

An Integrated OPORD Technique

Tips on Trimming Crucial Minutes From the Sequential Orders Process

by Major David Callahan

In a time-constrained environment, subordinates often do not have the time to make the necessary links between paragraphs that are required when using the standard sequential method. The standard sequential method requires subordinates to link previously briefed information from paragraphs 1 and 2 to paragraph 3 as it is being briefed and then link information from paragraphs 4 and 5 back to paragraph 3 in order to gain a thorough understanding of the plan. As a result, critical aspects of the OPORD are often overlooked or misunderstood, which results in an unsuccessful mission.

Parallel Planning

To understand the integrated approach, the company-level leader must understand the military decision-making process outlined in *FM 101-5* and the inputs and outputs associated with the process. Understanding this process enables the company leader to recognize opportunities to be proactive in his orders preparation and issuance. For example, in anticipation of a new mission, or after receiving a mission from brigade, the battalion issues a warning order, which generally includes the type of operation, general location, initial timeline, and any movement or reconnaissance to initiate. With this information, the company leader can begin his initial intelligence preparation of the battlefield (IPB), steps 1 and 2 (define battlefield environment and describe battlefield effects), by analyzing the terrain in his expected area of operation, and can begin his initial timeline for the operation. Upon completion of this initial IPB, the leader can issue a warning order, augmented with a sketch, which provides an overview and analysis of the terrain (big picture) using OAKOC (observation and fields of fire, avenues of approach, key terrain, obstacles and movement, and cover and concealment) and the initial timeline. This essentially serves as your terrain information for paragraph 1 of your order. After receipt of the mission the battalion conducts its mission analysis, which yields yet more

valuable information. The key outputs of the battalion mission analysis are the battalion restated mission statement, battalion commander's intent, refined AO, MCOO, projected weather data, BN/TF SITEMP, and updated timeline. With this information, the company commander can continue to refine steps 1 and 2 of his IPB and begin steps 3 and 4, (evaluate the enemy and determine threat courses of action). The company commander can now issue another warning order providing refinements to the terrain, weather data, SITEMP, and sketch of the enemy which the battalion will fight (big picture). This essentially serves as your enemy situation for paragraph 1 of your order.

After mission analysis, the battalion begins to develop courses of action (COA), analyze the courses (wargaming), compare the courses, and ultimately select a COA during COA approval. The key outputs of COA approval useful to the company commander are the refined battalion commander's intent, and battalion COA statement and sketch which provides the bulk of your friendly forces information necessary for paragraph 1 of the order. Task organization is also generally available after COA approval. With this information, the company commander can issue a third warning order which provides the friendly forces (big picture) information.

As you can see, much information is available prior to the issuance of the actual battalion order if you understand the military decision-making process and take advantage of the incremental outputs throughout its process, rather than waiting until the entire battalion order is issued to begin your orders process. Better yet, you will be better prepared to conduct your METT-T analysis as you determine your restated mission statement and make your tentative plan. In addition, your subordinates will come to the company OPORD with a better understanding of the terrain, enemy and friendly big picture.

Visualization

Visualization at the company level is a prerequisite for success. Proper visualization is often the determining factor in creating a clear, lasting picture of the terrain, enemy, and friendly actions in the minds of your subordinates. Visualization begins with the first warning order and continues throughout the operation. The key to effective visualization is much like the order itself: keep your visualization products clear, concise and thorough. Although your map is necessary for planning and execution, it often is not the best visualization choice due to its small scale. An enlarged sketch often works well for briefing purposes.

For the armor and mechanized force, a Plexiglas battle board (18" x 24") works well as an all-purpose visualization tool. One side of the board has your operational map and graphics and the other side is used for drawing your sketches. Other techniques to assist in your visualization include butcher paper, chalk sketches on the side of a vehicle, or a terrain model. All these techniques and more are useful, but the battle board sketch map technique has multiple advantages and is extremely versatile for an orders group of 6-8 personnel.

As with planning, it is essential that you visualize the terrain and enemy before you can visualize yourself. Your sketches, therefore, should coincide with your warning orders, as discussed earlier. Your first sketch should include the major aspects of the terrain (big picture), which you will address during your terrain and weather analysis using OAKOC. During your second warning order, when you discuss the enemy situation (big picture), you can create a sketch from the SITEMP right on the terrain which you previously used in your first warning order. Another technique is to sketch the enemy on a piece of acetate and place the acetate over the existing terrain sketch. This is a good time to discuss the enemy the battalion will fight (big picture) to include: overview, disposition, composi-

tion, most probable and dangerous COA and applicable forms of contact (visual, direct, indirect, air, obstacles, chemicals, EW). A plus to this technique is that subordinates can now visualize the enemy in relation to the terrain.

