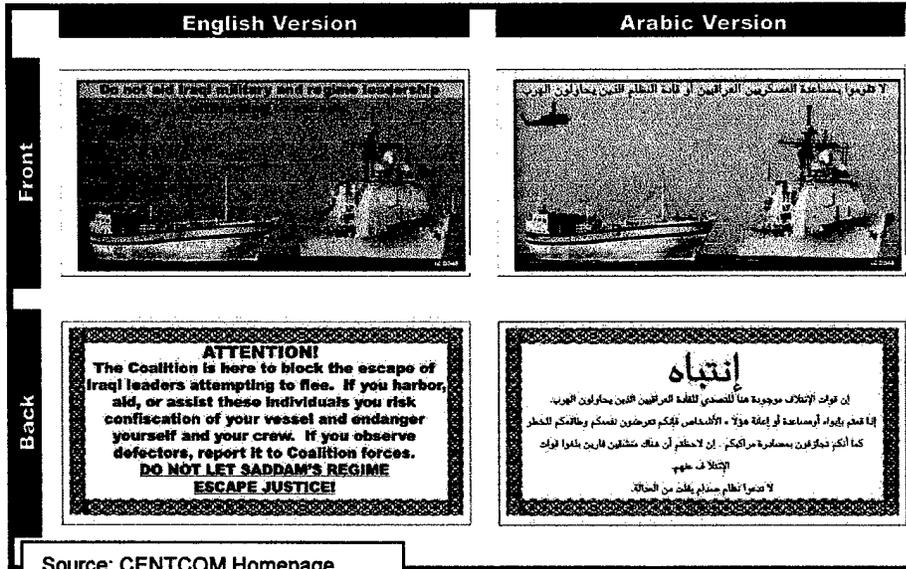
More than 100 warships from a dozen nations, along with helicopters, reconnaissance planes and fighter jets, are combing the ocean for signs of senior Queda and Taliban leaders. Each day, the allied forces tracked hundreds of vessels, from lumbering oil tankers to tiny fishing boats, questioning their captains and sometimes dispatching heavily armed boarding parties to check cargo holds and photograph crews.⁶

This blockade was effective and on July 13, 2002 and July 17, 2002 respectively, boarding parties from HMCS Algonquin detained suspects and handed them over to U.S. forces.⁷ As stated by RADM Zortman "If we can disrupt their travel routes and force them into less-easy, less-developed lanes, that may aid us in flushing them to the surface."⁸ By keeping the pressure on the terrorists we can catch their operatives and use their knowledge to continue to hunt down their associates at large.

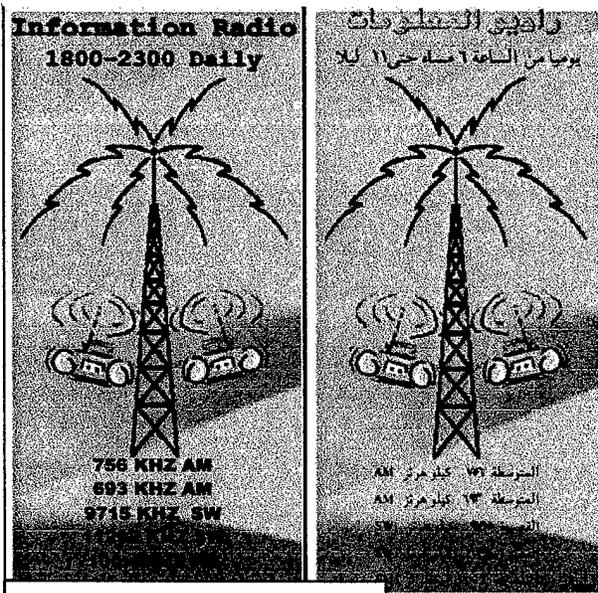
Recently the combination of quick intelligence community action and MIO units operations resulted in the capture of Al Queda members and illicit drug cargo using the information collected from the previous boardings. On 15 December 2003, the USS DECATUR intercepted and captured a dhow with an estimated 10 million dollars worth of hashish onboard.⁹ "Information from that stop led to the second interception on December 20 in the northern Arabian Sea where two boats were believed to be carrying heroin and methamphetamines."¹⁰ The USS PHILLIPINE SEA was able to capture these suspected terrorists and their cache of drugs. U.S. Central Command further stated "10 of the 33 crew members seized in December had been transferred to an "undisclosed facility" for more questioning after their initial interrogations revealed possible al Queda affiliations deemed noteworthy enough to pursue further."¹¹ Once again the close coordination of intelligence and MIO units attacked the tools of the terrorist.

