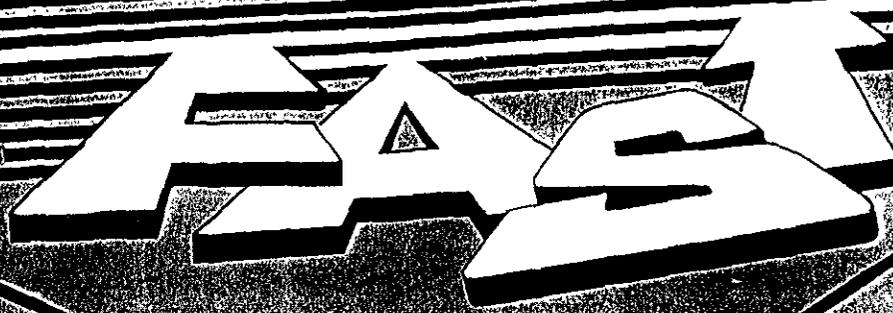


THE FIELD ORDER



MAJOR JAMES A. DUNN, JR.

All of us, at one time or another, have pondered over an immense operations order or plan (OPORD, OPLAN). Whether it was writing one in an officer advanced course or the Command and General Staff Course or reading some volume published by higher headquarters, we had to marvel at the amount of information such an order contained.

Our Army has a specific format for these OPORDs and OPLANs, and it is indeed the mark of a skilled staff officer (commissioned or noncommissioned) when he can prepare one "by the book." Remembering what comes first (is it annex-appendix-tab or annex-tab-enclosure?) and recalling how to number the pages (I-N-1-A-1) takes a special knack—most of us have to have an example nearby to be sure we have it right.

Although these monstrosities are useful when time is plentiful, a "field order"—written in a tent or the dimly lit interior of an M577 extension and reproduced on a mimeograph, "jelly roll," or diazo machine—is an entirely different matter.

One problem with this type of order is the time available for preparing it. All ARTEPs and staff manuals prescribe how much time an echelon of command can spend in preparing its order. Any staff operator, from the division G-3 to the tank battalion's operations sergeant major, can tell you his echelon has one-third of the total remaining planning time to prepare and issue its order. Thus, if the mission execution time is 30 hours away, the brigade may use 10 hours of that time. The battalion then may use a little less than seven hours of the remaining 20 to produce its OPORD, with similar time breaks for the company, platoon, and even squad. This one-third, two-thirds rule is known throughout the Army as the standard by which the preparation of orders is measured. This standard is not tough enough, though, and in most cases leaders at company level and below end up with less time than they need to plan adequately for their operations.

In the 3d Brigade, 4th Infantry Division, operations over the past 18 months or so have indicated that a tougher standard of one-fifth, four-fifths is in order. This tougher standard is aimed primarily at the brigade and the battalion or task force levels. And our experience during a REFORGER

deployment, a rotation to the National Training Center (NTC), a three-week off-post deployment to a maneuver site, and numerous local Fort Carson exercises indicates that it can be met at those levels and at some lower levels as well.

If the brigade meets this tougher standard, a battalion's planning time is increased by at least 21 percent. This extra time benefits the task force elements even if they follow the old standard. But if the battalion can also conform to the one-fifth, four-fifths rule, the company commanders are the major benefactors, as their planning time increases almost 45 percent (see table). This rule may be too stringent to be used at the company level, but if the higher echelons follow it, a company still gains considerable planning time.

	1/3-2/3 RULE		1/5-4/5 RULE	
	Time Available	Time Used	Time Available	Time Used
Bde	100	33	100	20
Bn/TF	66	22	80	16
Co	45	15	64	12-13
Plt	30		51	

But how does a brigade or battalion staff officer go about reducing the total time he needs to prepare orders? The four major methods discussed below permit this to happen. One involves the quality of the desired product and how to make the most of the resulting order. The second method makes it possible to display much useful information rapidly and concisely. The third method involves producing, reproducing, and issuing the order, and the fourth suggests some improved coordination procedures.

In most planners, there is an ingrained desire to produce the "A + plan," the "school solution," or the "perfect plan." A highly detailed staff estimate, a carefully selected course of action, a thorough analysis of enemy avenues and actions, and a totally comprehensive wargaming resolution will usually result in such a plan. Unfortunately, performing these tasks completely and by the book just eats up too much time! The "perfect plan" can be written, but if a staff produces one con-

sistently, that plan may be available for issue only to the enemy who overruns the unit's tactical operations center.

