MQA-8 DIV: MILITARY PLANNING PROCESS – MDMP

PREREQUISITES: MQA-7

REQUIRED READING: ALO Smart Book; Squadron TACP Handbook, FM 101-5 (Chapter 5), FM 34-130

PURPOSE: Familiarize new ALO with Army division planning process and how to make inputs into an OPORD.

Introduction - (Slide 2)

The Army military planning process is called the military decision making process (MDMP). The purpose of division level MDMP is to produce an "order" for the entire division to execute in accordance with tasks listed in the corps order. MDMP will cover every briefing from getting the order from division all the way to the point where major subordinate commanders (MSC) will walk a rock terrain or Rock Drill of the battle. ALO involvement in MDMP is required in order to provide smooth and effective Close Air Support (CAS) and Air Interdiction (AI). Airpower is effects based and should be portrayed as such. Always think about what is doctrinally and tactically correct.

First and foremost the division plans ALO needs to understand Army terminology and the way the Army fights. The Army fights over an entire geographical area instead of specific targets within a geographical area (the way a typical Air Force aviator is used to). You must familiarize yourself with FM 101-5-1, Operational Terms and Graphics. You will require a detailed knowledge of phase lines, TAIs, AIs, EAs, LDs, and a myriad of other acronyms. The Army stresses doctrine. Therefore you will also require a detailed knowledge of the definitions of a large number of the terms in FM 101-5-1. A quick reference handout has been developed to help you with the most important of the terms and acronyms you will use most often.

Once the warning order is issued, the division staff is extremely busy and will spend from 18 to 20 hours on the job. They will operate on as little as two hours of sleep per day until the process is complete. As the ALO, you will need to determine how much time your presence is actually required and that will come with experience. Suffice it to say, you don't need to work 18 hours a day during this process, however, you will need to be available.

The steps of the MDMP process are as follows:

- Receipt of Mission (Corps OPORD)
- Mission Analysis (MA)
- Course of Action (COA) Development
- Course of Action Analysis (Wargaming)
- Course of Action Comparison
- Course of Action Approval
- Orders Production
- ROCK Drills (Combined Arms Rehearsal)

Receipt of Mission – (Slide 3 - 4)

The corps will issue a warning order to facilitate parallel planning by the corps, division and subordinate planning staffs. The warning order will contain top level details allowing the division planning staff to gather material on the area of operation (AO). The Corps OPORD will contain greater detail. The ALO should take time to read the Corps OPORD and the Fire Support and ADA Annexes. The staff prepares for mission analysis immediately on receipt of a warning order.

Mission Analysis – (Slide 5 - 6)

Mission analysis (MA) allows the commander to begin battlefield visualization. The result of MA is defining the tactical problem and beginning the process of determining feasible solutions. It consists of 17 steps, not necessarily sequential, and results in the staff pre-briefing the CoS (Chief of Staff) and formally briefing the CG (Commanding General).

- Analyze The Higher Headquarters' Order (Corps OPORD)
- Conduct Initial Intelligence Preparation Of The Battlefield (IPB)
- Determine Specified, Implied, And Essential Tasks
- Review Available Assets
- Determine Constraints
- Identify Critical Facts And Assumptions
- Conduct Risk Assessment
- Determine Initial Commander's Critical Information Requirements (CCIR)
- Determine The Initial Reconnaissance Annex
- Plan Use Of Available Time
- Write The Restated Mission
- Conduct A Mission Analysis Briefing
- Approve The Restated Mission
- Develop The Initial Commander's Intent
- Issue The Commander's Guidance
- Issue A Warning Order
- Review Facts And Assumptions
- Course Of Action Approval
- Orders Production

The ALO assists the process by determining friendly air assets available (ADA Annex) and to advise on enemy use of airpower. The Corps ALO can provide information on the thought processes used during the Corps COA analysis and selection. The weather officer provides forecasts or historical data for weather, illumination data, and thermal data projected during the operations time frame. During the MA portion of MDMP, the ALO can assist the Engineer on possible scatterable mine placement to help shape the battlefield. Also, the ALO can assist the G4 by reminding them the TALO can answer questions on possible logistical support. There isn't any formal role the ALO plays during MA except to be available to assist on air power questions. At the mission analysis brief, the CG will give guidance on possible COAs for development.

