TRAINING NOTES

An Execution Matrix

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There is little question that a properly prepared execution matrix can be of considerable help to a battalion commander and his staff in planning and executing a combat operation.

Unfortunately, the execution matrix in our current doctrinal manuals (Figure 1) shows only company (or team) battle positions, levels of position preparation, engagement areas, and orientation.

With some modifications, this basic matrix can be made more useful. These modifications include adding a task organization section, a block in which a mission statement can be written, and a block in which a unit's attachments can be shown. This modified matrix allows the battalion commander and his S-3 to plan almost an entire operation on one sheet of paper; it shows all of the battalion's combat elements, including its scout and 4.2-inch mortar platoons and any attached units.

The completed matrix in Figure 2, based on hypothetical units and a hypothetical operational situation, shows how this matrix can be used. Imagine the matrix blank, and follow the way it is filled out step by step.

The commander of the 2d Battalion, 114th Infantry (M), has been given the following mission: First to defend in sector and then to receive the battle from the covering force. The brigade has taken one of the battalion's mechanized infantry companies — Company C — but has given the battalion these attachments:

- One tank company: C/2/80th Armor.
- Two engineer platoons: 1/C/104th Engineers (DS) and 3/B/111th Engineers (OPCON).
- Two Stinger teams: 4/D/522d Vulcan (DS).
- Two CEWI teams: Teams 1 and 2, 2/C/50th CEWI Battalion.

The S-3's first step in filling out the matrix is to list the organic and attached units. At this time, he shows the units in their pure states and lists the attached units in the attachment block.

The next step is to develop the mission statement for the task force. This process follows the METT-T method and the wargaming thought processes of the commander and the S-3. Eventu-

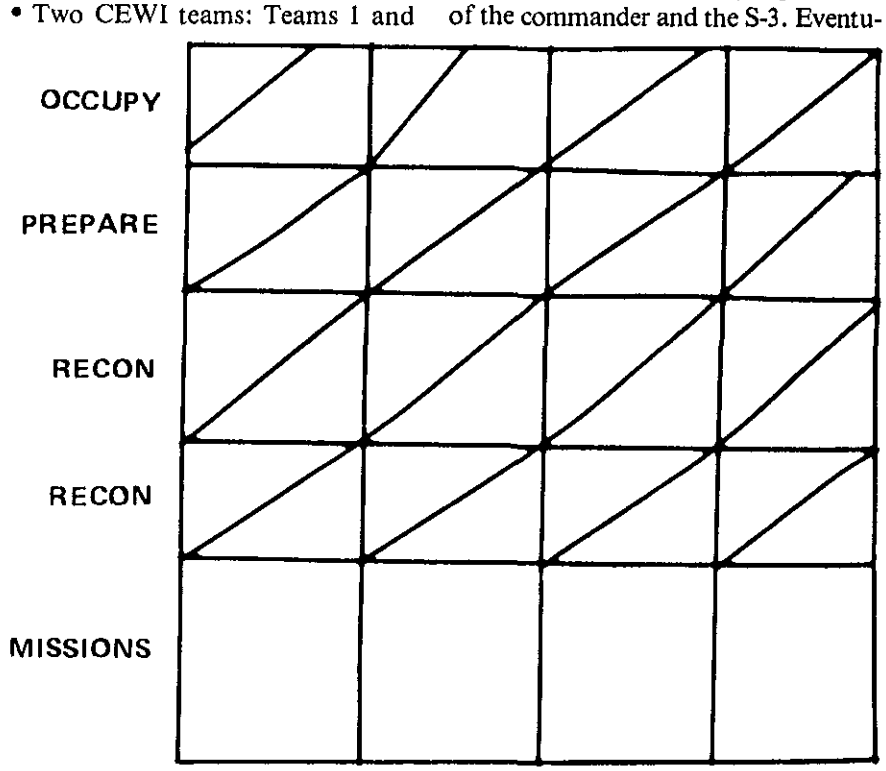

Figure 1. Current matrix.

ally, they arrive at a detailed mission statement, and the S-3 puts it in the "TF mission" block.

The battalion commander now decides what he has to do to accomplish this mission:

- Because the enemy can hit his unit with two motorized rifle battalions and a mechanized company, he must break up that attack by defending in depth throughout his sector.
- He must stop the enemy forward of an important network o' roads in the battalion's rear area, and this will take three companies (or teams) fighting from battle positions throughout the sector.
- He must put a strongpoint around the road network, because if the enemy force reaches that road network the battalion will be in serious trouble.