General George S. Patton, Jr., is credited with saying, "A good plan today is better than a perfect plan tomorrow," and it is to this idea that this first methodology is directed. An "A + plan" delivered late, not fully coordinated, and inadequately executed will often fail. On the other hand, a good, solid, tactically correct "B plan" that is issued early enough to allow for complete coordination and capable execution has a greater chance of succeeding.

The crunch usually comes at the company commander level; it is he who eventually controls troop movements, executes cross-attachments, and directs the firepower that kills the enemy. No matter how talented he may be, he will do *better* if he has more time. And the more lead time he has the better the outcome will tend to be.

The one component that can assure the successful implementation of a good plan are the "Commander's Intent" paragraphs. These paragraphs are as important as all the concept statements, fire support plans, and specific instructions combined. In this brigade, we habitually include our higher echelon commander's intent as part of the "Friendly Forces (Higher)" of our paragraph 1 (Situation). By providing "higher's" intent along with a clear-cut statement of the brigade commander's intent, we have found that our subordinate leaders have a much clearer concept of the overall picture and of how their battalion or task force's actions fit into the total scheme.

When subordinate commanders also follow this procedure, the result is squad leaders and tank commanders who can carry out their commander's intent even though they may not be able to communicate with an officer-leader. (The informed NCO has always been a strong point of our Army; with this methodology he can be even moreso.)

Our experience at the NTC and other major deployments has indicated that successful operations can be conducted with clear useful graphics, an execution matrix, and the commander's intent alone! Although this is certainly not the goal of operations personnel, it does point out the importance of this sub-paragraph. At any level, a clear understanding of the boss's desires often outweighs the mass of specific and coordinating instructions that normally accompany an order.

Another way of getting a field order out fast involves modifying the way information is presented to subordinate units. A traditional brigade order includes a long list of annexes to support the basic order, with intelligence, fire support, Army aviation and others having their own individual annexes or appendixes. The current manuals describe what should and should not be included in these enclosures and clearly defines the acceptable format. Thus, a "school solution" fire support annex will always include a sub-paragraph on naval gunfire even if the unit is maneuvering at Fort Irwin—with a nicely worded "None" or "Not Available" next to it. These formats, strictly used, make the order correct, but long, ungainly, and difficult to digest.

The concept of the mission or execution matrix, as described in Chapter 4 of FM 71-2J, The Tank and Mechanized Infantry Battalion/Task Force, was a beginning, and most units have

developed a matrix of their own for offensive operations. From there, it was only a small step to the combat team matrices this brigade has developed.

These matrices do a number of important things. First, they combine like systems or related systems into a single annex or matrix. Thus, for example, one single matrix includes the information normally contained in the fire support annex, the Army aviation annex, and the close air support paragraph. This information is put on a single page, if possible, to permit commanders and staffs to see it all at one glance. Because the matrix makes the important data easy to find and eliminates some of the "None/Not Available" comments, it is much more functional and useful. No longer will a tired, bleary-eyed staff officer miss his assets on page 6 of a 10-page annex.

Several of the matrices developed for use in this brigade are shown here, but as examples only—other units can modify them to meet their own specific needs.

Air Defense

The air defense matrix provides battalion-level air defense elements with all the information they need to perform their mission and to pass orders to their subordinate elements (see Figure 1). The units to which ADA assets are assigned are shown across the top of the matrix, while the actual assets and information data are along the left side.

The first section lists the ADA weapons that are present in the brigade and the elements that are task organized to units. The unit designation and the number of operational systems

	BDE CONTROL	1-8 M	2-34 AR	4-40 AR
STINGER	NONE	1/A/C (DS)	4/A/C (DS)	2/A/C (DS)
VULCAN	NONE	3/A (DS) 3	NONE	3/B (DS) 4
CHAPARRAL	3/C (GS) 4	EN 873187 1	EN 982188 1	EN 901100 1
ADJ SECTOR	RIGHT (NORTH) A/4-61	LEFT (SOUTH) B/8-61	FORWARD () NONE	REAR (RESERVE) B/4-61
FAAR	CURRENT: EN 665185 EN 704111	PROJECTED: EN 884192 EN 863175	PROJECTED: NONE	
ADW/WCS	YELLOW/HOLD UNTIL UPGRADED BY III CORPS OR CADC IN SECTOR			
ACO	LLTRI EN 605888 - 777931 994186 - UNTIL 241830 WPN FREE-ZONE VIC CITY OF TRINIDAD			
CLV ATP	STINGER: EN 776915	VULCAN: EN 776915	CHAPARRAL: NONE	
SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS	1. VULCAN RADARS WILL NOT OPERATE UNTIL H-4 HRS 2. ENEMY AIR EXPECTED TO BE MI-24, Su-17, Su-25 3. LINKUP POINT FOR VULCANS EN 863100, 231900Z.			

