
USAF Intelligence Training & IO Warrior Preparation

Interview With Colonel Scott A. Bethel

Interviewed by John Whisenhunt, Editor

Editorial Abstract: *Colonel Scott A. Bethel is Commander, 17th Training Wing, Goodfellow AFB, Texas. Goodfellow is a joint center of excellence for intelligence, precision instrumentation, and firefighting training for the Department of Defense. Col Bethel describes current Air Force training initiatives dealing with intelligence support to information operations, and the preparation of new political-military and computer network analysts.*



Colonel Scott Bethel. (US Air Force)

IO Sphere: *Some observers criticize the joint intelligence community for its lack of in-depth understanding of our adversaries. How do you think we're doing in terms of developing and practicing true cultural intelligence?*

Col Bethel: Across the board, especially in AETC (Air Education and Training Command), we're doing things to develop and generate new cultural intelligence folks. There are three initiatives that are very important: one is changing our ROTC (Reserve Officer Training Corps) scholarship structure. We're gravitating away from engineering and computer science, the so-called "hard science" degrees, toward more social sciences—political science, and language—with the hope and the understanding that you don't grow up someone who can do cultural analysis with a two week class. The second is introducing language in almost every aspect of training—such as in IDE and SDE (Intermediate and Senior Developmental Education). The current plan is to have Chinese, Arabic and French, and that will give us a cadre of folks that can at least understand foreign officials in their native tongue, and have an

appreciation for that language. Lastly, in terms of accessions, we're asking all incoming intelligence officers to be level "one-one" in at least one other language. So we're pursuing that, as well as increasing our presence in the traditional human intelligence (HUMINT) arena. You certainly can't simply read about a culture and know what's happening, so this will provide a good start.

IO Sphere: *Some of your newly-minted Air Force intelligence troops may find themselves in joint service assignments doing Information Operations missions, especially in today's expeditionary force. Can you tell us a little about how you prepare your students to work in these types of environments?*

Col Bethel: Almost every enlisted training experience in our programs at Goodfellow is a joint experience. The Air Force 1N0 (intelligence operations), 1N1 (imagery analyst), 1N4 (network intelligence analyst) specialties all have Army, Navy and Marine Corps personnel right in the classroom, so it's joint training from the get-go in both the instructor and student bodies. So every student will get a perspective such as "here's how we do things in the Army"—everyone will get something from at least one other service. The second way we do that is we have three exercises. Now the officer students are training jointly the whole time, so we have the sister service officers on base do role-playing in the exercises, and we'll ask them to do things relative to their service roles. Our 17th Training Group commander, Colonel Scott George, has an initiative with the US Army Intelligence Center and School at Fort Huachuca (Arizona) to do virtual exercises, where we will plug into each other as one large command staff, and do all the various intelligence disciplines and share data. So there are some great ideas about how to increase jointness in our training environment. Now as far as IO-specific training, that is of course tougher to crack, given it is a pretty specific skill set. So what we're doing there is to have follow-on training after your initial AFSC/MOS (Air Force Specialty Code/Military Occupational Specialty) awarding courses, whether you are officer or enlisted, so if you're going to an IO job straight out of school, you'll go to a multi-week course to prepare you for success in the IO environment.

IO Sphere: *Would that be a service course, or another joint course?*

Col Bethel: Right now it doesn't appear there is a joint course that gives you that whole skill set. For the computer network operations (CNO) side, our 1N5 folks get a great follow-on course at Corry Station, Florida, where they learn network operations, mapping, and very sophisticated methods to design and protect our networks. But we're really just getting going there. For officers on the other hand, there is no course, so we're working in partnership with AIA (Air Intelligence Agency) and its subordinate organizations to develop that kind of course, establish the expertise, and create some sort of formal training unit that is an extension of the existing schoolhouse, somewhere – though San Antonio would be the logical place to put that. So the training group has that in the works to determine the best spot.

IO Sphere: *Joint doctrine describes IO as “intelligence intensive,” and the current GWOT campaign seems especially so. Can you relate any of your experiences during your tour in Iraq that especially illustrates this?*

Col Bethel: Yes. I was in Iraq from June through December 2004, and during the Fallujah campaign in November of that year, we had an especially effective combination of IO and kinetic pieces under one umbrella. I think that one of the critical things is to understand all the different elements or core competencies of IO, and I'm no expert, but we started with an excellent SC (Strategic Communication) campaign. We were able to effectively show the Arab media, and the non-US western media, that there were some very bad people in Fallujah, out there doing some very bad things. So there was a very compelling need to do something about these evil deeds. And the SC campaign also allowed us to get the people who had not engaged in any wrongdoing to get out of town, letting them know something bad was about to happen. We were able to work on the communications and infrastructure of that area to mount an effective ISR (intelligence, surveillance & reconnaissance) campaign, so we knew what neighborhoods to watch, what areas were especially bad, where to focus the ground forces' efforts, and what roads to watch in that very troubled city. So that when we did send in troops and start dropping ordinance, then we knew exactly where to concentrate for best effect. Of course, this doesn't mean you don't have to go in and revisit such places and flush out the bad guys again—because they can come back. But there was a really effective linking of arms between the air forces, Marine ground forces, and the IO sides, in bringing about a pretty rapid success. That doesn't mean there weren't hiccups on the battlefield, and we might have missed some things, because that's just the way things happen in a complex campaign. But there was a lot of forethought in linking the influence and kinetic pieces together to come out victorious in that battle.