U.S. Army Psychological Battalions worked on a PSYOP campaign and distributed leaflets to all vessels boarded via MIO units as part of Operation Enduring Freedom and

Operation Iraqi Freedom. These leaflets have been carefully crafted to motivate members of the vessel's crew identify terrorists and other groups such as Iraqi Leadership hiding onboard as well as offering rewards for their help. Two recent bilingual handbills distributed as part of these campaigns are shown below.



Source: CENTCOM Homepage



Source: CENTCOM Homepage

MIO units have a unique ability to distribute these carefully crafted leaflets to the very vessels and craft that may be trafficking terrorists. Distribution of these handbills and leaflets can

pass on valuable information such as the frequency to listen to pro-coalition news or other ideas that are of interest to the United States.

MIO units and their sailors need to be part of the solution to crushing the ability of terrorist organizations ability to operate on the high seas. As the final part of this paper it is important to discuss how to change MIO teams to meet the requirements of intelligence collection. As we move away from UNSCR 986 boardings to Anti-Terrorism boardings we need to change and adapt our MIO teams to meet the new challenges. Boarding teams built for 986 boardings were 12 man teams, limited by the safe carrying capacity of USN rigid hulled inflatable boats (RHIB), as well as maximizing visits in the holding area in the Northern Arabian Gulf. Therefore most ships had at least two 12 man teams to conduct initial boardings searching for illegal contraband inbound to Iraq and illegal crude oil being smuggled out. A number of ships also had a third team which was smaller to conduct daily health and comfort inspections, although not required this adaptation shows the resourcefulness of ships to modify their boarding teams to meet the requirements of the mission.

Each sailor on the MIO team should be considered a mini-intelligence collection asset, as their unique ability to move around vessels under inspection is comparable to a detective in a crime scene. Modification of the boarding team should be considered to effectively use the RHIB assets available (typically 2) with the team members available from the original 986 team model. Using the initial boarding team to conduct the safety and security sweep as before the second team should be modified to conduct intelligence collection and cargo inspection. Table 1 shows the previous arrangement of the boarding teams, while Table 2 shows my proposed intelligence focused boarding team.

<p>Table 1 UNSCR 986 Boarding Team (12 Members, 1 boat sortie) Primary Purpose searching for illegal oil and contraband</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Boarding Officer (LTjg, ENS) • Assistant Boarding Officer (CPO) • Sweep 1 Bridg/SuperstructureTeam (E4-E6) 2 Persons • Sweep 2 Cargo Inspection Team (E4-E6) 2 Persons • Sweep 3 Engineering Inspection Team (E4-E6) 2 Persons • Security (E4-E6) 2 Persons 	<p>Table 2 Proposed Intelligence Specific Boarding Team (24 members, 2 boat sorties) Primary Purpose searching for illegal contraband and terrorist related activities.</p> <p>SORTIE ONE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Boarding Officer (LT Department Head) • Assistant Boarding Officer (CPO) • Security and Interrogation Team (E4-E6) 6 Person • Sweep 1 Bridge Team (E4-E6) 2 Person • Sweep 2 Engineering Team (E4-E6) 2 Person <p>SORTIE TWO</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sweep 3 Stateroom Search Team (E4-E6) 6 Person • Sweep 4 Computer Search Team (E4-E6) Information Systems Tech 2 Person • Sweep 5 Cargo Search Team (E4-E6) 2 Person • Intelligence Collection Team (LTjg and ISC) 2 Person
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Unlike 986 boardings in the Comisky holding area, warships are required to intercept and board targeted ships on the high seas or littorals. Therefore changing the make up and function of the team is required to maximize the intelligence information gleaned as well as increasing the likelihood that terrorist or terrorist related activities will be discovered. I describe the teams as sorties as this reduces the requirement for a dedicated second RHIB as a Go/No Go criterion.

