

Synchronizing Operations in Time, Space, Purpose: The Combined Arms Rehearsal and Commander's Visualization

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The Combined Arms Rehearsal (CAR) ensures synchronization of assets and units in time, space, and purpose to enable the commander's intent. Additionally, it ensures all commanders and staff officers understand the details of the operation and their responsibility within it. 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment (ACR) conducts in excess of 24 CARs per year and has found that the CAR is the most important aspect of the planning and preparation cycles for a given operation. Given a short planning horizon, the Regiment, represented by the Brigade Tactical Group (BTG), will focus on the CAR to mitigate effects of incomplete or rushed orders. Regardless of the timeline, the BTG never fails to conduct a CAR in person. While such a short amount of planning is not ideal, the demands of operations sometimes make it so and this shows that a detailed CAR can mitigate many issues with planning. This article lays out the methodology 11th ACR uses to

synchronize actions in time, space, and purpose using the CAR. The first half of the article focuses on the specifics of the commander's visualization, while the second half describes the CAR itself.

The BTG employs two types of CARs: in contact and out of contact. During pre-deployment preparation, the out of contact CAR brings all hands together on a massive terrain board replete with relief and all graphics. Here, commanders, intelligence officers, fire supporters, specialty platoon leaders, etc. gather and fight out the plan. In contact, the task force uses a reduced method. The commander determines attendees with the minimum being the S2 shop, Fire Support Officer (FSO), S3, and commanders. The rehearsal occurs anywhere that is inconspicuous such as a well-covered wadi, a non-descript building, or even a garage. The terrain board at times is a large map the task force retains or a smaller terrain model with less detail. When done

outdoors the task force erects camo nets to minimize overhead observation and disperses vehicles to look non-descript.

The scene setter of the CAR is the Commander's Visualization. This provides the framework for synchronization in time, space, and purpose. Therefore, we offer the following insight into a good visualization. The commander's visualization is the commander's opportunity to ensure everyone sees the fight like he or she does and to ensure the organization is focused on a single purpose. One error many commanders make is in using this space to motivate troops, put out notes, or other miscellanea. The commander should rather focus on translating his or her intent into a well understood overview of operations. This sets the tone for the operation. The format the BTG uses is:

Purpose: This is the expanded purpose of the operation and should closely mirror the operations order unless something has changed from its publication to the order. For example: "The purpose of this operation is to buy time for the 802nd BTG to establish an area defense around Razish to prevent the enemy from seizing the provincial capital."

What Are We Trying to Accomplish: This can naturally flow from the purpose, but the intent is to talk about the major elements of what the unit must do. "We are trying to delay the enemy advance through a series of engagement areas to slow down his operations and extend his lines. We want to force him east to create a long line of control (LOC) vulnerable to attack which will set conditions for a counter-attack and buy more time for follow on units to prepare their defenses."

BTG Mission and Commander's Intent	
Mission: The 801st BTG conducts a mobile defense between PL Debbie and PL Betty from 221800APR2024 to 250700APR2024 in order to allow the 802nd BTG to establish a deliberate defense in the Central Corridor. O/O the 801st BTG counterattacks along Axis Iron in order to deny the enemy an ability to consolidate for an attack into the Central Corridor.	
<u>Commander's Intent</u>	
Expanded Purpose: The purpose of this operation is to buy time for the 802nd BTG. Critical to this operation is preventing the enemy from establishing a screen along PL Mike. This is critical because a screen would prevent an integrated counterattack. We seek to push the enemy to the east and then fix them before counterattacking south through Siberia.	
<u>Key Tasks:</u>	
1.	Render the Enemy Deaf, Blind, and Mute: Defeat their reconnaissance, destroy their command posts and mission command systems, and destroy or degrade their information collection systems forcing them to fight disaggregated.
2.	Attrit him inch by inch: Mass the effects of drones, fires, aviation, and maneuver to force the enemy to take ground at extremely high costs. We don't care about any of this ground but we want him to think we want it all.
3.	Keep the Road Open: Push the enemy off to the east so that the counterattack has a route south through Siberia. Block in the center; give way in the east.
4.	Preserve combat power: Use passive and active means to keep our combat power alive to kill the enemy.
<u>Decisive Point:</u> Destruction of two enemy companies IVO Snowcone as this will force the enemy further east, delaying him by 24 hours, and enabling an effective counterattack.	
<u>End State:</u> At end state, the 802nd BTG is postured to defend the Central Corridor, the 801st has pushed the enemy back to PL Debbie, the enemy is unable to resume offensive operations for 24 hours, and the 802nd controls PL Mike	

