

The Synchronization Of the Brigade Fight

COLONEL BRUCE B.G. CLARKE
CAPTAIN STEVEN S. KLEMENT

Much has been written in the past few years about synchronization. Many authors have tried to define what it is and what it consists of, but few have talked about how to achieve it.

Members of the staff of the 2d Brigade, 1st Infantry Division, have developed and tested one method of synchronizing the battle. It includes a synchronization matrix that we have found useful, and also a process that the staff goes through in developing and refining their orders to their subordinates. In this process, the commander's intent, as elaborated in terms of the anticipated enemy activity and the seven battlefield operating systems, provides the basis for the synchronization of the battle.

The commander's intent is his visualization of the unfolding battle — the options that he thinks may be available, when and where they may be available, or what will be necessary to make them available. His ultimate goal is to achieve mass at the critical time and place, because it is timing that allows the combat multipliers to be brought together at the critical juncture on the battlefield. At the brigade level and lower, timing is the key.

The synchronization matrix we developed is prepared in addition to the normal order, which includes overlays and annexes. The matrix does not have a decision support matrix, but in fact captures in more complete form the wargamed results of the decision support template. It may even be called a sophisticated kind of decision support template. In some cases, it is similar to a table of contents for the specific annexes, because it refers to details in them.

The key is that in developing the matrix, the staff actually wargames actions. The wargaming synchronizes the battle by determining the critical times when certain assets need to be used in certain ways and at specific points on the battlefield to accomplish the commander's intent. Wargaming requires the staff to consider the time and distance factors involved in synchronizing the battle and to work them into the final product.

Across the top of the matrix (Figure 1) are blocks for the corps, division, and brigade commanders' intent, which gives each the appropriate visibility and focuses the unit effort.

In the next line down is the event/

phase section. Here, we show enemy and friendly activity in sketch form and highlight critical graphics such as decision points that are also on the operations overlay. Along the bottom of these blocks is a box for the estimated time of each event or phase. In this section, we break the battle into bite-sized pieces by event or time, or both. This allows us to plan in detail for each bite by picturing the situation that must be created or dealt with. This includes stated and implied tasks and different options.

The third part of the matrix contains the seven battlefield operating systems arranged so that entries can be made for each event or phase (Figure 2). Included are reminders of the critical items that need to be considered and dealt with. Finally, the last line on the matrix is used to highlight other critical information (Figure 3).

The actual matrix is about 2.5 feet by 3.5 feet and can be copied on a diazo machine, which makes field reproduction much easier than normal annexes.

Once the brigade has been given a mission, the staff begins its intelligence preparation of the battlefield (IPB). In this analysis, the S-2 must not only

CORPS CDR'S INTENT		DIVISION CDR'S INTENT				BRIGADE MISSION				BRIGADE CDR'S INTENT			
EVENT PHASE													
ENEMY SITUATION COURSE OF ACTION													
FRIENDLY SITUATION COURSE OF ACTION													
TROOP POINTS													
FRIENDLY DECISION POINTS													
PHASE LABEL													
TA NAME													
ENGAGEMENT AREAS													
OBJECTIVES													
EST TIME													

Figure 1

analyze the terrain and the weather but also must start to depict the enemy's possible and probable courses of action. These courses of action need to be shown on a map and also in sketches on the synchronization matrix.

In this layout, the S-2 templates the enemy's size and formations, if they are not known, and depicts the possible phasing of the enemy's activity and his decision points. This layout allows the commander to explain the way he

envisions using his assets sequentially and, when appropriate, massing them during each phase of the battle to defeat the enemy. The commander is thus attacking the enemy's plan, and in so doing is ideally attacking it at points where he sees flaws or weaknesses.

The next step is to begin determining the required intelligence. The commander's priority intelligence requirements (PIRs) will be based on what is not currently known and on what the enemy's decision points are believed to be. The S-2 normally has about a ten-percent knowledge of the enemy and templates the other 90 percent, but it is much easier to confirm a template than to go out and collect intelligence at random.

In other words, the first phase of any operation is intelligence gathering, which needs to be simultaneous with the completion of the staff's planning. The S-2 must immediately begin gathering information and confirming or denying the template, using whatever assets are available. These vary with the level of command but may include long range surveillance detachments, electronic intelligence assets, ground surveillance radar, air cavalry, ground cavalry, a battalion scout platoon, or a company reconnaissance patrol. In the end, as the plan comes together, the goal is to have all of these performing in a synchronized manner, backing each other up.

During the IPB process, the intelligence officer also lays out the enemy's courses of action in terms of time. This allows him to determine whether the enemy has the time, or whether he can take certain actions to create the time, to pursue other options. Once the enemy has been templated and at least his primary courses of action laid out, the commander can then, and only then, start developing his intent and scheme of maneuver for carrying it out.

His intent needs to explain how he plans to overcome that enemy — how he plans to maneuver, where and when he wants to mass, what he needs to do to cause the enemy to be at the place where he wants to mass, how he plans to conduct a deep fight, how he will

conduct his counter-reconnaissance and security missions, and how he will react to the enemy's decisions or actions at different decision points. These considerations, in turn, will lead the commander to plan fires that support and improve upon each portion of the resulting scheme of maneuver.

