UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS
THE BASIC SCHOOL
MARINE CORPS TRAINING COMMAND
CAMP BARRETT, VIRGINIA 22134-5019

TACTICAL PLANNING
B2B2367
STUDENT HANDOUT

Tactical Planning

Introduction and Importance

Success in combat is reflective of a leader's ability to make tactically sound decisions in a time constrained and ever-changing environment. Success in this time compressed environment is based on the ability for our leaders to conduct detailed analysis (analytical decision making) of the complex information prior to entering that environment. Only with the application of that analysis as a foundation, will the leader be able to apply the continuous analysis (recognitional decision making) necessary to make tactically sound decisions in the time compressed environment. As a leader, you must be familiar with the Troop-Leading Steps and the associated analysis that occurs to facilitate orders creation. The analysis is critical to overall mission accomplishment. It shapes the development of a tactically sound plan, communicated in the combat orders format, and shapes your decision-making process during mission execution. The process taught at The Basic School is lock-step only in sequence; the depth and detail by which the analysis is conducted is based on time and available information. Leaders must understand the application of the analysis to the Marine Corps planning in order to successfully modify the process without adversely affecting mission success.

Prerequisites

MCDP 1 Warfighting, introduced you to the nature of war which is inherently violent and chaotic, which we mitigate through clear communication of intent and simple plans. It discussed maneuver warfare, the theory of which is to strike the enemy's critical vulnerability (the decisive time and place) with massed fires to bend the enemy to our will.

In the **Tactical Fundamentals Discussion Group,** you learned in depth the Nine Principles of War (MCDP 1-0) and the Six Tactical Tenets (MCDP 1-3); evaluative concepts that operate congruently to your tactical planning.

In **Decision Making,** you learned the importance of decisiveness in a time compressed environment. This was illustrated by the Boyd Cycle (OODA Loop) in which maneuver in time is achieved through an increased tempo of action. You also learned that as a leader and a Warfighter, you must be comfortable with making reasonable assumptions, supported by fact, to drive your operations. The ability to do this was defined by the "70% Solution." You learned the difference between analytical decision making and recognitional decision making. 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:

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 squad with 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, an order, and 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-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-2002b. Given a mission with a commander's intent, conduct an estimate of the situation, to accomplish the mission and meet the commander's intent.

TBS-PAT-2002c. Given a unit, a mission with a commander's intent, and with supporting and attached units, determine Higher, Adjacent and Supporting mission (HAS), to accomplish the mission and meet the commander's intent.

TBS-PAT-2002d. Given an order from higher headquarters, paper, and pen, develop commanders intent, to support achievement of higher's mission and includes each of the required items.

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-2002g. Given an order from higher and a mental estimate of the situation, develop coordinating instructions, to accomplish the mission.

TBS-PAT-2002j. Given an order from higher and a mental estimate of the situation, make reconnaissance, to confirm or deny assumptions to accomplish the mission.

TBS-PAT-2002k. Without the aid of references, describe the troop leading steps without omission.

TBS-C2-1002a. Given an order from higher, conduct tactical planning for an operations order IAW the METT-TC process.

TBS-C2-1002c. Given an order from higher, conduct map reconnaissance IAW the troop leading steps.

Six Troop Leading Steps (BAMCIS)

In layman's terms, planning is easy to conceptualize. In the civilian world when given a task to do by your boss, provided the time was available, you would in general terms:

1. Determine what needs to get done to complete the task and what information you need to complete the task. During this time you may develop questions, pertaining to completing the task, for which you do not have the answer. To continue planning how to complete your task, some of those questions will be deliberately answered by assumptions you make. For others that do not impede your planning, you will seek to answer later when you gain more information. You will emerge with an initial plan to complete the task.

2. To validate your initial plan, you would identify where to find additional information that will aid in you completing your task. You may identify the internet, library, or subject matter experts as sources of information that will either answer the questions you still have after your initial plan, and/or prove your assumptions made during your planning. You would then build a research plan to execute.

3. To execute your research, you would focus on the source of information that would provide you the most effective answers to your questions. Once you have answered the questions raised during your initial plan, you would compile the information and look to finalize your plan.

