

PROFESSIONAL FORUM



Reconnaissance and Targeting A Formal Approach

CAPTAIN JOHN W. CHARLTON

Reconnaissance and targeting operations must be carefully planned, coordinated, and monitored. At division or corps level, there is a targeting team, made up of several staff officers and noncommissioned officers, to take care of these tasks. Each of the team members has specific duties and responsibilities, and the team uses a formal approach to identifying, prioritizing, and delivering combat power against high-payoff targets. The G-2 operations staff and the collection managers carefully monitor these operations.

At battalion level, however, no organization or element is specifically tasked with these planning, coordinating, and monitoring functions. Because this responsibility often rests solely with the S-2, many battalions fail in this area. And since the battalion staff does not fully participate in the reconnaissance and targeting effort, these operations are seldom adequately resourced or synchronized. As a result, many battalions do not use their collection assets or use them ineffectively at best.

Field Manual 6-20-10, *Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures for the Targeting Process*, briefly discusses battalion task force targeting, but it does not provide enough information on the

mechanics of the process at battalion level. Neither does it cover the synchronization of targeting with the overall reconnaissance and surveillance plan or thoroughly explain the duties and responsibilities that would apply to each member of a battalion targeting team.

A Joint Readiness Training Center (JRTC) example will illustrate these problems:

The battalion must conduct a night attack against a fortified enemy position in 48 hours. The commander has little information on enemy composition, disposition, or strength. He wants the scout platoon inserted immediately to gather information on the objective. The S-2, who also has little information, can only give the scout platoon leader a hasty doctrinal template of the way he believes the enemy will defend.

The scout platoon leader begins his planning. But he cannot complete much of his coordination for fire support and casualty evacuation, because the staff is busy preparing for the battalion operations order (OPORD). He leaves his support requests with the battle captain, hoping they will end up with the right people.

The scout platoon sergeant tries to find trucks to move the platoon to the

forward edge of the battle area where they will dismount and move by foot to the objective area. He cannot get the support platoon leader on the radio and ends up using engineer HMMWVs (high-mobility multipurpose wheeled vehicles) for transportation.

Meanwhile, the platoon leader issues his squad leaders an incomplete fragmentary order (FRAGO), promising to get them more information on fire support, casualty evacuation, and resupply by radio once they are in their squad objective rally points. The platoon leader tells them to brief their squads quickly, because the battalion commander wants them to infiltrate before the enemy has time to establish his defense. By the time they have removed the canvas from the back of the engineer HMMWVs and briefed the drivers on the route, the platoon has missed its departure time.

Then the S-2 and the fire support officer (FSO) say they have a Marine firepower control team and a brigade ground surveillance radar team that they want to infiltrate with the scouts. These teams have the mission of finding the enemy's reserve element and then destroying it using naval gunfire. The scouts will help the teams get to their objective areas. Once in position, all

elements will have to coordinate their activities with one another. Finally, after a two-hour delay, they all begin their infiltration to the objective area.

Units at the JRTC repeat such scenarios with disturbing regularity. Sadly, the result is often the complete destruction of the battalion's reconnaissance and target acquisition assets. The battalion makes the problem worse by failing to attack high priority targets and by assaulting without adequate information on the enemy objective, which leads to heavy losses.

A battalion staff needs to develop a special cell that plans and coordinates reconnaissance and targeting operations at the same time the staff is planning for the unit's primary mission. This staff cell, which can be called the reconnaissance and targeting team (RTT), must have a formal approach to planning and monitoring these operations, and its members must fully understand their duties and responsibilities.

Along with the battalion commander, the S-3 and the FSO are usually too heavily involved in planning for the battalion's primary mission to give the reconnaissance and targeting effort their full attention. The S-3 and the

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FSO are therefore only part-time members of the RTT.

During the staff planning process, the S-3, FSO, and S-2 develop the initial attack guidance matrix and collection plan as part of the wargaming process. They pass this information to the RTT, which coordinates and refines the plan. Battalion reconnaissance and targeting operations are better planned and resourced because the responsibility for

them is given to a specific coordinating element.

