

# TRAINING NOTES



## The Accelerated Task Force Decision Making Process

CAPTAIN NORBERT B. JOCZ

The military decision making process is hard to execute. Observations at the National Training Center (NTC) suggest that battalion task force staffs have tremendous difficulty in planning, organizing, and issuing a timely and concise order that subordinates understand. The current process focuses on methodology instead of a rapid solution.

Our Army has suffered countless doctrinal gyrations in the form of new acronyms, buzzwords, phrases, and procedures to take us through this lonely process. Through the maze of checklists, we have lost sight of our goal—the rapid defeat of the enemy. The desired process requires discipline in thinking. The procedures and their products are not ends in themselves. The logic followed in the process must be the focus of our efforts.

Information is power. From information we make decisions. Lack of information may result in poor decisions or none at all. Waiting for information delays decisions, and in combat late decisions are usually bad ones. Incomplete information is the environment of war. Understanding this and getting accustomed to a disciplined thought process that guides us will improve our decision making abilities.

As an observer-controller at the NTC, I had an opportunity to see many units

suffering through the decision making process. A trend I observed was that task forces spend too much time producing detailed orders and not enough time supervising the subordinates who will carry out those orders. The process these units follow is inflexible. They rigidly adhere to the specifics of the plan and rarely display flexibility or agility during execution. Their inability to develop timely

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plans and orders results from a misunderstanding of what it takes to defeat the enemy.

General George S. Patton clearly understood the requirements for effective decision making. Some excerpts from his Letter of Instruction Number 1 show his remarkable grasp of the procedures his subordinates should follow in developing and executing orders:

*In carrying out a mission, the promulgation of the order represents not over ten per cent of your responsibility. The remaining ninety per cent consists in assuring by means of personal supervision*

*on the ground, by yourself and your staff, proper and vigorous execution....*

*The order itself will be short, accompanied by a sketch—it tells us what to do, not how....*

*Keep your own orders short; get them out in time; issue them personally by voice when you can. In battle it is always easier for the senior to go up than for the junior to come back for the issuance of orders.*

The accelerated decision making process (Table 1) essentially follows the current process. The major difference is that it does not develop more than one course of action (COA). In addition, the commander is more involved in giving guidance to his staff. The incorporation of the troop-leading procedures must be based on the situation. The process is a guide to organizing a task force staff and developing plans and orders. Time alone dictates what can be done and to what degree of detail.

The following is a summary that explains each step of the accelerated decision making process:

**Receive warning order/mission.** Upon receipt of a warning order (WARNORD), the subordinate unit must also issue one. Staffs must share information with subordinates to provide focus and save time. These actions facilitate parallel planning. Even if the infor-

mation is vague, units can conduct pre-combat checks and inspections to prepare for future operations. In fact, the more detailed the WARNORD, the simpler it is to convey the final plan.

**Develop the time plan.** To improve speed in our operations, we must plan the use of time in detail. The enforcement of this idea gives direction to the staff and the unit. Although the one-third, two-

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thirds rule is an excellent guide, subordinates should be given as much time as possible. Since rapid action gives us the initiative, it is imperative that the commander and staff continually look at the time plan.

**Determine the facts and assumptions.** The purpose of determining facts and assumptions is to prepare a situation update brief to the commander and staff as a part of mission analysis. To begin the analysis of the task force mission, the staff collects information from the brigade operations order (OPORD) and from within the task force.

It is important to remember that the idea is not for the staff to develop a list of facts and assumptions, but to concentrate on discerning the facts that will affect the operation. (Facts are known pieces of information that affect the operation; assumptions are logical predictions of future events. Current task force strength is a fact; the enemy's most likely COA is an assumption.)

**Conduct the intelligence preparation of the battlefield (IPB).** The IPB is a continuing process, constantly updated. As a part of mission analysis, the S-2 must provide information to the staff and commander. As a minimum, he identifies enemy capabilities, strengths, weaknesses, and vulnerabilities. A COA is developed that attacks enemy weaknesses and avoids enemy strengths.

**Conduct the mission analysis.** Developing a time plan, listing facts and as-

sumptions and conducting the IPB process are all part of mission analysis. By reviewing the OPORD from the higher headquarters, each staff section identifies its tasks, restrictions, and constraints. In addition, it identifies information that the staff will need to do its job.

**Brief the mission analysis.** The mission analysis briefing (Table 2) is the distilled presentation of the higher unit's OPORD as it pertains to the task force and the enemy. It enables the commander to identify what he must accomplish. A situation update must be included in the mission analysis briefing. It is a snapshot of the task force's current and predicted strength and capabilities. Don't confuse the issue by separating the briefs; it's all mission analysis. A poor briefing wastes the commander's time. We cannot develop a reasonable plan without a clear understanding of ourselves and the enemy.

