

The Department of Intelligence and Security of the Holy (.Prophet (S.A.W

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The Intelligence Department

The department of Intelligence is a department which is responsible for acquiring and collecting all the information in matters pertaining to the enemy. This information especially covers: intention [of war], amassing [of forces], land where the enemy will fight, a detailed study of the acquired information and ensuring its accuracy - and different methods and tools of intelligence were employed to this end.

The Holy Prophet (s) would, more than anything else before the battle, try to acquire intelligence [about the enemy] because gaining intelligence and complete information about the enemy was a requirement for the issuance of appropriate orders and commands. In order to get intelligence about the Quraysh, he (s) send numerous Sariya missions to different places. These missions were charged with acquiring information about the number of enemy tribes, and also [in preparation for the battles with non-Arabs] the Roman forces. The forces who were sent kept an eye on the points of entry into and exit from Makkah.

The supreme commander made various peace pacts with some of the tribes and sought their assistance against the enemy and at the same time commissioned them to keep watch over the borders of the neighboring state (i.e. Rome), just as he had done in the Battle of Dumat al-Jundal when he sent 'Abd al-Rahma-n ibn 'Auf to that area to gain the friendship of the Bani Kalb - a tribe that lived in on the border area - and also in the case of the peace treaty with Akeedar and others.

The Prophet (s) would send troops to the sensitive areas and would himself meet with the traders and travelers and would get information from them and from those who lived there. Interrogating the prisoners, settling intelligence gathering forces in enemy territory, studying their movements and transferring them at the appropriate time, were all other methods for acquiring intelligence. The Prophet (s) would never be heedless of any means of obtaining information about the enemy, and at times he would personally undertake to find out the latest information about them. The goal of this was to achieve victory and gain accurate information. One of the examples of success in the Holy Prophet's information gathering was that he (s) would keep all the plans secret like in the case with the Sariya of 'Abdullah bin Jahash and the Conquest of Makkah and more than this, even the intelligence officers and those charged with

information gathering were unaware about some of these plans. Just as in the Sariya of Abi Qata-dah ibn Rabi' al-Ansa-ri to the 'Batn Adham' he tried as much as possible to carry out this mission in total secret, so he made only a few of his topmost commanders privy to the detailed planning of the mission. In the Battle of Uhud, he kept the acquired information hidden

from his own uncle 'Abba-s and he did the same thing during the Conquest of Makkah. The supreme commander prepared the intelligence outfit and personnel very well and chose the most suitable people for such missions as in the Battle of Badr where he sent Talha bin 'Abdillah and Sa'eed ibn Zayd to gather information from the trading caravan of the Quraysh; Ibn 'Amr al-Jahni and 'Uday bin Abi al-Za'ba-' to gather information from the heart of the enemy's camp; 'Ali bin Abi Ta-lib ('a) and Sa'd bin Abi Waqqa-s to find out about the number of enemy soldiers and Habba-b ibn Mundhir to get information about their movements and the number of reinforcements.

The Prophet (s) was fully aware of all issues pertaining to the organization and strategies of the enemy, their goal, weapons, commanders and plans. He obtained this detailed information by sending a Sariya mission under the command of 'Abdullah bin Anees to assassinate Sufya-n bin Kha-lid al-Hadhali and other leaders of the Quraysh in the Battle of Badr and also displayed them (i.e. what he had acquired from the enemy) in front of Abu Sufya-n during the Conquest of Makkah.

When intelligence information was sent to the Holy Prophet (s), he would study and scrutinize it very carefully and would coordinate it with the reality of the current situations in the battle. He showed this in the Battles of Badr and Uhud and also in the Battle of Ahza-b when the Bani Quraydha broke their allegiance and in the Conquest of Makkah when he gave permission to acquire information about the capabilities of the enemy, especially [about] their weapons etc. He made a lot of effort to ensure that the intelligence division was highly active and dynamic and would always cooperate with the commander and those in charge. For example in the Battle of Badr and the Conquest of Makkah, he used the intelligence to acquire every minor detail including the number of those animals slaughtered [for food] and when he sent secret missions, like the Sariya of Hamzah ibn 'Abd al-Muttalib, he did the exact same thing.