At this point, it is most critical that the fire support planner and the maneuver planner work together closely. At the brigade level, the commander not only has to worry about moving the artillery so it can support his maneuver, he also needs to establish priorities for targets and fires. In a 30-minute battle, an artillery battalion will be able to fire only three or four missions of 72 rounds each. The commander must therefore determine the three or four most critical fire missions and then make sure they reinforce his vision of the maneuver fight. One technique for doing this is to develop a sequence of fires that complements the scheme of maneuver and that is written in similar timelines.

While considering fires, a planner also needs to determine whether attack helicopters are available and when and where they will be used so that they can be coordinated with artillery and close air support (CAS). The suppression of enemy air defenses (SEAD) also needs to be incorporated into the sequence of fires when CAS or attack helicopters are used. Obviously, timing is critical in this process.

In addition, the electronic warfare and other combat multipliers might be used if they are available. All of this would be shown as simple matrix entries that, in turn, would serve as warning orders to the subordinate units.

Obviously, our own air defense artillery needs to be incorporated into the plan and must be positioned to protect our critical assets, for either the current phase or a subsequent one. In this regard, too, the air defender may be the best source of information the commander has on the actual conduct of the battle. Sitting on the flanks (and sometimes above the battle at the NTC), he can see not only friendly units but enemy units as well and can report the activity he observes.

CORPS CDR'S INTENT		
EVENT/PHASE		
ENEMY SITUATION COURSE OF ACTION		
TRIGGER POINTS FRIENDLY DECISION POINTS ☆ PHASE LINES TAF RAYS ENGAGEMENT AREAS OBJECTIVES EST TIME		
INTEL	ASSETS GSM S LP-DR'S LRSO PATROLS SCOUTS	OBSERVER
	REQUESTS TO DIVISION	CORPS PIR EW EFFORT
MNVR	CONSIDERATIONS: DEEP SECURITY CLOSE REAR RESERVE COUNTER-RECON	
FIRES		FA (DS)
		FA (IR)
		TF MONT CONTROL MEAS
		PRIORITY OF FIRE
		TGT GROUPS EAS
		FASCAM CAS ATK HELD
ADA		PRIORITY PROTECTION
		ALERT WEAPONS STATUS
MOB CMOB SURV		B I (EMDS)
		PRIORITY EFF SLIPP
		SMOKE RECON
		DECON SITES LU POINTS
MOFF LEVEL		
C²		TAC
		MAIN CP
		COMM CP (CENTERS OF GRAV)
CSS		ALOC
		MSHS PRIORITIES REARNT MEDICAL SUPPLY REPLACEMENTS
COORDINATING INSTRUCTIONS		
STAND TO (DTG)		

Figure 2

Figure 3

In the planning process, the employment of engineers — priority of effort, mobility, countermobility, and survivability — needs to be considered. Smoke and decontamination sites also must be considered, and these need to be readily apparent to subordinate units and coordinated with the rest of the plan. Related to this, the commander should anticipate when and where the enemy might use chemical weapons so he can direct the proper levels of MOPP (mission oriented protective posture) at the proper time or in the proper situation. Each of these should then be depicted, by phase, in the matrix.

While sequencing and synchronizing fire, maneuver, air defense, and engineer assets, the staff also needs to synchronize the movement of command and control elements. There are many examples of units that have ended up with all their command posts on the road at one time, which has resulted in the loss, or at least the reduction, of command and control.

Finally, none of these things can happen if the staff has not also planned for, moved, and positioned the combat service support (CSS) assets — fuel and ammunition and whatever else is needed — to support the battle. In fact, the positioning of CSS in both space and time may be a critical part of the commander's vision.

In this process of thinking through and organizing the information displayed on the synchronization matrix, a continual wargaming occurs among the staff members. The following example will help explain the way the matrix is developed and the wargaming involved:

During one warfighter exercise, the brigade was tasked to act as the division

reserve and had two mechanized infantry battalions and one armor battalion for the mission. It was given seven different contingency plans that it might have to execute. The first step in trying to plan in detail for each of these contingencies was to template the enemy. What kind of enemy would we probably fight, and where could we expect him to be?

To answer these questions, the brigade S-2 templated the enemy on a map and then diagrammed on the matrix the enemy's most likely formation. If he or the division G-2 thought we would be fighting the remnants of a regiment, he used a partial regimental symbol. This allowed us to synchronize our battalions' movements and to show the battle or defensive positions they would occupy to counter the anticipated enemy plan.

We showed the enemy and friendly phases of the operation and eventually added our own plans by drawing sketches of the entire sequence of maneuver. These sketches conveyed to the battalion commanders precisely what the brigade commander's intent was and also gave us a focus on the enemy. Because we had templated an enemy force, we could ask the division to focus its resources on confirming the presence of that force, not only its location but also its disposition and strength.