4. In finalizing your plan, you would revisit your initial plan, armed now with the answers to the questions you identified earlier. This would allow you to build an operable plan to execute the task.

5. To start acting on your plan, you brief those who work for you on what needs to get done, how the job will get done, and who will do what to complete that job.

6. Finally, you would watch your workers in the execution of their part of the task to ensure that the job is done correctly.

The process is the same when we discuss planning at the tactical level in the Marine Corps, we have simply standardized that process with the Six Troop Leading Steps. (Begin Planning, Arrange for Reconnaissance, Make Reconnaissance, Complete the Plan, Issue the Order, and Supervise [BAMCIS]). BAMCIS is a sequence of events which tactical unit leaders use to plan most tactical operations. The troop-leading steps are a tool meant to aid leaders in making tactically sound decisions, formulate plans, coherently communicate those plans, and turn those decisions into action. BAMCIS would be employed when you receive a job (aka. mission) from your boss (aka. higher command).

Six Troop Leading Steps (Continued)

Begin Planning

The receipt of a mission triggers the BAMCIS cycle. To make effective use of available time, the leader issues a *Warning Order* (an abbreviated set of instructions to inform of an impending action) to his subordinates; this allows his subordinates to execute the Warning Order while the leader conducts a detailed analysis, which we call the Tactical Thought Process (described in detail later in this hand out). Here, unit leaders will develop questions and therefore will have to make assumptions about the enemy to continue planning. The level of risk the leader will have to assume is directly related to the depth of analysis they perform during the Tactical Thought Process. At the end of this step, you will emerge with an initial plan that you expect to execute, pending the answers to your questions, and the validation of the assumptions you made about the enemy. To begin answering these questions you will move to Arrange for Reconnaissance.

Arrange for Reconnaissance

Based on the detailed analysis (Tactical Thought Process) performed during **B**egin the Planning, the leader must ask, "What information am I lacking in order to achieve success?" To get this information to further mitigate risk assumed during the Tactical Thought Process, the leader must arrange for a reconnaissance of the enemy and terrain. First, the commander must determine the most effective means of available reconnaissance. Frequently, this is a physical reconnaissance in which the commander visits the ground on which he will fight. Second, the commander must determine his priority of reconnaissance, or what order he will try to fulfill the information gaps. The first priority must be the gaps regarding the enemy; focusing on confirming or denying any assumptions made about his location, orientation, or current tactical activity. The second priority is to identify elements of the friendly SOM such as the route, assault position, or defensive positions. Finally, the leader must determine which subordinate leaders will accompany them during the collection of information. The personnel will vary according to the tactical situation, but the leader should take only as many subordinate leaders as necessary, while others remain behind to supervise mission preparation.

Six Troop Leading Steps (BAMCIS) (CONTINUED)

Make Reconnaissance

The commander now acts to answer his questions and validate any assumptions based on his priorities of reconnaissance and the time available. Every effort must be made to conduct a physical reconnaissance of the enemy. ***This means "eyes on the enemy" must be the focus.*** In addition to a physical recon, the commander should also look to use other assets (imagery, air reconnaissance, etc) available to help fill information gaps. The reconnaissance is only successful if it answers those questions needed to successfully accomplish the mission.

Complete the Plan

The unit leader must now take the information gained during the reconnaissance and validate his initial plan made during **B**egin the Planning. This is done by conducting the Tactical Thought Process again, now armed with the answers to our questions. This analysis must be conducted again to ensure necessary changes are ultimately reflected in our plan to our subordinates. 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. ***Do not fall in love with your plan.*** At the conclusion of your second conduct of the Tactical Thought Process, you will write an order (Five Paragraph Order) to communicate to your subordinates.

Issue the order

Here, leaders verbally communicate their analysis and scheme of maneuver using proper order-issuing techniques. Without coherent communication, the leader's decisions will never successfully be turned into action.

Supervise

The leader ensures compliance with the details of his plan until the mission is accomplished. This includes the timeline the commander set forth (non-negotiable), the mission rehearsals defined (as combat realistic as possible), the inspections (PCCs and PCIs) of personnel prior to execution, and the complete execution of the mission. Delegation to subordinate unit leaders is utilized, however check, do not assume, that your plan is being executed by subordinates to your standards.

