

CHAPTER 3

FIRE SUPPORT PLANNING, PREPARATION, AND EXECUTION

Fire support planning ensures that all available FS assets are employed in concert with your scheme of maneuver. During the planning process, you and your FSCoord or FSO determine how fire support can support your battle plan. The DS battalion commander (FSCoord) cannot be at the brigade HQ continuously. His assistant, the brigade FSO, serves as a full-time liaison between the DS artillery battalion and the maneuver brigade. A dialogue between you and your FSO must take place. Each time you sit down with your S3 to discuss current or future plans, concepts, or COA, your FSO should be present. The FSO's effectiveness is predicated on you including him in your staff planning process. This chapter focuses on the key aspects of planning, preparing, and executing your fire plan.

PLANNING

Top-down fire planning gives the maneuver brigade an FA plan that focuses the FS effort exactly where the combined arms commander intends to fight the battle. It provides guidance, allocates resources, assigns target execution responsibility, and fully supports the combined arms commander's scheme of maneuver.

Fire support planning is the continuing process of analyzing, allocating, and scheduling fire support. It determines how fire support will be used, what types of targets will be attacked (**decide**), what collection assets are available to acquire and track the targets (**detect/track**), what assets will be used to attack the target (**deliver**), and what assets are available to verify (**assess**) effects on the target. The goal is to effectively integrate fire support into battle plans to optimize combat power. Planning must be flexible to accommodate unexpected and rapid changes. It anticipates the massing of FS assets, changes in the force's mission, realistic movement times, resupply, target acquisition, technical support, and unit replacement.

Formal fire planning is conducted through a deliberate top-down process, with bottom-up refinement. An advantage of top-down fire planning is that the concept for fire support is developed early, which allows the artillery and brigade staffs to plan concurrently. Additionally, the most experienced field artillerymen in the force, the FSCoord and the brigade

FSO, develop the initial fire plan. In high-tempo operations, the top-down fire planning process provides a workable plan in a relatively short time. Finally, top-down fire planning allows the artillery battalion the planning and preparation time needed to support the fire plan.

The concept of top-down fire planning is simple. Planning originates at the higher levels and is refined at the lower levels. The plan, in its completed form, has a limited number of FA targets.

The brigade fire plan contains only those targets the FSCoord thinks are essential to support the commander's intent. The remaining targets are allocated to the task forces, according to priorities for FA support. The TF commander plans targets to support his plan on the basis of the targets he was allocated by brigade. Any remaining artillery targets may be further allocated down to the companies. Mortar targets are allocated by the TF commander and FSO in the same manner in which the brigade allocated their artillery targets.

By limiting the number of targets in the total plan, we focus our fires on meaningful targets, increase the level of detail, and provide the FA battalion's FDC with a manageable number of targets. The brigade assigns target execution responsibility down to specific task forces. The TF commander must then assign responsibility within his command. Primary and backup observers must be identified.

REMEMBER

If it is important enough to target, it is important enough to have *eyes on target*. At the company or team level, the commander is responsible for ensuring assigned targets are observed, have a trigger, and are rehearsed. This does not mean that a maneuver commander cannot request additional targets; just be sure they are justified.

Critical to the success of your top-down fire planning is the concept of bottom-up refinement. During the decision-making process, targets are planned on the basis of map spots and situational templates. Targets must be refined on the basis of such things as the reconnaissance effort, actual occupation of the terrain, and updated intelligence.

In a mechanized environment, most battles are decided in the first 90 minutes. The number of "killer" fire missions your artillery can shoot during this period is limited as shown below (in a perfect world). When the factors normally affecting artillery units are considered, the number of "killer" fire missions is further reduced as shown below (in reality).

Looking at the fire plan from this perspective, your targeting effort must focus on critical events to accomplish your intent.

KILLER MISSIONS

...IN A PERFECT WORLD

BN FFE MISSION STANDARDS (BN 3)

- 1ST VOLLEY, 3.40 MINUTES
- 2D VOLLEY, 1.0 MINUTE (SUSTAINED RATE)
- 3D VOLLEY, 1.0 MINUTE (SUSTAINED RATE)

TOTAL MISSIONS TIME: 5.4 MINUTES (APPROX 6.0 MINUTES)
TOTAL BN 3s AVAILABLE IN 1 HOUR: 10 MISSIONS

...IN REALITY

COUNTERFIRE, GROUND, AND AIR THREAT

COMM PROBLEMS...EW THREAT

OPERATIONAL READINESS

1 MINUTE SHIFT TIME FOR 155-MM HOWITZER

OTHER MURPHIES

TOTAL BN 3s AVAILABLE IN 1 HOUR: 5 TO 7 MISSIONS

LEGEND:

approx = approximately
bn = battalion

comm = communication
mm = millimeter

TACTICAL DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

Top-down fire planning is conducted throughout the tactical decision-making process. The considerations listed below illustrate how to integrate fire support into the tactical decision-making process.