The battalion commander develops an appropriate organization to do what he feels must be done. Here is his solution:

- He will form two company teams — Company A with an attached tank platoon, and the tank company minus one of its tank platoons but with a mechanized infantry platoon attached. Together with Company D, which will be used as a pure mechanized infantry company, these units will fight from the designated battle positions.
- Company B, minus one of its infantry platoons, will be the strongpoint company. Initially, it will have one ITV platoon and the direct support engineer platoon to help the commander dig-in his company.
- The scout platoon, reinforced by an ITV platoon and both CEWI teams, at first will screen the task force's front to keep track of the enemy force. As the covering force begins its withdrawal, the scouts will man the two passage points given in the brigade order. Once the covering force hands off the battle, the scout platoon will screen the task force's right flank. At that time the ITV platoon will be detached from the scout platoon and attached to Company B at the strongpoint. The CEWI teams will revert to task force control.
- Initially, the 4.2-inch mortar platoon will be well forward. When it displaces it will do so by section so there will be no lull in its firing. The platoon will also plan and register an FPF in Company B's area along the main infantry approach and to cover any deadspace.
- All other elements will remain under task force control, at least in the beginning.

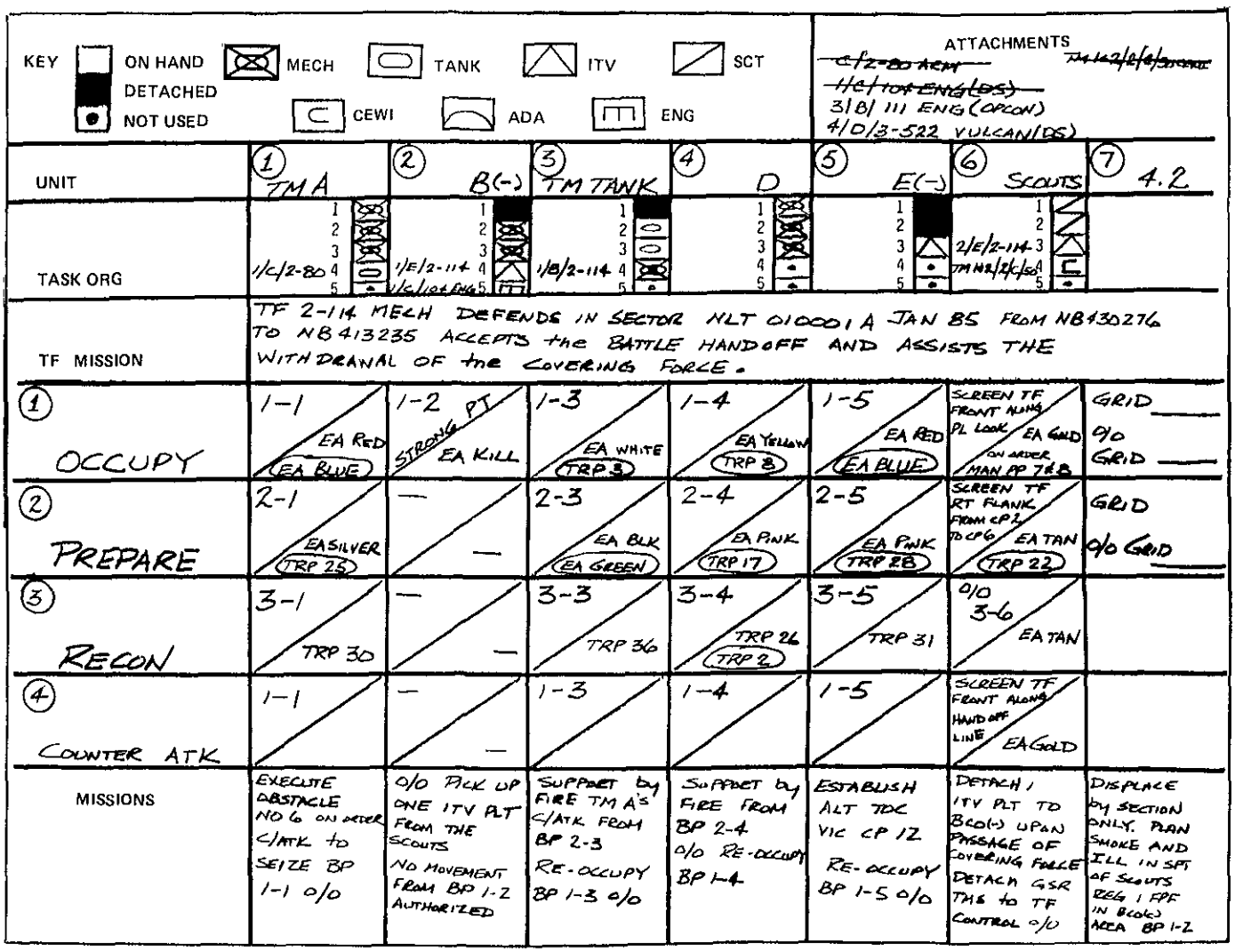

Figure 2. Modified matrix completely filled in. (Units are hypothetical.)

