

dinate's willingness to act and might even lead him to withhold adverse information or provide falsely optimistic reports simply to avoid his superior's wrath. This idea recognized there was little in mission-oriented command that was "systematic" and made allowances for this.

In mission-oriented command, both superior and subordinate shared the burden of mission accomplishment. Of course, the greater burden obviously rested with the superior, because he had to teach, trust, support, and correct well-intentioned but possibly errant actions. The subordinate was required to report accurately and to act when the situation demanded it. Inaction, not "wrong" action, was the cardinal sin.

The heart and soul of *Auftragstaktik* was the desired result, not the way the result was achieved. It rejected as counter-productive any attempt to control the type of action initiated during combat. It concentrated instead on instilling in subordinates the will to act as they deemed appropriate in their situations to attain the desired result.

The cultivation of initiative required special effort. It was so central to mission-oriented command that it applied to squad leaders as well as to division or corps commanders. A leader had to make a truly gross error to be reprimanded, and

then the reprimand would not forever haunt him throughout his service or unduly penalize him for an honest mistake.

In brief, the function of mission-oriented command was to bring the collective creativity of an army to bear in solving tactical problems. It rewarded the soldier who acted and penalized the one who did not. The mission order, the battlefield technique through which mission-oriented command was practiced, included the mission's objectives and a clear articulation of the commander's intent. The order not only left the subordinate free to determine how to complete his mission but also relied on him to decide on new courses of action as events unfolded that altered the assumptions made in planning.

*Auftragstaktik* was a product of German social and cultural tradition, and it was adapted by the German Army for its purposes. It depended on a relatively simple but well understood and accepted operational concept to generally guide commanders in deciding how to accomplish their missions. It demanded—and provided—adequate training and education both in the *Kriegsakademie* and in the units to make its execution reliably sure. It recognized and compensated for differences in the temperament and ability of its officers and NCOs through personalized unit training and professional

development, and in the details each was given in orders in the field. It provided a gigantic support structure to infuse and sustain the subordinates' initiative in battle.

This concept worked so well, however, that we in the U.S. Army now idolize it without fully comprehending the totality of what it was, why or how it developed, or how it worked as a system.

We must understand that issuing mission orders is not practicing mission-oriented command. To use this command concept successfully, subordinate leaders must be adequately prepared for it, and the entire organization of an army must be prepared to support, sustain, and reinforce it.

Our AirLand Battle doctrine is right in demanding that decentralized decisions be made by the man on the spot. Our challenge is to find a method of decentralized decision making that fits our culture and our Army.

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# Improving The Staff Planning Process

CAPTAIN JOHN SCUDDER  
MAJOR DAVID MAGRATH

The primary mission of the National Training Center (NTC) at Fort Irwin is to observe, control, and train battalion task forces in continuous tactical operations against an opposing force (OPFOR)

motorized rifle regiment that uses Soviet tactics. One of the greatest challenges facing an armored task force at the NTC is the staff planning process.

To succeed in the NTC's intense desert

environment, a task force staff must be able to plan, support, and supervise movement over extended distances and for extended lengths of time, and react to rapid changes in the essential informa-

tion. Further, a staff must have the special ability to carry out the commander's intent on the basis of mission-type orders and broad guidance.

During a 12-month train-up period for an NTC rotation and the NTC experience itself, we served with a battalion task force made up of two tank teams and two mechanized infantry teams from the 1st Battalion, 77th Armor, 4th Infantry Division. During that training, we learned that units preparing for and training at the NTC face several problems with staff planning:

First, the staff planning process is often too slow. Doctrinally, the Army preaches the "one-third, two-thirds" rule for staff planning procedures and the production of operations orders. This practice is supposed to give a higher headquarters one-third of the available time to prepare an order and the subordinate units two-thirds of that time. But units at the NTC have considerable trouble adhering to this doctrine.

## PERFECTION

In many instances, task force staffs are slow in collecting information and in gaining and interpreting the commander's broad guidance. The staff members try to create the perfect solution in a slow, methodical manner, and argue with subordinates on the "best" course of action to present to the commander. These problems not only take time away from company, platoon, and squad planning, they also hinder a staff in its efforts to supervise the execution of a mission.

After studying the negative results of slow staff planning on other units, we decided during our train-up period to try a "one-eighth, seven-eighths" schedule for the process. Our intent was to produce an operations order as quickly as possible, then to conduct a follow-on analysis and issue any subsequent changes as fragmentary orders.

We found that the intelligence and operations sections could handle this constraint on time. But the other staff agencies (fire support, air defense, engineers, logistics, and Air Force) could not analyze the situation and develop proper

courses of action for the mission at hand.

The end result of using this schedule, then, was a fast operations order but one that showed a shallow analysis of the mission and a complete lack of substance in the key supporting areas.