Intelligence Preparation of the Battlefield

Intelligence preparation of the battlefield, while not a separate step in the tactical decision-making process, warrants special consideration. The IPB affects FS planning in the following ways:

- Situational templates are the start point for the targeting effort. **Poor templates used in the war-gaming process result in poor targeting.**
- High-value targets are developed initially from doctrinal templates and refined by the situation templates. HVTs are those assets that the enemy commander requires to successfully complete his mission. During the war-gaming process, discussed later in this chapter, HPTs are identified. HPTs are those HVTs that must be acquired and successfully attacked for the success of your mission.

- Targets generated during the IPB process are included in the initial stages of the top-down fire planning process.

Mission Analysis

During the mission analysis phase, your FSO must accomplish several tasks. He should call the DS battalion and give them a warning order. He should provide an FS estimate.

In addition to the normal information in the warning order sent to the DS battalion, the brigade FSO should provide the brigade staff's planning time line. This allows the DS battalion S3 to get in early on the staff planning process. This will facilitate concurrent planning by the DS battalion.

When developing the FS estimate, the FSO must consider the following areas :

- Availability of firing units. How many tubes of what type are available for the upcoming operation?
- Maintenance or combat losses. What is the likelihood of getting any tubes back in time for H-hour?
- Allocation of FS assets. What FS assets were allocated by the higher HQ for the upcoming operation?
- Ammunition considerations. Field artillery ammunition requirements place the most demands on transportation assets in the brigade. Providing the right types and quantities of ammunition to the artillery on time requires extraordinary planning. Early in the planning process, determine—
 - Ammunition shortfalls.
 - Availability of ammunition.
 - Availability of transportation support.

The status of the COLT and FISTS must be determined. This applies to both personnel and equipment, especially the FISTV. Determine the following:

- Can shortages be organized and placed in the most critical areas?
- Is the FISTV a high-maintenance priority?

The OH-58D helicopter is an important consideration in mission analysis. The need for this asset must be identified early and requested to the division. Again, this helicopter is no longer an FS asset and must be coordinated externally with the aviation brigade.

Commander's Guidance for Fire Support

Having completed the estimate process, the brigade staff comes together with you and briefs their estimates. After the mission analysis briefing, you issue your guidance to initiate the development of COAs. Your guidance at this stage is critical to develop a viable FS plan that supports your overall intent. It should include the following:

- Attack criteria.
- Engagement criteria. This is the size and type of units you want engaged at different points in the battle.
- Priorities for target engagement. This is when the high-payoff targets are prioritized.
- Guidance for special munitions (illumination, smoke, Copperhead, FASCAM).
- Specify how, when, and where fire support should be employed in the development of COAs.

Consider having your FSO give you a backbrief to ensure your guidance was clearly understood. (For additional information on backbriefs, see Appendix G.)

Attack Guidance

As the combined arms commander, you must decide what effect fire support must have on a particular target. Most important is the interpretation of terminology. The maneuver definition of destruction is much different than the definition of the field artillery. As stated in Chapter 2, articulate your desired effects in exact numbers by vehicle type or unit size. The three types of artillery effects are as follows:

- **Destruction** -to artillerymen, destruction equates to 30 percent casualties. This may not guarantee achievement of the maneuver commander's intent. The surviving 70 percent may still influence the battle. Destroy should mean the target is rendered permanently combat ineffective. Destruction missions are expensive in time and ammunition. The FSCOORD and commander must have a mutual understanding of the desired effects. Key questions should address the size and type of unit the commander desires destroyed. Consider whether neutralization or suppression may be more efficient. With Copperhead, however, destruction of HPTs is feasible attack guidance.

- **Neutralization** -FM 101-5-1 definition of neutralization leads the commander to understand the target will not be able to interfere with a particular operation. Neutralization renders the target ineffective or unusable for a temporary period, pending repair or reconstitution. The element of timing requires mutual understanding between the FSCOORD and commander. Damage of 10 percent or more to a target that is repairable within 12 to 24 hours may meet a brigade commander's guidance but may not establish the conditions for division success. Key questions the FSCOORD or FSO must ask are *when* and *how long* does the commander want the target rendered incapable of interfering.
- **Suppression** -suppression is used to prevent effective fire on friendly forces. It is typically used to support a specified movement of forces. Exercise observations reveal a tendency to use one round volleys to suppress a target. This is normally insufficient to provide suppression for an action or move that lasts more than a few minutes. The FSCOORD or FSO must ask the commander when and how long he desires the target to be suppressed.

