

The Seven Inherent Responsibilities Of Managing Fire Support Coordination Measures

You are serving as a Field Artillery battalion S3, battalion or battery Fire Direction Officer (FDO) or maybe you work in a brigade or battalion Fire Support Element (FSE). Regardless of which job you have, you have done your homework so that you can get fires to set the conditions for those soldiers out front at the point of the spear. You know your Field Manuals (FM) and Technical Manuals (TM), and you have searched the Internet for every piece of information or Tactic, Technique or Procedure (TTP). You have conducted JANUS exercises, field training at every echelon, and you have also made the most of the Leadership Training Program (LTP). Short of actual combat experience, you have done your very best to become a subject matter expert in the art and science of fires.

You are now at the National Training Center, Fort Irwin, California, and your BCT is transitioning to live fire operations. In this instance, the BCT is conducting a deliberate attack supported by Close Air Support (CAS), Army Attack Aviation, your Direct Support (DS) battalion, a Reinforcing (R) battalion and a light battery attached to the DS battalion. The BCT has inserted its Brigade Reconnaissance Troop (BRT) teams and Combat Observation Lasing Teams (COLT) to observe Target Areas of Interests (TAI) and to identify enemy obstacle belts, high value targets and

infantry strong points. This allows the BCT to refine targets and finalize the BCT scheme of fires. The BCT is scheduled to cross the Line of Departure (LD) at 0500. The BCT and battalion task force FSEs have been working top down bottom up target refinement all night long and have updated the BCT target list, observer and task force responsibilities, triggers, and have just passed it to the FA battalion FDC. The FA battalion FDC works feverishly to sort out the new target list, assign targets, recheck triggers, ammunition and positioning requirements, and finally pass a detailed scheme of fires to the reinforcing battalion and firing batteries. It is now 0445 in the morning, the observers are trained on their targets, and the guns are laid, and everyone else is leaning forward waiting to cross the LD.....

Suddenly, an Observer/Controller (O/C) shatters the morning calm and tells you, “you are not fit to fight and you are not authorized to go red indirect at this time.” In an instant you mumble a few choice words, look around at your fellow Artillerymen, and wonder how can this be, all the work, all the preparation, and just when it matters most, you are told you are not ready???? You summon the fire in your eye and look the OC in the eye and demand to know why you are not judged fit to fight and authorized to go red indirect. The OC calmly reports, the BCT does not have 100% visibility on all Fire Support Coordination Measures (FSCMs). There is a churning in your stomach as you realize the BCT will not cross the LD on

time because it is waiting on its own Field Artillerymen to get their act together.

This is one of those rare training opportunities where Field Artillery units feel the pain that would otherwise come in the form of a real world fratricide. In all of the FMs, TMs and published TTP, there is not one scant word on how we as Artillerymen should track, update, coordinate turning on/off, or adjust FSCMs. While on a rotation at the NTC, a unit can expect to track as a minimum, an FSCL, CFL, ⁴² 23 Corps NFAs, ¹³ 11 Corps RFAs, ⁷ 3 Division ACAs, and 8 Division Air Corridors. By the time the BCT develops all of its own FSCM requirements, artillery units are looking at tracking on average an additional 7-25 Bde NFAs, 2-5 Bde ACAs, 2-7 Bde Air Corridors, 1 ROZ, and potentially 1-2 RFLs. Take the worst case scenario and combine all echelon FSCM requirements and an artillery battalion at NTC could easily end up tracking the following:

1 FSCL

1 CFL

48 NFAs

8 ACAs

15 Air Corridors

1 ROZ

2 RFLs

There are a number of reasons why there might be so many FSCMs.

Location of the BCT CFL over the course of the fight, whether or not the

BCT uses the BRT concept, utilization and positioning of BCT scouts, and amount of fixed wing or rotary wing support available to the BCT to name just a few. Regardless of the reason, the bottom line for Artillerymen is that we must have a system to track and manage all FSCMs so that when our FSEs at every echelon, artillery battalions, or artillery batteries are conducting their clearance of fires battle drill, we have a reasonable expectation that we have reduced the risk of indirect fire fratricides, and can use fires to leverage our BCT's maneuver operations.