During the MDMP process you should be very familiar with both the Corps Fire Support and ADA annexes. You should have an understanding of what the corps is attempting to accomplish and how they plan to do it. An understanding of the basic corps order is essential to this process as well. As you gain experience you will know what annexes are important. However, as the division planner you need to know that all of the annexes will contain information that affects operation of the division and you are expected to be the repository of that information as it may affect your squadron.

One of the first things the Army planners need to understand is what a sortie is versus a mission. A sortie is a single aircraft. A mission as far as fighter aircraft are concerned is made up of two or more sorties. Some of our Army counterparts find this concept hard to understand.

Course of Action Development – (Slide 7-8)

After receiving guidance, the staff develops COAs for analysis and comparison. The DIV CG sometimes gives the COA to the planning staff but not always. If the DIV CG doesn't give the COA, then the planning staff will have to come up with two or three (a most likely and a most dangerous based on enemy action) COAs. There is not a whole lot the ALO does during this, except help the S2 and ADA figure out how the enemy may use fixed wing aircraft against friendly forces. The ALO must always think about how airpower can facilitate decisive points (e.g. river crossings) in the COA.

The exact role the ALO plays in this phase is determined by the level of advice required by the rest of the planning staff. Past roles have included the ALO taking a very active part in COA development with the core staff planners doing the initial legwork. During this initial phase of planning the ALO planner must determine the main effort of the ground commander. Once this is determined, advise the core planning staff where you see the focus of airpower to be a combat multiplier to achieve the desired effects on the battlefield. Don't let the Army planners talk you into a "peanut butter" spread of the available air assets in your AO. Always focus the airpower to achieve the maximum effects in line with the ground commander's intent. Also, the ALO planner must focus on those strategic and operational targets in conjunction with the tactical targets during COA development. These strategic and operational targets will become your future AI nominations. Regardless of how active a role the ALO plays during this phase he should be available to the core staff to answer questions. That does not mean the ALO needs to physically be in the planning room all day while the core planners figure out what they want to do. Advise the planners where and how you can be reached. If there are multiple planners they can work out a schedule where an ALO is available whenever one is needed. If you are to be the lone planner, the Army expects you to be available 24/7. This does not mean you need to spend all of your time in the planning cell, but the planners need to be able to contact the ALO at any time. Each COA considered must meet the criteria of –

- **Suitability**. It must accomplish the mission and comply with the commander's guidance.
- **Feasibility**. The unit must have the capability to accomplish the mission in terms of available time, space, and resources.
- **Acceptability**. The tactical or operational advantage gained by executing the COA must justify the cost in resources, especially casualties. (largely subjective)
- **Distinguishability**. Each COA must differ significantly from any other. (largely subjective)
- **Completeness**. It must be a complete mission statement (who, what, when, where, how, why)

There are normally six steps to COA development.

- **Analyze relative combat power**. At division level, relative combat power is an evaluation of rough ratios of combat units two levels down.
- **Generate options**. A good COA should be capable of defeating all feasible enemy COAs.
- **Array initial forces**. The initial array identifies the number of units needed, develops a base of knowledge to make decisions, and identifies possible methods of dealing with the enemy during scheme of maneuver development. Shortfalls are identified.
- **Develop the scheme of maneuver**. It is the central expression of the commander's concept for operations and governs the design of supporting plans or annexes.
- **Assign headquarters**. Create a task organization.
- **Prepare COA statements and sketches**. The COA statement must clearly portray how the unit will accomplish the mission and explain the scheme of maneuver. As a minimum, the sketch should include the array of generic forces, and control measures.

After the COA briefing, the CG gives additional guidance. If he rejects all COAs, the staff begins again. The CG will normally accept one or more of the COAs and directs the start of COA analysis/wargaming.

Course of Action Analysis/Wargaming – (Slides 9 – 13)

COA analysis identifies which COA accomplishes the mission with minimum casualties while best positioning the force to retain the initiative for future operations. Computers have improved the process of wargaming, but it is still the longest meeting the Army has and can last days. Everyone on the planning staff has responsibilities as listed below:

- **CoS**. The CoS is responsible for coordinating actions of the staff during the war game. He normally delegates this to G3-Plans.
- **G1**. The G1 analyzes COAs to project potential personnel battle losses and to determine how CSS must provide personnel support during operations.
- **G2**. The G2 role-plays the enemy commander. He identifies information requirements and refines the event template to include NAIs that support decision points and refines the event matrix with corresponding decision points (DPs), target areas of interest (TAIs), and high-value targets (HVTs).

