



# Troop-Leading Procedures for the Battery Orders Process

by Captains Scott A. Westley and Thomas L. Kelly

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*The attack had failed. His battery had failed. The battery commander (BC) fought back tears as he surveyed the blackened hulks and broken bodies that had been his firing battery.*

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The frantic calls for smoke from the breaching element fire support team (FIST) still echoed in his mind. The team died trying to breach the enemy obstacles. He would always feel the searing heat of his howitzers exploding as his soldiers desperately tried to repel the enemy counterattack force as it swept through the battery on its way to the rear. What had happened? Why had he and his men failed despite Herculean efforts by the entire battery?

Observer/controllers (O/Cs) at the National Training Center (NTC), Fort Irwin, California, routinely see battles end this way—only substituting simulated battle damage and casualties for “blackened hulks and broken bodies.” There are many answers to this commander’s question; however, most rotational BCs focus on battalion or fire supporters when asked to explain why things went wrong. This article focuses on the battery—problems a BC can solve.

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## A Battery Problem

Most BCs don’t have the tools to effectively and efficiently translate the battalion FA support plan (FASP) for their subordinates. Like our maneuver brethren, they need an orders process.

Unfortunately, FA battery doctrine as outlined in *FM 6-50 Tactics, Techniques and Procedures [TTP] for the Cannon Battery* doesn’t address battery orders; it focuses solely on a battery movement order. While helpful, the movement order alone fails to provide battery leaders the TTP to get the right information to the right people at the right time.

As a result, batteries make poor use of limited time and BCs issue unfocused “one-over-the-world” orders or read the battalion order verbatim. Sections wait for hours doing little and then rush to prepare after the commander issues the battery order. Critical battery missions

fail because key rehearsals and inspections are rushed or not conducted.

To understand the problem from the BC’s perspective, let’s review his actions in the scenario in the hours leading up to the catastrophic battle. At 1500 hours yesterday, the BC received the battalion FASP briefing. Earlier that morning, he had received a warning order (WARNO) describing the FA battalion mission to support a deliberate attack. Other than mentioning to his platoon leaders that a new mission was coming, he had taken no other action.

As he left the FASP briefing at 1630 to participate in the battalion rehearsal, he carefully stored his copy of the order and graphics in his high-mobility multipurpose wheeled vehicle (HMMWV) to ensure he didn’t lose them. After returning to the battery area at 1830, he ate a quick dinner and sat down to prepare his order.

The BC briefed his order off his HMMWV at 2000, reading almost verbatim from the battalion order; his leaders struggled to follow along on their maps in the waning light. The platoon leaders kept their section chiefs for another 30 minutes, giving detailed movement orders.

The BC left with the advance party at 2130. He felt confident that his leaders knew how to get to the initial position and that they could recite the battalion’s mission and critical fire support tasks (see Figure 1).

**Mission:** 1-1 FA (155 SP) provides direct support fires to 3-3 IN (Mech) attack in zone NLT 210500 Mar 95 to penetrate enemy main defensive positions.

**Critical Fire Support Tasks:**

- Destroy the enemy's CSOPs with CPHD prior to LD.
- Provide smoke to screen breaching operations.
- Provide SEAD missions for CAS and attack AV against enemy company strongpoints.
- Locate and neutralize enemy RAG.

**Legend:**

- SP = Self-Propelled
- CSOPs = Combat Security Outposts
- CPHD = Copperhead
- LD = Line of Departure
- SEAD = Suppression of Enemy Air Defenses
- CAS = Close Air Support
- AV = Aviation
- RAG = Regimental Artillery Group

Figure 1: Battalion's Mission Statement and Critical Fire Support Tasks

The battery occupied its initial position at 2230 and rapidly achieved firing capability. Each section established sectors of fire for direct fire and crew-served weapons and dug survivability positions. There had not been time to rehearse the reaction force and casualty evacuation plan or integrate the battery defense.

Not until midnight, five hours before crossing the line of departure (LD), did the BC begin to realize his battery was running out of time. Everything seemed to unravel as leaders tried to get ready for the mission. His fire direction officer (FDO) discovered the observer tasked to designate for the Copperhead mission was outside the 800-mil gun-target fan that supports engagement. The FDO also voiced a concern that there were not enough smoke rounds to support breaching operations.

