

INTERROGATION - CONTEMPORARY HUMINT TRENDS AND CHALLENGES

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Abstract: *Interrogation plays a crucial role in the military, and intelligence sphere, especially in the face of operations of an armed nature. The differentiation of interrogation due to its nature (procedural and evidentiary purpose or intelligence requirements (IRs)) opened up the opportunity for military personnel to polemicize on the competence and organizational side of this practice, and this article presents considerations on the aspects of the application of interrogation at the intelligence level.*

Keywords: intelligence, HUMINT, interrogation, procedures

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1. Introduction

The interrogation and the methods and techniques used raise numerous controversies. This activity is associated with the justice system, public order bodies, statutory competencies, human rights institutions, and the military.

Research on interrogation methodology and its greatest development took place during the operations in Korea and Vietnam, the Cold War, Iraq, and Afghanistan. As a result of these experiences, the involved nations have developed strategies, and defensive and offensive interrogation programs to an advanced degree. It allowed for building effectiveness and the acquisition of valuable skills by interrogators. (Robert A. Fein, *Educing Information Interrogation: Science and Art.*, 2006). The Russian invasion of Ukraine revealed at the same time the brutal nature of the interrogations (without respect or observance of the international law of armed conflicts) and

the enormity of the scale of their conduct during the period of increasing conflict intensity.

Undoubtedly, the war crimes committed must be condemned, but at the same time, should warn against the consequences of entrusting this task to inappropriate personnel and the results of legal and moral-ethical consequences.

The modern battlefield reveals the possibility of obtaining information affecting the success of current operations as a result of interrogations (due to the possibility of knowledge or documentation collection derived from detainees).

The current approach to interrogation has had consequences in its perception by the military community. As a result, specific changes were initiated through the NATO doctrines and standards revision, confirmed by member states.

Building and developing these capabilities is an integral element of military activity and prompts debate in organizational and

functional aspects, as reflected in military exercises devoted to these issues, e.g. Combined Interrogation and Detention Exercise Ready Anvil, which took place in April 2023 as the part of the certification of the 504th Military Intelligence Brigade (Expeditionary) stationed in Poland. The interoperability strengthening in this area has been confirmed by the inclusion of a separate element of Polish HUMINT personnel in the training structure, as well as the participation of observers from the NATO HUMINT Centre of Excellence and Multinational Corps [1].

2. Interrogation Requirements

Following the current NATO doctrinal foundation, the execution of these tasks has been assigned to specialized interrogation teams. The placement of these competencies may result from the need to shorten the time of building and achieving specific capabilities and the fact that these personnel have appropriate knowledge, skills, and experiences. Interrogation must be the responsibility of authorized personnel, under applicable law and regardless of the environment in which the activity is conducted [2]. Currently, few NATO member countries have had or have the interrogation abilities to answer Intelligence Requirements (IRs).

As practitioners and experts emphasize, the selection of personnel should guarantee that the interrogators have the appropriate age, general military experience acquired during previous service, desired personal characteristics, and the proper level of access to classified information. Next, referral to specialist training is demanded, which in its program should include elements of cross-cultural awareness (adequate to the planned area of operation). Additionally, technical support should include audio-video equipment, and implement innovative solutions, such as stress detectors and analyzers, and biometrics [3].

Previous research on the organization of

the interrogator training system has shown that the current formal possibilities do not meet the actual battlefield requirements, being based on outdated or irrelevant materials, and interrogators strive to seek advanced knowledge and training experiences that reflect interactions similar to real life. Successful interrogation practitioners are perceived as having strong interpersonal and adaptive skills concerning a particular context or specific interaction with the interrogated person [3]. In addition, they should be patient, mature, and flexible [4].

According to Russano et al., the organizational part of training should base on more realistic forms of classes, staged simulations role-played, and the use of video recordings from real interrogation sequences. Lectures in the substantive knowledge are significant for operators without experience and those who want to develop their skills. It must touch on aspects of building relationships and differences in their establishment - depending on the situational or cultural background. Further comprehensive solutions should include the basics of cooperation with analysts and interpreters [4].

3. The Techniques Effectiveness and Efficiency

The area of interrogation techniques reveals a pattern of building a relationship and emotional provocation. According to practitioners, these techniques are most often used and perceived as more effective than confrontation techniques. Additionally, the experts emphasize that harsh methods based on fear have the opposite effect. Research has also shown that there are no universal rules, so finally, methods and techniques used require adaptation to specific conditions [4].

The essence of effective and efficient interrogation operations is the use of methods aimed at defying the resistance of the interrogated persons through appropriate relationship establishment and

maintenance, and elicitation of detailed valuable information.