**Select COA and issue commander's guidance.** The commander—on the basis of the mission analysis brief and following the troop-leading procedures—can develop a concept of the operation. This is the crucial point in the process. The plan developed by the commander and staff must be simple and realistic. Before he can give any worthwhile guidance, the commander must do his homework well. Based on his concept, he must present his guidance in detail. By following a set procedure (Table 3) in presenting his guidance, he saves time and ensures that enough information is provided. Detail is essential. Generalities confuse the issue and can lead the staff in the wrong direction. Commanders who are detailed and sketch out their concept give their staffs focus.

**Wargame, synchronize, develop decision support template (DST).** Experience at the combat training centers indicate that most task force staffs do not wargame effectively. One reason is that, at the task force level, our current doctrine fails to provide techniques and procedures on how a staff can wargame efficiently with limited time.

The purpose of wargaming is to "fight" the battle before the battle starts. The focus of wargaming is to synchronize all the combat multipliers to defeat the en-

emy. The end products of the wargame are a synchronized plan and a DST. The DST "identifies critical events and threat activities relative to time and location which may require tactical decisions."

There are many techniques for ensuring that the COA wargamed is synchronized. A quick and efficient method at task force level is a synchronization matrix. Critical events are identified and wargamed by battlefield operating system (BOS), with four columns, headed *Action, Reaction, Counteraction, Reaction*.

The box method of wargaming critical events is usually the most time efficient. By focusing the process on a specific area (or box) of the battlefield, it allows the staff to allocate time to wargaming events based on priorities. This requires combat force ratio comparisons by platoon. Tracking enemy and friendly attrition is also important to ensure the attainment and sustainment of the most favorable force ratio. The focus of the wargame is to fight the enemy, not to develop a detailed scheme of maneuver. Many units spend too much time looking at themselves instead of at "fighting."

**Conduct oral OPORD.** Unfortunately, many task force staffs think their ultimate responsibility is to develop and deliver a written product—the OPORD. But the product itself is not the end. The

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focus of the process is a good plan, clearly understood and timely. Lots of paper does not make a good OPORD. Task force OPORDs have become monsters and are often confusing and worthless. If time is short, issue the paper after the briefing. Timely graphics are more valuable.

**Conduct OPORD backbrief.** Backbriefs following the oral OPORD ensure that subordinates understand their mission. But this must be more than a

**ACCELERATED DECISION MAKING PROCESS**

<b>TF PROCESS</b>	<b>TF PRODUCT</b>
Receive WARNORD(s)	WARNORD
Receive Mission	WARNORD
Develop Time Plan	
List Facts and Assumptions	
IPB and Mission Analysis	WARNORD with Time Line
Mission Analysis Brief	
Commander Select COA	WARNORD
Commander's Guidance	
Wargame	
Synchronize	
Develop DST	WARNORD
Oral Order OPORD/Backbrief	

Table 1

**MISSION ANALYSIS BRIEF**

S-2:

**DEFENSE**

- Terrain analysis within TF sector.
- Effects of weather on operations.
- Specified/implied tasks. Restrictions, constraints, requests for information (RFIs).
- Refined situational template (often limited refinement because of time).
  - Avenues of approach (AOAs), mobility corridors.
  - Recon, air, dismounted AOAs.
  - Template possible formation of attack—enemy COAs.
  - Deployment lines/time phase lines.
  - Space between echelons.
  - Artillery ranges, location of regimental artillery group (RAG) and division artillery group (DAG).
  - Landing zones.
  - Use of chemicals, where and when.
- Enemy mission, expected time of attack, reconnaissance time.
- Enemy capabilities, strengths, vulnerabilities, weaknesses.
- Recommended priority intelligence requirements.

**OFFENSE**

Same as for defense except for:

- Refined SITEMP.
  - Motorized rifle company (MRC) and motorized rifle platoon (MRP) locations—by vehicle. Disposition, composition, CSOPs, SOPs, ambush locations.
- Kill sacks.
- Obstacles in sector—disposition, composition.
- Artillery locations and ranges.
- Subsequent enemy locations/positions.
- What is confirmed and templated.
- Use of chemicals, where and when.

XO:

- 2X higher mission.
- Higher mission.
- Specified tasks (for all BOSs).
- Implied tasks (for all BOSs).
- Essential tasks (for all BOSs).
- Restrictions.
- Constraints.
- Requests for information.
- TF mission statement.

S-1:

- Current personnel status.
  - Status of all organic units.
  - Status of attachments.

- Activity of Units: Status of personnel reconstitution.
  - Replacements.
  - Return to duty.
- Forecasted personnel status.
  - Organic unit status at mission time.
  - Attachment status at mission time.

