

The Battalion/Task-Force Fire Support NCO (FSNCO)...



...And The Military Decision Making Process (MDMP)

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The Problem

Sergeants First Class working in a Battalion/Task-Force fire support element (FSE) as the fire support noncommissioned officer (FSNCO) are not involved in the military decision making process (MDMP) during the plan and prep phase of the operation. As many as eighty percent of the FSNCOs that come to the Combat Training Centers (CTCs) lack the experience, training, and knowledge it takes to participate in the planning alongside a battalion or task force staff. This can be an intimidating situation for even the most experienced FSNCOs, not to mention the newly promoted sergeant first class who has had little or no training on mission analysis or course of action comparison.

In this environment, the FSNCO is left out of the planning process and therefore seldom understands the integration of fire support with the scheme of maneuver. As one of the key executors in the Battalion/Task-Force fire support plan he needs to know the *HOWs* and *WHYs* of the plan, and how they will compliment each other during the course of the fight.

The Issue

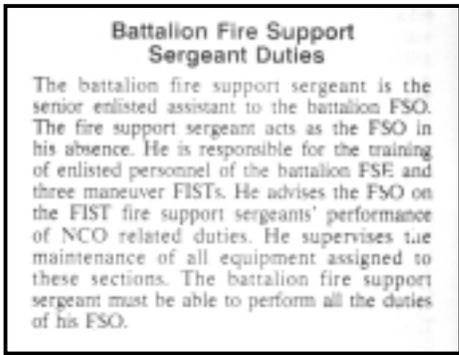
1. The 13F Advanced Noncommissioned Officers Course does not prepare a Sergeant First Class to be involved in the military decision-making process. Fire Support Officers (FSOs) and the maneuver staffs need to understand this. In many ways the FSNCO's level of proficiency comes solely from mentoring by his FSO. Even the Sergeants Major Academy's Battle-staff Course does not get to the level of planning that most Battalion/Task-Force staffs achieve when preparing for a battle. A FSNCO can be a very knowledgeable and hard charging individual, but he still lacks the knowledge to pull simple things from a Brigade (BDE)



operations order (OPORD) for the FSO's mission analysis briefing. This is in part because he does not understand the concept of the ongoing staff estimate; in most cases no one has trained the FSNCO in what is needed for the mission analysis briefing. Telling the FSNCO to extract from the BDE OPORD what he thinks the FSO will need for the mission analysis briefing will usually end in disappointment for the FSO.

2. Fire Support Officers should expect their Fire Support Noncommissioned Officers to understand the orders process. However, only when the FSE is deployed does the FSO realize that his FSNCO lacks the knowledge to participate with him and the Battalion/Task Force staff during the MDMP. By then it is far too late to teach the FSNCO the orders process, due to the high CTC OPTEMPO. FSOs and maneuver staffs also rely on the targeting officer to start the planning process while the FSO is at the BDE OPORD. This is not wrong, as the targeting officer must be able to accomplish things like mission analysis; however, a trained FSNCO is necessary for a fully functional staff FSE and maneuver TOC.

3. For some it is simply a matter of involvement. The FSNCO needs to get involved with the MDMP process. It is not just the Fire Support Officer's (FSO) job to attend the MDMP, it is also the FSNCO's job to attend and participate. It clearly states in FM 6-20-40 *TTP's for Fire Support Brigade Operations, Heavy* and FM 6-20-50 *TTP's for Fire Support Brigade Operations, Light* (fig. 1) that the FSNCO must be able to perform all functions of the FSO. This task should not be left with the targeting officer. The Battalion/Task Force



FSNCO mu Fig. 1 FM 101-5 *Army Planning and*

Orders Production to understand the orders process. The FSNCO needs the same training that most Battalion/Task-Force staffs have prior to a major deployment. This way he can watch, ask questions and understand the different steps of the military decision making process. Only after the FSNCO has begun to understand this planning process can he begin to use the knowledge gained throughout his career to integrate fires with maneuver.