So how are we going to track all of these FSCMs? Here are seven questions (The Seven Inherent Responsibilities of FSCM Management) that we need to answer in our FA battalion, and maneuver TACSOPs in order to conduct good FSCM management:

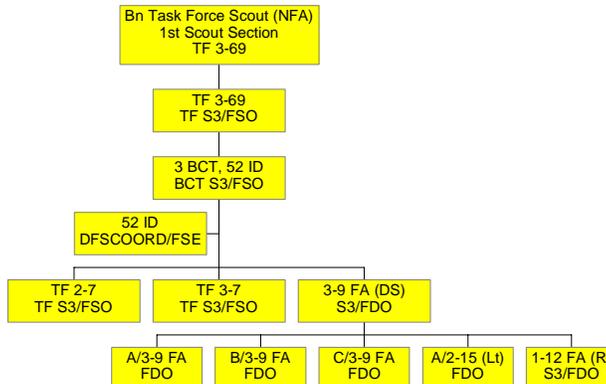
- 1. Who is the ultimate authority for FSCMs and our FSCM system in our BCT?**
- 2. What is our naming convention for FSCMs in the BCT? (Do we assign names or numbers just like we do for target blocks?)**
- 3. How do we activate/deactivate, or move FSCMs in the BCT?**
- 4. How do we track (common system picture) FSCMs throughout the BCT?**
- 5. How often do we update our FSCM picture throughout the BCT?**
- 6. How do we acknowledge (Trust but Verify) all echelons have received the latest FSCMs and their status in the BCT?**

7. How do we get an element in the BCT straight if they do not have, or lose the most current FSCM picture?

In answer to our first FSCM inherent responsibility, let's start with the notion that FSCMs are a BCT responsibility and not just a Field Artillery problem. Situational awareness is only as good as a BCT's reporting system, regardless of whether it is automated or manual. Timely and accurate reporting of all elements in the BCT's battlespace is paramount. For example, if a maneuver battalion task force scout is forward of the CFL, is given an NFA, and then proceeds to move outside the radius of its NFA, then the scout needs to report its new location to its battalion task force headquarters. From there the battalion task force headquarters needs to report it to the BCT, and then the BCT disseminates the new location and NFA adjustment to all other elements in the BCT.

The BCT commander and his FSCOORD are ultimately responsible

The Trail of a Task Force NFA (Who Needs to Know?)



for ensuring the BCT has an FSCM management system. The BCT S3 and FSO are responsible for implementing that system and ensuring that all echelons in the BCT use that system. Commanders and fire supporters at all echelons below the BCT are responsible for ensuring that their staffs know the BCT FSCM management system and are trained to execute.

Our second inherent responsibility requires us to have a naming convention or system that enables us to quickly determine who an FSCM belongs to. In particular, NFAs, ACAs, and RFAs. Each maneuver task force, the BCT, BCT rear area elements, and artillery elements need their own block of names by which to name NFAs, ACAs, RFLs, etc. This enables each echelon within the brigade to quickly identify who the FSCM belongs to. For example: If you are a battalion task force FSO and have four scout teams out forward of your battalion task force you would want to have NFAs around them. If one of the scout teams move, how do you know which NFA was covering that particular scout team? Seems like an easy answer but, if you remember, you are not just tracking four NFAs that belong just to you, you are tracking potentially as many as 48 NFAs in the BCT's battlespace. However, if we had a naming convention similar to our target block system, we could easily identify the old NFA for that scout team, delete it, and then create a new NFA. As an example, the 1st Scout Section in TF 3-69 Armor goes to ground at grid 12345678 and requires an NFA. From the BCT developed naming convention, the TF 3-69 FSO assigns NFA 369SC1A. "369" denotes that this NFA belongs to 3-69 Armor.