Since these boardings will be conducted on a less frequent basis than 986 boardings I recommend assigning a Department Head to the Boarding Officer position. Department Heads have the requisite mariner skills that are not yet learned in the vast majority of division officers in dealing with Master Mariners. Increasing the size and job scope of the Security Team to six members allows for control of the crew while processing them for individual interrogations and segregation if required. Stateroom search teams have also been equally

increased to six persons to ensure that staterooms are methodically and deliberately searched for intelligence.

The computer search team, that should be drawn from computer savvy personnel onboard to exploit the Master's computer for the vast array of information held. Use of flash EPROM technology can make it simple to collect files like word documents (.doc), data bases (.dbm, .xls), image files (.jpg, gif, etc...), emails, and personal folder files (.pst). Terrorists have been suspected of using steganographic programs (heuristics) to transfer instructions buried in .jpg files.¹² Although it is almost impossible for the computer search team itself to identify a modified file it would notice if any steganographic programs were loaded on the computer and can collect all suspect file types. Files that may contain hidden messages would then be able to be forwarded to Intelligence and Cryptographic agencies for exploitation.

The Intelligence Collection Team (ICT) should be made up of a knowledgeable junior officer (preferably a second tour division officer) and an Intelligenceman (IS). This team should set up their computer equipment in a central area that is not in view of the crew of the target vessel. The interrogation team, sweep teams and computer search team would bring any digital images or information to the ICT for initial review. Information that is deemed critical would be transmitted to the mother ship for transfer to the intelligence community to allow for the intelligence community to ask questions that can be posed to the crew quickly.

Changes in the make up of the boarding team also means we should look at how intelligence is collected. The ICT as should have equipment which is self supporting and easy to transport. An easily transportable laptop should be the center of the ICT toolkit. The laptop should be equipped with a light weight flat bed scanner, USB Hub, and numerous EPROM flash memory chips and/or wireless LAN connectivity with the mother ship or any other USB capable equipment deemed necessary. This laptop assembly should be powered

by a power pack I designed for USS BARRY (DDG 52)[†]. This will remove the reliance on substandard or non-reliable power found on the foreign built vessels.

The Sweep Teams should be given digital cameras and digital video recorders to take pictures of all documentation (personal as well as business) and record the internal layout of vessels boarded. Digital documents should be forwarded to the ICT for initial review and eventual forwarding to the intelligence community. Layout of the internals of the ship could be stored by the intelligence community for future use should the vessel need to be boarded again by another MIO unit or Special Forces. Sweep teams would also be responsible for looking for any material such as hidden compartments, false bulkheads, or weapons.

The Bridge Sweep Team should be made up of both a Quartermaster rating as well as a Cryptological Technician Technical (CTT). This team should be responsible for reviewing GMDSS transmission, GPS coordinates, INMARSAT phone usage, and collecting radar information (ELINT). The radar information collected can be maintained for future use by both the Naval Intelligence Community, utilizing space based sensors to locate this emitter,¹³ and MPA and MIO units. INMARSAT phone numbers can be used to focus eavesdropping efforts against suspected terrorists and link together conversations to localize terrorists on ground or at sea.

The information collected by a single sailor can result in a windfall for the intelligence community. Consider the following illustration of the power of information that allowed intelligence agencies to localize and track terrorist using their own cellular phone in April 2002 as reported by the New York Times.

[†] The described power unit consists of a deep cell marine (12 volt DC) battery with a 110volt/60hz AC power converter. This pack can be easily carried in a ALICE pack and is easily created by material on hand. The ALICE pack worked best as it was easily jettisonable by the team member tasked to carry it in the event of an emergency. See Appendix A for further information.