- **G3-Plans**. The G3 ensures the wargame for each COA covers every operational aspect of the mission, records each event's strengths and weaknesses, and annotates the rationale.
- **G4**. The G4 analyzes each COA to assess its sustainment feasibility. The TALO will work with the G4 on airlift issues. However, be advised your Army counterparts expect your knowledge to encompass all aircraft and their capabilities. It would be to your advantage to get with a TALO and brush up on your knowledge of logistic aircraft you can expect in a theater of operations including coalition aircraft.

- **ALO**. The ALO must remain objective and ensure the use of CAS and AI is realistic and complies with Air Force doctrine. SEAD and FSCL changes are usually hot issues. The ALO must develop a close working relationship with the FSE.

This is the phase of the MDMP requiring the greatest amount of time from the ALO. Based on the Corps Order, the staff learns how many CAS sorties are available for planning purposes. An important point to remember is that the Corps Order does not have the authority to distribute sorties. Only the ground component commander (GCC) can determine the CAS distribution and he can only do that after the JFC apportions and the JFACC allocates the air assets. Once the GCC distributes CAS sorties, the Corps can then divide them up among its divisions. All CAS sorties listed in the order are for PLANNING PURPOSES ONLY. The division doesn't own any sorties. Requests for CAS sorties are approved or denied by the GCC, not the Air Force. Note: The JFACC may or may not be an Air Force person, so be careful about using the terms air power assets and Air Force assets.

If the division preplanned CAS sorties do not make the ATO/ITO, the only CAS possible must be requested as immediate CAS through Air Force channels. Typically, the division will have some preplanned CAS on each ATO/ITO. It is hard for our Army counterparts to understand that their preplanned CAS can be diverted by the GCC to other immediate CAS requests.

There is no distribution of AI sorties for planning purposes in the corps order, but the ALO should advise that AI nominations can be a very effective way to shape the battle field, for exa mple, through the use of scatterable mine fields.

As a general rule, plan to use four sorties (JAAT or CAS) for each "deep attack" the division plans during wargaming. These sorties will generally come from the distribution the Corps says we have for planning purposes.

The ALO needs to coordinate closely with the Engineers to determine whether or not the placement of scatterable mines will facilitate shaping operations throughout the entire wargame. If the target is appropriate for the employment of mine munitions, you will need the engineers to determine what fuse settings they desire for the mine self-destruct time line.

During the COA phase you should remind the G4 that the TALO is available to help advise and request Air Force logistical support, if airlift is required.

Often, the Army will attempt to use CAS as airborne artillery, DON'T LET THEM. Airpower is a maneuver force and the ALO should look at this process as if it were his own mini air campaign in his division's AO. Look for the proper use of airpower to achieve the effects needed to support the ground campaign and the commander's intent. A rule of thumb to use during CAS employment planning is that if the division can't provide SEAD for the requested CAS, then it probably isn't a viable or smart target for CAS. You usually run into this situation when the FSCL has been extended too far in an attempt to expand the battlefield for the Army. In these instances you will have to use your judgment as to whether or not CAS is survivable or if the target will need to be attacked with AI and its appropriate SEAD support.

There may be doctrinal differences between air power advocates and ground force commanders about how far out in front of ground troops the FSCL should be. The ground force commanders often want it farther out than air power advocates do. The placement of the FSCL is not something you can determine, but you can advise the planners and your FSE counterpart on the possibility of creating enemy sanctuaries by pushing the FSCL out farther than their organic MRLS and artillery can range.

The division must provide SEAD support for CAS. The division planners may not realize that AI targets are different, in that, once a target is identified as AI the joint targeting board determines protection requirements and the number of sorties required, as well as the type of aircraft and any other requirements to strike the target.

Another aspect you will need to consider is electronic warfare (EW) support. The division needs to realize the EA-6B and EC-130 are theater assets and in all probability will not be available directly for their use. Typically, the division will want EA-6B coverage during their deep attacks. You should remind them that unless dedicated EW support is approved on the ATO/ITO, the most they can expect is overlapping support when AI packages are being supported in the same general vicinity, but that will have to be coordinated on a case-by-case basis. They

should consider when the overlapping EW support might be available in the timing of their deep attacks. This point isn't as important in the war-gaming process as it will be when the targeting process starts, but that's another class.

PSYOPS is becoming a major factor in the planning process. The PSYOPS planner will ask you for dedicated EC-130 support. The planners can request this support, but you will have to advise them that this may not be possible, and that they should ask for leaflets drops in conjunction with AI missions whenever possible.