The gun line tried frantically to redistribute ammunition and front-load the smoke rounds while fighting over the Copperhead trainer. The first sergeant had been out of position for more than an hour searching for the ammunition trucks with additional smoke rounds and fuel tankers to top off the battery vehicles before the 14-kilometer jump to the battery's subsequent position.

Despite all this effort by battery leaders and soldiers, the unit still failed in its mission to support the infantry—soldiers

"died" unnecessarily. What could the BC have done to improve his battery's chances for success?

## A Solution—Troop-Leading Procedures (TLP)

We can borrow the TLP outlined in *FM 71-123 Tactics and Techniques for Combined Arms Heavy Forces: Armored Brigade, Battalion/Task Force and Company/Team* (Page 1-11) and use it for battery TLP. The maneuver TLPs provide a framework to organize the BC's orders process.

The eight steps in the battery orders process listed in this article aren't necessarily performed sequentially; some occur simultaneously or can be executed out of order (see Figure 2). But the actions associated with each step can improve the BC's use of his time and the chances of his battery accomplishing its mission.

**1. Receive the mission.** The BC receives the mission via battalion order or a detailed WARNO.

- Conduct mission analysis. The BC identifies the essential tasks—also called critical fire support tasks—his battery must execute. A useful framework to define each critical fire support task is to identify the task, purpose, method and endstate for each task.

The result of mission analysis is a restated battery mission, the BC's intent and the tasks the battery must execute to accomplish the mission.

- Prioritize pre-combat checks (PCCs) and pre-combat inspections (PCIs). As the BC identifies the battery critical fire support tasks, he identifies PCCs and PCIs the battery must conduct to verify his unit is ready. A good unit standing operating procedure (SOP) will have PCCs and battle drills for each battery mission-essential task list (METL) task and the collective tasks that support the unit's METL. Then, from this "menu" of drills or checks, the commander can prioritize those he wants done in a given situation.

The following are some examples of PCCs that might be included in the battery SOP: family of scatterable mines (FAS-CAM), Copperhead, smoke, deploy, artillery raid, mass fires, communications, fire direction center (FDC) and others. Threat-based PCCs could include air threat to position, air threat to movement, mounted threat, etc.

- Make a tentative time line. Time analysis is another important part of receiving

the mission. The BC must determine the time available and establish a time for key events, such as issuing the battery operations order (OPORD), movement and rehearsals.

**2. Issue the WARNO.** The BC can issue his detailed WARNO in any format. The classic five-paragraph format in the

### 1. Receive the mission.

- Conduct mission analysis—critical fire support tasks: task, purpose, method and endstate.
- Prioritize PCCs and PCIs.
- Make a time line.

### 2. Issue the warning order.

- Include the—
  - Battery mission with critical fire support tasks.
  - PCC and PCI priorities.
  - Time line.

### 3. Make a tentative plan.

- Include the—
  - Battery IPB.
  - METT-T considerations.
  - Critical logistics requirements.
  - Rehearsal plans.

### 4. Initiate movement.

- Perform PCCs and PCIs.
- Rehearse.
- Issue movement order.

### 5. Conduct reconnaissance.

- Establish/verify survey control.
- Conduct advance party operations.
- Continue to conduct PCIs, PCCs and rehearsals.

### 6. Complete the plan.

- Prepare the verbal order by—
  - Organizing, briefing and rehearsing the OPORD.
  - Using visuals (terrain board, sketch, overlays, etc.).

### 7. Issue the order.

- Focus on section chiefs.
- Be concise.
- Require back briefs.

### 8. Supervise.

- Perform final PCIs.
- Conduct battery rehearsals.
- Execute.

**Legend:**

- PCCs = Pre-Combat Checks
- PCIs = Pre-Combat Inspections
- IPB = Intelligence Preparation of the Battlefield
- METT-T = Mission, Enemy, Terrain, Troops and Time Available
- OPORD = Operations Order

Figure 2: Troop-Leading Procedures for the Battery Orders Process

OPORD works well. Also, you can easily modify the format in Appendix A of *FM 71-1 Tank and Infantry Combat Team* for artillery-specific considerations. But the format isn't as important as the information in it—the information must be clear and concise. Based on the scenario, an example of a battery WARNO in the five-paragraph format is shown in Figure 3.

