
**UNITED STATES MARINE
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MARINE CORPS TRAINING
COMMAND CAMP BARRETT,
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**TACTICAL PLANNING
PROCESS I
B2B0255XQ
STUDENT HANDOUT**

Tactical Planning

Introduction and Importance

The expectation of a Marine Officer is to decide, communicate, and act in the fog of war. If war is a time-competitive environment characterized by uncertainty and disorder, then the commander's ability to make reasonably correct deductions and decisions in time is the goal of any officer. Tactical planning is an attempt to influence the future to develop advantages over the enemy.

Prerequisites

MCDP 1 Warfighting, introduced the nature of war as inherently violent and chaotic. Warfighting is the doctrinal foundation for the Marine Corps as a Maneuver Warfighting force.

MCDP 1-3 Tactics introduces the art and science of winning engagements and battles and the six Tactical Tenants. MCDP 1-3 Tactics defines to the concepts and methods we use to accomplish a particular objective.

In **Decision Making**, you learned the importance of decisiveness in a time-compressed environment. This was illustrated by the Boyd Cycle in which increased tempo in a decision-making feedback loop creates increased tempo in action. You also learned that as a leader and a Warfighter, you must be comfortable with making reasonable assumptions to drive operations quickly in environments of uncertainty. A reasonably correct decision, executed violently and quickly, is the "70% Solution" that grants us an advantage over our enemy in time. You learned the strengths and weaknesses of *analytical* decision making and *recognition-primed* decision making and how to apply them at all stages of an operation to create adaptability. In this lesson we focus on analytical decision making.

Tactical Planning (Continued)

In This Lesson We will discuss the six Troop-Leading Steps (BAMCIS), the Tactical Planning Process, and its relation to your mission planning.

Student Requirements This lesson covers the following topics:

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Learning Objectives

Terminal Learning Objective TBS-OFF-2102 Given a mission, implement Marine Corps Warfighting concepts to accomplish the mission.

TBS-PAT-2002 Given a unit with or without attachments, a mission with commander's intent, paper, and pen, write a combat order to support the achievement of higher headquarters intent.

TBS-C2-1002 Given subordinate units and an order, while considering the situation and time available, issue a five paragraph order to communicate a complete, realistic, and tactically sound plan that accomplishes the mission.

Enabling Learning Objectives TBS-C2-1001a Given a mission from higher, develop an initial estimate of the situation to publish a warning order.

Learning Objectives (Continued)

- Enabling Learning Objectives (Continued)**
- TBS-C2-1002c Given an order from higher, conduct a map reconnaissance in accordance with the troop leading steps.
- TBS-OFF-2102k Given a mission and commander's intent, develop a mental estimate of the situation using METT-TC to accomplish the mission.
- TBS-PAT-2002c Given a unit, a mission with a commander's intent, and with supporting and attached units, determine Higher, Adjacent and Supporting (HAS) to accomplish the mission and meet the commander's intent.
- TBS-PAT-2002e Given an order from higher and a mental estimate of the situation, develop a scheme of maneuver to accomplish the mission.
- TBS-PAT-2002k Given an evaluation, write the troop leading steps without omission. (TBS-PAT-2002k)

Troop Leading Steps (BAMCIS)

The Troop Leading Steps (TLS) comprise a series of actions that help commanders utilize time effectively and efficiently to issue orders and execute tactical operations. The TLS are not a hard and fast set of rules. Some actions may be performed simultaneously or in an order different than listed below. In combat, both time and the enemy have a vote. A leader will rarely have enough time to go through each step in detail. All steps should be done, even if only in abbreviated fashion. Leaders will continuously update their estimates throughout the preparation phase and adjust their plans as appropriate. As such, these steps are designed to help a commander develop and issue a combat order in time.

Troop Leading Steps

1. **Begin Planning**
 2. **Arrange Reconnaissance and Coordination**
 3. **Make Reconnaissance**
 4. **Complete the Plan**
 5. **Issue the Order**
 6. **Supervise**
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Six Troop Leading Steps (Continued)

Begin Planning

The receipt of a MISSION triggers the Troop Leading Steps. The mission will be received in the form of a Warning Order, Operation Order, or Fragmentary Order.