At the same time, the team members support the overall plan by performing their routine staff functions. Their activities complement the battalion plan by seeing that reconnaissance and targeting activities are fully coordinated and synchronized with the commander's scheme of maneuver.

The RTT consists of the following members:

Battalion XO. The battalion XO leads the RTT. He has the experience needed to insure the coordination of staff actions. He also has the vested authority to make decisions, which allows the targeting effort to continue even when the commander is not available. The XO gives the RTT additional guidance that will help meet the priority information requirements (PIRs) and identify high-payoff targets.

Battalion S-2. As the collection manager for the RTT, the S-2 coordinates reconnaissance and target acquisition activities by developing the battalion collection plan on the basis of the information requirements. He determines the appropriate collection strategy for answering the requirements and recommends high-value targets. During the wargaming process, the S-2 helps develop high-payoff targets (HPTs) by playing the role of the enemy commander and fighting the most probable enemy course of action (COA). The S-2 also provides an initial event template for the units tasked with conducting reconnaissance and target acquisition to assist them with their missions. Finally, he requests any non-organic assets needed to support his collection plan.

Battalion fire support NCO (FSNCO). The FSNCO, with guidance from the FSO, is responsible for coordinating fires to support reconnaissance and target acquisition units during their infiltration and actions at the objective area. This lets the FSO concentrate on the battalion's overall fire support plan. The FSNCO also coordinates the movement of fire support assets to support reconnaissance and targeting activities. Finally, he works with the rest of the

targeting team in updating and refining the attack guidance.

Air Force liaison officer (ALO) or enlisted tactical air controller (ETAC). Either the ALO or the ETAC provides expertise on the employment of Air Force assets in support of the reconnaissance and targeting plan. He determines which targets the unit can attack with close air support (CAS) or interdiction and integrates his recommendations into the attack guidance matrix and the targeting team FRAGO.

Supporting arms liaison team (SALT) members. The SALT members work with the FSNCO and the rest of the targeting team by planning, coordinating, and executing naval gunfire missions in support of the RTT plan. They determine which targets the units can attack with naval gunfire and then integrate their recommendations into the attack guidance.

Assistant S-3 Air. The S-3 Air is the RTT's maneuver representative. He takes guidance from the S-3 and makes sure the RTT plan fully supports the friendly maneuver plan. He also coordinates the air movement of collection assets into the objective area. In the absence of an Army aviation liaison officer, the S-3 Air coordinates and monitors attack helicopter operations in support of the reconnaissance and targeting plan. Finally, he is responsible for drafting FRAGOs that implement the RTT plan.

Battalion signal officer. The signal officer coordinates communication support for the reconnaissance and targeting plan. This includes establishing communications procedures and positioning communications assets to support the operation.

Headquarters and headquarters company (HHC) XO. The HHC XO coordinates casualty evacuation, ground transportation, and logistical support for RTT operations. He is ideally suited for this task because he is familiar with the battalion's logistic, medical, and transportation system. In addition, he is often located at the battalion tactical operations center (TOC), where he can easily keep abreast of other RTT planning activities. Using

the HHC XO in this capacity leaves the battalion S-4, S-1, and medical platoon leader free to concentrate on the overall logistic and medical plan.

Scout platoon leader (or platoon sergeant). The scout platoon leader provides information on scout capabilities and limitations. This helps prevent the scouts from being misused or

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over-tasked. If his scouts have been in the area during previous missions, he can also provide detailed information on the terrain in the battalion area of operations.

The Planning Process

As with any mission, the commander must give the staff members guidance that will help them develop a plan. For reconnaissance and targeting missions, this guidance takes the form of "risk acceptance," or how much risk the commander wants units to take in gathering information. The commander's planning guidance should provide a focus for the reconnaissance and targeting effort, help determine what targets they should consider high-payoff, and help the S-2 develop the battalion PIRs.