With this guidance, the S-3 selects the actual platoons he needs to comply with the commander's concept and completes the appropriate blocks on the matrix.

Company A is to be a full company plus a tank platoon, which makes it a company team. The S-3 darkens the first platoon block in the tank company's column, which shows that the first tank platoon has been detached. He then adds a tank symbol to the fourth block in Company A's column and places the unit designation for the tank platoon next to the symbol.

He then organizes Company B according to his commander's desires. He takes Company B's 1st Platoon and moves it to the tank company's column. He does this by blackening the first platoon block in Company B's column and adding a mechanized infantry symbol to the tank company's column, together with the mechanized infantry platoon's designation. This action also serves to form Team Tank.

The S-3 now attaches an ITV platoon to Company B — the 1st Platoon, Company E — and adds the DS engineer platoon to the same unit. To show this on his matrix, the S-3 darkens the 1st Platoon's block in Company E's column and adds an ITV symbol to the fourth position in Company B's column, together with its proper designation. He puts an engineer symbol in Company B's fifth position and identifies the unit. He also crosses out that engineer platoon in the "attachment" block of the matrix.

Since Company D will initially act in a pure state, the S-3 simply puts a large dot in blocks 4 and 5 of Company D's column to show that there are no attachments.

The scout platoon needs an ITV platoon, so the S-3 darkens the second block in Company E's column and adds an ITV symbol in the third block of the scout platoon's column. He also places the unit designation for that ITV platoon next to the ITV symbol.

The scout platoon also gets the two CEWI teams, and the S-3 adds this symbol to the scout platoon's column, appropriately identifies the teams, and crosses out the CEWI teams in the attachment block.

Only the third platoon of Company E remains with its parent company. To show that there are no further attachments to or detachments from Company E, the S-3 puts large dots in the fourth and fifth blocks of that company's column.

The matrix now shows the complete organization the battalion commander wants. The S-3 then looks over his matrix and puts large dots in the unused blocks in each company's column. From this he can now tell at a glance how many and what type platoons are in each company. And by looking at his attachment block and seeing the units that he has not crossed out, he knows which units are under TF control.

The bottom part of the matrix is really the matrix that is now shown in our doctrinal literature, with one exception — the columns that have been added to account for the scout platoon and for the 4.2-inch mortar sections.

This part of the matrix is filled out in the manner described in our current how-to-fight manuals. The columns for the scout platoon and the 4.2-inch mortar sections are filled out in the same way the line unit columns are, but additional notes and grid coordinates can be inserted to better describe the units' assigned missions.

To make the matrix even more functional, both the position levels of preparation and the companies can be numbered. Thus, as can be seen in Figure 2, the levels of preparation are placed on the left side of the matrix and numbered in the order in which they will be carried out. In the example used with this article, the levels of preparation and the corresponding numbers are:

NUMBER	LEVEL OF PREPARATION
1	Occupy
2	Prepare
3	Reconnoiter
4	Counterattack

The units are numbered as they appear in the completed task organization. Thus, the unit numbers are:

NUMBER	UNIT
1	Team A
2	Company B (–)
3	Team Tank
4	Company D
5	Company E (–)
6	Scout Platoon

By combining a level of preparation and a unit number, an S-3 can easily assign battle positions. Thus, in the example used, the first level of preparation the task force will undertake is to occupy battle positions along the FEBA. Therefore, Team A's battle position would be BP 1-1. (The first number is the level number, the second is the unit number.) Company B (-) would have BP 1-2; Team Tank, BP 1-3; and Company D, BP 1-4.

When the commander moves his units into the second part of the operation — prepare — Team A's battle position number becomes BP 2-1. The battle position numbers follow the same sequence used for the TF's missions.

The new execution matrix is much more effective than the present one in planning a combat operation. It gives a commander a more complete picture of his total force, because combat power, task organization, attachments, missions, and unit levels of preparation are all shown on one piece of paper.

The new matrix is not difficult to handle; its completion requires only a little practice. It is also flexible and can be used with different types of operations.

And, finally, it provides a commander with a formatted sequence to his operation that will be of great help to him on the complex battlefields of the future.

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