1. Receive Mission

- a. Assess available TIME
 - i. How long until you have to execute?
 - ii. How much TIME do you have to prepare?
 1. Planning Time (yourself and your subordinates)
 2. Continuing actions/prep for combat
- b. Generate initial TIMELINE
- c. Begin Preliminary Estimate of the Situation
 - i. This preliminary METT-TC is not detailed
 - ii. Goal is to produce a Warning Order – a “preliminary notice of action”
 - iii. Develop an initial Course of Action – this will be refined through detailed planning/analysis. You want your subordinates to understand the basics of the operation.

2. Warning Order Issue – *Preliminary Notice of Action*

- a. Issued immediately upon receipt of mission to subordinates to aid in their planning and preparation.
- b. Include, a minimum, the same elements given to you in higher’s WARNO/OPORD/FRAGO. It should state:
 - i. Your mission
 - ii. What you KNOW about the enemy
 - iii. How you tie into higher’s plan
 - iv. Task Organization
 - v. Any relevant specific instructions
- c. Issue WARNO face-to-face or post, time permitting. Use terrain model, sketch or map if practical.

3. Make a Tentative Plan – Goal is to answer three questions: What do I KNOW, What do I THINK, and What am I going to DO.

- a. Update/Continue Estimate of the Situation – METT-TC (Covered in detail below)
 - i. Mission
 - ii. Enemy
 - iii. Terrain/Weather
 - iv. Troops and Fire Support Available
 - v. Time/Space/Logistics
 - vi. Civilian Considerations
 - b. EMLCOA -> CG/CV/EX -> SOM -> FSP -> TASKS
 - c. Develop Requests for Information (RFI) for Higher, Adjacent, and Supporting elements and for your
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reconnaissance effort. *What ASSUMPTIONS have I made about the situation that need to be confirmed by reconnaissance?*

OUTPUT/ACTION: WARNO issued to subordinates

Arrange Reconnaissance and Coordination

This step is not simply about reconnaissance. **IT ACCOUNTS FOR ALL THE COORDINATION REQUIRED TO EXECUTE YOUR MISSION.** Coordination is a concurrent action used to generate tempo. Based upon initial planning and time analysis, complete arrangements for the following:

1. Movement of Unit

- a. Does your unit need to move to a new location before commencing mission?
 - i. A new Assembly Area or to an Attack Position/Line of Departure?
 - ii. How long will it take to move across terrain, in trucks, via air assets, etc.?
- b. Initiate any movement necessary to continue mission preparation or to posture unit for the start of the mission.
- c. Movement can be completed at any time during the Troop Leading Steps

2. **Reconnaissance** – the nature and type of recon conducted must be evaluated by the amount of **information** needed, the **risk** to leaders conducting the recon, and **time** available. Use the RFI's from "Make a Tentative Plan", submit to higher or work with recon unit to collect information. Transmit assumptions from METT-TC to whoever is conducting recon – these become Priorities of Reconnaissance.

- a. Map/Image/Other patrols or units
 - i. Intelligence Officer – S2
 - ii. Combat Operations Center (COC)
 - iii. Past patrol or unit actions in the area
- b. Physical Recon
 - i. Weigh Risk/Reward of physical recon
 1. Leader's Reconnaissance – insert, route, coordination, time
 2. Recon led by subordinate or adjacent units
 3. Other available assets – Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS), Intelligence, Surveillance & Reconnaissance (ISR)

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- ii. Include subordinate leadership in recon effort – this includes any non-physical recon
3. **Coordinate the Issuance of 5 Paragraph Order** – Asses time/space available to issue your complete order to your unit.
 - i. When will you issue the order?
 - ii. Where will you issue the order?
 - iii. Who will be present for the order?
 4. **Coordination** – who/what you need to execute the mission. If you have a MG squad attached or have 81mm Mortar Platoon in support, you must coordinate with them prior to execution.
 - i. Higher
 - ii. Adjacent
 - iii. Supporting

OUTPUT/ACTION: Coordination complete

Make Reconnaissance

The leader now acts to answer questions and validate any assumptions based on priorities of reconnaissance and the time available.

1. Confirm Information Requirements
 - a. Confirm/Deny **ENEMY** assumptions
 - b. Confirm/Deny **TERRAIN** assumptions
 - c. Confirm/Deny **Scheme of Maneuver**
2. Update Estimate of the Situation (METT-TC)
 - a. Terrain Focus – confirm or deny terrain assumptions
 - i. Visibility
 - ii. Rate of March – **time**
 - iii. OCOKA-W
 - b. Enemy Composition/Disposition/Strength
3. Refine EMLCOA
 - a. Adjust Scheme of Maneuver and Tasks as required
 - b. Refine or expand EMLCOA or EN Caps/Lims based upon identified EN gaps
 - c. “Eyes on” if prudent – every effort should be made to conduct a physical leaders recon

OUTPUT/ACTION: Recon Complete. METT-TC, EMLCOA, SOM updated

Complete the Plan The unit leader must now take the information gained during the reconnaissance and validate his initial plan made during Begin the Planning. A common problem occurs when leaders receive updated information that conflicts with their previous analysis or established plan, but fail to update their METT-TC or amend their scheme of maneuver.