The Noble Prophet (s) would always give importance to acquiring information at all times, whether before, during or after battle, like in the Conquest of Makkah, and in all situations, however difficult they may be, as in the Battle of Ahza-b where he ordered Hudhayfah bin al-Yama-n to go and gather intelligence [about the enemy] in cold weather and harsh conditions. The Prophet (s) insisted that intelligence gathering be done from near and without keeping a distance from the enemy, like in the Battle of Uhud when he sent Anas and Munis to Dhu

Hulayfah, the place where the Quraysh had encamped and ordered them to join the enemy's camp and remain with them. Then, when they arrived at Aqd, near Uhud, he sent Habba-b bin Mundhir and in this way he would use intelligence agents to transfer intelligence and information about the enemy and order them to penetrate within the enemy ranks and at the same time he would station guards and his intelligence agents at the northern borders of the enemy.

The intelligence activities that were carried out by the Holy Prophet (s) were not only for obtaining information about the enemy, but also to negate any intelligence they may have acquired about him, and this was one of the most imperative steps he took which was most necessary and of the utmost importance. He (s) would do this in the following ways:

1. Through 'covert operations' while marching through routes that are filled with vegetation and trees in Madina; namely al-Manqa-, al-Khubayth, Dhi Qasr, al-Kutayb and Dhi Amr, that took place in the Battle of Dhi Amr (also known as Ghatfa-n). In the two battles of Dhi al-'Asheerah and Dumat al-Jundal the cover of darkness in the night was also benefitted from. The Prophet (s) would advise the secret missions to take advantage of the darkness of night time, so they would mostly march at night, as is seen in the Sariya of Muhammad bin Maslamah against the Bani Bakr and that of Zayd ibn Ha-ritha against the tribe of Judha-m and the mission of 'Abd al-Rahma-n bin 'Auf against Dumat al-Jundal.

2. Speed and swiftness in movement, as was seen in the Battle of Dumat al-Jundal.

3. Using shortcuts in order to arrive at the enemy's camp faster as in the Battle of Bani Lihya-n and the commanders who were sent in the Sariya of 'Aka-shah bin Muhsin to fight against the Bani Asad, and (the mission of) Qutbah ibn 'Aa-mir against the Khat'am.

4. Ordering that bells should be removed from around the necks of camels so that the forces could move unnoticed as in the example of the Battle of Muta and the Conquest of Makkah.

5. Concealing the state of readiness and the initial mobilization of forces, as was the case in the battles of Bani Saleem, Dhi Amr, Dha-t al-Ruqa-' and Bani Lihya-n, and the Sariya of Abi Qata-da bin Rab'i al-Ansa-ri towards the Batn Adham.

6. Using secret codes and identification as was employed in the Battle of Badr and the Sariya of Usa-ma bin Zayd from the commander of the group.

7. Instructions to ensure that no noise was to be made that could alert the enemy of the approaching army, like in the Battle of Khaybar where one of the soldiers was prevented from going ahead of the army and advancing alone.

8. Preventing the shining of weapons during the march and not passing in front of the inhabitants of the area, just as he did in the Battle of Badr, Bani Saleem and the Sariya

missions of 'Abdullah bin Jahash and 'Ali ibn Abi Ta-lib ('a) against the Bani Sa'd.

9. Ordering the army to march through uninhabited areas like the desert routes which were taken by the supreme commander in the battles of Bani Saleem and Bahra-n and [the Sariya of] 'Amr ibn 'Aa-s in the fight against the Bani Qudha-'ah.

10. Issuing the command that secrets should be safeguarded and information about the battle-plan should be kept hidden, like in the Conquest of Makkah and the Sariya missions of 'Abdullah ibn Jahash, Abi Qata-da and others.

