ity of its role, but also the increased obligations and responsibilities that such a role brings.19

Support to Military Operations (SMO): This traditional intelligence role has usually focused on assisting current military operations. Much of this information concerns current numbers, locations, and activities of hostile units, and other information addresses significant elements of the physical environment in which military forces are operating.20 Other military users need quite specific current data on subtle technical characteristics of adversarial equipment and forces to serve, for example, as targeting signatures or to support electronic warfare (EW) activities. Regardless of type, intelligence supporting operating forces demands extraordinary accuracy, precision, and timeliness to ensure that it is immediately “actionable” under conditions that are highly stressful and potentially lethal.21

Increasingly, however, military operators have other operational intelligence needs, such as support for information operations and for security and stabilization in Iraq. To prosecute these missions successfully, the military now also needs far more cultural awareness and timely accurate information on adversary thinking, motivations, and intentions.

Support to Policy Operations (SPO): Making explicit that this is a distinct role emphasizes the importance of intelligence to daily policymaking across the entire spectrum of national security concerns; it is the “national user” cognate of SMO. SPO provides policymakers and senior officials (importantly including senior civilian defense officials, combatant commanders, and other military officers) with indispensable situational awareness, including important background information, to assist them in executing and overseeing ongoing policy activities and in planning and framing policy initiatives. As it is as intensely focused on providing actionable information, it is as heavily oriented as SMO to current intelligence and reporting. However, SPO differs from SMO somewhat in content and priorities in that it has always included a greater proportion of less quantifiable, softer information, such as political and economic

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18 I am grateful to Dr. Russell Swenson of the Joint Military Intelligence College for persuading me to sharpen this point. See Russell G. Swenson, with Susana C. Lemozy, “Politicization and Persuasion: Balancing Evolution and Devolution in Strategic Intelligence,” unpublished manuscript. When the CIA was created, expectations about intelligence capabilities and its role were significantly different than they are today. At the policy level as well, there is now an expectation that intelligence will be available to guide policy creation and inform course changes if necessary.
19 A valuable guide to appropriate comportment in these circumstances is Herbert Goldhamer’s The Adviser.
20 The US Army, which has extensive doctrine on operations, calls this intelligence preparation of the battlefield (IPB). This includes specific information on mission, enemy, time, terrain, and troops available (METT-T).
21 A critical example is the need for technical details, so that enemy weapons, such as improvised explosive devices (IEDs), can be countered.