1. Expand or Refine initial/tentative plan
 - a. Inputs from recon, subordinate recommendations or additional information received
 - b. METT-TC refined/expanded
2. Prepare and submit map overlays; refine target lists, check points, and TCMs
3. Conduct final coordination with higher/adjacent/support as required
4. Prepare briefing site and resources (terrain model, sketch, map)

OUTPUT/ACTION: Five Paragraph Order Complete. Briefing site (i.e. terrain model) prepared.
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Issue the order Verbally issue a five paragraph order or FRAGO.

Supervise This final step is crucial; after issuing the Five Paragraph Order, the commander and his subordinate leaders must ensure that the required tasks are completed in a timely manner prior to mission execution. Understanding TIME is critical.

1. Conduct back briefs, rehearsals and inspections
2. Ensure the second in command in each element is prepared to execute in his leader's absence
3. Listen to subordinate orders (if applicable)
4. Observe rehearsals
5. Pre-Combat Checks/Pre-Combat Inspections
6. Local security (continuous)
7. Comm. Checks

OUTPUT/ACTION: Continuous until mission accomplishment or new tasking

Tactical Planning Process: METT-TC

Upon receipt of an order leaders must begin tactical planning. This process begins with a detailed analysis of the situation, or Estimate of the Situation (METT-TC). Using the details of that estimate, the leader determines the Enemy's Most Likely Course Of Action (EMLCOA). Determining what the enemy will do enables the commander to identify the enemy's center of gravity (CG), critical vulnerability (CV), and the Exploitation Plan (EXP). The Exploitation Plan determines the development of the Scheme Of Maneuver (SOM), a Fire Support Plan (FSP) that supports the SOM, and Tasks given to subordinates to execute the SOM. The below flow chart that reflects the Tactical Planning Process. Its relation to the orders process is graphically displayed in Appendix A of this handout.

**METT-TC → EMLCOA → CG/CV/EXP → SOM
→ FSP → Tasks**

Estimate of the Situation: METT-TC

Estimate of the Situation, denoted by the acronym METT-TC, is simply mission analysis. It is a continuous, cyclic, process during the course of an operation and is a critical responsibility of the commander. A platoon commander must analyze all factors of METT-TC in as much depth as time and quality of information will allow. The factors in METT-TC are not always analyzed sequentially. The goal is to make reasonable deductions. More importantly, analysis never ends – inputs and feedback aid essential refinements in mission analysis. This ultimately prepares the commander and his/her unit to make the appropriate decision efficiently. METT-TC begins upon receipt of mission, in the Begin the Planning step of BAMCIS but it does not end until the mission is complete. The goal is to arrive at the best answer in the least time possible in order to generate advantage over the enemy.

Mission:

Taken directly from higher's tasking of your unit, analysis should also account for higher's Commander's Intent, Scheme of Maneuver and coordinating instructions. To fully understand how your unit fits within the larger picture, it is helpful to sketch or draw out higher's SOM and to understand adjacent and supporting units. Always think two-levels up – meaning if you are a platoon commander, your analysis must take into consideration how your mission integrates with the company, and how the company's mission integrates with the battalion.

1. Task Analysis

- a. Identify the Tactical Task – know the definition from MCDP 1-0 Appendix C and other doctrinal publications

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- b. Identify the Specified Tasks – These are tasks specifically assigned to a unit by the commander. As a platoon commander, you will look toward paragraph 2 and 3 of your company commander’s operation order to analyze your specified task.
 - c. Identify all Implied Tasks - These are tasks that must be performed to accomplish a specified task, but which are not stated in the higher’s order. Implied tasks are derived from detailed analysis of the OPORD, Commander’s Intent two levels up, the enemy situation, your tentative scheme of maneuver, and the terrain.
2. **Purpose Analysis**
- a. Understanding the “why” – commander’s intent, or reason for the task.
 - b. The “why” enables a commander to make adjustments to his plan as the situation changes while still accomplishing the mission
 - c. Analyzing the purpose enables the leader to exercise judgment and initiative – “to depart from the original plan when the unforeseen occurs” MCDP 1.