Another problem at the NTC is the fatigue suffered by the task force leaders as their units continually try to fend off the OPFOR threat 24 hours a day for 14 days. Unfortunately, although the fatigue issue has been discussed in many forums and some recommended solutions have been documented, most leaders still believe in the "macho image," in which "real soldiers" do not get tired and can function with little or no sleep.

Nevertheless, the effect of fatigue on staff planning is severe: Simple actions such as taking notes become Herculean tasks; a person's ability to focus on what is important becomes cloudy; leader judgment is questionable; and decision making is poor. Obviously, in such a situation, the staff's product is always far from perfect and often inadequate.

The task force attachments also present a real problem. Unfortunately, with the Army's current authorizations for personnel and equipment at the battalion level (units are either pure armor or pure infantry), many staff agencies do not get an opportunity to work with combined task forces except during major training exercises.

## PROBLEMS

For a variety of reasons, some of our staff attachments were unable to take part in the train-up before our rotation to the NTC. Undoubtedly, the problems that developed later were caused by their lack of familiarity with the other staff members and with the way the task force as a whole operated.

In fact, when these problems were combined with some doctrinal innovations and additions we made to our standing operating procedures, these staff agencies fell far behind the planning process months before our NTC rotation began.

Another problem that develops at the NTC in staff planning is that, at times,

the dominant personalities on the staff, those who have the most ideas and speak the loudest, are the most convincing. This creates a "sales pitch" atmosphere that is almost competitive. Consequently, other staff members who are not as energetic or aggressive are stifled, and their valuable input is lost.

In many cases, it is the S-3 who, because of his operational role and informative power, has this type of personality. As a result, a task force commander may rely upon or listen to his S-3 almost exclusively and neglect other staff sections that are equally vital to the success of the mission.

## GOALS

From an analysis of the lessons we learned during our train-up and our actual experience at Fort Irwin, we have developed a series of goals that will allow our staff to function better as a team the next time we train in such an intensive environment. These goals are the following:

First, we want the staff to be able to *anticipate* the commander—understand his intent without having to talk to him. If we can correctly "read his mind," we will not be forced into making last-minute changes.

Second, we want to convince the commander (and the staff) that the sole objective in any operations order is "a B+ plan and an A+ execution." We will therefore save time, because the staff officers will not spend an excessive amount of time trying to come up with a perfect plan.

Finally, we want to consolidate our planning process so we can issue an operations order within five hours of receiving a brigade order. This goal will allow enough planning time at all command levels.

As a starting point, we found that Army doctrine offered some help. Field Manual 71-2J, for example, puts troop leading procedures into a simplified form as follows:

- Receive the mission. (Conduct the mission analysis.)
- Issue the warning order. (The com-



mander gives planning guidance to the staff.)

- Make a tentative plan. (The staff develops courses of action, those courses of action are wargamed, the commander then adopts the final course of action.)

- Begin movement. (The task force is alerted to upgrade its readiness status.)

- Reconnoiter. (The commander meets with his staff in the battle position.)

- Complete the plan. (The commander refines his concept with input from all staff agencies.)

- Issue the order.

- Supervise and refine. (The staff begins to check units to insure compliance and understanding.)

This method outlines what a staff must do before a mission is actually executed.

In addition, the Staff Officers Handbook (RB 101-999, 1983) accentuates troop leading procedures in a decision making flowchart (page 2-2).

With the troop leading checklist and the decision making flowchart, we began to incorporate these guidelines into a training plan that would help us reach our objective.

In the 1st Battalion, 77th Armor, we have tried to integrate the lessons we learned from our analysis of the problem with the published Army doctrine to develop a well-thought-out staff training plan. The basis of this plan evolved from training both at the individual and the group level. A unit can use the following techniques to help build the high-performance staff it needs to withstand

the demands of the NTC and of combat.

Since a staff deals with a variety of subject areas (combat intelligence, personnel administration, operations and plans, and logistics, to name a few), all staff officers must have personal checklists that outline their particular areas of interest. These checklists may take the form of notecards, acetate-covered briefing charts, or specific map boards with the same information on them from each staff agency. The information on the lists may include refined standing operating procedures (SOPs), troop leading procedures, or the decision making flowchart from the Staff Officers Handbook.

The use of checklists also improves communication among the staff members as well as communication with the



major subordinate commands. And if the checklists are used habitually, they will be easier to use during a major exercise, especially when a unit is given its fifth consecutive mission and its staff officers are fatigued.

Another key training tool for the staff is operations order drills. These drills should be done bi-monthly either in garrison or in the field to sustain the staff's operational effectiveness in troop leading procedures and in the decision making process.

In a garrison environment, a battalion has access to the Army Training Battle Simulation System (ARTBASS), which trains staffs on a computerized battlefield, and to the command post exercise (CPX), which accomplishes the same objectives as ARTBASS using a large-scale

map for the battle simulation.