Figure 1. BTG Mission and Commander's Intent (U.S. Army)

Key Tasks: These are likely similar to your operations order. Some commanders prefer very specific key tasks (i.e. “Seize Objective (OBJ) Colts”) while others prefer more broad key tasks (“Win the Counter Recon Fight”). We’ve found in the BTG that using pithy phrases that are easy to remember helps ensure compliance and we tend to use more generalized key tasks. For example:

- Key Task #1: Render the Enemy Deaf, Blind, and Mute—Prevent the enemy from seeing or talking. Kill the recon assets and missions command systems.
- Key Task #2: Attrit Inch by Inch—Make the enemy pay a high price for the terrain he gets.
- Key Task #3: Grab Him By the Belt: Get in close to neutralize the effect of air and artillery assets.
- Key Task #4: Deceive Him—Make it so the enemy doesn’t know where our counterattack is coming from.

End State: This is not different from the typical end state of any operations, laid out in Terrain, Enemy, Friendly, and Civilian considerations.

“At end state, the enemy will have lost two battalions worth of combat power, friendly forces are prepared to defend West of Phase Line (PL) Mike, the BTG retains Hill 760...”

Risk: The Army defines risk in terms of accident and tactical, more colloquially termed risk to force and risk to mission. However one defines it, it is important to spell out risk and mitigation measures. One way to consider risk is the Move-Strike-Protect framework. At all times, a unit can normally only do two well. For example, a defense requires loss of ability to move at scale.

“I see three areas of risk: 1. We are in Strike-Protect mode, so we are limited in mobility. We will employ a capable reserve, rehearsed, to return to offense and ensure we protect our flanks from Infantry. 2. We have limited

ability to construct obstacles due to limited engineer assets. We will focus on survivability and use terrain and indirect fires to shape the enemy into our engagement areas. 3. We accept risk to our personnel due to the extremely dusty conditions. We will implement a 100-meter dust interval, enforce cleaning of windshields, and provide more time for movements to ensure no loss of personnel to accidents.”

Overview: Here, the commander should walk the terrain on the model or map and discuss how he or she sees the battle unfolding. “I believe the enemy will attempt a simultaneous push toward Siberia and Red Lake Pass. At 2100, troops will move north of the Whale Gap and probe our engagement area. 3-67 AR will push north into Siberia attempting to first seize the John Wayne Foothills and establishing a blocking position at the mouth of John Wayne Pass. Simultaneous to that, 3-15 IN will push toward Nabran and isolate it before clearing it. 2-69 AR with engineers will then pass 3-15 IN and attempt to seize Red Lake Pass using dismounts to clear the high ground to the east and west. 3-67 AR will push to the Siberian Ridge Line and establish a hasty defense. 2-69 AR will then push through and seize Forward Operating Base (FOB) Miami as a far side objective. After consolidation and reorganization, 2-69 AR will move to seize Snow Cone while 6-8 CAV attempts to push a screen line along PL Mike from PL Betty to PL Courtney. 3-15 IN will then isolate Barisu and attempt to seize the town from the north. In order to prevent this, we will use a Family of Scatterable Mines (FASCAM) to push them into the eastern approach. What we need to do to counter this is act like an offensive line in pass blocking. Tiefert is our center and our defense along JW Foothills is our guard. Nothing gets through. Continue to push the enemy east. Our defense along Porta-Potty Wadi is our Tackle. We’re going to absorb the blow and push the attacking defensive end outside to provide time for our quarterback to throw. As we string them outside along a long LOC, we’ll fix with a counterattack and then send our reserve deep to destroy his

Position Areas for Artillery (PAAs).”

Once the commander provides their visualization, participants fight out the plan in real time and that fires and maneuver are synchronized with all assets supporting the plan. Generally, anything already covered in an order, confirmation brief, or back brief, is not covered again save the disposition and composition of forces to set the scene. Commanders do not brief, but rather fight their plans in concert with the BTG shaping operation. The S2 fights the enemy plan as if they were the commander. In the offense, the BTG initiates action during the CAR. In the defense, the S2, acting as the enemy, initiates action. For example, when briefing an enemy battalion, an S2 rep might say: “My name is LTC John Jones, and I am the commander of 1-17 IN. I bring to the fight three infantry companies, a scout platoon, and a mortar platoon. I will [*cross the*] line of departure (LD) at 0600 and attempt to establish a foothold on John Wayne Foothills using A Company to clear the high ground to the west, C Company to establish a support by fire, and B Company to seize the objective.”