Enemy

The objective of enemy analysis is to understand the enemy system. We must account for how the enemy will use each element of his combat power. The purpose is to identify the enemy’s strengths and potential weaknesses or vulnerabilities so we can exploit them. Pay close attention to the analysis provided by higher and account for it in your planning. From there, identifying what you KNOW about the enemy will allow you to identify what you THINK they will do. This analysis will enable you to generate an EMLCOA and the CG/CV/EXP.

1. **Composition, Disposition, Strengths.** Generally delivered as SALUTE – Size, Activity, Location, Unit, Time and Equipment. These are facts; this is what you KNOW from higher’s order. Focus on the enemy you will encounter – the enemy you are tasked with confronting.
 - a. *Composition* – analysis must determine the number and types of enemy vehicles, soldiers and equipment that could be used against friendly forces. Analysis must also examine how the enemy organizes for combat.
 - b. *Disposition* - Identify how the enemy is arrayed
 - c. *Strengths* – Determine the actual numbers of equipment and personnel that the enemy possess.
 - i. Understand the facts you are citing – it is not enough to list that the enemy “has AK-47s and RPGs”. Stating that the enemy has “AK-47s capable of accurate fire to 400 meters, and RPG-7’s capable of accurate fires at 300 meters” is far more impactful for your analysis.
 2. **Capabilities and Limitations.** Answers the question, “Under what conditions can the enemy...?” Determine what the enemy is capable of doing against us during the mission and what they would have trouble doing due to their limitations.
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- a. *DRAW-D* – Under what specific conditions does the enemy have the ability or inability to Defend, Reinforce, Attack, Withdraw or Delay?
 - b. *Example Questions to ask:*
 - i. How does the enemy’s composition/disposition/strength affect his ability to defend?
 - ii. Under what conditions will he call for or be reinforced? How long will it take? How large will the reinforcing element be? What conditions will limit the reinforcement?
 - iii. What enemy assets enable him to delay our movement?
 - c. These initial assumptions about the enemy will be supported by the rest of METT-TC and will be the basis of your prediction of the enemy’s action, or EMLCOA

Terrain and Weather:

This analysis must be conducted from both a FRIENDLY and ENEMY perspective. The enemy perspective is more important because you will use this information with your enemy analysis to determine your EMLCOA. Analysis of terrain must extend beyond simple observations such as “this is high ground” or “this is an avenue of approach”. You must arrive at significant conclusions about how the terrain will impact the enemy and your unit. Prioritizing terrain analysis around what most impacts the mission is vital. For instance, focusing on the terrain around the objective area is more important than the terrain adjacent to the assembly area or perhaps, along your route. The information to be analyzed may come from among the following: higher’s orientation, the commander’s map reconnaissance, physical reconnaissance, or intelligence section (S2). We use the military aspects of terrain – OCOKA-W – to analyze the terrain.