Another solution is for you to describe what you want fire support to accomplish in order of priority. Usually, this will be a menu of choices that eventually exceeds the capabilities of the assets available. The FSCOORD or FSO then has the responsibility to draw the cut line and tell you what you cannot have. Through a process of give and take, the list will be refined, and the fire supporters can put the artillery, mortars, NGF, and CAS where you want them. Additionally, effectiveness cannot be measured in number of tanks or BMPs (amphibious infantry combat vehicles) destroyed. If your guidance was to suppress, then success should be measured in effective missions not battle damage assessment (BDA).

REMEMBER

When possible, request that the DS FA battalion S3 come to the brigade TOC when your guidance is issued. The DS FA battalion S3 then gains firsthand knowledge of the upcoming operation and can return to his TOC to begin the FA support plan. If the DS FA battalion S3 cannot be present, ensure your FSO passes your guidance to the DS FA battalion TOC to allow their planning process to begin.

Course of Action Development

Course of action development should not be limited to field artillery but should consider all FS systems. The FSO must develop the COAs with the maneuver S3 if the synchronization of maneuver and fire support is to be maximized. The repositioning of artillery and other FS assets must be determined so that the operating tempo (OPTEMPO) is maintained without a degradation of fire support.

Field Artillery Positioning

Early on, the DS battalion needs to have cleared land so they can start reconnaissance and movement. Terrain management considerations must include the following:

- Locations of delivery units, radars, TOCs, and trains.
- Movement routes and times.
- Supply routes.

A technique to reduce coordination for position areas is to develop an overlay which identifies the following:

- Areas that require no coordination to occupy.
- Areas that require coordination before they are occupied.
- Areas not available for occupation.

The enemy counterfire and air threat will increase terrain requirements for field artillery and mortars so that survivability moves can be conducted. (For information on the Confederation of Independent States [CIS] artillery and mortar capabilities, see Appendix H.) Priorities of positioning are as follows :

- Direct support artillery battalion.
- Reinforcing battalions.
- General support reinforcing and GS units.

REMEMBER

The primary enemy threats to your artillery are counterfire, air attack, and ground attack. The presence of any or all of these threats will dictate appropriate positioning and movement techniques. The DS FA battalion S3 ultimately has two key positioning considerations: position the artillery to support your FS plan and survive to provide uninterrupted support for current and future operations.

Course of Action Analysis and Comparison (War-Gaming)

War-gaming is arguably the most critical step in the decision-making process. As the staff conducts the action-reaction-counteraction drill, the FSO is actually developing the fire plan by placing targets on the map to support your scheme of maneuver. An effective war-gaming process will—

- Determine the high-payoff targets to allow development of the high-payoff target list.
- Synchronize fire support with other battlefield operating systems (BOSs) and allow initial development of the FSEM. (For an example of an FSEM, see Appendix I.)
- Define critical events for brigade and TF FSOs.
- Provide an 80 percent solution. For the process to work, you must have given the FSO guidance for fire support with which to begin. Without this, he will be planning on the basis of his vision of the battlefield, not yours.
- Position the artillery. Consider having the DS battalion S3 present during war gaming.

REMEMBER

The effectiveness of your fire plan can usually be determined by analyzing your war-gaming procedures. The war-gaming process is a critical event that must include the FSO. Failure to include him in this process will result in a fire plan developed in a vacuum. Make him part of your planning process.

Decision on the Course of Action and Scheme of Fires

After the proposed COAs are briefed, you announce your decision and state your concept of the operation. The fires paragraph should clearly articulate the scheme of fires. Specificity is the key. (For additional information on developing the fires paragraph, see Appendix I.)

Orders Brief

The following should be considered for the FS portion of the orders brief:

- Scheme of fires.
- Targets planned and their purpose.
- Availability of FS assets, their status and allocation.
- Priority of fires (POFs).

- Clearance of fires procedures (if different from standing operating procedures [SOPs]).
- Attack guidance matrix and HPTL. (See Appendix J for an example of an AGM, and see Appendix K for an example of an HPTL.)
- Fire support coordinating measures. (For additional information on FSCM, see Appendix L.)
- Cutoff times for target refinement.
- Rehearsal instructions.
- Any requirements a higher FS team will place on subordinate FS teams.
- Retransmission requirements for communications, depending on terrain.