“Investigators, suspicious that the call was a signal between terrorists, followed the trail first to one terror suspect, then to others, and eventually to terror cells on three continents. What tied them together was a computer chip smaller than a fingernail. But before the investigation wound down in recent weeks, its global net caught dozens of suspected Al Queda members and disrupted at least three planned attacks in Saudi Arabia and Indonesia, according to counterterrorism and intelligence officials in Europe and the United States.”¹⁴

This is exactly the sort of information that is critical in the GWOT, and may be collected by the MIO units and their teams in a way that satellites and reconnaissance aircraft cannot. As stated by a senior counterterrorism official in Europe:

This was one of the most effective tools we had to locate Al Queda... The perception of anonymity may have lulled them into a false sense of security. We now believe that Al Queda has figured out that we were monitoring them through these phones.”¹⁵

The telephones used by Al Queda used a chip which was sold by a Swiss company that did not require personal information to purchase which is why they were valuable to the terrorists. As a result of this investigation the “Switzerland's legislature passed a law making it illegal to purchase cellular phone chips without providing personal information.”¹⁶ The Swiss therefore cooperated in the GWOT similar to the Tongan government and removed yet another safe haven for the terrorist.

The U.S. Navy's NTTP 3-07.11, Chapter 5 has an expansive list of “Essential Elements of Information” that MIO teams should be looking for. This document should be the key source for targeting information collection by boarding teams to maximize intelligence value. This document should be mandatory reading for all MIO teams and Intelligence Officers assigned to MIO support. The recommended search elements are prioritized below as extracted from NTTP 3-07.11.¹⁷

1. Cellular Telephone information
2. Crew Information

3. Ship's Registration
4. Communication and Navigation Equipment
5. Personal Documents
6. Ship's Logs
7. Managing Company Information
8. Ship's Cargo and Manifest
9. Financial Data and Movement History
10. Smuggling Activities
11. Owner's Information
12. Bill of Sale and other Legal Documents
13. Agent/Broker Information
14. Master's Safe Contents
15. Ship's Material Condition

Units which have a good plan for conducting their boarding operations will enhance the value of the boarding if they follow the recommendations of NTTP 3-07.11. Each of the aforementioned elements is designed to focus the efforts of the boardings conducted by MIO units. These boardings offer a unique opportunity to collect valuable real time intelligence in relatively high volume.

In Figure 1 below, notice that the symbiotic relationship between the operational forces and the intelligence community is one of synergy not of competing goals.