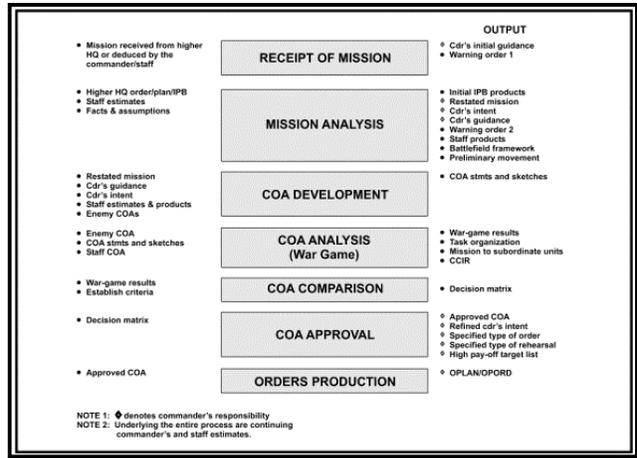
A Solution

1. Hopefully, in the near future, the 13F Advanced Noncommissioned Officers POIs will cover the Military Decision Making Process at the level of detail that the Battalion/Task Force NCO needs to understand it. Eventually, we could even combine a week of the Field Artillery Officer Advanced Course, and the

Advanced Noncommissioned Officers Course so that artillery officers and artillery NCOs can work and learn together. This would help in many ways. It would allow both the officer and NCO to understand each others' roles in the orders process at the Battalion/Task Force and even the Brigade levels. It would also force the NCO to realize that he is an integral part of the orders process within the Battalion/Task Force and not just there to set up the TOC and update maps.

2. The Battalion/Task Force Fire Support Officer needs to train his Fire Support

NCO during the plan and prep phase for deployment. A simple training plan can include only the FSO and FSNCO, or possibly the BDE FSO and FSNCO could implement a series of combined OPD/NCOPDs on the subject. The bottom line is that the Fire Support Officer must train his FSNCO on the MDMP (fig. 2); otherwise, do not expect him to understand it. Unfortunately, there is no formal training available to the fire



support NCO. For the FSNCOs that feel slighted by the idea of being trained by an officer or suggest that this is really not their job, I suggest they step back, and reevaluate themselves as an NCO. The FSO must ensure that the maneuver staff understands the importance of having the FSNCO at the table during the planning

process. The Fire Support Sergeant brings his technical expertise and years of experience to the table during the Battalion/Task Force planning process, such things as capabilities of the company FIST and the knowledge and experience of his personnel. He is the technical expert and knows the capabilities of the equipment within his platoon. Ensure that the FSNCO participates in the train-ups that the FSO and maneuver staff have at home station. If this does not happen, the FSNCO becomes another NCO in the TOC and not a fully integrated executer in the maneuver/fire support plan.

3. The most immediate solution lies with the FSNCO. He needs to fully realize his

role as a fire support expert in the planning process. The FSNCO needs to ask questions aggressively and participate in home station training with the Battalion/Task Force staff. Understanding the Military Decision Making Process is the first step; watching it put into action at the Battalion/Task Force level is the next step. The more the FSNCO participates, the more knowledgeable he will be on the matter. The FSNCO must ask the FSO to sit down and explain in detail how the supported maneuver unit does the planning process. Ensure the FSO and the maneuver staff understands that the fire support NCO plans to participate in the train-ups that the unit executes

on the orders process. **DO NOT** be intimidated because this is usually an officer function on the maneuver side.

In Conclusion

The sooner we give our Fire Support NCOs the proper formal instruction on how the Military Decision Making Process works the better. At this time, we are not setting up our sergeants first class for success in the orders process at the Battalion/Task Force level, and therefore most are not very successful in this position when deployed to a combat scenario at our CTCs. The Battalion/Task Force FSNCO is a position which most 13F NCOs will hold during their career. We must ensure these NCOs are successful by educating them in NCOES. All Field Artillery officers and NCOs must demand this training from the schoolhouse.

Officers, train your NCOs to fully understand your position as the FSO, as well as their duties and responsibilities as the FSNCO. Do not let the targeting



officer do the job of the FSNCO. The FSNCO should be your right hand man, capable of filling your shoes in your absence. This is not the targeting officer's duty. You, as the FSO, will have a more knowledgeable and capable FSNCO during deployments. The FSNCO will also be an integral part of the planning team and therefore will be trusted by the maneuver staff to make the tough decisions in your absence.

NCOs, stand your ground and be a part of your maneuver unit's Military Decision Making Process during their orders process. Continue to learn and grow as a fire supporter by understanding the units we support-MANEUVER. Otherwise you will be misused as just another soldier in the TOC to update maps.