Six Troop Leading Steps (BAMCIS) (Continued)

Tactical Level Planning Using BAMCIS	
RECEIVE HIGHER'S ORDER ↓ ISSUE A WARNING ORDER TO SUBORDINATES ↓	
BAMCIS	
Begin Planning.	Execute the tactical thought process: METT-TC>EMLCOA>EXP>SOM>FSP>Tasks
Arrange for Reconnaissance.	Plan reconnaissance to answer remaining questions about the enemy and terrain, choose the method to validate assumptions and the tenative SOM, and determine the composition of the reconnaissance patrol.
Make Reconnaissance.	Conduct the reconnaissance to get "Eyes on the Enemy."
Complete the Plan.	Revisit the tactical thought process with information collected during reconnaissance: METT-TC>EMLCOA>EXP>SOM>FSP>Tasks
Issue the Order.	Effectively communicate the plan over a terrain model.
Supervise.	Supervise subordinates' execution of orders through completion of the mission.

Begin Planning: Tactical Thought Process

Now that you understand the elements of the troop leading steps, we will go into the Tactical Thought Process as it applies to the troop leading steps and tactical planning. Upon receipt of an order and within the Begin the planning stage of BAMCIS, leaders must dive into the tactical thought process. The Tactical Thought Process, through its sequence, applies analysis to the development of a tactically sound plan that ultimately counters the enemy's course of action. The 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). Related to the EMLCOA, the commander identifies: the center of gravity of the enemy; the enemy's critical vulnerability or gap associated with the identified center of gravity; and the best way to strike this vulnerability known as 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 → EXP→ SOM → FSP → Tasks

Tactical Thought Process (Continued)

Estimate of the Situation (METT-TC)

Mission Analysis
Enemy Analysis
Troops and Fire Support Available
Terrain Analysis
Time Analysis
Civilian Considerations

The key is for the leader to conduct a detailed analysis to mitigate risk, and drive decisions that allow him to develop the most tactically sound plan. First, the leader must understand the specified and implied tasks of the mission issued to him by higher (Mission Analysis). A specified task is a task explicitly given to the commander from higher. An implied task is a task not explicitly given, but is a task that must be done to complete the mission. (For example, your mission is: At 2100 brush your teeth in order to prevent cavities. The specified task is to "brush" your teeth at 2100. A related implied task would be put toothpaste on your toothbrush.) Second, he must look at the enemy's combat power and the conditions under which he can employ those assets to achieve a desired endstate (Enemy Analysis). Third, he looks at the effects of **O**bservation, **C**over and Concealment, **O**bstacles, **K**ey terrain, **A**venues of approach, and **W**eather (OCOKA-W) on possible friendly and enemy SOMs (Terrain and Weather Analysis). Fourth, he must understand the combat power he brings to the fight within his own unit, and how adjacent and supporting units will support or impede mission success (Troops and Fire Support Available). Fifth, the leader must identify the time available for each phase of the mission, time constraints and restraints from higher, time/space considerations for enemy and friendly movement, logistics required, as well as gaps (Time/Space/Logistics Analysis). ["C" stands for Civil considerations. For simplicity at this time, we will skip or "grey out" this step until later in your officer development.

EMLCOA

Based on your understanding of the situation through the detailed analysis (METT-TC), turn the map around and ask yourself, "What would I do if I were the enemy?" What is his mission? What are the effects of your analysis (terrain weather, time, etc) on the enemy? The sum of this analysis is your prediction of the Enemy's Most Likely Course Of Action (EMLCOA) or enemy SOM. 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 mission? Second, what is the enemy's current tactical activity, which includes patrolling, location and orientation of crew-served weapons, composition and orientation of his engagement area, LP/Ops, etc. Lastly, what are the enemy's actions on contact; how he will react when we impose our combat power on him.

Tactical Thought Process (Continued)

EXP

As learned in MCDP-1 Warfighting, we aim to gain an advantage over the enemy through exploitation of vulnerability. Commanders seek to avoid surfaces (center of gravity) and exploit gaps (critical vulnerabilities) to gain an unfair advantage during combat operations. The careful consideration of enemy center of gravities and critical vulnerabilities is a critical aspect of scheme of maneuver development.