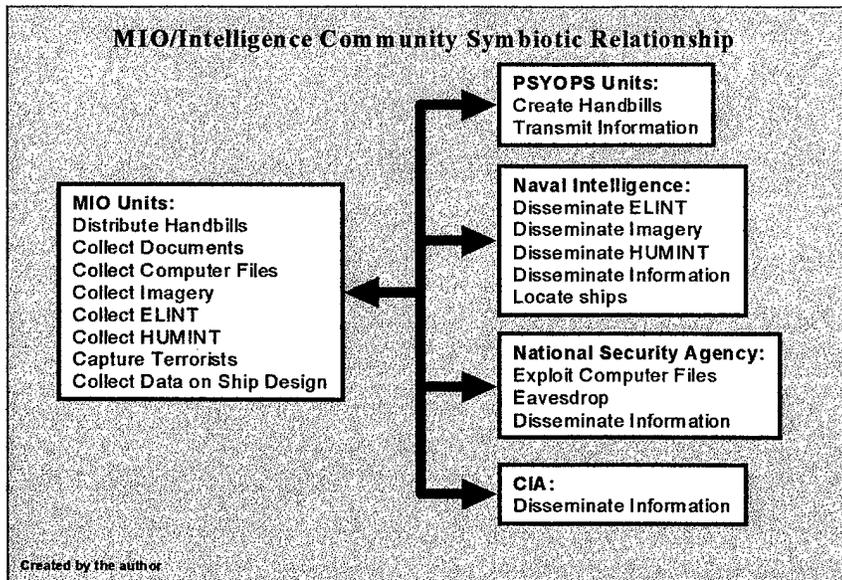


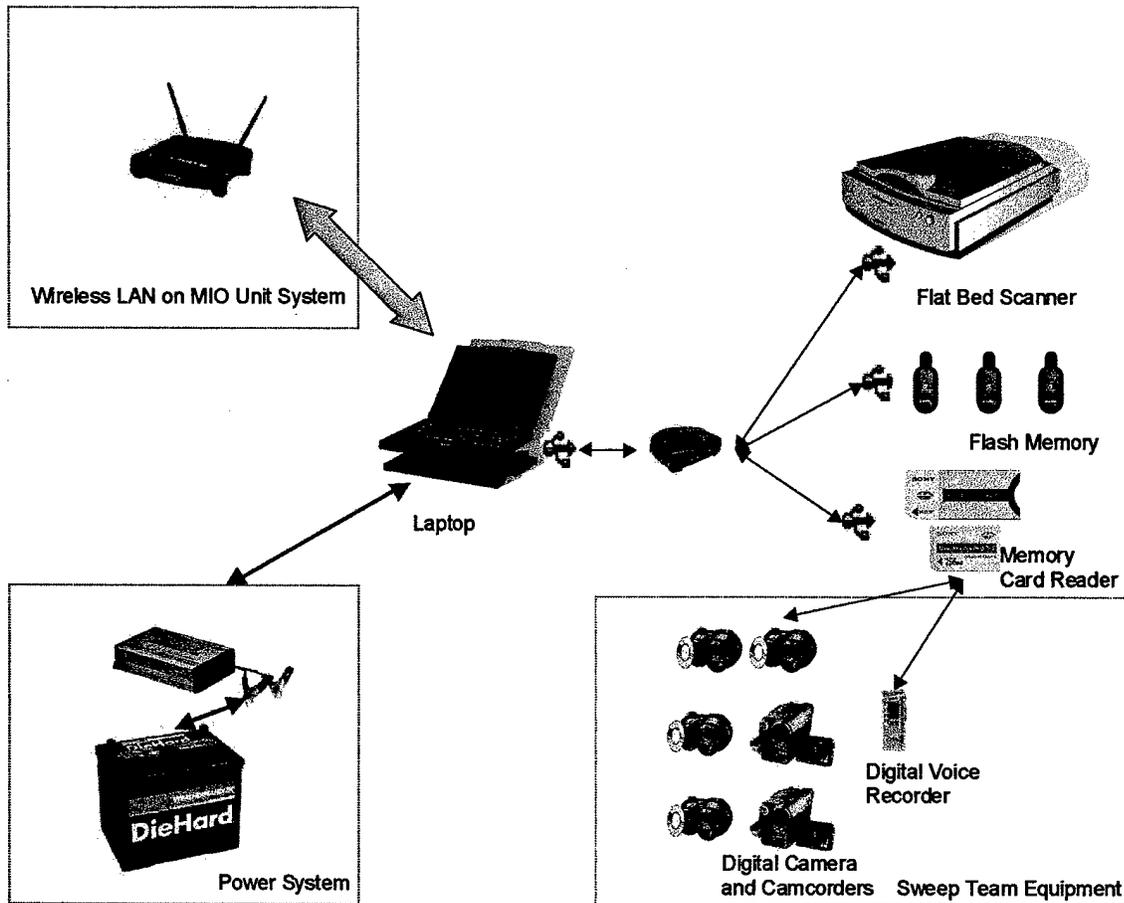
Figure 1

Close coordination and alignment between the MIO units and the Intelligence

Community can only help to undermine terrorist networks while fine tuning our ability to focus efforts on the GWOT. Alignment of our MIO team organization to meeting the goals and needs of the intelligence community needs to occur to facilitate this common interest and continue to support the National Counter Terrorism Strategy. Synergetic energies created by our military and intelligence organizations will ensure that we win the Global War On Terrorism.

Appendix A

Intelligence Collection System plan designed by the author:



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