Figure 1. ADA Matrix. (Prepared by Lieutenant Willie Merrick, brigade Air Defense liaison officer.)

appear beneath the appropriate task force. The support relationship (DS, GS) is also shown as well as the grid coordinates of any brigade general support system located within a task force sector, with the number of weapons positioned there located by grid.

	TF 2-34	TF 1-10	TF 1-8	BDE
Task Organization	1/C/4 EN (DS) 1/C/299 EN EQUIP/C/4 EN AVLB/C/4 EN	2/C/4 EN (DS) 2/C/299 EN EQUIP/C/299 EN (-) AVLB/C/4 EN	3/C/4 EN (DS) 3/C/299 EN AVLB/C/4 EN 2 CEV/C/4 EN	C/4 EN (-) C/299 EN (-)
Priority of Engr Effort	5, C-M, H	6, C-M, H	5, C-M, H on order M, C-M, B	6, C-M, H
Priority of Engr Support	1	2	3 on order 1	NONE
Planned FASCAM	1	2	0	1
Engr Equipment	2 Dozers 2 Loaders 1 Backhoe	1 Dozer 1 Loader 1 Backhoe	1 Dozer (299) 1 Loader (299)	NONE
Class IV & V (Appendix 1) WTC MFB EMFB	Bde Tpts 16 4	10 10	5 5 8	NONE
Directed Obst. (Appendix 2)	3001 3002	NONE	NONE	NONE
TF Engr	Cdr, C/4 EN	Cdr, C/299 EN	Plt Ldr, 3/C/4 EN	N/A
S = Survivability C-M = Counter-mobility H = Mobility WTC = Wire, triple standard concertina (100m) MFB = Mine field row (100m) EMFB = Explosive minefield breach (150m)				

Figure 2. Engineer Matrix. (Prepared by Captain Bob Slockbower, brigade engineer.)

Adjacent ADA units are listed in the second section followed by current and projected forward area alerting radar (FAAR) locations. The air defense warning and weapons control status, with any restrictions or modifications, is then described, and airspace control orders are listed next. These might include low-level transit routes, minimum risk routes, high density airspace control zones, or weapons free zones with appropriate location data. Class V ammunition transfer points are then listed, if they are known.

This matrix can be further expanded, or used in conjunction with an overlay, if necessary. Specific instructions may be included to describe non-standard data or to assist units in their missions. This section might also be used to describe on-order missions.

Engineer

The engineer matrix provides a rapid way of organizing the critical information necessary for directing the engineer activities performed in support of brigade combat team operations. The matrix reduces or eliminates the need for preparing the traditional narrative engineer annex.

In the basic engineer matrix (see Figure 2), the task forces and elements under brigade control are listed across one axis and on the other are the specific elements of information needed to define engineer-related mission requirements. The items included in the matrix are tailored to the specific mission requirements of the basic order. The determination of these is a critical step that must be performed by the brigade engineer in conjunction with the combat team staff.

In the sample matrix, the essential items were determined to be the engineer task organization, priority of engineer effort, priority of engineer support, number of planned FASCAMs (family of scatterable mines), engineer equipment, engineer-related Class IV and V requirements, directed engineer obstacles, and task force engineer command and control. For those items that require more specific coordinating instructions, appendixes to the basic engineer matrix can be prepared to provide the necessary details. These are also prepared in matrix form.

The engineer task organization includes the specific allocation of engineer platoons, combat engineer vehicles (CEVs),

and armored vehicular launched bridges (AVLBs); and the priority of engineer effort in the performance of the basic engineer missions of mobility, survivability, and counter-mobility are delineated for each task force. It is not unusual for the priority of engineer effort to differ among the various task force engineer support elements. The priority of engineer support for each task force is annotated by consecutive numbers, with 1 indicating the highest priority.