Modern interrogation methods show psychological manipulation as aimed at obtaining an appropriate statement or confirmation from the interrogated person about the specific available information. This approach is known as accusatory and consists of three stages during which it occurs:

- isolation of the detainee in a small room (causing anxiety and uncertainty);
- accusation and confrontation with available information (maximization of possible consequences);
- compassionate approach (so-called minimization of effects in exchange for information) [5].

This method, although often used, has not gained sympathy among military practitioners, as evidenced by attempts to adapt other solutions derived from various forms of personal interactions, such as the “PACE” and “ORBIT” models (developed in Great Britain and Canada) or the cognitive approach (popular in the USA). The cognitive solutions undoubtedly affect the information collection effectiveness and awareness to distinguish truth and lies. This skill is crucial during the evaluation of interrogated person's credibility and the information obtained assessment process and is the main subject of numerous psychological studies in terms of building the ability to detect deception.

4. Modern Interrogation Practices – Tips and Tricks

There is a plethora of interrogation techniques, methods, and exemplary models promoted by various professional studies and academic papers. When reviewing current practices, it is important to notice interrogation as a dynamic process. In achieving goals, the interrogator adapts the available knowledge and experience to a specific situation and environment. Below is an overview of the most frequently used practices based on the High-Value Detainee Interrogation Group (HIG - a specialized interdisciplinary interrogation group established in January 2010 to advance the science and practice of interrogation in the US.) report, which complements each other and can be used interchangeably. The practices used can therefore be divided into three phases: planning and preparation, execution, and completion.

During the first phase (Table 1), all interrogation team members are concentrated on specific demands to achieve success and answer IRs. This effort provides the team with sufficient detainee data based on available reports analysis and interviews with guards. Behaviors observed while the detainee is isolated play a crucial role in the interrogation planning process and can be used as an advantage in building an interrogation strategy.

Table 1 Preparation for the interrogation [6]

PLANNING AND PREPARATION	ACTIVITIES AND TASKS
Preparation, planning and support by an interdisciplinary team.	Team members (interrogators, analysts, interpreters, and other field experts) have adequate training to perform designated tasks. People not involved in the interaction with the detainees will act as observers and then convey their observations and opinions to the interrogators.
Distinguishing hard facts from inferences.	Use conclusions, facts, and IRs to set long- and short-term goals. Try to infer the interrogated motivation and expected reaction to interrogation strategies.
Preparation of favorable conditions.	Adjust the equipment of the interrogation room, your clothes, and the way you behave and speak in such a manner to influence the ability of the detainee to reveal information.

Cooperation with interpreters.	Use the cultural and linguistic knowledge of interpreters. Interpreters must have adequate training so as not to disturb the strategy and tactics adopted by the interrogators. Involve interpreters in the preparation and planning phase. Arrange the session in a specific manner where the conversation flows as naturally as possible, even though it may occur to be three-way.
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The second phase (Table 2) presents multiple solutions that can be used and adapted to the battlefield requirements. Taking into consideration a comprehensive approach to the problem, the modern battlefield dynamic will have a detrimental effect on the overall planning and execution process. For sure, it will

significantly reduce the number and time of interrogations. Finally, the amount of intelligence-value information will be decreased. In this case, the advanced training should increase the information-gathering efficiency and decrease the estimated time for it.

Table 2 Strategies and techniques implementation [6]

EXECUTION	ACTIVITIES AND TASKS
First impression.	Together with the team, develop an authentic image of the interrogator (to which the interrogated person will respond most favorably for the intended purposes). Develop a script and content of the planned verbal communication with the interrogated. In the initiation phase use the most effective phrases (prepared in advance) to achieve the intended effect and expected benefits.
Level of resistance assessment.	Develop a team assessment of the level of cooperation. Identify strategies used to compete with or avoid the topic. Determine motivations based on the interlocutor statements. - Is the detainee worried about the relationship with the interrogator, about own needs, and identity? Is the detainee engaged in problem-solving?
Way of countering the resistance.	Use persuasion to engage the person being interrogated in the conversation - use self-affirmation, liking, social proof, and reciprocity. Gently demonstrate your power - act openly, with commitment and consistency. Reframe the interaction if needed, use the mutual storytelling technique, acknowledge the resistance, use a foot-in-the-door technique, or imply a scarcity of time.
Rapport development and maintenance.	Encourage the interrogated person to show autonomy - the lack of coercion will result in a greater willingness to cooperate. Show your acceptance and empathy while expressing your values and beliefs - adapt your strategy to the needs of the person being interrogated. Maintain the rapport throughout all sessions and evaluate it based on the level of mutual attention (coordinate the relationship on an ongoing basis).
Active listening.	Express your commitment, use paraphrasing, summarize critical statements, mirror body language, and skilfully play with silence.
Elicitation by open and closed questions.	Transfer the narrative initiative to the interrogated person. Strengthen the interrogated person's sense of autonomy in order not to reveal the IRs. Ask the person being interrogated for additional information, explanation, and description of an event or topic of discussion. Focusing solely on IRs may cause overlooking other information. Do not interrupt what is being said and allow silence to continue the narrative.
Recall of memories.	Ask the subject to close his eyes or look away to recall an image, a third person's perspective or to recreate an event through the senses. Collect information about the event in its temporal, auditory, and spatial context. (What did you hear? What did you see? What did you feel? How did you feel?). Reverse the timeline and ask to tell the event from the end.