1. **Observation and Fields of Fire:** Observation is the influence of terrain on visual recon and target acquisition. What can be seen from where?
 - a. Observation –
 - i. Analyze areas surrounding key terrain, objectives, avenues of approach, and obstacles to determine if they provide clear observation and fields of fire for both friendly and enemy forces.
 - ii. Locate intervisibility lines (IV Lines) – terrain that inhibits observation from one point to another – in order to determine where visual contact between the two forces occurs.
 - b. Fields of Fire –
 - i. Focus on friendly and enemy direct fire capabilities to include max effective ranges of friendly and enemy weapons and their dead space.
 - ii. Identify positions that enable indirect fire observers (LP/OP or Forward Observers) to call for artillery or mortars to engage targets.
 - iii. Whenever possible, conduct a physical reconnaissance to determine fields of fire.
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2. **Cover and Concealment:** Cover is protection from the effects of fire. Concealment is the protection from observation but not direct or indirect fires.
- a. What terrain enables both clear fields of fire and effective cover and concealment?
 - b. Which terrain provides maneuvering or advancing units with cover and concealment while facilitating lethality?
3. **Obstacles:** An obstacle is anything that stops, delays, or restricts movement or maneuver. The two general categories of obstacles are **existing** and **reinforcing**. (*See Engineering in the Offense and Defense SHO for further detail*)
- a. **Existing Obstacles** – obstacles already present on the battlefield and not placed through military effort. They can be:
 - i. *Natural*
 1. Drainage features
 2. Soil trafficability
 3. Slope and relief
 4. Vegetation
 5. Climate and weather
 - ii. *Cultural*
 1. Cities/towns
 2. Dikes, dams, canals
 3. Drainage ditches, embankments, cuts, and fills
 4. Hedgerows and orchards
 5. Roads and railroads
 - b. **Reinforcing Obstacles** – obstacles placed on the battlefield through military effort which are designed to extend or improve the effectiveness of existing obstacles. A reinforcing obstacle must force the enemy to react, thereby influencing his scheme of maneuver. There are five types of reinforcing obstacles:
 - i. *Constructed* – log cribs, hedgerows, concrete blocks, tank ditches
 - ii. *Demolitions* (caused by detonation of explosives)– road craters, abates, landslides
 - iii. *Mines/Minefields*
 - iv. *Contamination* – nuclear or chemical in nature
 - v. *Expedient* – the potential of expedient obstacles is unlimited. Expedient obstacles that substitute locally available materials and manpower for a logistical requirement.
4. **Key Terrain:** Any terrain that affords a marked advantage to either the enemy or friendly force who seizes, retains or controls it. Key terrain is something both sides are willing to bleed over. Begin by assessing the key terrain at the objective and working backwards to your current position. Analyzing key terrain is not an OBSERVATION – it is a CONCLUSION
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based on the situation. You must assess what terrain is key to accomplishing the mission. Key terrain might allow the leader to apply direct fire or achieve observation of the objective or avenue of approach. Key terrain may also be enemy oriented, meaning that if the enemy controls the terrain it could prevent the unit from accomplishing its mission. A good starting point is to ask “what terrain can be used to generate advantage?”

5. **Avenues of Approach:** Avenues of approach are movement routes to an objective or key terrain. Avenues of approach permit friendly and enemy forces to advance or withdraw with the goal of capitalizing on the principles of mass, momentum, shock and speed. When friendly forces are attacking, friendly avenues of approach to the objective must be identified. Enemy avenues of approach that could affect friendly movement – i.e., counterattack avenues – must be identified.

6. **Weather:** Weather is analyzed using the five military aspects of weather: *temperature/humidity, precipitation, wind, clouds, visibility (day and night) and astrological data*. How will these elements influence the operations of each combatant? To determine its cumulative effect on the operation, weather must be considered in conjunction with the associated terrain. Weather affects equipment (including electrical and optical), terrain (trafficability), and visibility. Inclement weather affects visibility, rates of movement, routes of movement, unit efficiency and morale. It makes command and control more difficult. Poor weather conditions can be as much of an advantage as a disadvantage to a unit, depending upon the unit’s capabilities, equipment, and training. Astronomical data is not a surprise – End of Evening Nautical Twilight (EENT), Begin Morning Nautical Twilight (BMNT) and lunar data are critical to night operations – how does it impact you and your mission?

Troops and Fire Support Available:

In the same way we analyze what the enemy brings to the fight, a leader must also understand the capabilities and limitations of their own unit. The unit leader must also consider the mental and physical condition of the Marines, their level of training, the status of their equipment, and fire support assets. Some of this information can be found in higher’s friendly situation.

1. **Organic.** Identify the capabilities and limitations of the assets your organic unit will bring to bear on the enemy during the conduct of the mission. Organic to your unit means it is part of your de facto task organization

 2. **Attachments and Detachments.** Identify what units/assets have been attached to your unit, and what assets you will detach from your unit. How will they affect your ability to achieve mission success?

 3. **Fire Support Available.** Identify locations, azimuths of fire, contact information, employment, target allocations and any priority of fires of
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indirect fire support agencies. What are the effects of the supporting units location on your ability to employ its' assets? What are the effects of their priority of fires? Identify any available air assets. What weapons will they bring to the fight? What are the capabilities of their fires? When and how long are they on station?

4. **Higher and Adjacent Units.** Identify higher and adjacent units' SOM and what influence they will have on your SOM. Consider effects on geometries of fire, reinforcement, enemy actions and contingency plans.

Time/Space/Logistics:

The ability to appreciate the aspects and effects of time and space is one of the most important qualities in a leader. A leader must also be able to identify resource short-falls and have a plan to rectify them.