During your third warning order, when you discuss the friendly situation (big picture), you can sketch the friendly forces right over the terrain and enemy sketch or use another piece of acetate to visualize the friendly forces scheme of maneuver (big picture). Another technique is to create unit markers (Post-its) to assist in visualizing the scheme of maneuver without cluttering the other sketches. This is a good time to discuss the battalion mission, battalion commander's intent and battalion concept of the operation (friendly big picture). As you brief the battalion concept, to include task and purpose for each subordinate element, you can naturally include the task and purpose of adjacent and supporting units. This friendly visualization in relation to the terrain and enemy will assist in developing a clear mental picture of the operation in the minds of your subordinates. You have just briefed and visualized paragraph 1 of your order through a series of warning orders using the back of your battle board. When necessary you can turn the battle board over to refer to your map and graphics for clarity, but keep in mind how difficult it is to read a 1:50 map with graphics, even from a short distance.

Although a commander can begin to create a tentative plan after he receives the battalion COA sketch and statement, he requires additional guidance, or the completed order itself, to complete paragraphs 2 through 5. Upon completion of your mission analysis, issue another warning order to provide your subordinates with the company's restated mission and your intent to facilitate their parallel planning.

The execution paragraph consumes the majority of the commander's time during planning and preparation of an order. Using the parallel planning process discussed earlier pays big dividends during the development and preparation of paragraph 3, because you already have an understanding of the terrain, enemy, and friendly big picture and can concentrate on developing the company fight. Now it's time to get down to the details required for company level operations (little picture).

Once you have developed your concept, determine critical events that require de-

tailed explanation and create phases associated with the critical events. This next step is the most critical element of preparing and issuing an integrated combat order. Create a series of sketches for each phase of the operation. When creating the sketches for the company fight (little picture), use the similar approach discussed earlier, which began with a terrain sketch, followed by an enemy sketch, then a friendly sketch. It is recommended that you erase the (big picture) sketches from the back of your battle board and divide your battle board into quarters. Each quarter should be sufficient to visualize key elements for each phase of the operation. If you have more than four phases, you can use a piece of laminated butcher paper. Each sketch should be self-sufficient and assist in visualizing the terrain, enemy, and friendly actions. Begin by sketching key aspects of the terrain, for each specific phase, which you determine will assist in the visualizing the terrain's effects (little picture). Again, use OAKOC as it applies to verbally reinforce the sketch. After visualizing the terrain, sketch the enemy over the terrain or sketch the enemy on a piece of acetate which can be placed over the terrain sketch. This is a good time to discuss the enemy the company will fight (little picture) to include: disposition, composition, most probable and dangerous COA and applicable forms of contact (visual, direct, indirect, air, obstacles, chemicals, EW). A plus to this technique is that subordinates can now visualize the enemy in relation to the terrain. Next, sketch company actions and graphics (friendly little picture) over the terrain and enemy sketch. If it appears that the sketch is too busy, remember you can use Post-its to visualize friendly or enemy forces. This is a good time to discuss the company mission, your intent and the concept of the operation (friendly little picture). You can refer to each sketch as you give an overview of the various elements of each phase. As you brief the company concept, highlight any decisive points throughout the operation, identify main and supporting efforts, and include the task and purpose for each subordinate element. This friendly visualization in relation to the terrain and enemy will assist in developing a clear mental picture of the company fight in the minds of your subordinates. For each phase use the following integrated format to assist you in visualizing how the fight will unfold. The bottom line is, if it's important enough to discuss, have it on the sketch, and if important enough to have on the sketch, reinforce it verbally.

Integrated Format

- 1) Terrain (Little picture, "CO/TM" OAKOC) * Big picture "TF" OAKOC covered in W.O. #1
- 2) Enemy (Little picture disposition, MPCOA/MDCOA, "Forms of Contact" for enemy CO/TM is fighting) * Overview, composition and enemy TF is fighting was covered in W.O. #2
- 3) Maneuver (Little picture, CO/TM concept, decisive point, ME/SEs, T/P for each platoon) * Big picture friendly forces missions and TF concept covered in W.O. #3
- 4) Fires (EFSTs)
- 5) Recon and surveillance (Locations, T/P)
- 6) Engineer (Locations, POE/POS, T/P)
- 7) Air Defense (Locations, POP, T/P)
- 8) Service Support (Locations, 35 MMD or FFAMMS)
- 9) Command & Signal (Locations, Cdr's, TOC, CP, visual and pyrotechnic signals, code words)

Use the same format for each sketch, and after the last sketch, you can complete essential elements of paragraphs which did not complement the visualization process. Such elements include various parts of coordinating instructions, succession of command, etc.

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