



The Company FSO/FSNCO To Brief, But Not *Too* Brief

By Sergeant First Class Stephen D. McCane

You are the fire support officer (FSO) for an infantry or armor company attending the company rehearsal or operations order (OPORD) briefing. The company commander is describing the mission's task and purpose, detailing the sub-tasks to the platoon leaders and clarifying the scheme of maneuver. He looks at the FSO and says, "FSO, brief fires. You have three minutes."

An FSO has to brief, but he can't be *that* brief. No one will know what his delegated responsibilities are. No one will understand the scheme of fires. Fires will not be synchronized with maneuver.

This article outlines and defines some things you or your fire support NCO (FSNCO) can do when briefing the fire support plan to make the plan more easily understood and synchronize fires with the company's maneuver plan.

Big Boys with their Toys. Many units use models of vehicles on the sand table

to represent their platoon or other element. These are often plastic models of a Bradley fighting vehicle or Abrams tank. You should obtain some models (even an M113) to depict your vehicle location, so the maneuver platoon leaders and platoon sergeants can more easily understand where the fire support team (FIST) is in relation to the support or attack by fire positions. When the unit describes movement from one position to another, often by phases of the operation, you also show where your team will move or be located.

You must describe the FIST movement, especially if the FIST is not going to be traveling inside the company formation. Define the time you expect it to take the team to occupy the new observation post (OP) and what the task and purpose is at the new OP location. Because you can't see the entire battlefield, you must delegate responsibility to the maneuver platoon elements and describe these responsibilities phase by phase.

"X" Marks the Spot. FSOs often brief, "We have two planned targets, AE 2005 and AE2010. AE2005 is at grid NV123456, and AE 2010, the smoke target, is at NV234567." This information doesn't clarify anything for anyone.

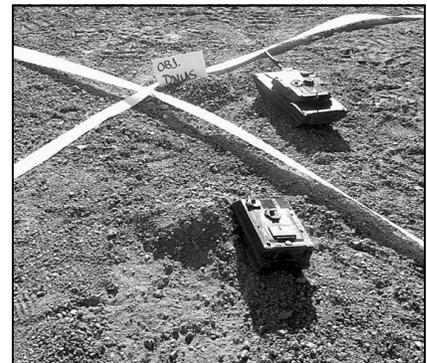
You should have a visual marker to locate the target on the ground. Some units use index cards, some use four-inch square ceramic tiles and some use Popsicle sticks run through an index card. The second two models are better in that they are less likely to blow away in the middle of your briefing. The point is to have something on the ground to help the maneuver personnel visualize how fires are supporting them.

In the case of a linear target, such as smoke, use more of maneuver terminology in describing how the target supports them. Rather than saying the target is on an attitude of 2400 mils, tell them the direction in degrees because that is what they understand. Or tell them it runs in a south/southeastern direction and then show them visually on either a map or the terrain model. Clarity and understanding are your ultimate goals.

You also should have visual aides to depict planned OPs. Number them and point them out by phase as the rehearsal or OPORD is conducted.

Why There and Why Then? These are good questions about planned targets. The problem is, they are rarely asked. What is even worse is letting company leaders walk away from the rehearsal not understanding the plan.

Just as the maneuver companies know their task and purpose, you must know and then brief the task and purpose for



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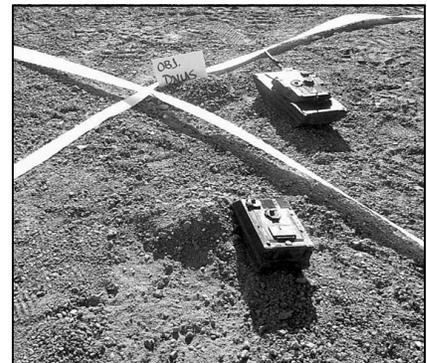
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