The reconnaissance and targeting process should answer four basic questions:

What targets should we acquire and attack, and what other critical information do we need about the enemy to complete our mission successfully?

The wargaming process determines which high-value targets will emerge as high-payoff targets. The S-2 begins the process by matching the enemy's most probable COA against the friendly plan. The enemy will react to the friendly COA and commit certain of his high-value targets to defeat our forces. Those

high-value targets are our high-payoff targets because, if we attack them, our chances of success greatly increase. Our reaction to the enemy high-value target, stated in targeting terms, is an attack against a high-payoff target. When determining which targets to attack, the RTT must consider the enemy's COA in relation to the friendly plan.

The S-2's recommended PIRs may include the location of high-payoff targets as well as other aspects of the enemy and terrain. The PIRs complement the commander's guidance to the RTT by establishing a focus for the collection effort. The S-2 must develop specific information requirements for each PIR and HPT, because these are the specific indicators that the collection assets will look for and report. The S-2 analyzes these reports to answer his PIRs and determine the location of HPTs.

When should we acquire and attack these targets? This answer to this question is also largely a product of the wargaming process. We know when friendly action will occur and, on the basis of that and our knowledge of enemy tactics, we can begin to determine when to attack HPTs. The RTT

presents this information in the decision support template and the attack guidance matrix. In some cases, the availability of resources may determine the time when we attack targets. For example, Air Force aircraft may attack certain targets on the first CAS cycle after a collection asset detects them.

Sometimes, the RTT will have great difficulty timing attacks against high-payoff targets. For example, attacking a major enemy cache during a low-intensity conflict may be difficult to time because the unit is not sure when and where they will find the target. In this case, the RTT must have a flexible plan that allows the task force commander to shift collection and attack assets quickly and focus on targets that may suddenly emerge on the battlefield. The RTT should never forget that attacks against HPTs are not random, but must be synchronized with the overall scheme of maneuver.

What assets do we use to attack the target? The objectives of the targeting process are to disrupt, delay, and limit enemy capabilities that could greatly interfere with our ability to accomplish our mission. The RTT must decide the exact effects to be rendered against a

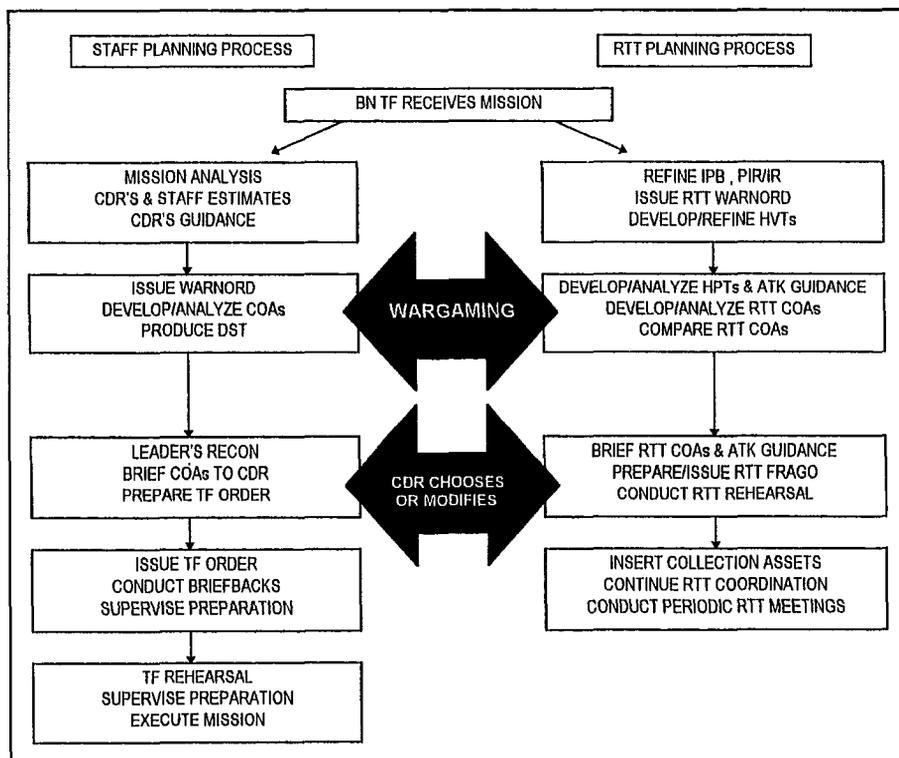


Figure 1. Comparison of Staff Planning Process and RTT Planning.

