

OBSTACLE COORDINATION POINTS

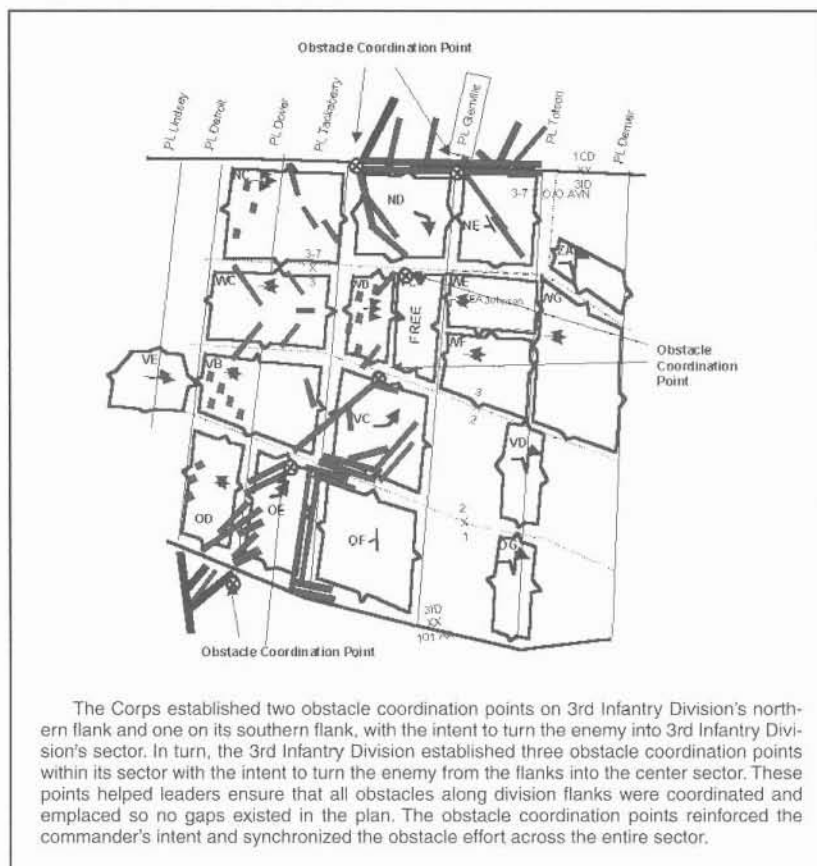
By Colonel David W. Washechek, Lieutenant Colonel James A. Price and Captain Kevin Pettet

Although obstacle coordination points are not current doctrine, this article describes a tactic, technique, and procedure that engineers in the XVIII Airborne Corps found useful during the 3rd Infantry Division Warfighter Exercise at Fort Stewart, Georgia, on 7-12 February 1999.

The XVIII Airborne Corps developed a Corps-level obstacle plan with designated *obstacle coordination points* in support of the Corps maneuver plan. By doing so, XVIII Airborne Corps engineers ensured coordinated obstacle effort throughout the Corps sector, which enabled the Corps to shape the battlefield and fight one fight with massed combat power. In doing so, XVIII Airborne Corps forced the World Class opposing forces into Corps- and division-level engagement areas where they were easily destroyed.

The doctrinal foundation for an obstacle coordination point is found in the definition of a *coordinating point* in FM 101-5-1, *Operational Terms and Graphics*: a control measure that indicates a specific location for the coordination of fires and maneuver between adjacent units. The engineer interpretation of a coordinating point is a place where leaders coordinate their obstacle effort across division and Corps boundaries in support of the maneuver plan.

An obstacle coordination point is not a point on the ground that dictates exactly where obstacles are tied in, but rather a graphic-control measure. These points can be established at Corps, division, brigade combat team, or task force levels. At the Corps level, obstacle coordination points are established along boundaries (flanks) between divisions. At the division level, they are established along boundaries (flanks) between maneuver brigades.



The XVIII Airborne Corps used obstacle coordination points to help the commander communicate his intent during defensive operations. They supported the commander's description of how he wanted to shape the defensive battlefield space, ensured synchronicity of obstacle effort and covering fires, and accelerated leader involvement.

Established obstacle coordination points prevented seams in the obstacle plan (between sectors/boundaries) and eliminated the need to "redesign" portions of the obstacle effort. This saved the Corps, division, and brigades time, manpower, and material resources. ■ ■ ■

Colonel Washechek commands the 3d Infantry Division's Engineer Brigade. A

graduate of the United States Military Academy, he holds a master's degree in civil engineering from Brigham Young and is a registered professional engineer in Virginia.

Lieutenant Colonel Price is the Assistant Corps Engineer, XVIII Airborne Corps. He is currently deployed to the EUCOM AOR and is serving as the Branch Chief, J3 JOPES Support Element.

Captain Pettet is the XVIII Airborne Corps Engineer Plans Officer. He is a graduate of the U.S. Military Academy, the Air Assault and Airborne Schools, the Engineer Officer Advanced Course, and CAS3 and holds a master's degree from the University of Missouri-Rolla.