The enemy's center of gravity is that element or capability which allows the enemy to execute his mission or scheme of maneuver successfully. The enemy typically has many center of gravities, so at the platoon level we must focus our planning on one. The center of gravity is critical to the enemy successfully executing his EMLCOA.

Next, consideration must be given to a critical vulnerability or vulnerability which can be exploited. Ideally, acritical vulnerability is one against which combat power can be applied to avoid the enemy's center of gravity or even render it ineffectual. Again, the enemy likely has many identifiable vulnerabilities, so we must focus our intent on the one vulnerability that will render the center of gravity ineffective.

The center of gravity and critical vulnerability 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) may be a Form of Maneuver or a method of tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs) employment. 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.

Tactical Thought Process (Continued)

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 achieving the Exploitation Plan. This is known as the **S**cheme **O**f **M**aneuver (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.

FSP 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. They 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.***

Now that you have an understanding of what BAMCIS is and the tactical thought process, understanding how to apply these concepts and when is key to tactical planning.

Begin Planning: Tactical Thought Process: METT-TC

Within the first troop leading step in BAMCIS: Begin the Planinng, we need to gain an understanding of all elements surrounding the mission at hand. METT-TC is a tool helpful to a decision-maker, as its elements are a reminder of the factors that need to be considered in order for the tactical planning process to be successful, and ultimately counter the enemy's actions. While much of the information can be derived from higher's order, the process is an analysis of that information, not simply regurgitation. An estimate of the situation is conducted in as much detail as time allows prior to the mission, but the process is executed as often as the situation changes throughout execution. Detailed analysis in the initial tactical thought process will increase the speed and accuracy of decisions as the situation changes at the point of friction.

Mission Analysis

The first step in the estimate is mission analysis. It is the means for the unit leader to gain an understanding of the mission. The information used in this analysis is taken directly from: higher's tasking statement to you, higher's mission and intent, higher's scheme of maneuver, and higher's coordinating instructions. During your analysis, it is important to think two-levels higher, 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.

- Task Analysis: Each mission statement contains specified tasks (tactical task from MCDP 1-0, appendix c). The unit leader must understand not only those explicitly stated tasks, but the implications of those tasks required for the success of the mission. The commander must analyze his unit's specified tasks, the purpose of the mission, and higher's coordinating instructions to identify all the implied tasks
- Purpose Analysis: An understanding of 'why' a commander is conducting the mission will have a direct impact on the development of implied tasks. These implied tasks may drive or restrict friendly action. For instance, they may drive fire support control measures, elements of a timeline, signal plan, or other coordinating instructions. Understanding the purpose will ultimately allow the commander to make adjustments to his plan as the situation changes while still accomplishing the mission.

Begin Planning: Tactical Thought Process: METT-TC

Enemy Forces

The objective of an analysis of the enemy situation is to understand how the enemy will use each element of his combat power. Its development comes from many sources including enemy doctrine, current enemy activities indicated in higher's order, adjacent units who have previously operated in the area, or the intelligence section. The commander must know what information is valid from each of these sources regarding their specific enemy and the relationship they have with a higher or adjacent enemy. The information used to analyze the enemy situation includes the following:

- **Composition, Disposition, Strengths:** Typically this is identified in the most general terms by **S**ize, **A**ctivity, **L**ocation, **U**nit, **T**ime, and **E**quipment (SALUTE). In raw terms, these are generally facts that we know about the enemy. They are usually identified by higher. In conducting this part of the enemy analysis, we need to make sure we focus primarily on the enemy we are tasked with encountering. We must not however ignore how our piece of the enemy relates to the greater enemy threat two-levels higher. Finally, make sure you are analyzing the facts. For example, simply stating "the enemy has AK-47s and RPG's" lacks analysis. However stating "the enemy has AK-47s capable of accurate fires at 400 meters, and RPG-7's capable of accurate fires at 300 meters" is far more meaningful during your analysis.
- **Capabilities and Limitations.** Answers the question, "Under what conditions can the enemy…?" The information and initial analysis conducted during Composition, Disposition, and Strength is further examined to determine the enemy's ability to conduct operations against our unit. The enemy's force is analyzed concerning its ability to or inability to conduct various operations against your unit.