In a field environment, a battalion can use a command field exercise (CFX), which requires a minimum of manpower and equipment to execute each mission. Normally, a CFX is used in conjunction with a major field training exercise (FTX) that prepares the staff for its upcoming full-scale challenges.

Overall, the training methods used in garrison and in the field must be intense and stressful. The attached staff agencies absolutely must participate so that a team environment can be created, people with dominant personalities can be trained to be more cooperative, and staff problems can be ironed out before the actual test occurs.

One of the greatest underlying problems with group interaction is the ability

of some people to hide or rely on others to protect them. This is especially true in staff training. To expose these "ghosts" or malingers, we have devised a method of individual training for our staff members. Under the guidance of the task force executive officer, we have adopted a staff test that can be used to evaluate all staff members on their ability to backbrief, conduct a mission analysis, provide well-considered courses of action for a particular problem, formulate and execute a sandtable simulation exercise, and run a training meeting.

Applying methods taught at the Combined Arms and Services Staff School (CAS<sup>2</sup>), the XO works one-on-one with each staff member, keeps a performance status on each individual, and creates an intense environment that forces daily progress. This training identifies the "ghosts" and improves their performance.

## TEAMWORK

The most important way to have a cohesive staff, however, is to establish teamwork. As with any successful team, the people on the task force staff must live, eat, sleep, and fight together.

One way to develop camaraderie is through social interaction, or teambuilding. Teambuilding techniques help work groups improve the way they perform their tasks and help individual group members improve their interpersonal and problem-solving skills.

Focusing primarily on the elements attached to the task force (fire support, air defense, engineer, and the Air Force), a unit must try to persuade those individuals to take part in social activities that they might normally avoid. For instance, in our battalion, the members of all the staff agencies were asked to take part in hail and farewell activities, parties, or ski trips. The results were surprising: We found that the people did enjoy talking about things other than work. In fact, once we adopted teambuilding, many of our communication gaps diminished while the staff's overall motivation and effectiveness increased.

To be successful at the NTC (or in war), all units, from basic infantry squads to armored brigades, must be prepared for it. With a competent staff, a commander can be sure his guidance will reach down to the lowest level, and *executing the mission will therefore be easier*. And if the staff can produce a coherent operations order in a short time, *it will have more time to concentrate on the most important staff function, which is supervision*.

Overall, by adopting Army doctrine

in staff planning and by following the process and changing the behavior of the staff members, a battalion task force staff can produce a good plan in a short time. Although the plan may not be flawless, its execution will be successful *if the units, all the way down to the individual soldiers, understand the commander's intent*.

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# After Action Reviews

MAJOR NOYES B. LIVINGSTON III

The after action review (AAR) has been an important training tool for several years, but many leaders still find it difficult to conduct an AAR without slipping into a traditional critique.

It is not unusual for unit and functional area evaluators to go through an entire series of task force ARTEP AARs describing accomplishments and weaknesses to a mute, captive, and passive audience of commanders and staff members. It appears that the average reviewer either feels obligated to demonstrate the thoroughness of his own observations or does not have the experience and patience to be a good interrogator and an active listener.

An effective AAR is nothing more than a structured, but informal, self-appraisal by unit members. It provides a wide range of mission-related, performance-oriented feedback and positive reinforcement. Although an AAR is an excellent format for making on-the-spot corrections if time permits, it must not be a one-way critique or a spur-of-the-moment lecture.

The goals of an after action review are to reinforce effective training, motivate soldiers to train, and identify a unit's training strengths and weaknesses. To accomplish these ambitious goals, an AAR must be well planned and must cover both mission requirements and the resulting tactical events. In addition to reviewing the action that was taken, an AAR should also explore alternative courses of action that might have been taken.

A good AAR is essentially a group discussion of a mission's key points—who, what, when where, and why—in which the important lessons learned from the "how", or the execution, are discovered by the soldiers themselves. An AAR does not need to evaluate the operation's success or failure explicitly, but it must analyze the way the training events occurred and their effect on the accomplishment of the mission.

Some soldiers are concerned about the extra time, patience, and effort they must devote to conducting an effective after action review. Active, direct, task-oriented

people tend to believe that it is more efficient and effective to use their own experience and knowledge to tell the others the way things went and then go on to the next mission. If everyone involved in the training had perfect knowledge, equal interest, and similar capabilities, the traditional critique might be appropriate, but for the typical tactical training event, this is not the case.

The AAR method is important primarily because of the nature of training. A training event does not unreel in front of an attentive audience in a uniform, focused, sequential manner like a television program.

Instead, a training exercise is constructed from individual and group efforts much the same way a large building goes up behind a safety barricade on a busy street. The sidewalk spectators and construction workers—or the soldiers, in our case—watch only a small portion of the building process in uneven broken increments. Alone, each person sees little of the total progress of the effort, other than the building's eventual completion.