The brigade engineer matrix can be modified to suit specific mission requirements, including hasty and deliberate river crossing operations. These brigade level matrices also form the basis for preparing detailed execution matrices by the task force engineers.

NBC

The NBC matrix (see Figure 3) is designed to provide essential information on chemical or nuclear support in a convenient, quick-reference format. Units are arrayed across the top, with informational data displayed on the left side.

Mission-oriented protective posture (MOPP) is the first item listed. Since MOPP is not a fixed or rigid system, flexibility is the key to providing maximum protection with the lowest risk possible for a given mission. Flexibility allows the subor-

	TF 2-34	TF 1-10	TF 1-8	BDE
1. MOPP LEVEL/TIME	040600	040600	040600	040600
2. OEG/TROOP SAFETY	NEG RISK TO UNWARNED EXPOSED PERS	MOD RISK TO WARNED PROTECTED PERS	MOD RISK TO WARNED PROTECTED PERS	NEG RISK TO UNWARNED EXPOSED PERS
3. DECON -CP -UNIT -CH -RELATIONSHIP -L/U SITE -LOCATION	EN 32277 7/2141 CH Co CE	CP2 CP7	CP6 CP17	CP13 CP26
4. SMOKE UNIT/RELATION TIMES GEN/FOG OIL L/U PT	NONE	2/172CH(SG) (DS) From 040600 Co 041800 12/2400 gal CP2	NONE	2/172CH(SG) (DS) From 041800 Co 051200 12/1200 gal CP 13
5. NBC RECON -DTG COMPLETE -LOCATION -DIB -RDB	NONE	021800 RT ZEBRA AT 0201 100/HR	021800 RT CALF 10 CBY 5 CBY/HR	NONE
REMARKS	(1) NBC Assets in OEG from 031800-041000 (2) NBC Assets in adjacent bde sector			

Figure 3. NBC Matrix. (Prepared by Captain Greg Schlechta, brigade NBC officer.)

dinate commanders to adjust the amount of MOPP protection required in their particular situation and still maintain combat effectiveness. Directed MOPP levels are prescribed in the matrix. Subordinate commanders may exceed these levels without approval but must request any lower level or any reduction in MOPP.

Operational exposure guidance (OEG), described next, is determined on the basis of the unit's previous exposure and the risk that the commander is prepared to take. OEG may differ between task forces. Decontamination assets are discussed next with unit designation, location, and command relationship shown.

Smoke assets are listed in a similar manner with command relationships described and the number of operational generators and gallons of fog oil on hand. Any NBC reconnaissance missions tasked by brigade are also listed with

line with a particular NAI to clarify the information actually desired. Possible and actual taskings are indicated by NAI so that units may identify their tasked requirements and on-order requirements. This matrix permits battalion intelligence personnel to prepare their reconnaissance and surveillance plans.

This matrix and a decision support template are prepared at the same time as the OPORD so they will be available to the units when the order is issued. Although the matrix is not complete at this point—changing enemy situations may require NAIs to be retasked or modified—it is a point of reference from which changes can be made. These new NAIs are usually transmitted by FM radio.

The NAI tasking matrix, when used with the enemy situation paragraph and the decision support template, has become an effective replacement for the intelligence annex to an operations order by translating the commander's PIR/IR into specific intelligence requirements tied to a piece of terrain where activities are expected to occur.

Fires

The fires matrix replaces several annexes and appendixes. It addresses subjects from the traditional fire support annex—specifically, artillery organization for combat, priority of fires, close air support allocation, and a modified controlled supply rate (CSR). In addition, it includes information usually shown in a separate Army aviation annex. This data is displayed in a matrix whose design is unique (see Figure 5).

Informational data is depicted down the left side of the matrix. Along the top are shown phase lines or graphic control measures from the operations overlay. The use of phase lines permits all data on fires to be depicted phase by phase for the entire operation. This unique feature makes it easier to show changes in priorities of fire, allocations of ammunition, and all other features. Phase lines are shown from right to left or left to right to correspond with control features of the operation. Therefore, the basic matrix can be read from either direction, depending on the mission.

The information categories down the left side of the brigade's matrix includes such items as the commander's attack criteria, priority of fires, allocation of close air support, Army attack aviation, FASCAM, and special instructions.

The fires matrix is the most complex of all the matrices that accompany the order. But being able to display the mass of information contained in this one matrix on *one* page makes it a remarkably useful tool.

