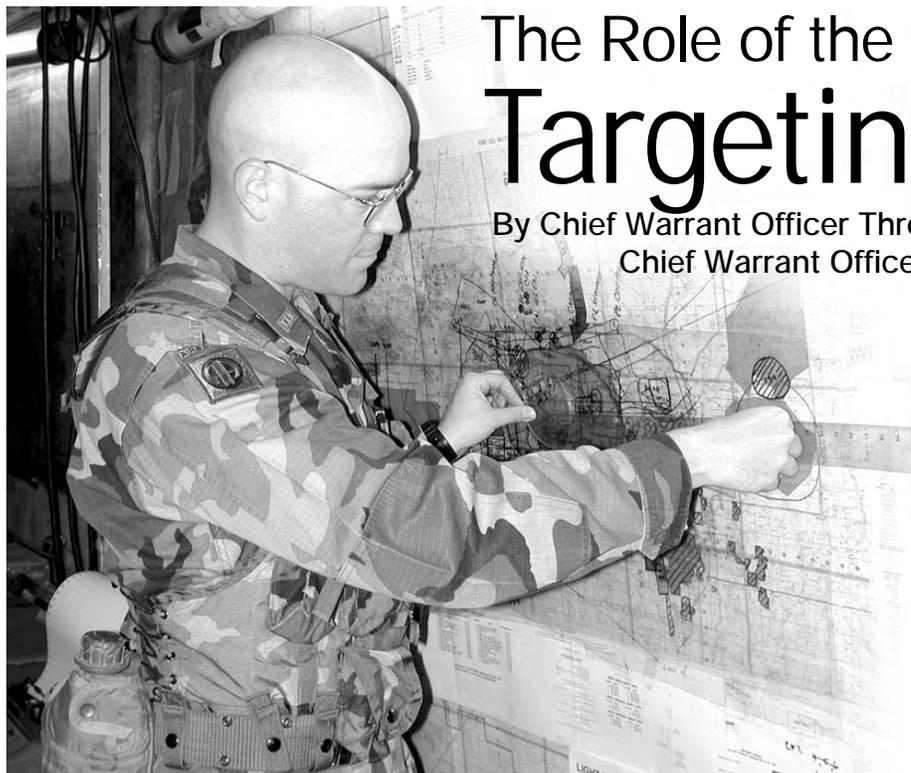


The Role of the GS FA Battalion Targeting Officer

By Chief Warrant Officer Three Harold A. Thacker, Jr., and Chief Warrant Officer Two Robert S. Fortenbaugh



CW3 Sean Fortenbaugh

In the maelstrom of a National Training Center (NTC) force-on-force fight, at Fort Irwin, California, a Q-36 Firefinder radar acquired a battery of 2S1 howitzers firing and violating a call-for-fire zone (CFFZ). The reinforcing (R) FA battalion tactical operations center (TOC) cleared and passed this acquisition to one of its batteries.

Minutes later, multiple-launch rocket system (MLRS) launchers fired, destroying the 2S1s. The R FA battalion executed the brigade combat team's (BCT's) essential fire support task (EFST) of suppressing enemy artillery to protect the force during the BCT's attack.

Counterfire sounds simple—but it's not. Interestingly enough, there is little doctrine written specifically about the duties and responsibilities of the general support (GS) FA battalion targeting officer who will be involved in the counterfire process. This lack of doctrine is being addressed in the rewrite of *FM 3-09.12 (6-121) Tactics, Techniques and Procedures (TTP) for Field Artillery Target Acquisition*. According to the FM's modified table of organization and equipment (MTOE), the battalion targeting officer, an FA Targeting Technician (warrant officer 131A), is in the battalion intelligence section of the MLRS, Paladin and M198 general support (GS) battalions.

This article describes the GS FA battalion targeting officer's job and briefly

outlines his role in the GS mission plus the other three standard tactical missions: direct support (DS), R and general support reinforcing (GSR). It also describes his role in nonstandard tactical missions.