11. Diverting the enemy from the targets of attacks. This was carried out in various ways which would put the enemy in doubt and misguidance until they would assume that the Holy Prophet (s) is not marching against them. This is precisely what happened in the battles of Bani Lihya-n and Dumat al-Jundal and also took the inhabitants on Makkah and their leaders by surprise in the Conquest of Makkah as they were unsure if Muhammad (s) was marching towards Najd, Hawa-zin or another region, therefore they were completely baffled and the matter was unclear to them.

12. Arresting the spies and intelligence agents of the enemy and preventing them from sending information as can be pointed out in the battles of Badr, Dumat al-Jundal and Bani al-Mustalaq. During the Conquest of Makkah, one of the spies of the Hawa-zin was arrested before entry into Makkah and in the Battle of Khaybar, one of the bold spies of the enemy who had acquired a lot of intelligence was captured.

The goals and objectives in terms of what the Holy Prophet (s) sought to learn about and :concentrated on were

First: Intention and Objective

He (s) would try to find out the goals and objectives of the enemy either through his intelligence agents who were always present among the enemies, like 'Abba-s ibn 'Abd al-Muttalib, or by means of trickery and deception. In the battles of Badr and Bani Lihya-n, he kept the battle-plan, the time and the place secret and in the Battle of Khaybar, he deceived the tribe of Ghatfa-n in such a way that they returned back from whence they had come. In the battles of Uhud, Dha-t al-Ruqa-' and Khandaq, he learnt of the enemy's goals by eavesdropping on the conversations of the [enemy] commanders and soldiers. Sometimes information was gotten from the way the enemy conducted its exercises and the activities that is carried out openly, or through allied tribes such as the Bani Dhumrah and Bani Mudlij. In the Battle of Dha-t al-Ruqa-' he got information from members of the Najd tribe and in the Battle .of Tabuk he got information from the Mudhar tribe

Second: Assembly (of enemy troops)

In this matter, the Prophet (s) would acquire his information from allied tribes or by means of his intelligence division. Just like in the Battle of Uhud, he gave the responsibility to Habba-b ibn Mundhir to obtain information about the assembly and mobilization of the forces of the Quraysh. In the Battle of Khandaq, he used Zubayr ibn 'Awa-m to get detailed information about the assembly of the confederates, their headquarters, the places where they were stationed and their level of intelligence. In the same way he got information from the intelligence gathering groups of Habba-b ibn Mundhir in the Battle of Uhud, Buraydah ibn .Haseeb in the Battle of Bani al-Mustalaq and Busr ibn Sufya-n in the Battle of Hdaybiyya

Third: Terrain and the points of advancement

The Holy Prophet (s) would use the following ways to gain complete and detailed information:

1. Through the vanguard of the army like the action taken by the front-line of the contingent of 'Abba-d ibn Basheer in the Battle of Khaybar and of Kha-lid bin Walid in the Battle of Hunayn and others.
2. By using guides like the employment of Jabba-r the guide in the Battle of Dhi Amr, Abi Khuthaymah al-Ha-rithi in the Battle of Uhud, Madhkur from the tribe of Bani Udhrah in the Battle of Dumat al-Jundal and Haseel bin Mudhirah in the Battle of Hdaybiyya.
3. The supreme commander would instruct the commanders to make use of guides, especially on routes and in areas that were not well known to them and also in routes that were outside the regular paths; or to use the prisoners who had valuable information as was done in the battles of Dumat al-Jundal, Bani al-Mustalaq, Khaybar etc. and in the various Sariya missions.
4. From the inhabitants of the area. They would send people to them and by asking them questions, they would establish the movement patterns of the enemy and other issues, as was carried out in the battles of Badr and Khaybar. In the Battle of Tabuk too, they benefitted from the intelligence that the tribes who lived near the area where the enemy was marching had to share.
- .5. By sending patrols to far off areas to gather information

Fourth: Identifying the area of operations

The supreme commander would complete his 'identification' using various intelligence apparatuses and would also personally get involved in this like in the battles of Badr, Uhud, Khaybar and Khandaq. The most important ways that the Holy Prophet (s) used to obtain this

information was using watchmen and eavesdroppers.

