
The IW Battlelab's first steps

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Exploiting today's technology—fast! That's how the Information Warfare Battlelab located at Kelly Air Force Base, Texas, likes to conduct business.

The first of six Air Force Battlelabs formed on the direction of former Air Force Chief of Staff, Gen. Ronald Fogelman, the IW Battlelab marks its first anniversary this month and sees itself only getting better with age.

First Things First

Chartered with improving how the Air Force fights wars in the Information Age, the IW Battlelab first had to focus on its own infrastructure—both in physical and procedural terms—last year, before it could effectively embark on its mission.

Some of the requirements were floor space, equipment, manning, establishing relationships and detailing some processes, according to Col. Jim Watkins, IW Battlelab commander.

"We spent a considerable amount of time and effort putting in place an organizational structure, as well as a concept review process, that will stand the test of time," said Watkins.

"The bulk of our efforts have been creating the framework to do business the right way," he said.

Battlelab leadership says the

unit has accomplished all those front-end requirements and is now beginning to go into a mode of full-speed execution.

Col. James C. Massaro, Air Force Information Warfare Center commander, concurs. "The Air Force has probably one of the most important organizations set up that now will revolutionize the way we can affect organization, training, equipping, ways we can affect doctrine and the way we can prove the military's worth of a concept," he said.

The AFIWC had been doing a Battlelab-like process for years. Now, under the new system, that process has been separated from other AFIWC duties and made a priority, allowing more focus on proving the military worth of new concepts.

"The Battlelab was real high on the priority of the Chief of Staff's list of 'to-do's' and he not only said, 'let's make it happen,' he made sure by giving it money," added Massaro.

"Based upon that high priority for him and the importance of the core competency, Information Superiority, we think it is of critical importance," Massaro said.

Keeping pace with progress

In order for the corps of IW



photos by Gloria Trevino

Tech. Sgt. James Johnson, non-commissioned officer in charge of computer support staff works to keep the support systems operational at peak efficiency.

experts, located at Kelly, as well as other IW organizations, to advance Information Superiority and other Air Force core competencies, they must receive ideas. Not just any ideas.

The IW Battlelab solicits ideas from a variety of sources, such as Air Force agencies, other government agencies, academia and even civilian industry, all in hopes of finding new, innovative ways to use mature, available technology to positively change the way the Air Force fights wars. The focus is not on research and development, but taking advantage of what's already out there.

"There is quite a bit of confusion among some people as to what the Battlelab does. A lot of people think we should be interested in long-term ideas. We are, by charter, an organization that has a provision of improving things with new ideas," said Watkins.

"Our mission puts priority on those things that are 'off-the-shelf' applications. New ideas that can

provide immediate, or as quickly as possible, impact on our ability to do things today with technologies that are available today," said Watkins.

"Technology has outpaced the acquisition process. Our lag time theoretically is anywhere from two to three years, to five to ten years. Well, that's fine for some things, that's not so fine for others. Things we need to do in IW are things we need to do **today!**," said Massaro

If you build it, they will come

"IW/Information Operations is developing and evolving everyday," said Capt. Bryan Ossolinski, chief of the IW Battlelab's Intelligence Operations branch.

"IW/IO is a kind of revolutionary way of conducting war - it's a new strategy, a new way of doing business," he said.

"People have ideas on how we can better implement IW, however, they're not really sure how it will fit in because this is a new mission

area," Ossolinski added, who believes that as the mission area grows and develops and the Air Force understands more comfortably how it is going to use IW/IO, the ideas will come.

Although most of the ideas received thus far have come from industry, the amount from Air Force personnel are steadily increasing.

"Collectively, though, we've had a nice spectrum of people that have provided us ideas," said Ossolinski.

"We are an idea processor," said Watkins.

"We depend very heavily on the ideas coming from the field, from the warfighters, and people with current operational expertise, so we know we're working with things the people in the field think are important," he added.

From 98 submitted ideas since the Battlelab has been in operation, approximately 20 ideas have been selected for further study and possible demonstration.

Submitted ideas fall into one of two categories:

- **Mitchell Class-** for initiatives that are more revolutionary in nature and require a larger scale of resources and will probably involve two or more Battlelabs.

- **Kenney Class-** innovative ideas that will create smaller scale changes in how the Air Force operates.

Just as the sources of ideas vary, so are the reasons for submitting ideas.

Whereas industry sources may have monetary reasons for submitting ideas, Air Force operators could benefit in that ideas they submit might have a direct impact on how the Air Force fights future wars.

All it takes for the warfighter is a good idea, 20 minutes or so to write it down and making the effort to submit it.

"No pride of authorship"

If a submitted idea isn't demonstrated by the IW Battlelab, it doesn't mean it's necessarily discarded. If it's a good idea and it makes sense, the Battlelab may forward it to another organization or sister service for consideration.

"We're looking at improving Air Force operations, but that's not to say one of our initiatives/ideas couldn't work in another service. We do have solid relationships built with the other services," said Ossolinski.

Additionally, commanders of the six Air Force battlelabs meet periodically to network and share ideas. This helps avoid overlap and fosters synergism between the various battlelabs.

Because it was the first to stand up, the IW Battlelab has served as a role model for the other battlelabs.

"Since we were the first to become operational, the meetings give the other commanders a chance to find out how we decided to complete our mission," said Ossolinski.

"We were a good example. I would say most of the other battlelabs probably took some pieces and parts of us ... fit that into their organization, which is good," said Massaro.

"There shouldn't be any pride of authorship. We did this for the Air Force and the nation," he added.

Who are they?

The IW Battlelab currently carries 24 billets, 20 of which are currently filled.

"It all started with AFIWC people. I gave them some of the best people the AFIWC has; don't get me wrong, we have all great people, but I gave them some of the most tremendous people we have to kick-start this thing," said Massaro.

The Battlelab consists of an array of career fields, from intel,

comm/computer, to rated officers to administration specialists.

Massaro is hoping to get IW Battlelab positions filled as three-year, special-duty assignments, in hopes of continually bringing in new blood, new ideas and concepts.

Future challenges

Watkins' most important challenge is to choose which ideas will eventually be demonstrated, and doing so in a well-considered, fully-researched manner, so that he don't overlook a really good idea or take one on that doesn't have as much worth as it should.

Also on Watkins' list of future projects is an Expeditionary Force Experiment, to be held in September. The EFX is an Air Force-wide operation designed to facilitate experimentation, and therefore is not referred to as an exercise.

Massaro would like to see "A no-kidding, interchange of good ideas and thinking all the way across the board." He would also like to see Air Force exercises where we invite the other services, if not as participants, as observers.

"We haven't had a lot of joint warfighting exercises, but it's a start. We're definitely going in the right direction and it's a real good way for the operators who haven't seen

what we've done to give us their comments," he said.

"These are first class people doing first class work," Massaro said of the IW Battlelab staff. "What they do, they do for the nation, and that's the bottom line" he said.

For people who would like to submit ideas, "Our doors are open," said Ossolinski. "You can send your idea to the Battlelab via fax, mail, electronically or our website."

The IW Battlelab can be reached at DSN 969-3030, or by fax at DSN 969-2122 and e-mail at iwinnovation@afiwc.osis.gov or visit the IW Battlelab homepage at www.aia.af.mil/aiaweb/homepages/afiwc/iwb. ■



Lt. Col. Dan Radcliff discusses technical concepts for a current initiative with Capt. Bryan Ossolinski and Maj. Paul Rigney.