Begin Planning: METT-TC (CONTINUED)

Capabilities and Limitations (Continued)

Commonly we determine under what specific conditions does the enemy have the ability or inability to **D**efend, **R**einforce, **A**ttack, **W**ithdraw, or **D**elay (DRAW-D)? Here is where we begin to make our first assumption about the enemy based on the facts at hand.

Enemy Forces (Continued)

The acronym DRAW-D serves only as a reminder of the minimum factors to be considered. For example, maybe the enemy is only capable of attacking at night, or attacking units of like size or smaller. Examples of some questions asked during the capabilities and limitations analysis are: How does the composition and disposition of say, the enemy defense, affect his ability to defend? 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? Can it be done during the day or only at night? Is it a vehicular transported reinforcement force or will it be traveling on foot? Where and how will the enemy withdraw? Remember, the initial assumptions you are making about the enemy now will be supported by the rest of the METT-TC components and will be the basis of your prediction of the enemy's action, or EMLCOA.

Terrain and Weather Analysis (OCOKA-W)

The analysis of terrain and weather must always be conducted from the friendly and enemy perspectives. The enemy perspective is arguably the more important of the two because you will use this info in conjunction with your enemy analysis to support your estimate of the EMLCOA. This is not simply a regurgitation of existing terrain and current weather conditions but rather an analysis of the effects of the five military aspects of terrain and weather. Certain situations may elevate one element of **OCOKA-W** (**O**bservation, **C**over and Concealment, **O**bstacles, **K**ey terrain, **A**venues of approach, and **W**eather) to a level of importance above that of one or more of the remaining elements. The information to be analyzed may come from among the following: higher's orientation, the commander's map reconnaissance, physical reconnaissance, or intelligence section. While this analysis will affect almost every aspect of the commander's mission, the resulting product will be briefed in the orientation paragraph of the operations order.

Begin Planning: Tactical Thought Process: METT-TC (Continued)

Terrain and Weather Analysis (Continued)

• **Observation and Fields of Fire.** Observation is the influence of terrain on visual recon and target acquisition. What can be seen or not seen from where? Fields of fire are the influence of terrain on the effects of weapons systems. Both are important in determining how the enemy can identify and engage you and vice versa. **Cover and Concealment.** Cover is protection from the effects of fires. Concealment is protection from observation or target acquisition. The analysis of cover and concealment is often related to the consideration of observation and fields of fire. Again, both enemy and friendly aspects must be considered. **Obstacles.** Obstacles are any natural or man-made obstructions that canalize, delay, restrict, or divert the maneuver or movement of a force. It is important not just to identify the obstacles, but to understand what effect they will have on the friendly and enemy SOM. **Key Terrain.** Key terrain is any area whose seizure, retention, or control affords a *marked tactical advantage* to either combatant. Key terrain does not need to be occupied to be controlled, but it must have the potential to affect mission success for either combatant. **Avenues of Approach. Avenues of approach** are movement routes to an objective. A viable avenue of approach usually offers mobility corridors. These are areas within the avenue of approach that permit movement and maneuver. They permit friendly and enemy forces to advance or withdraw and to capitalize 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.

Begin Planning: Tactical Thought Process: METT-TC (Continued)

Terrain and Weather Analysis (Continued)

- **Weather**. Weather is analyzed using the five military aspects of weather: temperature/humidity, precipitation, wind, clouds, and visibility (day and night). 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 electronic and optical), terrain (traffic-ability), and visibility. Inclement weather affects visibility, rates of movement, routes of movement, unit efficiency and morale, and 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.

Troops and Fire Support Available

In the same way we analyze what the enemy brings to the fight and how he has the capability to use it, a unit leader must also understand the Marines and assets and their capabilities that are brought to the fight. 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.

- **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.

- **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?

Begin Planning: Tactical Thought Process: METT-TC (Continued)

- **Fire Support Available.** Identify locations, azimuths of fire, contact information, employment, and any priority of fires of 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?