target and also the best asset to be used in meeting these targeting objectives. This process involves all members of the RTT, because the team can use any number of assets to attack a target.

The following are some examples of ways to attack different targets:

- Jam an enemy command frequency to disrupt his attack.
- Use smoke to obscure enemy observation of a friendly maneuver.
- Fix an enemy counterattack force with direct fire from a maneuver element.
- Direct CAS against an enemy logistics cache.

These examples also point out that *attacking* targets may not mean *destroying* them. Units should attack targets only to the degree necessary to achieve the targeting objectives. Anything more wastes assets.

What resources do we need to support the reconnaissance and targeting plan? This category includes collection assets required by the RTT plan and such resources as transportation, casualty evacuation, and logistics to support them. At the JRTC, units often neglect this planning and coordination requirement. As a result, scouts infiltrate their objective area late, go without water for days, and routinely

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“die of wounds” at the hands of the opposing force.

The RTT also plans for the assets its members will use to attack targets—mortars, artillery, maneuver forces, CAS, and smoke—and must coordinate for any of them that are not organic to the battalion. On the basis of his role within the team, each member of the RTT has some responsibility for coordinating resources to support the plan.

Reconnaissance and targeting planning occurs while the commander and

	Event or Activity	Staff Responsibility
1.	Enemy situation next 48-72 hours	S2
2.	Friendly situation next 48-72 hours including any FRAGOs issued	S3 Air
3.	Status of attack missions last 12 hours and next 12 hours	FSNCO/ALO/ETAC
4.	Status of collection activity last 12 hours including significant reports and dissemination	S2/Collection assets representatives
5.	Review PIR and Attack Guidance -- recommend changes	S2
6.	Status of collection asset support including infil, exfil, logistics, casualty evacuation, etc.	S3 Air, HHC XO, BSO,
7.	Update RTT planning and execution guidance	Battalion XO

Figure 2. RTT Meeting Agenda

UNIT: _____

RECON AND TARGETING TEAM EXECUTION MATRIX

PERIOD COVERED: FROM _____ TO _____

PIR / IR	INDICATORS	NAI / TAI	TGT # / PRIORITY	METHOD OF ATK	COLLECTION ASSETS AND LOCATIONS	INFIL DTG / METHOD / LOCATION	TGT DTG	EXFIL DTG / METHOD / LOCATION	REPORT TIMES / METHOD	REMARKS / LOGISTICS

Figure 3. Example Reconnaissance and Targeting Execution Matrix.

staff plan for the battalion’s primary mission (Figure 1). When developing the plan, the team members use many of the products in the standard estimate process, and each produces a staff estimate within his particular area of interest. The team then uses these estimates to formulate, analyze, and compare COAs for reconnaissance and targeting operations. They can apply these same estimates to the COAs for the battalion’s primary mission.

The RTT develops COAs that will focus on answering the battalion task force PIRs and locating and attacking HPTs. The process of wargaming will help the team identify important coordination and resource requirements.

The following are some of the criteria the RTT should use to compare and evaluate their COAs:

- How well the COA meets the commander’s risk acceptance for collection assets and other assets that support the RTT COA.
- How well the COA supports the overall tentative plan.
- How well the COA addresses the PIR and the attack guidance matrix.
- How well the COA supports timely information collection and dissemination.

- How flexible the plan will be in response to changes on the battlefield.

