

# INSCOM Journal

## Half a world away

Winter 2012  
BY Capt. Peter Zink  
513th MI Brigade



Spc. Gregory Guido and Chief Warrant Officer 2 Anthony Foulks of the 224th Military Intelligence Battalion (Aerial Exploitation), 513th MI Brigade, provide reach back support to warfighters deployed halfway around the world. (Army photo)

It's 11 p.m. and Chief Warrant Officer 2 Anthony Foulks walks briskly to the gate of the classified facility he works at and swipes his badge.

A plane roars off the airfield as he waits for it to open. The gate clicks and he greets the nightly guard shift as he punches his pin number and enters through the facility doors.

Rows of empty workstations greet him on the main operations floor as he walks to the back corner.

In six hours every seat will be full for an entirely different mission than the one tonight. He opens the door to the back office where Sgt. Oksana Shabunin and Spc. Daniel Shaffer sit at their desks watching data stream across their screens.

"How are we looking so far? Are the pilots and link good to go?" Foulks inquires as he sits down and scans the overlay of Afghanistan projected on a nearby plasma screen.

"Pilots are tracking sir, they should launch any minute now," Shabunin replies.

A pilot comes over the FM radio informing the analyst cell that the planes are up in the air covering a new operation. With less than 48 hours notice on a time change, it's just another typical night covering Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan.

With one notable exception: Foulks and his crew aren't stationed in Afghanistan.

They conduct their operations with the 224th Military Intelligence Battalion (Aerial Exploitation), 513th MI Brigade, out of Savannah, Ga.

"I put my kids to bed each night and roll into work," Foulks said. "The times can change on the fly because of missions downrange, so it can get hectic when I'm trying to set appointments or plan for the future."

While posing its own set of challenges, the "reach back" capability of intelligence assets today lets an enduring collection mission exist.

Fifteen years ago, it would be hard to imagine an Army unit being able to support real-time targeting of insurgents in Afghanistan from halfway around the world. Now analysts have the ability to process intelligence and notify units on the ground of enemy activity, hopefully before a bomb (literally or metaphorically) goes off.

It's just one example of the many changes intelligence assets are beginning to experience on the battlefield today.

"Years ago I had the opportunity to tour this unit before coming here, and I always remember these large, awkward vans that could deploy anywhere," said Sgt. 1st Class Theodore McDowell, who has been around long enough to see some of those changes. "When I finally ended up here, the first thought that went through my head was 'What happened to the vans?'"

These days, McDowell and his fellow Soldiers work in an intelligence corps that has to be leaner and quicker to adapt than previous generations. That's possible, thanks largely to today's generation of Army intelligence analysts.

"The core mission of the military intelligence Soldier is timeless," McDowell said. "Meet intelligence requirements for commanders and take care of Soldiers so they can do their jobs." Soldiers have come a long way, even during the last 10 to 20 years, McDowell said.

"The amount of technology these kids grow up with now is a game changer," he said. "Between iPhones, iPads and Facebook, a lot of Soldiers today are able to get in here and pick up the technology very quickly. The days spent conducting complicated training on tactical collection systems have definitely shortened."

Newer analysts tend to agree, they don't skip a beat rolling into today's operations. Take, for example, Spc. Gregory Guido, who grew up in New Jersey and started life after high school as an electrician.

While coming from a technical trade certainly doesn't hurt, it's his connection to technology growing up that he believes has made the difference in his intelligence career.

"I haven't been here long, but we've already had changes in our software and how we do our mission," Guido said. "But it's not hard to adapt. I grew up with an Xbox and laptops, so I've been able to settle into the job pretty easily."

"The toughest part of this job still remains when you have to go beyond the technology and really think about what kind of product you're producing," he added.

Guido isn't alone in his opinion.

As dawn breaks over the horizon, Foulks and his team call it a day and exit the gate. On their way out of the building, they walk by the Soldiers who will man the next shift.

“Good luck in there guys, we had some good intel passed up today,” Foulks said.

With unpredictable time shifts, equipment testing, and ever-expanding missions, no one can say for certain what lies ahead in the coming months for the mission.

But they know one thing for certain: today’s analysts are more comfortable adapting to the fast-paced technology of intelligence collection, but the use of that technology to deliver superior intelligence to the war fighter will always remain as a challenge in the analyst’s domain.

[Back](#)