- **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, 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.

- **Time.** A solid understanding of time required versus time available is vital to all operations; it drives planning and execution. The unit leader must first identify constraints and restraints which are often given by higher. *Reverse planning* is the method by which leaders should identify realistic timelines to complete each task that is required for mission success. Together with the time constraints, an accurate timeline can be developed and supervised that will uphold and drive the assigned mission. Critical times can include planning time, Line of Departure (LD) time, movement time, realistic times to fill logistic shortfalls, defend-no-later-than time, time available to prepare and rehearse the attack or defense, and time available for reconnaissance. 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 the available time to those tasks he must directly supervise, leaving 2/3 of the time to his subordinate leaders to accomplish tasks of which he does not need to have direct supervision.

Begin Planning: Tactical Thought Process: METT-TC (Continued)

- **Space.** A leader must know and understand his **A**rea of **O**peration (AO). Identify **T**actical **C**ontrol **M**easures (TCM), **F**ire **S**upport **C**oordination **M**easures (FSCM), and **A**irspace **C**ontrol **M**easures (ACM) within your AO as applicable. Develop a plan to deconflict converging forces and geometry of fires. **Logistics.** Logistics sustains operations. Without appropriate logistical planning, units will reach their culminating point before ever reaching a decisive point. A leader must be able to identify the required resources in order to accomplish the mission from crossing the LD through consolidation; then identify shortfalls. A realistic plan to fulfill those shortfalls must be formulated, prioritized, and built into the timeline before departure.

Civil Considerations

You will look in depth at civil considerations when you receive your urban operations platform, so we will not cover this portion of your METT-TC analysis here.

Begin Planning: Tactical Thought Process: EMLCOA

Now that we have completed our estimate of the situation (METT-TC), we analyze all aspects of our estimate to develop our comprehensive assumption of the enemy, the **E**nemy's **M**ost **L**ikely **C**ourse **o**f **A**ction (EMLCOA). As stated above, taking all we know and estimate about the situation, in the EMLCOA we predict what the enemy's scheme of maneuver will be. There are three components to the EMLCOA: the enemy's mission, what the enemy is doing now, and what the enemy will do on contact.

The enemy's mission is best summarized within our tactical tasks (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.

Begin Planning: Tactical Thought Process: EMLCOA (Continued)

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? 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**. 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.

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.

Begin Planning: Tactical Thought Process: EXP

Having determined what we believe is the EMLCOA (aka. Enemy SOM), we can now analyze the enemy's center of gravity, critical vulnerability, and our **ex**ploitation plan (EXP) of the enemy's vulnerability. This EXP will make up your commander's intent (CI) within the combat orders process.

Begin Planning: Tactical Thought Process: EXP (Continued)

As Marines, we fight maneuver warfare, and therefore we avoid striking surfaces and conducting attrition-type warfare. The enemy has several surfaces, but we must commit our focus to one center of gravity. When we look at the enemy's strength, we must do it within the confines of the EMLCOA. For example, we estimate the EMLOCA is a defense to block south where they can mass effective fires in an area where they expect us to approach from. The center of gravity in this case may be the enemy's ability to mass fires to the south along a particular avenue of approach. In this regard we are "nesting" our enemy's center of gravity with the EMLCOA. A poor example would be a strength of the enemy's ability to rapidly withdraw north and reinforce an adjacent force. Note how this surface has no linkage to our original EMLCOA. If the enemy is in a defense to block, then rapid withdrawal and reinforcement would be a "last resort" action and has no bearing on the enemy's ability to block. ***Remember, the center of gravity is the element or capability that allows the enemy to accomplish your prediction of their SOM (EMLCOA).***

The enemy's center of gravity will have a corresponding vulnerability. When struck, the critical vulnerability renders the enemy's center of gravity ineffective, without having to strike the center of gravity directly. The enemy's center of gravity and vulnerability must be "nested" or linked with the EMLCOA we have determined. Continuing the above example, the enemy's gravity might be his ability to mass fires south; the enemy's vulnerability might be his poorly defended left flank open to attack. Note the vulnerability is nested within the center of gravity and the EMLCOA. A poor example would be the enemy's lack of indirect fire. In this case, the vulnerability directly contradicts the gravity of ability to mass fires south. Another poor example might be the enemy's lack of rest. While the enemy may very well be lacking sleep, unless you can infiltrate up to his position undetected, this vulnerability is difficult to exploit and would not necessarily render the center of gravity ineffective.