The first two letters “SC” identify the NFA as covering a scout section. The first number “1” denotes that this is the 1st scout section, and the last letter “A” denotes this is their first NFA over their initial position. If the scout moves, the FSO would delete NFA 369SC1A, and then create a new NFA around the scout and label it NFA 369SC1B. The last letter is the only thing that needs to change in the NFA label. In this case it changed to the number “B” denoting the scout’s second position.

The third inherent FSCM responsibility is how do we activate/deactivate, or move FSCMs in the BCT? FSCMs are always in a state of flux. METT-T is the driving force behind our decisions to employ FSCMs. What we need is a central clearinghouse in the BCT to assert control over FSCM management. The most likely place is in the BCT TOC with the BCT S3 and FSO coordinating FSCM tracking and execution through the assistance of the BCT Fire Support Non-Commissioned Officer (FSNCO). They work in concert with the maneuver battalion task forces, the BCT rear area, the supporting artillery battalions, the BCT Commander, and FSCOORD to manage the overall BCT FSCM picture. Keep in mind that the picture is just like a camera picture, it is only as good at the time it was taken. The BCT Commander or FSCOORD will issue orders pertaining to moving the CFL while the battalion task forces are reporting changes in their NFA requirements. In turn, the BCT FSNCO captures the input, paints the picture, and then continuously disseminates the picture across the BCT.

This leads us to our fourth inherent FSCM responsibility. How do we ensure we have a common FSCM picture throughout the BCT? Our older TACFIRE and newer AFATDS systems have FSCM tracking tools, but they are either not robust enough, or they are too vulnerable to hardware failure. Does this mean we give up on them? No, but until the day arrives when we no longer need pencil or paper, it's best to be prepared. In that vein, does your BCT have a system that enables you to track which FSCMs are in effect, who owns them, and are they plotted properly on a map? Does anyone else in the TOC have visibility on FSCMs besides the FSNCO in the FSE, or the battalion/battery FDO? A simple system to help each echelon uniformly track FSCMs might look like this:

FSCM MANAGEMENT MATRIX

As Of: _____

	<u>Corps</u>	<u>Division</u>	<u>BCT</u>	<u>Task Force</u>	<u>Task Force</u>	<u>Task Force</u>
<u>FSCMs</u>						
FSCCL						
CFL						
RFLs						
ACAs						
RFAAs						
NFAAs						

At the BCT, each battalion task force, the supporting FA battalions and batteries, and the BCT rear area would each have a copy of the above matrix using the BCT naming convention. The BCT TOC would simply run down each column and cover the affected changes.

Now you ask, how often do I update this matrix? Which brings us to our fifth FSCM inherent responsibility. This is your biggest challenge. You probably have to update the matrix using a number of parameters. As an example, when the BCT Commander orders the CFL moved, the BCT TOC needs to get that word out ASAP! The next domino to fall will probably be NFAAs. This will take some time to sort out so we probably need to prioritize our efforts towards the BCT sector that is most affected by indirect fires. This can usually be traced to who has Priority of Fires (POF)

in the BCT. Once we have the NFA sorted out in that sector, the BCT TOC disseminates and we move on to the next supported sector. If the BCT is not in the middle of a meeting engagement, then chances are that the