GS Targeting Officer Job Description. The figure outlines the duties of the FA battalion GS targeting officer that help integrate him into the GS FA staff. The targeting officer is assigned to the TOC (MLRS/Paladin/M198). He facilitates the exchange and interpretation of the scheme of fires between the supported unit and the GS FA staff. He is the link between the division artillery and FA brigade counterfire officers, maneuver brigade S2 and fire support officer (FSO), and the brigade and division targeting officers. In this capacity, he helps the staff determine the supported unit's targeting and counterfire focus.

The battalion targeting officer advises the FA battalion S2 on specific requirements for target location accuracy, the systems available to meet the standards and the duration the target may be considered viable for attack. He also helps the S2 and S3 control any weapons-locating radar that may be attached.

There are a few items the battalion targeting officer should know, regardless of his battalion's tactical mission. First, he should be familiar with the operations and capabilities and limitations of the Q-36 and Q-37 Firefinder

radars and other friendly sensor systems. Second, he should know the capabilities and limitations of friendly attack systems. Third, he should be knowledgeable of the enemy order of battle, the enemy's disposition and composition, and his attack and sensor systems.

Next, he must know the targeting methodology: decide-detect-deliver-assess (D³A). He also must understand target selection standards (TSS), the effects requirements of the high-payoff target list (HPTL), attack guidance matrix (AGM), scheme of fires and the essential fire support tasks (EFSTs) of the supported unit. Last, he must be aware of the current ammunition count and FA tasks (EFATs).

The GS targeting officer faces some challenges. The GS FA battalion supports the force as a whole and stays under the immediate control of the force FA headquarters (*FM 6-20-1 TTP for the Field Artillery Cannon Battalion*). While performing the GS tactical mission, the targeting officer should help the battalion's targeting process by implementing the division/corps attack guidance and TSS. He must thoroughly comprehend the intent of the AGM and TSS in order to provide rapid fires to the supported unit. He also may help the FA battalion's S2 compute battle damage assessment (BDA) and conduct predictive analysis.

The nature of GS FA is that it can support anyone in the fight. The targeting officer does not have the benefit of a habitual relationship with the supported unit. He must familiarize himself with all available fire support systems in the Army and prepare to integrate his unit into the supported unit's targeting efforts. Different versions of fire direction software, fire support equipment, communications equipment, and unit tactical standing operating procedures (TACSOPs) can make the integration of the battalion targeting officer difficult.

The GS FA battalion must contribute to the supported unit's targeting and counterfire focus. Often, the battalion is des-

ignated the counterfire headquarters with no additional planned fires, making counterfire its only mission.

The BCT may fail to use the GS FA to augment its fires to accomplish its EFATs. The battalion targeting officer must become part of the BCT's targeting effort and introduce his assets to support all the BCT's fight.

FA targeting technicians are radar system experts first. The GS FA does not have organic radar systems and must rely on outside support from other units for radar coverage. The battalion targeting officer must be ready to receive an attached radar section or one under his unit's operational control (OPCON) and be the primary staff advisor on all things radar-related. His experience will be invaluable when planning for positioning, radar zones, movement and support of the radar sections. He also ensures the radar section leader of the attached/OPCON radar section is integrated into the staff's planning, preparation and execution phases.

DS Mission. An FA battalion DS to a maneuver unit is primarily concerned with the fire support needs of that unit (FM 6-20-1). For comparison, GS FA has no organic forward observers (FOs) or fire support elements (FSEs). When a GS FA battalion is given the mission of DS, the GS targeting officer is best used in the BCT's FSE, unless that FSE has its own targeting officer, such as in an armored cavalry regiment.

For whatever reason, if the reinforcing battalion does not have or did not bring its own targeting officer, then the GS FA battalion targeting officer goes to the reinforcing FA battalion to help its staff. When both the brigade FSE and the reinforcing FA battalion have their own targeting officers, the GS FA battalion targeting officer remains with his own staff.

Reinforcing Mission. Reinforcing is a tactical mission that requires one FA battalion to augment the fires of another FA battalion (FM 6-20-1). When the GS FA battalion has a tactical mission of reinforcing, the targeting officer must have a counterfire battle drill and counterfire drill rehearsal. This provides timely counterfire for the BCT.

He must understand the Q-36 or Q-37 radar plan as well as the BCT's zone plan. He participates in the counterfire battle drill rehearsal as well as the brigade fire support rehearsal.