Through the use of these matrices, and the one-fifth, four-fifths rule, an operations order can be composed more rapidly than traditional methods permit. But the time saved will translate into more time for subordinate leaders only if the composed order is then rapidly produced, reproduced, and issued to units. A number of techniques can be used to decrease the time it takes for the composed order to be turned into an order in the hands of subordinate units.

A combination operations overlay and a simplified five-paragraph operation order, for instance, can be reproduced simultaneously. A standard operations graphic, produced on an acetate master, is the basis for the basic order. Written alongside the graphics are the essential paragraphs of the

		PL COW	PL HDG	PL PIG	PL SOW
CDR ATK CRITERIA	FORCES IN CONTACT FA <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> C3 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SEAD <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		RECON <input type="checkbox"/> FA <input type="checkbox"/> SEAD <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> C3 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
PRI OF FIRE	TF 1/8		TF 2-34 & TF 4-40		
ALLOC OF CAS	2/1 TF 1/8 2/1 BDE CONTROL	1/0 TF 4-40	2/1 TF 2-34	2/1 TF 2-34	
ARMY ATK AVN	A/4 AVN (DS) TO 3d BDE	A/4 AVN (DS) TO TF 2-34 ATK TO ECHELON		A/4 AVN (DS) TO 3d BDE ZONE RECON	
# OF FASCAM	BDE CDR EXEC AUTHORITY 5 FASCAM AVAIL	TF 2-34-2		TF 2-34-2	
FFF PRI TGTS	TF 1/8-1 TF 1/8-1	TF 2-34-4 TF 4-40-2			
# OF BN 3's	TF 1/8-10	TF 2-34 TF 4-40	23 7	TF 2-34 10 TF 4-40 5	
MIN OF SMOKE	NONE	TF 2-34 TF 4-40	21 16		
MIN OF ILLUM	NONE	TF 2-34 TF 4-40	25 12		
<input type="checkbox"/> SUPPRESS <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NEUTRALIZE <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DESTROY					
SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS 1) 3-29 FA DS TO 3d BDE, 1-29 FA GSR TO 3-29 FA 2) TF FIRE SUPPORT MATRIX/PLAN TO BDE FSE NLT 030800 WAR 3) 3d BDE CFL PL SOW INITIALLY, PL'S & CFL					

Figure 5. Fires Matrix. (Prepared by Captain Terry Sharp, brigade fire support officer.)

operations order, abbreviated where possible. The subparagraphs are reduced to the essential information and written on the margin of the graphics. Spartan language, heavily abbreviated, is used to describe task organization, friendly forces (including the high headquarters commander's intent), enemy forces, and the mission. Under "Execution," the commander's intent is augmented by an execution matrix or by simple unit instructions. Any coordinating instructions not included in matrices are shown next. The service support matrix is then referenced followed by command and signal information.

This acetate overlay is then reproduced using field techniques. The fastest and best method uses a diazo reproduction machine (NSN 3610-01-061-0621 or LIN84904, R84689), which uses an ammonia process with light sensitive paper technology to produce a paper copy of the acetate original. Numerous copies can be made from the acetate master. A backup method of reproduction involves the veteran "jelly roll," which can produce multiple copies, but more slowly than the diazo process. A third method, much slower but adequate for limited copies to units, is merely copying the graphics, abbreviated order, and execution matrix on other acetate "drops."

Pre-printed matrices are simultaneously filled out by staff officers and NCOs. Their matrices may be hand printed on precut mimeograph stencils and reproduced on a hand crank or electric mimeo machine, or pre-printed matrices may be layered with carbon paper and reproduced by hand four or five copies at a time. Staff members reproduce their own matrices independently from the overlays, thus reducing the total time required to produce the entire order.

The overlay, with order and graphics included, is then collated with individual matrices and intelligence and logistics overlays and combined into a packet for subordinate units and the appropriate staff members. Total production time is thus reduced significantly from that of traditional methods.

The final step of this sequence is the actual issuing of the now fully produced order. A completed order that sits in the

TOC for two hours awaiting the arrival of unit liaison officers defeats the entire purpose. Two simple options ensure that the "fast field order" can now be delivered quickly. If helicopters are available (probably only at brigade level) and the enemy situation will permit it, orders may be flown forward to unit command groups, TOCs, or TACs by a "battle captain" who can explain the order.

