



Soldiers with Charlie Troop, 1st Squadron, 75th Cavalry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, move from a wood line to a target compound during a joint exercise at Fort Campbell, Ky., Aug. 16, 2019. The Soldiers spent two weeks training with Green Berets from the 5th Special Forces Group (Airborne) on battle drills, handling prisoners of war, tactical casualty care and evacuation, and mission planning. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Iman Broady-Chin)

# Planning and Troop Leading Procedures

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**A**s civilizations and their armies have developed, so has their reliance on operational planning and preparation. Although this concept dates back to well before 6000 B.C., as documented by Sun Tzu's *The Art of War*, it is a relatively new idea within the U.S. Army, who only formally initiated the applied theory in the late 1800s. Though their military vs. civilian gover-

nance ideas were unfavorable with the American Constitution and like other military concepts, the U.S. Army again took lessons from the Prussian military model. The U.S. learned from the failures of the Prussian Generalstab's Schlieffen Plan philosophy that flawless planning will not trump poor strategy and execution.

The age of modern U.S. Army planning began in

1910, just prior to WWI with the publication of *Regulations for Field Maneuvers*. Though a start, it failed to address processes. The procedural shortfall was acknowledged with a 1914 field service regulation publication that mentioned the void, yet again failed to provide substance. The post-WWI update brought the establishment of doctrinal orders, annexes, maps, tables, and guidance that leaders “first make an estimate of the situation, culminating in a decision upon a definite plan of action” (Paparone). Yet again, no process steps were defined. The 1932 publication, *The Staff Officers’ Field Manual*, outlined principles rather than unyielding rules that set the foundation for today’s procedures.

As a result of the growing WWII effort, the 1940 *Field Manual (FM) 101-5, Staff Officer Field Manual: The Staff and Combat Orders* addressed the intricacies and scope of planning and decision-making for a multinational effort. The updates to *FM 101-5* in 1950 and 1954 focused primarily on the commander’s estimate process. In 1968, revisions of *FM 101-5* presented the Standardization Agreement 2118, set problem-solving techniques with flowcharts, wiring diagrams, and the encouragement to “fill the gaps in knowledge of what conditions probably will be” (Paparone).

In 1972, *FM 101-5* included the introduction of the administrative staff study to focus on administrative preparations allowing for the military decision-making process (MDMP) to be used primarily for combat operations. The retitled *FM 101-5* was released in 1984 as the *Staff Organization and Operations* where MDMP was further developed doctrinally by adding rehearsals among other details.

In 1997, the introduction of the commander’s intent and the marriage of synthesis and analysis during the MDMP process was introduced. 2005 introduced the sixth update to the original *FM 101-5* and another retitling to *FM 5-0, Army Planning and Orders Production*. This publication established the link between the MDMP and troop leading procedures (TLP). The final 2010 update to *FM 5-0* further strengthened the linkage between MDMP and TLPs through the Army problem solving methodology. The most recent version of this document, *Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 5-0, The Operations Process*, accompanied by its sister publications, helped to revolutionize and simplify our doctrinal references while reinforcing this linkage.

Infantry Soldiers, and those who have used *FM 7-8*, *FM 3-21.8*, and other similar publications have been exposed to and utilized TLPs for years. It has, however, only been recently that the TLP concept has broken outside the combat arms realm. This can be, in large part,



U.S. Army 1st Lt. Alesandra Lipari, currently assigned as the fire support officer for 12th Combat Aviation Brigade, conducts initial planning for Dragoon Ready 20 at Hoenfels Training Area, Germany, Oct. 23, 2019. (U.S. Army photo by Maj. Robert Fellingham)

directly attributed to the more than 10 years of war and the collaborative efforts across all cohorts and branches while often operating outside traditional doctrinal roles. Troop leading procedures are now covered in not only infantry manuals but also *The Operations Process (ADP 5-0)*, the *Commander and Staff Officer Guide (ATTP 5-0.1)* and many others validating the relationship and dependencies between the Army design methodology, military decision-making process, and TLPs. This complementary relationship lends credence to the use and value of TLPs and their overall contribution to mission success.

As military leaders, we spend much of our time planning. We plan multiple courses of action, we plan for numerous contingencies, and we plan for events that we pray never come to fruition. Ultimately, we plan so that we are ready to confidently and successfully lead our Soldiers into a situation for which we have considered the likely scenarios and potential outcomes. Troop leading procedures give us a proven planning and decision-making process by which we can effectively and expeditiously plan, prepare, and execute at the company level and below.

The TLP is made up of eight steps and although they are in serial, some steps may run parallel to one another, as do the TLP steps with those of MDMP (*FM 3-12.8*).

Step 1: Receive the mission - this could be by either a completed operations order (OPORD) or warning order (WARNO), and later fragmentary order (FRAGO). Oftentimes, the MDMP is still developing courses of action (COAs) when the WARNOs are issued.

Step 2: WARNO - do not delay issuance, this will allow your subordinates as much time as possible to begin their preparations. Include as much information as possible, but do not wait for all information. Send

a WARNO as soon as the initial assessment and time availability is determined, and follow up with other WARNOS as needed.

Step 3: Make a tentative plan - this is based on the operational variables such as mission, enemy, terrain, troops, time, and civilian considerations (METT-TC).

Step 4: Initiate movement - any movement necessary for the mission preparation or execution.

Step 5: Conduct reconnaissance - though critical, personal recons of an area of responsibility (AOR) may not always be an option. At a minimum, you should always conduct a map/imagery recon and intelligence must thoroughly be reviewed in order to identify information gaps in the plan and mission analysis.