Positive and negative interpersonal relationships.	Engage positive behaviours and adapt to the flow of the session. Establish in advance the topics covered in the dialogue. Be frank and forthright, confident and assertive, supportive, social and warm, respectful and trusting, humble and seeking advice, or reserved and wary. Avoid being argumentative, demanding and rigid, parental and patronizing, over-familiar, uncertain and hesitant, weak and submissive, passive and resentful, or attacking and punishing. Conduct the conversation and choose its topics to avoid involving negative emotions.
Asking questions - funnel strategies.	Start with open questions in a broad context, but also related to the purpose of the interrogation (e.g. Could you tell, explain, describe?). Ask probing questions and narrow down the topics covered. After achieving your goal, gradually change the topic of the dialogue, minimizing the importance of your goals.
Elicitation by the storytelling.	Tell a thematic story, involving the topic that interests you. Return to the specific events and information. Maintain a friendly attitude and be emotionally involved in the story. Do not ask direct questions, but use confirmation and denial to obtain additional information without making the person being interrogated aware of its importance.
Cross-cultural differences in communication styles.	Be sensitive to cultural differences and conduct an orientation dialogue, relational, and collect information regarding the framework and methods of solving problems in a given culture. Determine what your relationship should look like to create a comfortable and friendly atmosphere. Build the interrogation team's awareness of cultural differences in the area of lie symptoms.
Highly detailed responses.	Demonstrate or introduce the level of detail expected in descriptions of events and narrative. – It causes the expectations disruption regarding “yes” or “no” answers. Together with the team, assess the capabilities of the interrogated in terms of knowing the details provided and the potential ability to verify them. Assess with your team whether there are anomalies, differences in description detail, or spontaneous corrections to the narrative.
Strategical frame of evidence and information.	Evaluate the collected evidence and information in terms of its source and specificity. Together with your team, prepare a matrix that illustrates the precision level of the information obtained (e.g., from low to high (specificity) or from vague to precise (source)).
Strategic presentation of the evidence and information.	Ask for a free narrative on a specific topic without revealing evidence or information you already have. Ask again for a story, supplementing it with specific questions and determining the final version of the event described by the person being interrogated. Present the evidence and related information in a way that is unclear and requires explanation - ask for it the interrogated. Provide evidence and information with greater precision and detail and ask for clarification again. The interrogation team takes notes and assesses inconsistencies in the explanations provided.
Unanticipated questions.	Prepare a list of questions that the interrogated person cannot predict and cannot be ready to answer immediately – they can be answered if they are true. Ask the detainee to sketch "what he saw" when he attended the event. Ask about the planning process, not the event itself. The interrogation team evaluates the level of detail in the provided answers and the perspective of the made sketches.
Fixed Choice Tests.	The use of tests will help you reveal knowledge that an interrogated person (or a group of people) tries to conceal.

In the third phase (Table 3), we should strive to achieve a cooperative posture of the detainee. Small incentives such as medical appointments or returning personal

items can strengthen relationships. Appreciation of the detainee's cooperation is also important.

Table 3 Completion of the interrogation session [6]

COMPLETION	ACTIVITIES AND TASKS
End of session.	Summarize what was said and allow to freely correct or expand on the topic. Provide the detainee with information about plans for the next session - end the meeting with a positive attitude.
Audio-video recordings.	Recorded sessions will support the report writing. Analyze the recordings and plan your next session. Analyze the recording to detect lies or specific mental states.

5. Conclusion

The development of interrogation capabilities to answer military IRs demands further research into the effectiveness of the strategies and techniques to be used and the improvement of appropriate standards at national and NATO levels. Based on this, contemporary training has to adapt effective solutions in this area and implement the results.

Organization of the interrogation activity, due to the specificity of the interrogation centre's functionality, requires close coordination with the military police or the units responsible for organizing and

protecting places of isolation for detained persons. To properly implement this process, it is necessary to develop procedures that standardize the scope and activities of individual parties and the principles of bilateral cooperation.

Modern battlefields and limited access to reliable intelligence information reveal the information importance derived from detainees. The dynamic of armed forces movement may force interrogating units to maintain high mobility and thus be ready to carry out tasks in areas affected by military operations.

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