At this point, you must define not only the center of gravity, but also what it allows the enemy to do. For example, "well dug-in positions" is incomplete and lacks analysis. A center of gravity of "well dug-in positions allowing the enemy to mass fires from cover and concealment" is far more pertinent. Similarly a vulnerability of "small size" is also incomplete. A critical vulnerability of "as a result of the enemy's small size, they lack the manpower to protect their left flank" is far more informative.

Finally, your exploitation plan is your succinct and overarching plan to exploit the critical vulnerability of the enemy. For example, if the enemy's center of gravity is their dug in positions allowing them to mass fires to the south along the high speed avenue of approach, and the vulnerability is as a result of their small size, the enemy lacks the manpower to protect their left flank, then a reasonable and nested exploitation plan might be a flanking attack on the enemy's left flank with supporting direct and indirect fires fixing the enemy's position.

Begin Planning: Tactical Thought Process: EXP (Continued)

Once you have completed your EXP analysis, go backwards through the tactical thought process. So: METT-TC > EMLCOA > EXP made sense as you did the analysis, but if you went EXP > EMLCOA > METT-TC does your analysis still make sense? If so, you can be assured that so far, your analysis is logical and most likely realistic

Begin Planning: Tactical Thought Process: Scheme of Maneuver (SOM)

In combat orders you learn what the essential elements of the **s**cheme **o**f **m**aneuver (SOM) are, and in general terms its relationship with the rest of the order. With regards to tactical planning, it is imperative that your SOM is linked to the rest of the tactical thought process. Your SOM is the detailed plan you have developed to conduct your exploitation plan. Remember, we are still in the "B" in BAMCIS, so this is your *initial* SOM. Once you have arranged for and made reconnaissance, you will seek to validate your assumptions about the enemy, and therefore your SOM.

Begin Planning: Tactical Thought Process: Fire Support Plan (FSP)

To support your initial SOM, you build an initial **F**ire **S**upport **P**lan (FSP) which outlines the supporting fires that will aid in your execution of the SOM. It is, like the rest of the Tactical Thought Process, dependent on the analysis conducted earlier. The troops and fire support available portion of the METT-TC analysis should aid you in developing the FSP.

Begin Planning: Tactical Thought Process: Tasks

At the conclusion of the Tactical Thought Process, we develop our tasks to our subordinates that provide them the mission they must accomplish to allow our SOM to be successful. In Combat Orders you learn the components of the Tasking Statements, so we will not revisit them in this handout. A key point however is the appropriate tactical task and purpose. The purpose is the most important part of the statement as it allows for decentralized execution within your intent.

At the conclusion of Begin the Planning, first check the logic in your analysis by going backwards through your Tactical Thought Process. Does your analysis make sense:

Tasks > FSP > SOM > EXP > EMLCOA > METT-TC.

Arrange for Reconnaissance (B**A**MCIS**)**

Second, compile the questions you have, and the assumptions you have made, which you will answer or validate through reconnaissance.

At this stage in BAMCIS, you must:

1. Identify what questions you need answered and in what priority. ***Validating enemy position, orientation, and activity is always the top priority.***
2. Identify assets available to conduct reconnaissance.
3. Determine the most effective available means of reconnaissance. The types of reconnaissance include physical, aerial, and map/imagery. (If available, a physical reconnaissance is generally the most effective means of "getting eyes on the enemy.")
4. In the case of a physical reconnaissance patrol, identify the leadership you will bring with you and build and brief a plan for the reconnaissance.

Remember, the key in this stage is to focus your reconnaissance planning on answering your assumptions made and questions remaining concerning the enemy and ground.