1. **Time:** A solid understanding of time required versus time available is vital; it drives planning and execution. The unit leader must first identify constraints and restraints which are often given by higher. A *restraint* is what cannot be done while a *constraint* is the option to which one is limited (e.g. "At 0900, cross the line of departure"). *Reverse planning* is the method by which leaders should identify realistic timelines to complete each task that is required for mission success. Together with time constraints, an accurate timeline can be developed and supervised that will uphold and drive the assigned mission. Whenever possible, unit leaders should use the One-Thirds, Two-Thirds Rule when building a timeline (See Below). In our analysis of time we account for higher, operational, planning, the enemy, and environmental considerations.

One-Thirds, Two-Thirds

Whenever possible, unit leaders should use the One-Thirds, Two-Thirds Rule when building the time-line. This is the idea that the leader devotes 1/3 of available time to those tasks he must directly supervise, leaving 2/3 of the time of his subordinate leaders to accomplish tasks of which he does not need to have direct supervision.

2. **Space:** A leader must know and understand his Area of Operation (AO). Identify Tactical Control Measures (TCM), Fire Support Coordination Measures (FSCM), and Airspace Control Measures (ACM) within your AO as applicable. Develop a plan to deconflict converging forces and geometry of fires. (See MCWP 3-16 for FSCM)
3. **Logistics.** Logistics sustains operational reach and tempo. Without appropriate logistical planning, units will be forced into their

culminating point prior to decisive action. Logistics planning provides the means to evaluate the feasibility of various tactical options and determine the adequacy of resources to support them. Planning assists the unit commander in anticipating requirements and positioning resources to meet those requirements. Some common questions that should be asked by the unit commander include:

- a. What logistics resources and capabilities currently exist?
- b. What logistics resources and capabilities do we possess?
- c. Where are we on the battlefield?
- d. What are the requirements to sustain my forces (to include attachments)?
- e. How do we obtain our support?
- f. How do we logically sequence sustainment operations into our planning?

Civil Considerations:

Analysis of the civil considerations can impact any operation and must be accounted for in planning. The acronym **ASCOPE** (Area, Structures, Capabilities, Organizations, People, Events) focusses analysis for operating amongst human terrain. ***You will look in depth at civil considerations when you receive your Urban Operations platforms.***

1. **Areas.** These are areas that have significance to the local population. As planners we must examine tribal boundaries, religious and political influences, and the physical location of local centers of business, religion, and politics in order to guide us in the application of our influence and force.
 2. **Structures.** Planners for urban operations must understand the impact of particular physical structures in an assigned area. While hospitals and mosques might quickly come to mind as politically and culturally sensitive structures, such locations as schools, monuments, and cemeteries might also have a great impact on the success or failure of a mission. When Marines use some structures for a tactical advantage, the population may have a negative response to the occupation of the structure. This must be taken into account during operations. Other structures are high value targets to insurgents, police stations and rival mosques for example, and their security must be factored into planning operations.
 3. **Capabilities.** These are the functions and services that local authorities provide.
Examples include courts, hospitals, police, firefighters, and things as basic as drinking water and sanitization. We may use the local police to assist us, or coordinate for firefighting and medical assistance. To gain the support of the population we can assist the locals in improving their capabilities.
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4. **Organizations.** People with a shared interest or goal make up organizations. These can be religious groups, criminal organizations, foreign nongovernmental organizations, or a host of other entities. We will support some and eliminate others, but we must first identify how each organization can help or hurt our mission.
 5. **People.** Key individuals in any area must be considered as important as key terrain. These people's support or opposition can affect our mission. Marine leaders will interact with tribal, religious, or political leaders who can influence the population.
 6. **Events.** Each culture maintains key dates that are important to them for different reasons. We have seen how particular dates or calendar events can be connected to a rise in insurgent activity in Iraq. This is not an isolated phenomenon and can be expected in any urban operations environment. The battle of Hue City was a result of the Tet Offensive in 1968 when the North Vietnamese used a holiday as an impetus for their massive assault on South Vietnam. Elections may entice the enemy to attack us or the general population. Weddings and funerals will draw crowds, and may include celebratory gunfire. We must understand what events will take place in our area of operations, and plan for the population's reaction to these events.

EMLCOA:

The Estimate of the Situation (METT-TC) is the analytical framework for the planning process. It yields greater understanding of the friendly and enemy situation. Most critically, it provides – in concert with reconnaissance – the information/analysis required to predict the Enemy's Most Likely Course of Action (EMLCOA). The EMLCOA is the enemy's scheme of maneuver; it accounts for his task, purpose, and method of imposing his will. The EMLCOA is what a commander must counter with his/her plan. The detail required for an EMLCOA is based on the tactical situation. However, there are three things that must be considered when developing the EMLCOA. First, what do I deduce is the enemy's tactical task and purpose (Mission)? Second, what is the enemy doing currently? Third, what will the enemy do on contact? The importance of understanding your enemy 1 or 2 levels up enables you to know what he will do when his purpose cannot be achieved, or worse, what he will do if he is successful.