The RTT must brief the battalion commander, the S-3, and the FSO on their recommended reconnaissance and targeting COA. Once the battalion commander has approved or modified the COA, the RTT must draft and publish a FRAGO that formally implements the plan. A matrix format is best suited for RTT FRAGOs, because it is simple and saves time.

One of the most important functions of the FRAGO is that it officially tasks units to support the reconnaissance and targeting missions. This helps insure that RTT units receive proper logistic, transportation, casualty evacuation, and communications support.

The details of the RTT FRAGO are repeated in the battalion OPORD. The decision support template, the synchronization matrix, and the attack guidance matrix also reflect portions of the RTT plan. This helps keep the battalion commander informed of ongoing RTT activities and ties reconnaissance and targeting operations to the battalion’s overall plan.

The RTT members must rehearse their plan, because a rehearsal synchronizes the activities of all recon-

naissance and target acquisition elements. It also helps units understand the RTT plan, the reporting procedures, and the expected locations of other reconnaissance and targeting units on the battlefield. During the rehearsal, unit leaders identify any problems with the plan and with resources. Then the RTT staff can work on solving these problems immediately after the rehearsal.

Reconnaissance and targeting are continuing operations; as the overall plan changes, the RTT plan should change as well, to support it. Certain events on the battlefield may also lead to changes in the RTT plan. For example, a pilot executing a CAS mission in the battalion area of operations may fly over a possible enemy cache site as he is leaving battalion airspace. Then the RTT may decide to shift a collection asset to confirm or deny the target. If they confirm it, the team members may nominate it as a high-payoff target,

which is then plugged into the attack guidance and serviced as part of the updated RTT plan.

To support continuous reconnaissance and targeting operations, the RTT should conduct meetings every 12 hours. During the targeting meeting, the team can refine the current RTT plan, initiate plans for future operations, and monitor the status of current reconnaissance and targeting operations. All members of the RTT must attend these meetings, which should follow a planned agenda (Figure 2).

The members of the team should develop a synchronization or execution matrix for tracking the execution of the RTT plan (Figure 3). They should use this tool to track unit activities, monitor their reporting, check their status, and synchronize their efforts. Finally, the staff should integrate RTT operations into all commander's updates and all TOC shift-change briefings.

The RTT concept recognizes the

need for an element that is tasked with the responsibility for planning and coordinating reconnaissance and targeting. The RTT improves the coordination and synchronization of these activities by spreading the staff work load for them.

This concept formalizes the targeting effort at battalion level and helps insure that the commander's high-payoff targets are quickly identified and attacked. Finally, RTT actions complement the overall battalion scheme of maneuver by providing timely information on the enemy and effectively servicing the high-payoff targets.

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Multipurpose Navigational Aid

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When my battalion of the 24th Infantry Division deployed to the Persian Gulf in August 1990, we were issued LORAN (long-range electronic navigation) devices and global positioning systems (GPSs). These technological wonders revolutionized our operations in numerous ways—in training, preparation, and execution.

We learned early, however, that certain pitfalls awaited the users. Far too often, the key leaders took immediate control of these devices and used them as their personal command and control aids. This kept LORAN and GPS out of the hands of the soldiers and denied

a lot of potential training to those closest to the enemy.

Some leaders became so dependent on their personal locating devices that they hardly knew their own locations without them. They either forgot how to read a map or lost confidence in their personal accuracy. The old map, compass, and pace count or mileage fell by the wayside for many. But there are always times when the satellites required are not available, and this should not be allowed to hinder operations. In short, these devices should augment basic land navigation, not replace it.

A commander who carries a GPS around with him all the time, constantly referencing it, may be tempted to focus on the device instead of on his unit's actions. Although he may know where he is, he will have lost his feel for the battlefield.

I believe a commander should get these devices out first to the fire support officer (FSO) and the platoon leaders, who will be closer to the action. They should also be able to master the devices, develop training based on them, and use them to orient the unit in movement.

Meanwhile, the commander needs to