A more reliable, though less timely, method is to rely on unit liaison officers and NCOs (LNOs). These LNOs are called to the TOC when the orders group convenes so that they will be there before the order is complete. LNOs are briefed on the order by the battle captains or staff officers and questioned in an informal "briefback" before it is released. Questions are cleared up, and the LNOs then return to their units to deliver and explain the order.

It is easy to see how a "good plan" prepared according to the one-fifth, four-fifths rule can be more effectively coordinated. But no plan can succeed if the efforts of every element are not coordinated, or if the subordinate units are not given the time they need to properly execute the plan.

If the plan follows the rule described above, however, unit staffs will have additional time to coordinate their efforts. Whether at brigade or battalion level, staffs with more coordination time generally produce better products. A staff officer can begin his coordination, of course, before the order is begun by his headquarters with some general guidance—"We think we are going to . . ." and "One plan puts you here while the other places you over there." But this type of coordination frequently causes more problems than it solves when people misunderstand.

If the "good plan" is produced quickly, it then permits the staff to focus cleanly on final coordination and enables them to nail down the details. This also permits the staff to discover potentially serious problems early enough to correct them instead of trying to just work around them. Aggressive staff members will hunt down their subordinate counterparts and make use of the valuable time this tougher time standard has made available to them.

Since the OPORD is a living document, it usually requires change or modification as more combat information becomes available. Intelligence data, in particular, can cause a plan to be modified or even changed completely before its final execution.

The "fast-good order" is easier to modify, for several reasons. Because there has been no attempt to make the order "perfect," the writers and staff members tend to accept modifications to it with less resistance. On the other hand, planners who have sunk lots of time and professional "face" into a product tend to be overpowered by the specific details of their plan.

The quicker plan also gives brigade and battalion level staff officers and NCOs the time and opportunity for face-to-face coordination with their subordinate counterparts or with combat support or service support leaders. This enables them to focus on potential trouble areas and identify them early. Their on-the-spot influence may solve a problem, or at least elevate it to the level where it can be solved more expeditiously. Although the upcoming battle cannot be won through the coord-

ination efforts of these staff members only, their presence, influence, and problem-solving abilities may prevent defeat.

An extremely useful tool for staffs to use in this quest is the "War Stoppers" list. After the order has been issued and staff officers and NCOs are effecting their coordination, the executive officer and assistant S-3, with the commander and the S-3 if they are not forward, sit down and study the plan. They look at all the coordination that must be done and select key items that will severely affect the mission if they are not completed—that is, "war-stoppers." These critical items are then listed on a board where they can be seen easily.

The format of this board is up to the individual, but it is useful to group the issues by functional areas—artillery, close air support, engineer, air defense artillery, and logistics. The XO and the battle captain then decide where they will expend their personal efforts in resolving these issues. The XO may elect to include the command sergeant major or other members of the staff to pursue specific coordination issues. When the commander and the S-3 return, if they do, they may also add their concerted efforts in these areas.

As each war stopper is resolved, this is annotated on the list so that the battle captain will know the status and be able to double check during his tour of duty in the TOC. Before the commander, the XO, and the S-3 retire to rest, they go over the war stoppers list one last time. Any additions are made and the battle captain is advised on what coordination measures must be taken. If the status of any of these significant items should change, the battle captain is directed to inform the command group immediately.

The importance placed on this list helps to ensure that key coordination items will not be overlooked or forgotten in the usual TOC's intense environment. The additional coordination time made available by the faster planning process and the systematic approach to critical coordination tasks permit brigade and battalion staffs to make the most of their staff efforts. The writers of the order must understand that coordination issues must be initiated by the time the order is written but not necessarily completely resolved. It is a bit uncomfortable the first time the members of an orders group work in this manner, but the additional time they are given to complete detailed coordination items pays impressive dividends.

The "fast field order" is not a complete solution to all the problems of writing and producing good orders in the field. But neither is it a half-hearted staff officer's excuse for not being able to produce orders "by the book." It is a methodology that will permit commanders and their staffs to produce effective orders in a timely manner, thereby giving their subordinates time to do the same thing.

Following the techniques described here in itself will not guarantee success, but when followed consistently these techniques will increase the opportunity for success at all command levels.

Major James A. Dunn, Jr., an Armor officer, was S-3 of the 3d Brigade, 4th Infantry Division when these procedures were developed. He previously served as S-3 of an armor brigade and an armor battalion and as an assistant professor of geography at the U.S. Military Academy and is now assigned to a defense attache office. He has had several other articles published in various military journals.