What the Army expects CAS or AI to accomplish is one of the biggest considerations in planning. Do they want to destroy, delay, or neutralize the targets? The answer to those questions will determine what the initial CAS/AI requests will be for an ATO/ITO cycle. As you progress in the wargaming scenario, it will seem impossible to determine how many sorties to use for planning purposes based upon the Army's assumed strength of enemy forces. In general, you will need to start with the number of sorties the division's daily distribution is for planning purposes. From this planning number you will have to spread these out over the course of the day. For example, let's say the division's daily distribution is 50 sorties. You and the FSE can plan on 30 sorties during the day, and 20 sorties at night, then determine how many sorties per hour you can apply.

The Joint Targeting Board (JTB) will actually determine the number of sorties required in order to attain the desired results. A request for all targets to be destroyed will require many more assets than if the requirement is to neutralize. Keep these concepts in mind as you advise the planners on their preplanned CAS and AI requests, since the numbers of air assets within the theater are a finite resource. Additional planning factors include terrain, weather, type of aircraft, type/number of munitions that can be carried, day/night, and threats.

If the Army wants a target attacked at or by a certain time, then they need to include this information on the preplanned CAS request. Otherwise, the JTB will determine when the target will be attacked. The Corps ALO can provide insight into the assumptions (CAS effects and attrition factors) used during their wargaming.

Course of Action Comparison – (Slide 14)

The staff compares the feasible courses of action to identify the one that has the highest probability of success against the most likely enemy COA. The selected COA should also –

- Pose a minimum risk to soldiers, equipment, and mission accomplishment.
- Best position the force for future operations.
- Provide the best flexibility to meet "unknowns" during execution.
- Provide maximum latitude for initiative by subordinates.

Course of Action Approval – (Slide 15)

The staff will provide the results of the COA analysis and comparison to the CoS and then brief the CG with a recommend COA. Your participation in the course of action approval briefing is to make sure the CAS and AI targets are correct. You will not have a speaking part in any of the briefings, but you need to be available to answer questions. Any briefing the CG attends, the squadron commander will also attend. So, it is imperative that the squadron commander understands and has copies of the slides in advance of the briefing. Any issues that come up in the course of war gaming should be brought to his attention, because any questions the CG has will probably be directed to the squadron commander. Realize that all the planners and the commander do not need to attend all briefings. As you gain experience you and your commander can decide who will attend what briefings.

The COA Decision Brief format includes –

- The intent of higher headquarters (Corps).
- The restated mission.
- The status of own forces.
- An updated IPB
- Own COAs including assumptions, results of staff estimates, advantages and disadvantages.
- The recommended COA.

The CG will select a COA and give further guidance prior to orders production. He may slightly modify or enhance the selected COA. If he makes major modifications, the COA should be wargamed again. When finished, the final COA will be refined and briefed to the major subordinate commanders (MSCs).

Orders Production– (Slide 16)

Based on the CG's decision and the final guidance, the staff refines the COA and completes the plan and prepares to issue the order. The concept of operations is the commander's clear, concise statement of where, when, and how he intends to concentrate combat power to accomplish the mission in accordance with Corps' intent. Each boss representative is responsible for writing his/her annex as well as proof reading the OPORD and the other annexes. The ALO should read the entire OPORD and pay particular attention to the Fire Support Annex, usually annex K. However, the ALO does not write any part of the OPORD.

Rock Drills– (Slide 17)

Once the OPORD has been published, the MSCs will conduct a Combined Arms Rehearsal (Rock Drill) and a Fire Support Rehearsal to the CG. Detailed smart books are prepared for each MSC. A Fire Support Rehearsal normally follows the Combined Arms Rehearsal. Detailed operations such as river crossings may necessitate their own rock drills.

Conclusion – (Slide 18)

Time available is the biggest factor affecting the MDMP process. With limited time, the number of COAs developed and analyzed will be limited. Some of these processes will appear tedious to the ALO. He must remain professional and focused. He is there to advise and educate the planning staff on the doctrinally correct use of airpower. The ALO need not be in the room for the entire planning process but must be readily available to assist the planning team. Most importantly, the plans ALO must keep the ASOS commander informed. The Squadron CC is the Division ALO and it is his responsibility to advise the DIV CG. The Squadron Commander attends all briefs to the CG and should be prepared to answer any question.