By breaking the battle down into finite phases and then wargaming our way through each little event that had to occur in each phase, we were able to give instructions to the subordinate units in a synchronized, time-related manner. They, in turn, were able to take each of these phases and embellish it, adding the specific subtasks they had

to perform and the subordinate commander's intent. The synchronization that began at brigade level thus flowed, through expansion and increased detail in the orders process, all the way down to company level.

This process — the wargaming and the preparation of the plan, coupled with rehearsals and refinements as the enemy situation becomes clearer — enables us to have all of the appropriate action agents prepared to execute the commander's intent. The matrix is perfect to use in conducting a rehearsal, because it lays out all the small pieces and allows a commander to work with each of the critical players to make sure he understands what he must do and when.

None of this is to argue that any battle will unfold precisely as a staff has envisioned it. The enemy will not necessarily be configured precisely as he has been templated. If enough time is available, a set of matrix entries can be developed for each of the enemy's other options, but only after the staff has planned to deal with the most likely one. The staff can then work through those other options from the most likely to the least likely.

Even if the enemy does not do what the staff members have anticipated, they still have a basic battle plan that can be modified to fit the existing situation. There is no need to start over and build a whole new plan, and this makes synchronizing the actual battle much easier. The commander and the XO always work together to ensure that the staff continues to execute those portions of the plan that have not been changed, and the momentum is maintained. The



XO in the TOC and the commander forward at the critical spot on the battlefield can thus fight a synchronized battle. Since the XO has most of the battle staff in the TOC, he is the one who must ensure that the commander's intent is achieved — that synchronization has occurred.

If it sounds like we think this matrix development process, and the resultant wargaming, is a cure-all, we do not. To make it effective, we spent several months developing and refining the matrix and five months training in its use. (*AUTHOR'S NOTE: Major Steve Bourque translated an idea into the matrix. Captains Stewart Smith, Scott Rutter, and Pete Scheets and the rest of the brigade staff, under the direction of executive officer Lieutenant Colonel Don Schenk, contributed to making the matrix concept meaningful.*)

The next step in our learning process will be to make the matrix a living document. To do this, we will have to learn to do a better job of predicting where the battle will turn — when it will go in a direction we have not anticipated. We will then need to “cut” the matrix and start planning. Given

the size of the brigade staff, doing this while fighting the brigade fight will be difficult, but until we have tried we won't know whether we can do it. If we do master such a process, it will either supplement or replace the standard fragmentary order.

Meanwhile, we have tested this synchronization matrix process at the National Training Center and have found it effective. It is probably most effective at the NTC because of the doctrinal approaches the opposing force follows. Rarely has the staff failed at least to consider most OPFOR options. In each case where we determined the enemy's decision points, and therefore which course of action we would adopt if he made a certain decision, we found this method effective. We moved our forces on the basis of the time and distance factors and the decision points in the matrix, and these moves resulted from the fact that the enemy actually performed as we had templated and predicted.

Additionally, artillery was moved and sequences were fired entirely on the basis of the wargaming and the times entered on the synchronization matrix.

This was done along with closely coordinating our air support, attack helicopter, and electronic warfare assets. In several instances, the brigade was able to fight the deep fight and then reposition the artillery so that it was prepared for the close-in fight. The hand-off of the battle to the forward battalions also took place as planned and as depicted in the matrix.

Obviously, the key part of any battle is seizing or maintaining the momentum so as to destroy the enemy, and this process allows us to do that. It may not work for every unit, but we believe it is at least worthy of consideration.

Colonel Bruce B.G. Clarke commanded the 2d Brigade, 1st Infantry Division when this article was prepared. Commissioned in Armor branch from the United States Military Academy in 1965, he now serves as an instructor at the Army War College.

Captain Steven S. Klement was assistant S-3 of the 2d Brigade, 1st Infantry Division when this article was prepared. He was commissioned in Armor from the United States Military Academy in 1985 and served as platoon leader, battalion assistant S-3, and armor company executive officer with 4th Battalion, 66th Armor in Germany.

Individual Protection Kit

LIEUTENANT KEVIN M. WALKER

During a two-week training period in 1987, units of the 2d Battalion, 293d Infantry, Indiana Army National Guard, and the British 6th Battalion, Royal Anglican Regiment, Territorial Army, conducted an exchange program to promote inter-allied cooperation and understanding.

A reinforced British company plus scout (recce) platoon was sent to a U.S. reserve forces training area in Indiana,

while one rifle company of the National Guard battalion was sent to the United Kingdom. The exchanged units replaced each other in their parent battalions, assuming control of the units' organic equipment and weapons. The men of each company retained their individual organizational item issues (“TA-50” in U.S. jargon).

One item of British equipment that gained our interest was the KIP (kit,

individual protection), a lightweight support system for providing overhead cover for an individual fighting position. The kit enables a British soldier to erect effective overhead cover rapidly without logs or engineer support, and in less time. It comes sealed in a pouch smaller than an MRE (*meal, ready to eat*) and is issued on the basis of one per man.

With the present emphasis on light, mobile, self-sustaining units, the intro-