

CPX Planning

For A Battalion Staff

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Today, because of resource constraints, an infantry battalion has a limited amount of field training time available. Therefore, more of that time is usually devoted to tactical ARTEP missions than to staff functions. For this reason, the command post exercise (CPX) has become the primary tool for training a battalion staff. Unfortunately, definitive guidance and information on CPX planning is extremely limited.

The following planning process, developed at the Military District of Washington, is offered as a technique for conducting staff procedural CPXs:

CPX planning begins with identifying the exercise objectives. Only those activities that are applicable to either a unit's wartime mission or its transition from a peacetime to a wartime posture should be considered. Because of the detailed level of knowledge required to understand the various staff functions, each staff principal becomes responsible for identifying objectives for his functional area.

The principal considerations when identifying objectives are the following:

- An objective should provide for the evaluation of a procedure or a system.
- The more critical an objective is, the more often it should be exercised.
- How often a battalion conducts this kind of CPX should influence how often a particular objective is included.
- Objectives that have been identified in the after action reports of previous exercises should be examined to

determine whether they should be reevaluated.

- The resources to support the evaluation of an objective should be available.

Once the objectives have been identified, a scenario is developed on the basis of these objectives. The S-3 reviews the input from the staff principals and develops a realistic scenario in which all of the objectives can be evaluated. Ideally, the scenario will focus on the unit's assigned real world missions.

Several issues must be considered during this phase:

- Security classifications, if any, that could restrict the flow of information during the planning, execution, and evaluation phases.
- Pre-exercise events that must be implemented.
- Assumptions and artificialities that support player participation during the active phase of the exercise.

Special consideration should also be given to the availability of various types of administrative support:

- Personnel to act as evaluators and controllers. (It is desirable for these participants to have a working knowledge of staff functions at battalion level.)
- A facility in which to conduct the exercise. (Distractors can be kept to a minimum if the exercise is conducted outside the battalion area. If possible, the players and controllers should be separated.)
- Communications for the exercise.

- Reproduction equipment. (A CPX will generate a large number of documents during the planning and execution, and this equipment should be accessible and reliable.)

- Video recording equipment. (Recording the active phase of the exercise and reviewing it during the after action review provides valuable training. A VCR system should be used during the exercise if one is available through the training support center.)

The scope of the exercise and the objectives will determine the level of participation. The following four-step process will help in identifying the exercise participants:

- Staff principals review internal procedures and identify the level of participation required to evaluate the objectives.
 - Planners consider non-unit participants (who should have been identified during the development of objectives) in light of the consequences if they cannot participate.
 - Staff principals consider factors that may influence their selection of participants—cost, availability of personnel, and the demands of the existing workloads.
 - The exercise planners develop a list of participants.
- The next step is planning the evaluation process. Although evaluation planning is somewhat technical, it is not necessarily complex. The primary criteria for an evaluation should be that it is useful and that it is understood by the users. The evaluation structure used

in CPXs consists of two subparts:

Elements of Evaluation. These elements are broad questions whose answers contribute to the evaluation of the objective. In developing his elements, a staff principal identifies the systems or procedures to be implemented during the exercises; identifies the steps contained within the system or procedure; and formulates these steps into evaluation questions. When reviewed collectively, the answers to these questions will enable a staff principal to determine whether a particular objective has been achieved.

Data Collection Form. This form is used to record the data collected during the CPX. It should be a one-page form tailored to the exercise, identifying, at least, the point of contact, the exercise objective, and the element to be evaluated. Any special instructions to the evaluator should also be included. A data collection form should be prepared by the staff principals for each objective.

MSEL

Pre-exercise planning focuses on actions leading up to and including the start of the exercise. A master scenario event list (MSEL) is created by the staff principals to generate exercise activity

in support of their objectives.

The following are guidelines for developing this list:

- Each event should be concise and brief.
- Each event should generate activity in a particular staff section in support of an objective.
- Some events may generate activity in another staff section, causing interactions among several sections.
- Events may be generated for simulated players or non-unit players and introduced by the controllers.

To achieve a common understanding of the exercise and any specific procedures that will be used during the active phase, some pre-exercise training is needed. This training should be coordinated by the S-3 and supported by the other staff sections. The following subject areas are usually addressed:

For the players:

- Scenario background and an exercise overview.
- An overview of the exercise objectives and the evaluation procedures.
- Communications support.
- Procedures to be used during the exercise.

For the evaluators:

- An overview of the exercise scenario and the flow of events.
- Evaluation procedures to be used.
- Working relationships with the

players and controllers.

For the controllers:

- An overview of the exercise scenario and the flow of events.
- General controller functions and responsibilities.
- Specific controller responsibilities within the control group.
- Working relationships with the players and evaluators.

Given the resource limitations and the existing workload, a CPX is the most efficient and effective training vehicle for a battalion staff. The procedures outlined here provide an overview of the CPX planning process and can help staff principals to develop procedural CPXs that support their battalion's tactical ARTEP missions.

Additional information, including a "how to" planning guide, is available in an exercise planning manual developed by the Military District of Washington. Anyone who is interested may request a copy from Commander, USA MDW, ATTN: ANOPS-OP-P (Captain Garrett), Fort McNair, Washington, DC 20319-5050.

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CSS Training

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The supplies required to keep men and machines going in combat neither grow on trees nor appear magically. Out of the struggle to sustain victory or deny defeat comes the regular order of business of combat service support

(CSS) elements--to be there with what the commanders need when they need it.

Although combat service support elements regularly deploy and train with their organic task forces, they are

rarely trained in the techniques of combat actions and reactions during the execution of their duties. It is crucial that CSS soldiers be able to think and act independently in combat, because if their efforts to sustain the combat