FSO:

- Indirect support.
  - DS Battalion.
  - Number of tubes.
  - Number of mortars.
  - Unit with priority.
- Close air support.
  - Aircraft.
  - Munitions.
  - Limitations of aircraft and weapons.
- Ammunition available.
  - Smoke: length and time.
  - Family of scatterable mines (FASCAM): number, delivery times.
  - Copperhead: number.
  - Dual-purpose improved conventional munitions: effects on templated enemy.
  - High-explosive (HE): effects on templated enemy.
  - Mortar HE: number of rounds, equate to minutes of suppression.
  - Mortar smoke: length and time (currently no 4.2 available).
- Observer status.
  - Fire support vehicles: capabilities of each.
  - Combat observer lasing teams: capabilities of each.
  - Air liaison officer.
- Brigade fire plan.

Engineer:

- Enemy engineer capabilities: equipment and what we can expect to see on the ground.
- Assets available/projected.
  - Squads.
  - Armored combat earthmover/dozer.
  - Plows.
  - Rollers
  - Combat engineer vehicles.
  - AVLBs.
  - AVLMs.
  - Mine clearing line charges.
  - Number of lanes (4mx100m).
  - Volcano/reloads.
  - Modular-packed mine system.
  - Turn minefields (500mx320m).
  - Block minefields (500mx320m).
  - Fix minefields (250mx120m).
  - Disrupt minefields (250mx100m).
  - FASCAM.
- Engineer constraints.
  - Zones (Division).
  - Belts (Brigade).
- Engineer time analysis.
- Recommendation for situational obstacles.
- Recommendation for commanders critical information requirements (CCIRs).

S-4:

- Current vehicle status.
- Forecasted vehicle status.
- Forecasted weapon status
- Supply status.
  - Class I.
  - Class III.
  - Class IV (number dismount positions).
- Transportation assets.

Table 2

**COMMANDER'S GUIDANCE**

- **Enemy courses of action.**
- **Restated mission.**
- **Commander's intent:**
  - **Identification of decisive point.**
  - **Desired effects on the enemy.**
- **Concept of the operation—approved COA.**
- **BOSs.**
- **Deception objective (if applicable).**
- **Priorities—CCIRs.**
- **Approved time plan.**
- **Type of order to issue.**
- **Type of rehearsals to conduct.**

Table 3

repetition of the OPORD. Unit commanders must identify their essential tasks and convey their missions to the task force commander.

In addition to the backbrief, the task force needs to conduct a detailed rehearsal. There are many types of rehearsals and obviously the more detailed the better, depending on the available time. Like the wargame, specific time is allocated to the events identified for rehearsal. The task force commander must prioritize these events and run the rehearsal.

The plan is irrelevant if the situation is not as anticipated. As part of the rehearsal, possible contingencies, as envisioned by the commander, must be addressed. During the execution of the mission, some task forces have a bad habit of fighting the plan instead of the enemy. Adapting to the situation, within the

framework of the intent, must be the common understanding.

The checklists and graphs of a decision making process will not solve our problems. But a reasoned approach to defeating the enemy, along with conveying the concept to our subordinates, will give us the edge. Our only measure is success or failure in battle.

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# Dismounted Infantry Training

## A Mechanized Approach

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Field Manual (FM) 25-101, *Battle Focused Training*, states that "well trained units do not train to 'peak' for selected events or at pre-determined times" but adds that "their proficiency naturally fluctuates as a result of training frequency, leader changes, key personnel turnover, new equipment fielding, and many activities that occur on an installation."

In the Republic of Korea, these observations are particularly accurate. With a hostile enemy within field artillery range, units of the 2d Infantry Division routinely turn over 99 percent of their personnel in one year, and maintaining a well-trained force is extremely challenging. The training program must be simple and efficient and, at the same time, establish continuity for the units' training.

The battle readiness of a mechanized infantry unit must include both mounted and dismounted training. Mounted training, or Bradley gunnery, is a well-established

system for developing crews. Gates and other requirements verify the training level of crews by objectively evaluating their ability to execute particular tasks. An effective dismounted training plan should incorporate many of the same elements. It should be a well-

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established training plan with gates, or requirements, for different levels of training.

A logical basis for this training plan is drill training for the mechanized infantry platoon and squad. Battle drills are the essence of company and platoon training.

The core of small-unit combat skills is the collective ability to execute battle drills to standard. They are in the "must know" category. By executing routine tasks routinely, a unit can maintain a high level of battle readiness. Developing a standardized program of battle drill training will establish a well-defined and structured system similar to Bradley gunnery. Incorporating standard packages of tactical and live-fire scenarios leads to maximum efficiency in training. Much as the unit conduct-of-fire trainer does for Bradley crews, the battle drill training will provide systematic, low-cost training for the dismounted infantry in the squads and platoons.

The most efficient and effective technique of training battle drills must involve performance-oriented training in a lane training format. Using practical application with clear tasks, conditions, and standards results in better understanding