FSCM MANAGEMENT MATRIX

As Of: 040100AUG00

	10th Corps	52 Div	3 BCT	TF 3-69	TF 3-7	TF 2-7
FSCMs						
FSCL	PL JACK					
CFL		PL TOM				
RFLs			<u>RFL</u> - 3BCTRFL01		<u>RFL</u> - 37RFL20	
ACAs	<u>MRRs</u> - 10XXXBRAZIL - 10XXXCHINA <u>ROZ</u> - 10XXXTURTLE - 10XXXFROG	<u>ACAs</u> - 52XXALASKA - 52XXTEXAS - 52XXNEVADA <u>Air Corridors</u> - 52XXEAGLE - 52XXHAWK - 52XXFALCON <u>UAV</u> - 52XXHUMINGBIRD	<u>ACAs</u> - 3BCTDALLAS - 3BCTOGDON - 3BCTATLANTA - 3BCTPHOENIX <u>Air Corridors</u> - 3BCTBEE - 3BCTWASP - 3BCTHORSEFLY - 3BCTMOSQUITO - 3BCTNAT <u>SAAFFER</u> - 3BCTANT - 3BCTTERMITE			
RFAs	<u>RFAs</u> - 10XXX01CHURCH - 10XXX02POWER - 10XXX03WATER - 10XXX04CEMETARY					
NFAs	<u>NFAs</u> - 10XXLRSD1A - 10XXLRSD2A - 10XXLRSD3A - 10XXLRSD4A - 10XXSOF1 - 10XXSOF2 - 10XXSOF3 - 10XXSOF4	<u>NFAs</u> - 52XXLRSD1A - 52XXLRSD2A - 52XXLRSD3A - 52XXLRSD4A - 52XXGBCS1A - 52XXGBCS2A - 52XXPPS51A - 52XXPPS52A - 52XT-321A	<u>NFAs</u> - 3BCTBRT1A - 3BCTBRT2A - 3BCTBRT3A - 3BCTBRT4A - 3BCTCOLT1A - 3BCTCOLT2A - 3BCTCOLT3A - 3BCTCOLT4A - 3BCTFAC1A	<u>NFAs</u> - 369SC1A - 369SC2A - 369SC3A - 369SC4A - 369AFISTA - 369BFISTA - 369CFISTA - 369DFISTA - 369FAC2A	<u>NFAs</u> - 37SC1A - 37SC2A - 37SC3A - 37SC4A - 37AFISTA - 37BFISTA - 37CFISTA - 37DFISTA - 37FAC3A	<u>NFAs</u> - 27SC1A - 27SC2A - 27SC3A - 27SC4A - 27AFISTA - 27BFISTA - 27CFISTA - 27DFISTA - 27FAC4A

update will work well if conducted every hour on the hour.

Quality control of the FSCM information passed, received, and translated is the sixth inherent responsibility. The BCT trusts its subordinates will have the right FSCM data, but it needs to periodically verify FSCM message received, plotted on the map, and understood. Using the FSCM tracking matrix, each task force would periodically review its column of FSCMs by going down its respective column and conducting a scrub with the BCT TOC. The timing is METT-T dependent, but often is better than once in awhile. For the FA battalion and firing batteries, the

task is a little tougher. In this case, the FA battalion TOC is interfacing with the BCT TOC and then working with the batteries, or even the reinforcing battalion TOC, in order to make sure all echelons have the same picture.

The last of our seven inherent responsibilities deals with getting an element straight if their picture is lost, or hopelessly corrupted. Once again, if we use something similar to the FSCM matrix, walk each column, and have a naming convention that keeps us straight as to which FSCMs belong in each column, then we can quickly reproduce another FSCM picture for the unit.

FSCM management is a tough task. It takes both maneuver leadership and fire support leadership to make it work. In many ways, managing FSCMs is a lot like the top down bottom up target refinement process, a never-ending process that requires attention to detail, and a system for tracking, updating and disseminating. The targeting process requires a group effort and so does FSCM management. The FDO, FSO or S3 that takes on FSCM management alone and unafraid will soon find himself overwhelmed and unfocused. Using the seven inherent responsibilities of FSCM management as a framework for FSCM management, take a look at your BCT's FSCM management system and see if it passes muster. If not, maybe the FSCM tracking matrix, a naming convention for FSCMs, and revising the BCT TACSOPs to address the TTP for your organization, can help your BCT lean forward and expect to cross the LD on time. Even more importantly, those soldiers who risk everything

at the point of the spear will have confidence in our ability to apply the art and science of fires without putting them at unnecessary risk.