IO Sphere: *Some observers feel the IO mission area has too many players or stakeholders. How do you approach the problems of ISR support and intelligence integration into such a complex arena?*

Col Bethel: I agree that it has too many players, and frankly too many definitions. It still means different things to different services: some still see it as an offshoot of signals intelligence, some as straight computer network operations. There still seems to be trouble defining if some IO elements belong in the J2 (intelligence), the J3 (operations) or the J6 (communications & computers). I understand we now have a newly published joint doctrine (Joint Pub 3-13, 26 June 2006), and I think we need to rally around that. For the Air Force, I think the difficulty is the functional mission seems to bounce back and forth between the A2 and the A3. The three has the operational activity, but much of the workforce and training resides on the two side, which has not always been a particularly good combination for the USAF. I think we've been a bit spotty and inconsistent on our commitment, funding, training, for IO. So I would say the most important thing we can do is embrace the joint community guidance and definitions, and agree on what the IO components or core competencies really are. There's offensive and defensive parts, the SC piece, and so on, that reside in that broad framework. But that would let us all know what tools we have in the kit bag. Now, those are all my personal ideas, and in my current assignment at 17th Training Wing Commander I don't have a lot of say so in these areas. While our adversaries are getting much smarter in using SC and being network-centric, they are defensively using the more arcane methods like couriers and dead drops. They are good at information ops across several areas, and as the enemy adjusts his tactics, well, we have to become more agile.

IO Sphere: *Along with your Air Command and Staff College classmates, you wrote one of the early USAF papers on IO in 1996. Looking back at this work, how did your team predict changes in Air Force Information Operations? What do you see now, 10 years later?*

Col Bethel: The notion of the paper was a team trying to come up with new ideas, whether technology existed to implement them or not. We used author Alvin Toffler's "Third Wave" ideas, which some might see as wild notions or crazy, outside-the-box kinds of thoughts. Even if the ideas were wild or "science-fictiony," that was our group's job. So our idea was to solve the problem of latency between commander's intent and accomplishing a given objective, and slash through that like butter to the actual implementation phase. And especially enabling others throughout the process—to add their ideas—without changing the overall focus of the commander's intent. Our idea was that there would be some sort of machine that would let us understand each other's thoughts—which is a dangerous and challenging notion—but that you could understand what a commander really wanted to accomplish,

without him having to tell someone else, then somebody else, and somebody else. Where this really plays into today is that these ideas have evolved in the real proliferation of collaborative tools, allowing a variety of analysts and professionals to get on a net and look at the same material, annotate it, instant message chat or voice chat, and talk it through, no matter where they are sitting. Though that's not exactly a thought connection, it's not a textual message that requires reading and interpretation, and determining what someone is getting at, and going back and forth. So, the outside-the-box thinking and trying to build the right technology mix has been very successful in that respect.

IO Sphere: *We've heard you hope to revise some of the analyst-building content of Air Force intelligence training courses. Could you talk about what you'd like to change, and how you hope these revisions will improve your force readiness?*

Col Bethel: Yes, there's been a lot of officer training work, because so much analytical work is done by the officer corps. Our training group commander, Col Scott George, came from a trip at the Research and Development Corp. in Santa Monica (California), where he worked a training regiment adjustment for Air Force intelligence students, to increase analytical capability among intelligence professionals. The kind of things we've already started doing is an analytical capabilities test, which we've given to both our students and our instructor cadre, to give us an idea if you're better six or eight years down the road or just coming in. And the scores were actually pretty close. So there might be some innate nature of whether you're ever going to be a good analyst. We can help refine that and expand upon that, but if you don't have it, you're never going to get it, no matter how many classes we send you to. We need to be smart about how we send people to assignments and those who have good analytical skill sets, well, we'll track those folks and analysts, and folks with higher mechanical/technical skill sets such as reporting and presentations will be tracked another way. We're trying to give our initial cadre students many more organizational challenges. For example, something happens in the world like the recent Israeli/Hezbollah war in southern Lebanon. We will do a briefing competition, and ask each of six teams to build a four slide briefing that provides an analytical framework for that situation. Understanding they're fresh out of school, the expectation can't be the same as with a 30 year analyst out of CIA or some other larger intelligence center, but it gives them a chance to "boil it down," and come up with a way ahead that is sensible for a policy maker, in a pretty big hurry. How do you break down the walls, and understand what Web sites to go to on what network, and use your colleague network, and all those things good analysts do with incredible rapidity—and do it now? And we challenge them in a "scramble alert" setting, to answer those "why did this happen" questions, and "what's going to happen in the next 24 hours" questions, and what role should the US play



Goodfellow Air Force Base. (US Air Force)

in all that. We're trying to get those thinking processes into them now, so that when they're out there in the field, and their commander asks these hard questions—wherever they end up—they'll have some experience in quick analysis. We want to avoid just "regurgitating" technical aspects of what weapons can do what, and other traditional rote aspects of our training regiment. And going back to the testing, we will track them and see if they improved over the years as an analyst. Of course, this will help our overall force development by allowing us to put the right people in the right job, hopefully every time.

IO Sphere: *Thank you for being here today.*

Col Bethel: You're very welcome. I enjoyed the visit.



Col Scott Bethel, US Air Force, is Commander, 17th Training Wing, Goodfellow AFB, San Angelo, Texas. Col Bethel is a career intelligence officer who has served at all levels from fighter squadron to NATO headquarters. He commanded the 22d Intelligence Squadron and the 497th Intelligence Group, and served as Chief of Collections at MNF-I C2, Iraq, in 2004. He holds a BA from Northern Illinois University, a Masters from the Defense Intelligence College, and was an Defense Fellow at Boston University. Col Bethel assumed his present command in 2005.