As this action takes place brigade- and battalion-level assets begin to fight against it. First, the BTG established how it detects the enemy action and answers priority intelligence requirements (PIR). For example, the scout platoon leader may say, “observation point (OP) 1 observes that movement through the Whale Gap, named area of interest (NAI) 5, and reports via Joint Capability Release (JCR) on the Task Force (TF) Battle S2 chat.” Then, the S2 may say, “That answers PIR #1. We now know the main avenue of approach.”

Next in the sequence is the fires fight. The Fire Support Officer (FSO) might say, “That triggers me to fire target AB1001 which is a Battery 6 fired from Alpha Battery with the task to disrupt the formation as it moves through the Whale Gap.” The Joint Terminal Attack Controller (JTAC) would discuss any response from fixed wing aircraft and the brigade aviation officer or liaison from



Figure 2. 11th ACR Conducting a Combined Arms Rehearsal Prior to Deployment (Photo by 11th ACR Public Affairs)

the aviation element would then discuss and rotary wing response. The S2 may also discuss armed drones if available. Of course, this is only if fixed wing, rotary wing, or armed drones are to be used in this engagement. Rather than go around the horn and having staff officers and leaders brief “no change”, only those units or assets contribute to the portion of the fight in question chime in.

Following this, the various protection elements talk. For example, and engineer battalion commander may say, “As the element approaches the John Wayne Foothills, it will come in contact with a 500 m antitank ditch located at MP 3214 5969.” The Air Defense Artillery (ADA) officer would discuss arrayal of assets in the event the enemy is expected to employ aviation. Then, the Electronic Warfare (EW) officer would discuss any jamming or other effects arrayed against this threat. For example, “As the enemy battalion exits the Whale Gap they will encounter global positioning system (GPS) jamming until 0200.” All of this occurs only if any of these elements have a role in the portion of the fight being rehearsed.

Maneuver comes last after the BTG

and its enablers have shaped the fight. The Mechanized Infantry Battalion (MIBN) commander or the commander of the Mechanized Infantry Company (MIC) arrayed at John Wayne Foothills may discuss their direct fire plan. Keep in mind that all this is occurring on the map or terrain model. Commanders and staff orders move about the map;

they do not sit back in chairs and brief. The very best CARs the BTG has executed ended up with commanders fighting and coordinating actions on the map with little prompt from the BTG commander or S3. At the end of this exchange, the S-2 assesses the enemy’s effect on combat power and the unit’s effect on the enemy. “I (S-2 as



Figure 3. Task Force Battle Conducts a Combined Arms Rehearsal in an Abandoned Tent (Photo by Author)

the enemy) believe you have lost one MIC and I lost a company of infantry and a platoon of tanks.”

When in the defense, it may be helpful for a commander to brief their engagement area development when discussing their establishment, though this can take away from the flow. If inclined, an example is: “I assess the enemy will use axis of advance (AoA) 1 and 2. I assess the enemy will send two battalions along AoA 1, with one attempting to breach, and the other