EMLCOA Components:

1. **Mission** - Focus on your enemy first, then make deductions to determine the purpose of the larger enemy system two-levels up.
 - a. *Tactical Task* – Use MCDP 1.0, Appendix C
 - b. *Purpose* - ..."in order to" statement

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- c. Additional analysis into the enemy's distribution of forces enhances your EMLCOA. Who/Where is the enemy's ME? How are the supporting efforts supporting the ME's mission?
 2. **Current Activity** – what is the enemy doing now?
 3. **On Contact** – what do I anticipate will change when we engage the enemy? How will the enemy respond? This should be tied to routes of ingress and egress. You should consider how the enemy is being supported and how they are tied into the higher enemy system.

The enemy's mission is best summarized within our tactical tasks (most tactical tasks can be found in appendix C of MCDP 1-0). For example, if the enemy is in a defensive position, what is the enemy attempting to accomplish? Block? Delay? Disrupt? While the focus needs to be on the enemy at your level, in determining the enemy's mission, ensure you are thinking about your enemy's relation to the enemy two-levels up. Look at the enemy system.

For example if you are a platoon commander, how does the enemy you are facing integrate with the enemy the company and the battalion are facing? Meaningful detail in this regard is key **as the EMLCOA is the key factor that will determine your scheme of maneuver**. Meaningful detail assumes that the detail added is of impact to the mission at hand. **Do not add useless or faulty assumptions as they will have negative effects on your scheme of maneuver development**. Using the information gleaned on the enemy through your METT-TC analysis, you need to make educated assumptions about **what the enemy is doing now**. For example, if the enemy is in a defensive position, where are his forces oriented? His patrols, his patrol routes, his LP/OPs. If the enemy has machine guns, where are they placed and oriented within his defense?

Once we engage the enemy, the enemy's action will change, hence we must define **what the enemy will do on contact**. *Contact* refers to an input that alters the current state of the enemy. Contact can range from direct fire and indirect fire to visual contact. This will influence our scheme of maneuver in two ways. First, when we analyze the enemy's critical vulnerability and determine our exploitation plan, we will seek to build a scheme of maneuver that counters both what the enemy is doing now and what they will do on contact. For example, we assume the enemy is in a defensive blocking position. We also determine that the enemy's western and northern flanks are exposed. Finally we assume that on contact, the enemy will withdraw north. Therefore we may opt to flank the enemy from the northwest to not only defeat what the enemy is doing now, but to also defeat what the enemy will do on contact.

The application of maneuver warfare concepts requires a detailed understanding, or deduction, regarding what the enemy is most likely going to do. Without this assessment, we cannot focus our efforts on a vulnerability in the enemy system. Remember, all aspects of METT-TC influence the EMLCOA. The enemy's composition, disposition, strength and capabilities, and limitations, the terrain and

weather, and their knowledge of your troops and fire support available will influence what they are doing now. Add your mission, your troops and fire support, the time, space, and logistics, and the terrain and weather to your analysis and you will determine what the enemy will do on contact.

Exploitation Plan:

As we learned in MCDP-1 Warfighting, we aim to gain an advantage over the enemy through exploitation of a vulnerability. Commanders seek to avoid surfaces and exploit gaps to gain an unfair advantage on the enemy. The careful consideration of enemy Center of Gravity (CG) and Critical Vulnerabilities (CV) is critical to developing the friendly Scheme of Maneuver (SOM).

1. Center of Gravity (CG)

- a. Definition: the element or capability which allows the enemy to execute his mission. A CG is the answer to the below questions:
 - i. Which factors are critical to the enemy?
 - ii. Which can the enemy not do without?
 - iii. Which, if eliminated, will bend him most quickly to our will?
- b. Though an enemy system may have multiple CGs, at the tactical level we focus on one.
- c. We want to take away the CG – that source of strength.

2. Critical Vulnerability (CV)

- a. Definition: a vulnerability that, if exploited, will do the most significant damage to the enemy's ability to resist us. It is a pathway to the CG, it is directly related to the center of gravity.