Make Reconnaissance (BA**M**CIS)

Details concerning the conduct of arranging and conducting a reconnaissance patrol will be instructed during your patrolling platforms, so we will not cover them here. The point to be made here is, in order for reconnaissance to be effective, ***YOU MUST GET EYES ON THE ENEMY; ANSWER REMAINING QUESTIONS; VALIDATE YOUR ASSUMPTIONS.***

Complete the Plan (BAM**C**IS)

After completing your reconnaissance, you should now have validated the assumptions you made about the enemy and answered any questions you had at the end of your initial plan. You can now revisit the Tactical Thought Process utilizing the new information you have gained. ***Do not fall in love with your plan.*** If your SOM must be changed because your EMLCOA and resulting EXP were incorrect, then change the plan. At the conclusion you will build your five paragraph order. If done properly, the preponderance of your order has been written through your execution of the Tactical Thought Process. Orientation relates directly to your terrain analysis and friendly analysis (ME**TT**-TC). Enemy situation contains your enemy Composition, Disposition, and Strength analysis, enemy Capabilities and Limitations analysis (M**E**TT-TC), and EMLCOA analysis. Friendly situation contains much of your Troops and Fire Support available analysis, and higher's mission and intent analysis (**M**E**T**T-TC). Your mission contains the specified tasks identified during your mission analysis (**M**ETT-TC). Your commander's intent is composed of your EXP analysis, and the resulting SOM, FSP, and Tasks have been identified. In writing your order, ensure you are providing the meaningful detail needed for both execution of and confidence in your plan. To check your detail, ask yourself or your senior subordinate: If I were to brief only from

Complete the Plan (Continued)

Orientation to my exploitation plan, would my Marines be able to predict my SOM? If the answer is yes, you probably have the meaningful detail necessary. *Finally, do not forget the Nine Principles of War which are a useful tool to evaluate the strength of your plan, lends rigor and focus to the purely creative aspects of tactics, and provides a crucial link between pure theory and actual application of the Tactical Tenets.*

Issue the Order (BAMCIS)

Order issuance is covered during the Combat Orders class and Utilizing Terrain Models class, so we will not revisit the concept here. The primary focus is confident, succinct, clear communication of your plan over a terrain model that will help you paint the picture to your subordinates. The terrain model should have not only illustrate terrain, but all the information appropriate to show the enemy and friendly SOMs. In evaluating your terrain model, ask yourself: If someone with a basic military knowledge approached this terrain model, would they have a clear depiction of the AO they are about to operation in? Would they understand what the enemy is doing and what we are doing? In other words, can they predict the meat of your order after looking only at the terrain model?

Supervise (BAMCIS)

As stated previously, supervision is not limited to just the preparation for your mission. It is supervision throughout the conduct of the operation, and the consolidation at the end of the operation. ***DO NOT assume that your subordinates are executing in a fashion that meets your standards. Failure to supervise frequently results in mission failure.***

Summary

During this lesson, we discussed the importance of leaders being able to make sound and timely decisions based upon an accurate 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 looked at the Tactical thought Process as an analytical process that identifies and analyzes all the elements of the situation and lends understanding to how the situation affects the commander's development of the Enemy's Most Likely Course of Action, a center of gravity and vulnerability of the enemy directly tied to the EMLCOA, and the creation of a scheme of maneuver that directly targets the enemy's course of action, using the exploitation plan to achieve unity of effort focused on the enemy's critical vulnerability.

References

Reference Number or Author	Reference Title
MCDP 1	Warfighting
MCDP 2	Intelligence
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 3-11.2	Marine Rifle Squad
MCRP 3-11.2A	Marine Troop Leader's 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 reconnaissance, 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
FSP	Fire Support Plan
METT-TC	Mission, Enemy, Terrain and weather, Troops and support available, Time/space/logistics, Civil considerations
OCOKA-W	Observation, cover and concealment, obstacles, key terrain, avenues of approach, weather
PCC/PCI	Pre-Combat Checks/Pre-Combat Inspections
SALUTE	Size, Activity, Location, Unit, Time, Equipment
SOM	Scheme of Maneuver
TCM	Tactical Control Measures

Notes

APPENDIX A: TACTICAL THOUGHT PROCESS AND THE COMBAT ORDER