<p>1. Rules</p> <p>2. Orientation to the Terrain Board (AS3)</p> <p>3. Commander's Intent and Visualization (CDR) (see next section)</p> <p>4. Initial Set</p> <p>a. Enemy (S-2): Battalions (including slant), PAAs, C2, Forward Area Refueling Points (FARPs), other High-Payoff Target List (HPTL) targets, obstacles (offense)</p> <p>b. Friendly (AS3): Bns (including slant), Scouts, Obstacles (defense), C2</p> <p>[Note: We find that having the AS3 brief all friendly sets significantly reduces time on the front end of the CAR and prevents the CAR from turning into a back brief.]</p> <p>5. Fight the Plan</p> <p>a. When on Defense</p> <p>i. Enemy Action Briefed by S-2 or AS2: “I am LTC John Smith, commander of 1-1 IN BN. I have two mechanized IN companies and one tank company. I will move along Route Eagles...”</p> <p>ii. Who Sees it? (UAS, recon aviation, scouts, etc.); “I observe four tanks entering EA Smash and report to Brigade S-2 on channel 509, the command net.” [All proponents able to sense or observe this action explain how they detect and how they report.]</p> <p>iii. PIR Answered, if any (S-2)</p> <p>iv. Fires Response:</p> <p>1. Artillery (FSO): What targets are being fired and are there any triggers for special munitions?</p> <p>2. Aviation (as appropriate)</p> <p>a. Fixed Wing (JTAC)</p> <p>b. Rotary Wing (Brigade Aviation Officer)</p> <p>c. Armed unmanned aerial system (S-2)</p> <p>v. Protection</p> <p>1. Obstacles (TF Engineer or BEB Commander): Where are the obstacles and what are their effects on the enemy?</p> <p>2. ADA (Protection Officer): Where is the ADA and what is its engagement and disengagement criteria?</p> <p>3. EW (EW): What assets will be in support at this time and what are their effects?</p> <p>vi. Maneuver: What is the ground commander doing to counteract the enemy? The commander should also brief triggers to occupy BPs and use internal fire support measures, such as mortars, as well as engagement criteria, disengagement criteria, and displacement criteria. [Commander's should discuss risk as they see it]</p> <p>vii. S2 Adjudication: Following this action, the S2 should assess what Red and Blue forces have been destroyed or degraded and this should be kept in mind as the rehearsal progresses.</p> <p>b. When on Offense:</p> <p>i. Intel read: How do we identify the enemy disposition, composition, strength, and courses of action (COAs)? What assets detect this? How do we report information?</p> <p>1. UAS</p> <p>2. Aviation</p> <p>3. Scouts</p> <p>4. Other intel sources</p> <p>ii. Fires actions to shape the enemy</p> <p>iii. Aviation actions to shape the enemy.</p> <p>1. Fixed Wing</p> <p>2. Rotary Wing</p> <p>3. UAS</p> <p>iv. Maneuver</p> <p>1. Actions at the PLOC, formation, order of movement</p> <p>2. Engineer Efforts</p> <p>3. Smoke</p> <p>4. SOSRA as necessary</p> <p>5. Maneuver plan 1 level down</p> <p>6. Risk</p> <p>v. Enemy Response (S-2)</p> <p>vi. S2 Adjudication: Following this action, the S-2 should assess what Red and Blue forces have been destroyed or degraded and this should be kept in mind as the rehearsal progresses.</p> <p>6. Decision Points (S-3): A note taker should track along the Decision Support Tool and announce when the unit has reached a decision point and the S-3 should recommend a COA to the commander.</p>	
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Figure 4. Sample Script to focus on fighting versus briefing (U.S. Army)

as the exploitation force. I intend to kill the enemy in EA Crush. I will emplace a turn obstacle from MP 1234 5678 to MP 1265 5690. I will have one company arrayed in BP 1, another in BP 2, and a third in an alternate BP [which the commander points out on the map or terrain model]. I have planned Target AB 1010 to destroy enemy moving along Route Eagles." Commanders should brief their engagement criteria, disengagement criteria, and displacement criteria, with the final one including an assessment of time to displace and reestablish.

In the offense, it is helpful for the commander to brief their transition from movement to maneuver at the probable line of contact. "I will SP from Attack Position Fury at 0200 traveling along Axis of Advance Blue. An advanced guard will lead with companies in column. We anticipate the PLOC being PL California. 500 m from PL California, elements will transition to platoons in wedge and transition to traveling overwatch..."

The commander's role during the fighting portion of the CAR is to ask questions, such as "How long will it take?" and to make decisions that pop up during synchronization. Additionally, the commander verifies that subordinate commanders have nested their scheme of maneuver with theirs. The S3 with assistance from the FSO and S2 help the commander ensure his or her fighting products are nested across the board.

Steps 5 and 6 above will repeat as many times as the commander and S-3 feel necessary. Generally, the commander and S-3 agree upon what they will rehearse and assign each a turn. This may look like: counter-recon fight, fight in engagement area 1, fight in

engagement area 2, and counterattack, as an example.

The methodology of the CAR laid out here ensures that commanders and staff officers are rehearsing actions on the terrain model or map rather than back briefing their plans and helps ensure efforts are synchronized in time, space, and purpose. Setting the scene for the CAR is the commander's visualization and the method offered here has proven quite effective. Taken together, these techniques represent a great way to ensure operational success.

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ACRONYM QUICK-SCAN

ACR – Armored Cavalry Regiment
ADA – Air Defense Artillery
AoA – Axis of Advance
BAO – Brigade Aviation Officer
BTG – Brigade Tactical Group
BP – battle position
CAR – Combined Arms Rehearsal
COA – courses of action
EW – Electronic Warfare
FARP – Forward Area Refueling Point
FASCAM – Family of Scatterable Mines
FOB – Forward Operating Base
FSO – Fire Support Officer
GPS – global positioning system
HPTL – High-Payoff Target List
JCR – Joint Capabilities Release
JTAC – Joint Terminal Attack Controller
LD – Line of Departure
LOC – Line of Control
MIBN – Mechanized Infantry Battalion
MIC – Mechanized Infantry Company
NAI – named area of interest
OBJ – Objective
OP – Observation Point
PAA – Position Area for Artillery
PIR – Priority Intelligence Requirement
PL – Phase Line
TF – Task Force
UAS – Unmanned aerial system



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