The battalion targeting officer must understand the EFATs thoroughly to

- Help the staff plan and supervise radar assets that are attached, organic or under the operational control of (OPCON to) the battalion, i.e., refine and manage the radar zone, produce the radar deployment order (RDO) or radar exception matrix (REM), position the radar and develop the cueing schedule.
- Monitor and ensure the processing (clearing) of counterfire targets in the FA tactical operations center (TOC) in an efficient and timely manner.
- Help the staff develop, refine and execute a counterfire battle drill.
- Help the S2 determine battle damage assessment (BDA) and predictive analysis estimates.
- Perform target value analysis (TVA).
- Develop proactive counterfire targets.
- Monitor the processing of target acquisitions.
- Monitor the development of the enemy order of battle while processing target information and generate FA battalion intelligence requirements.

Duties of a General Support (GS) FA Battalion Targeting Officer

achieve the attack guidance and effects. This understanding comes from knowing the priority, coordination needs, special munitions missions, triggers and decision points for EFAT execution. Basically, he coordinates with the DS battalion's S3 and fire direction officer (FDO) to ensure the GS battalion's fires support the EFATs. He also may help the reinforcing FA battalion S2 compute BDA for the counterfire missions.

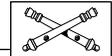
GSR Mission. The GSR FA battalion fires for the force as a whole and to reinforce the fires of another FA battalion as a second priority, remaining under the control of the force FA headquarters (FM 6-20-1). The FA battalion targeting officer assumes the same duties and responsibilities described for GS and R as he performs those missions.

The battalion targeting officer must be flexible because he must have knowledge of the GS unit's plan and also the R unit's plan and be able to differentiate between the two.

Nonstandard Tactical Missions. The nonstandard tactical mission is one that adjusts to an unusual tactical situation (FM 6-20-1). An example of a nonstandard tactical mission for a GS FA battalion would be serving in an FA headquarters with a Paladin battery and a Q-37 radar attached in support of a maneuver battalion task force. In this case, the GS FA battalion targeting officer may assume the role of the force FA headquarters counterfire officer and integrate the Q-37 into the task force's overall plan. Integrated into these duties would be those he would perform if the battalion had an R tactical mission.

A well-trained targeting officer can provide effects in support of the unit's EFATs. The GS FA battalion targeting officer position is a stepping stone to becoming a division artillery or FA bri-

gade counterfire officer, division or corps targeting officer, or an FA intelligence officer. Once integrated into the GS FA battalion staff, the targeting officer can contribute significantly to the fight, regardless of the battalion's mission.



Chief Warrant Officer Three Harold A. Thacker, Jr., is an Instructor/Writer for the Warrant Officer Basic Course in the Fire Support and Combined Arms Operations Department at the Field Artillery School, Fort Sill, Oklahoma. In his previous assignments, he served as the Combat Radar/Targeting Trainer in the Fire Support Division of the National Training Center, Fort Irwin, California, and FA Intelligence Officer for the 1st Infantry Division (Mechanized) in Germany. He was the Brigade Targeting Officer in the 1st Battalion, 6th Field Artillery in support of the 3d Brigade Combat Team, also in the 1st Infantry Division in Germany, where he participated in Operation Joint Guard in Bosnia, and Radar Technician for B Battery, 25th Field Artillery, part of the 3d Infantry Division (Mechanized) in Germany, where he participated in Operation Joint Endeavor, also in Bosnia.

Chief Warrant Officer Two Robert S. (Sean) Fortenbaugh is the Counterfire Officer for the 212th Field Artillery Brigade, III Corps Artillery, Fort Sill. In his previous assignments, he served as the Battalion Targeting Officer for the 6th Battalion, 32d Field Artillery (*Proud Americans*), also in the 212th Field Artillery Brigade, and as a Q-37 Radar Section Leader for the 231st Field Artillery Detachment, III Corps Artillery. He is a graduate of the Warrant Officer Basic Course, Fort Sill, and the Naval Gunfire Course at the Naval Amphibious School, Little Creek, Virginia, in addition to the Opposing Force (OPFOR) Weapons Course at the Military Intelligence School, Fort Huachuca, Arizona.