Targeting Meeting

The targeting meeting is a technique used to update and revalidate targets. These meetings should be scheduled daily or should be mission dependent. Target acquisition assets are coordinated and synchronized, and the HPTL and AGM are updated. Key personnel involved are the-

- **Brigade XO** -he is responsible for conducting the targeting meeting.
- **Brigade FSO or targeting officer** -he assists with or runs the targeting meeting. He ensures required FS assets are planned and allocated. He ensures the validity of the HPTL and makes changes on the basis of the respective commander's guidance. He also makes any changes to the HVTs on the basis of updated intelligence.
- **Brigade S2** -he ensures the brigade collection assets are retasked after each targeting meeting to ensure the commander's guidance is met.
- **Other participants** -they may include the ALO, ANGLICO or SALT, EW officer, DS battalion S3 and S2, brigade engineer, ADA representative, brigade chemical officer, and the DS battalion FDO.

Each participant reviews his taskings, assets available, and allocation of assets to meet the commander's guidance. The meeting verifies and/or updates the HPTL (decide); verifies, updates, and retasks available collection assets (detect); allocates delivery systems to engage the target (deliver); and confirms the assets tasked to verify the effects on target (assess). At brigade level, high tempo and austere staffs make this a very informal process.

PREPARATION

The preparation phase is characterized by conducting rehearsals and refinement. The paragraphs below discuss these key concepts.

Combined Arms Rehearsal

The combined arms rehearsal is required to synchronize all the BOSs before combat operations. Any last-minute changes to the operation made after the rehearsal may cause a reduction in the effectiveness of your fire support.

Key FS points that should be highlighted during the rehearsal include-

- Synchronization of the FS plan with the scheme of maneuver.
- Target execution responsibilities, to include primary and backup observers and their engagement criteria.
- Artillery and mortar positioning and movement plans.
- Verification of the TA plan.
- Fire support coordinating measures.
- Close air support and JAAT employment.
- Verification of windows to mass battalion fires.

REMEMBER

The effectiveness of your maneuver rehearsal is increased if the fire supporters are present and actively participating. Do not allow your subordinate commanders to leave them back at the track doing “more important” duties. Make sure FS events are depicted on the terrain model. Check to see if your FSE has a supply of rehearsal props, such as string, 3 x 5 cards, and cotton balls (to replicate smoke), to augment your TOCs supply of props.

An FS rehearsal will also be conducted shortly after the maneuver rehearsal. Key participants will include the artillery battalion, mortars, all FSEs, observers, and other FS agencies such as the ALO. The focus of this rehearsal is on the FS system from shooter to executor. It should address areas such as—

- Communications to observers, FSEs, radars, TOC, trains, and alternate nets.
- Positioning elements such as mutes, order of march, and movement times.
- Observer locations such as FIST, COLT, and OH-58D.
- Fire support coordinating measures.
- Target lists and schedules.

- Fire direction such as fire unit availability, ammunition management, firing data and on-hand ammunition verified, timings for special munitions, site-to-crest, air corridors, and restrictive FSCMs.

Refinement

Refinement of targets is an essential part of the preparation phase. Initial targeting is usually based on map spots, which requires the need to establish actual target locations on the basis of the terrain. Refinement considerations include–

- Changing the target locations, but not the purpose of the target. The purpose of the target was established during the war-gaming process; changing it dilutes synchronization.
- Adhering to the target cutoff times. Massive changes to the plan close to H-hour are detrimental to the artillery's ability to successfully support the mission.

REMEMBER

A key to refinement is to ensure your FSE has a system to check that the purpose of the refined targets is still the same. Failure to check the refined targets may result in fires that no longer meet your original guidance.

When establishing the target cutoff time, consult with the DS FA battalion S3. He and his staff have the greatest challenge reacting to last-minute changes. The DS FA battalion S3 knows best the capabilities of his staff and firing units to react to last-minute changes in the fire plan.

EXECUTION

During the battle, the positioning of the FSCOORD and FSOs is dependent on mission, enemy, terrain, troops, and time available (METT-T). Some considerations include–

- Command and control requirements to execute the fire plan.
- Communications assets available to the TF FSO and FSCOORD. These assets must be addressed and rehearsed before execution.. At a minimum, they will need to communicate on their respective maneuver command and FS nets. The FSCOORD will also have the need to communicate on the FA battalion command net. When not collocated with his supported maneuver commander, the most critical net for the FSCOORD is the maneuver command net to ensure that FS needs are being met. On the basis of the

availability of radios in the vehicle in which the TF FSO or FSCOORD is riding, a plan must be developed to serve his communication needs. The brigade and TF FSEs provide a critical communication function by monitoring nets not available to the TF FSO and FSCOORD and keeping them apprised of the situation.

- The payoff in traveling with the commander versus being in FM contact.
 - The FSOs ability to control fires from your position. His ability to communicate and see the battlefield will determine this.
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