Consideration must be given to a CV as it is the pathway to the enemy's CG. A CV is something which combat power is applied, at the right time/ right place, utilizing speed and focus to render it ineffective.

The CG and CV analysis is critical to the development of a plan that directly counters the EMLCOA. If the vulnerability is not targetable at the leader's level, or the center of gravity is not directly tied to the EMLCOA, his plan will not successfully counter the enemy.

The commander must now decide what method he plans to use to directly target the enemy's critical vulnerability. The Exploitation Plan (EXP) is conveyed in a Form of Maneuver. For instance, if the Enemy's vulnerability is his fixed unprotected flank, then a likely exploitation plan may be to conduct a flanking attack. If his vulnerability is his inability to integrate fires within his engagement area, then a likely exploitation plan may be the employment of combined arms. Whatever the method of targeting, it will drive the rest of the commander's planning process, as every element of his SOM will be combined and coordinated in order to achieve the exploitation plan.

Forms of Maneuver (FOM) are the basic techniques a force conducting offensive operations uses to gain advantage over the enemy. There are six FOM: *Frontal Attack, Flanking Attack, Envelopment, Turning Movement, Infiltration, and Penetration*. Reference Chapter 9 of MCDP 1-0 Marine Corps Operations.

SOM Development:

Keeping in mind the nine Principles of War and the six Tactical Tenets, the commander now develops a plan for their combat power to achieve the Exploitation Plan. This is known as the Scheme of Maneuver (SOM). In this way, the Exploitation Plan is used to achieve unity of effort when developing the SOM. For instance, a commander may decide the Exploitation Plan is to conduct a flanking attack while maintaining surprise with the direction of assault. The detailed execution might be to offset the support-by-fire position 90 degrees from the direction of assault, making the enemy think they are being attacked from a completely different direction. The commander's SOM must focus on integrating all subordinate (organic and attached) elements within their respective capabilities to achieve the Exploitation Plan.

Fire Support Plan Development:

Based on the leader's analysis of his supporting assets in the METT-TC, he must now identify how to integrate those assets into his plan. The Fire Support Plan (FSP) must be developed following SOM development because the fire support assets must be integrated to directly support the SOM.

Task Development:

The leader must succinctly and effectively communicate the task that his subordinate elements **MUST** accomplish to allow the mission to be a success. Identify the Main Effort, the task for the Main Effort, and tasks for Supporting Efforts that enable the Main Effort to achieve its task. Tasks are developed to execute the SOM. ***The commander must utilize standard language to ensure that the correct action is taken. This standardized language is known as a Tactical Task and purpose.***

Summary

Planning under conditions of uncertainty and time pressure is difficult and planning is more complex than simple decision-making. During this lesson, we discussed the importance of being able to make sound and timely decisions based upon an uncertain and incomplete assessment of conditions present on an ever-changing battlefield. We focused upon the Six Troop-Leading Steps and the role they play in creating a streamlined process from receipt of the order to execution of the mission. We introduced analytical tools such as METT-TC that provide the pathway to determining what the enemy will do (EMLCOA) and how best to defeat him (Exploitation Plan). The goal of tactical planning is to assist the commander in making the correct decision with greater relative speed than the enemy. Time gained making the decision is time gained for combat.

References

Reference Number or Author	Reference Title
MCDP 1	Warfighting
FM 3-21.8	Infantry Rifle Platoon and Squad
FM 3-21.10	Infantry Rifle Company Operations
MCRP 3-11.1A	Commander's Tactical Handbook
MCWP 3-11.1	Marine Rifle Company/Platoon
MCRP 3-11.1B	Small Unit Leader's Guide to Weather and Terrain
MCWP 5-1	Marine Corps Planning Process
THULS	Tactical Handbook/Unit Leader PCN 180 1020300
MSTP PAM 4-0.2	A Logistics Planners Guide

Glossary of Terms and Acronyms

Term or Acronym	Definition or Identification
ACM	Airspace Coordination Measures
ASCOPE	Areas, Structures, Capabilities, Organizations, People, and Events
BAMCIS	Begin planning, Arrange for Coordination, Make reconnaissance, Complete the plan, Issue the order, and Supervise
COA	Course of Action
DRAW-D	Defend, Reinforce, Attack, Withdraw, and Delay
EMLCOA	Enemy's Most Likely Course Of Action
FSCM	Fire Support Coordination Measures
FSP	Fire Support Plan

APPENDIX A: TACTICAL PLANNING PROCESS AND THE COMBAT ORDER