1. Watchmen: The lookout would be appointed in the intelligence gathering missions. During this, they would keep watch over the enemy's movements inside and outside the points of interest as well as possible areas in two tactical and strategic levels. Some of the sentries or watchmen would keep an eye on the routes taken by the enemy's caravans, just as was the case when one of the troops was posted at Nakhba-r in order to keep an eye over the activities and movements of the enemy, or in the Sariya of Zayd bin Ha-ritha where they performed the duty of a lookout when he was encamped at 'Ayyis. These forces would stand in a place from

where they could carry out their duties as watchmen and spies in an effective manner.

In every situation, one sentry or spy was posted in a secret location, hidden from the eyes of the enemy and would take advantage of his senses of sight and hearing. No amount of hardship, tribulation or affliction would prevent him from carrying out his duties. Anees ibn Abi Murthad al-Ghanawi who was the sentry appointed in the Battle of Hunayn, remained steadfast despite all the hardships that he had to face. He also remained firm in the Sariya of Gha-lib ibn

'Abdullah al-Laythi despite having been shot and injured by an arrow.

2. Eavesdroppers: This was a method that the Holy Prophet (s) used during the night or in situations where visibility was low or when the weather was bad. In such cases, the intelligence agents and eavesdroppers would move in complete secret until they arrived at the enemy's camp. They would eavesdrop on their conversations and then return and inform the Muslim army of what they had heard. This is exactly what one of the members of a Sariya mission did for the Bani al-Maluh. Hudhayfa ibn al-Yama-n also used eavesdropping against Abu Sufya-n,

the commander of the army of confederates.

What can be seen is that the responsibility of information gathering and eavesdropping needed to be given to men who had certain attributes and qualities, from bodily strength and courage to freedom from certain sicknesses such as coughing, being hard of hearing etc. that could prevent in their successfully carrying out the missions.

The types of information that the Prophet (s) sought to obtain were:

1. General information, for which he would employ normal troops to gather the information such as the vanguard, patrols, guides, locals etc.

2. Urgent information, for which the special military patrols would be brought in. Just as in the battles of Badr, Dumat al-Jundal, Bani al-Mustalaq and the Conquest of Makkah, and the Sariya of 'Akashah ibn Muhsin against the Bani Asad, that of Zayd bin Ha-ritha and other similar missions.

Sometimes this action would be carried out by those who were behind enemy lines as in the

Battle of Uhud. The commander would turn to this when he did not have enough information about the enemy, so he would capture some prisoners and would obtain the information from them.

Reconnaissance would be carried out according to the different stages, meaning the Prophet (s) would conduct reconnaissance at the tactical level to make preparations for battle and during battle when the field of operation for the intelligence agents was limited to the front lines of the enemy, however reconnaissance at the strategic level was carried out by his forces deep within the enemy territory and among the enemies.

Additionally, in order to protect the troops during movement and encampment, he would post his intelligence patrols for reconnaissance in front and on the sides of the army, as he had done when marching from Madina to Badr and from Madina towards Uhud and from Makkah towards the valley of Hunayn. In the same way, he (s) would carry out reconnaissance of the territories and areas where the troops could camp with relative ease and their surrounding areas, like in the battles of Badr, Uhud and Khaybar and would select those people to keep watch whose duties among other things, was to prevent the enemy from finding out their numbers, to protect their base from the approaching enemy, protecting the commander and the troops from being taken by surprise and giving warning about the nearing enemy while at the same time not giving any opportunity to enemy spies and saboteurs.

This guarding and protection was either stationary, which would protect in sensitive and dangerous areas, or mobile, which would offer protection in some areas that were considered to be of special importance militarily and during battle; and normally the former type would .require fewer numbers of troops

Note

To study the book "**Military Management in the Battles of the Prophet (s)**", please click here:

<http://alhassanain.org/english/?com=book&id=1281>