Step 6: Complete the plan - results of the recon validate the course of action (COA) Overlays, target lists, sustainment and signal requirements are refined and the tentative plan is updated. Coordination with higher headquarters and adjacent units is complete if available time permits.

Step 7: Issue the order - this is typically issued verbally following the standard format of the five-paragraph OPORD. Ideally, the issuance would be at an AOR vantage point overlooking the objective, however, due to security/other concerns this is typically done over a sand table, a map, or other means.

Step 8: Supervise and refine - this step keys in on the strength of the unit's standard operating procedures (SOP), rehearsals, and the NCO's role of check, check, and check again. Organizational SOPs help govern the process, rehearsals help strengthen the action/team, and NCO checks, i.e. pre-combat checks and inspections (PCCs/PCIs), verify Soldier/mission readiness.

Troop leading procedures are a dynamic process that will require adaptation as the operational variables change. As leaders, we plan for an anticipated result based on unknown actions by a potentially hostile force. Some plans go well, and as history and experience has proven, others often do not. TLPs are the battle drill for small unit level planning and provide a guide to plan for a specific COA while considering possible outcomes and alternate COAs. Rehearsals, battle drills, and SOPs are key in the event that things do not go according to plan. Soldiers and leaders must have the confidence, foundation, and "muscle memory" to instinctively transition to an alternate COA or contingency and still find success.

The Army has procedures and manuals for nearly everything that you will come into contact with in Army life. Some procedures are hard structured with no gray area or room for deviation, such as the Uniformed Code of Military Justice or the rigging instructions for a parachute. Others have room for interpretation and application such as TLPs. They provide a flexible framework due to the variables and factors associated with mission planning. Although some considerations carry more weight than others, each step is equally important and leads to a clearer picture of the impending operation. A recent Joint Readiness Training Center study found that leaders who used a simple graphic training aid reference card were much more effective than those who did not on 34 of 39 measures also resulting in ample time to conduct quality TLPs. Should one step be overlooked rather than assessed, it weakens the subsequent steps, the operation, and ultimately, the Soldier's safety.

We have all heard the quote from former U.N. General Assembly President Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit, "The more

we sweat in peace, the less we bleed in war." Based on that thought, TLPs are to be used and honed during peacetime and training operations. When I was stationed in Hawaii during the mid 1990s, one of our sister companies was conducting a platoon live-fire range where they were assaulting an objective. The company issued the order and the platoons immediately began their planning processes. By all indications things were running smoothly with the platoons rotating through a day dry-fire, blank-fire, and live-fire. The platoons then proceeded into the night iterations, again completing a dry, blank, and live-fire. It was when the third and final platoon went into their live-fire scenario that things went wrong.

On the sixth run for this platoon,



U.S. Army Col. Wilson Rutherford, far right, commander of the 1st Armored Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division, leads a combined arms rehearsal at Camp Aachen training area, Grafenwoehr, Germany, Jan. 20, 2019. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. 1st Class Robert Jordan, 382nd Public Affairs Detachment)



U.S. Army 1st Lt. Gavin Baynes with Charlie Company, 5th Battalion, 20th Infantry Regiment, explains the use of a terrain model while implementing troop leading procedures during exercise Cobra Gold 19 at Photsanulok, Kingdom of Thailand, Feb. 15, 2019. Cobra Gold is one of the largest theater security cooperation exercises in the Indo-Pacific and is an integral part of the U.S. commitment to strengthen engagement in the region. (U.S. Marine Corps photo by Cpl. Robert G. Gavaldon)

having done well on the five previous iterations, a Soldier was killed. After the investigation and interviews, it was determined that the process had changed on that final iteration compared to the previous five. The critical decision that put this in action was the leader's decision to initiate fire on the objective himself rather than the M60 gunner who had done it five times previously. The Soldier positions were not easily visible due to very high and thick grass and as a result the Soldier was shot in the back by his leader. We will never know for sure but chances are that this accident could have been avoided had the leader taken the time to revisit and follow the TLPs.

In a cursory review, this should have been caught in any of the following steps: Step 2, was this change covered in a concept of operation WARNO? Step 3, METT-TC, was observation, avenue of approach, and cover

considered? Troops and support available, was the change the result of a Soldier or manning issue? Was initiating fires a changing COA given in a FRAGO? Step 5, was a reconnaissance done of firing positions and Soldier locations in respect to the objective? Step 6, was a new plan completed with the change in initiation? Step 7, was the order issued over a sand table with locations or on the ground with exact locations? Step 8, was there a rehearsal with the new plan, what is the unit SOP for such an operation?

We are in a tough business and accidents are going to happen, however, the Army gives us the tools to succeed and it is up to us to use them correctly. As in life, the effort you put in will be the results you take out. Most of the lessons and procedures we study today are based

on the hard experiences and gaps of yesterday. To prevent the hard lessons of times past, we, as leaders, must coach these principles through the implementation and enforcement of standards and discipline. The goal is to set up our Soldiers and future leaders with the foundation and skills today so that they are prepared to lead and succeed tomorrow.

If you would like to learn more about this topic, it is recommended that you read the following publications; *Army Doctrine Publication 5-0, The Operations Process, Army Tactics, Techniques and Procedures 5-0.1, Commander and Staff Officer Guide, Field Manual 3-21.8, The Infantry Rifle Platoon and Squad, Improving Troop Leading Procedures at the Joint Readiness Training Center* by Evans & Baus, *U.S. Army Decision-making Past, Present and Future* by Paparone and *The Schlieffen Plan* by Ping. ■

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