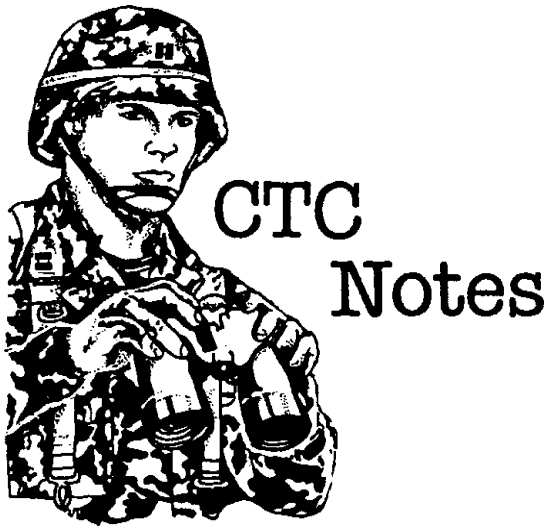

Combat Maneuver Training Center

Product-Focused Planning

By Captain Ted Read and Major Tom Smith

During recent rotations to the Combat Maneuver Training Center (CMTC), engineer battalions have shared the training objective of "surging" the battalion staff during the brigade's military decision-making process (MDMP) and also improving its own MDMP. However, the battalions typically do not arrive with tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTP) on how to accomplish this goal. By the end of a rotation, the battalion staff reaches a norm on how to plan, but it may be inefficient and limit the positive impact of the engineer battalion staff. A technique to address this problem is for the battalion to arrive at the CMTC with an MDMP SOP. A simple way to develop this SOP is to use a product-focused matrix that identifies products required from each staff member by time/phase of the engineer- and maneuver-brigades' MDMPs. The matrix fixes the responsibility for specific products, by phase, and ensures that the staff acts within the brigade combat team's decision cycle.

The first step is for staff members to review tasks and responsibilities for each step of the MDMP. While Field Manual (FM) 101-5, *Staff Organization and Operations*, is the Army's capstone manual for MDMP, staff members should also review key manuals for engineer integration into the brigade combat team—FM 5-7-30, *Brigade Engineer and Engineer Company Combat Operations (Airborne, Air Assault, Light),* and FM 5-71-3, *Brigade Engineer Combat Operations (Armored)*—as well as functional manuals such as FM 20-32, *Mine/Countermine Operations*; FM 90-7, *Combined-Arms Obstacle Integration;* and FM 3.34.2 (formerly FM 90-13-1), *Combined-Arms Breaching Operations*. The goal is for each staff member to answer five questions:

1. What products do I owe the engineer and maneuver commanders?

2. What products do I owe the engineer and maneuver staffs?

3. What products do I owe subordinate commands?

4. When do I owe these products?

5. Who synchronizes production and reviews the product before publication?

Note that FMs 5-71-3 and 5-7-30 crosswalk the maneuver-brigade and engineer-battalion actions during each step of the MDMP but do not fix responsibilities for products from specific staff members.

The second step is to synchronize tasks and responsibilities by time and staff member. The battalion executive officer is the key player in delineating the level of staff participation and the breakdown by phase. During this step, challenge the availability of staff personnel and the timing of products. As conflicts develop, weigh the criticality of the information or product and possible alternate staff members or means to provide the information. The end state is a matrix that lists critical tasks and products by staff section with a no-later-than (NLT) time of production. The matrix becomes a living document ready for execution, preferably at a command-post exercise before the rotation. More details can be added by increasing the specificity of tasks, increasing or further defining the staff participation to staff NCOs and below, and dividing the times/phases into smaller steps. Another level of refinement is possible if the matrix becomes mission-specific (for example, a different matrix for defend, movement-to-contact, or deliberate-attack missions).

Provided on page 49 is a simple example of the planning matrix, intentionally limited to three phases (receive mission, issue warning order (WARNO) #1, and brief the engineer mission analysis). It is not definitive! The unit matrix SOP should be the result of individual staff analysis by phases defined by the executive officer. It should account for your tactical-operations center's (TOC) organization and the brigade combat team's likely battle rhythm.

A primary benefit of this format for developing an MDMP SOP is flexibility. As the staff refines tasks and responsibilities, the matrix easily expands. It also trains a synchronization technique commonly used in tactical units. Used properly, it accomplishes the goal of surging the staff on the brigade's MDMP and improving the battalion's MDMP process.

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Product-Focused Planning Matrix

	Receive Mission	Issue WARNO #1	Brief Engineer Mission Analysis
CDR	• Analyze mission. • Provide initial guidance.		• Issue commander's guidance. • Direct focused precombat inspections on misson-critical equipment.
XO	• Develop timeline. • Prioritize planning assets. • Send a logistics planner to the assistant brigade engineer (ABE). • Focus rear-command-post planning tasks. • Verify current status.	• Issue WARNO #1. • Consolidate products for mission-analysis briefing.	• Coordinate the mission-analysis briefing to the commander. • Nest timeline within the brigade's timeline. • Receive commander's guidance. • Issue WARNO #2.
S3	• Verify initial guidance with the brigade S3/XO. • Identify operational tasks. • Identify operational shortfalls. • Identify critical tasks.	• Prepare operation portion of the mission-analysis briefing. • Prepare mission statement. • Approve ABE portion of the brigade's mission-analysis briefing.	• Brief operational piece of the mission-analysis briefing. • Be prepared to send a planner to the brigade's course-of-action (COA)-development meeting.
ABE	• Copy order for battalion. • Develop a friendly engineer estimate. • Identify engineer tasks. • Submit engineer-specific priority information requirements. • Update the Dirty Battlefield Overlay and have it available for mission-analysis briefing. • Pass specific verbal guidance from the brigade command group to the engineer battalion's TOC via the S3 or XO.	• Receive products from staff for brigade's mission-analysis briefing. • Work to get brigade-specific release authority of SCATMINEs. • Work with S2 on R&S routes. • Work with S2 on engineer-specific named areas of interest (NAIs).	• Attend engineer battalion's mission-analysis briefing. • Receive engineer commander's guidance. • Incorporate the commander's guidance into the brigade's mission-analysis briefing.
S1/S4	• Identify combat-service-support (CSS) tasks. • Identify CSS shortfalls. • Identify critical log task. • Update Class IV/V status. • Update equipment status and project the mission's NLT time.	• Prepare CSS portion of mission-analysis briefing. • Receive status from rear command post.	• Brief the CSS portion of the mission-analysis briefing (focus on mission-critical supplies and equipment). • Receive commander's guidance on priorities of supply and maintenance.
S2	• Develop TerraBase shots of key terrain and objectives. • Review and update the modified combined obstacle overlay (MCOO). • Conduct NAI analysis with the brigade S2. • Develop an enemy engineer estimate.	• Work with brigade S2 for NAI TerraBase products. • Prepare enemy engineer portion of the mission-analysis briefing.	• Brief enemy portion of mission-analysis briefing. • Receive TerraBase guidance.