If the BC in the scenario had sent his copy of the battalion order and graphics along with a WARNO back to the battery with his driver while he attended the battalion rehearsal, his unit could have used the time to begin preparing. With standard PCCs and battle drills in the unit SOP, a BC can communicate more efficiently what he wants the battery to accomplish. Likewise, his soldiers have the knowledge and confidence necessary to take action in his absence.

**3. Make a tentative plan.** While the battery uses the BC's WARNO and the

SOP to begin mission preparation, the BC must make a tentative plan. He should focus on detailing the method of accomplishing the critical fire support tasks he identified in mission analysis.

In the scenario, the BC identified the critical task to fire smoke to screen the breach. However, he didn't define the method sufficiently enough to accomplish the task. He failed to answer several specific questions: Where is the breach site? When (event) in the fight will the infantry breach the obstacle? Where does the battery need to be at this time (event)? How large an area needs to be screened and for how long? Which sections will fire the mission? As a result, the BC didn't calculate the number of smoke rounds needed and failed to distribute them in the battery in a timely manner.

As the BC makes his plan, he must translate the battalion FASP requirements into battery tasks. He takes from the bat-

talion order the essential information the battery leaders and soldiers need to accomplish the battery's critical fire support tasks.

From the S2, the BC must demand "battery-level" intelligence preparation of the battlefield (IPB) information. He needs specific terrain analysis of proposed position areas and information about the enemy useful at the battery level. Similarly, BCs must get specific information from the S3 during the battalion FASP briefing.

There are many questions a BC must have answers to before he can plan a battery mission. If he leaves the battalion orders briefing without the answers, he can only blame himself. One technique to help a BC focus his information gathering is to develop specific checklists. For example, Figure 4 lists the questions the S2 can help answer and Figure 5 lists the questions the S3 can help answer.

**4. Initiate movement.** For the artillery battery, initiating movement may mean physically moving the battery or simply beginning combat preparations from the soldier to battery levels. For a physical movement, a unit can use the reconnaissance, selection and occupation of position (RSOP) procedures outlined in Chapter 2 of *FM 6-50* to get the battery from point A to point B.

SOPs, PCCs, PCIs, battle drills and rehearsals allow the battery to "initiate movement" toward mission success, even before the final plan is decided or briefed. These tools facilitate simultaneous action by individuals, sections and leaders while the battery plan is being finalized.

The more the BC can focus and prioritize the section and battery efforts in his WARNO, the better the battery can initiate movement. At the section level, for example, just knowing the battalion will support a deliberate attack can key the section chief to begin movement PCCs, rehearse the occupation battle drill (hasty), the hipshoot battle drill and the section crew drill. The gunnery sergeant can begin advance party PCCs and rehearse hasty survey techniques.

The unit must anticipate and rehearse battery-level tasks before the plan is final. Based on the threat and time available, the battery can rehearse its casualty evacuation drill, reaction force drill and nuclear, biological and chemical (NBC) reaction team drill. Not using the WARNO, PCCs, PCIs and rehearsals often causes units to be overwhelmed as execution time approaches and to fail to accomplish their missions.

#### 1. Situation:

- Enemy: 21st MRB defends vicinity of Leak Lake passes (grid 123456) in three company strongpoints. A CSOP is suspected vicinity of 120451. Primary threat to battery is air attack by Hind-D helicopters.
- Friendly: 1-1 FA provides direct support fires to 3-3 IN (Mech) attacks in zone NLT 210500 Mar 94 to penetrate enemy defensive positions.

#### 2. Mission: Battery B, 1-1 FA provides fires to support 3-3 IN (Mech) attack in zone NLT 210500 Mar 94 to penetrate enemy defensive positions.

#### 3. Execution:

- Battery critical fire support tasks:
  - Fire CPHD to destroy CSOP.
  - Provide back-up smoke (45 min) to Battery A.
  - Mass with the battalion on point of penetration.
  - Fire counterfire missions with the battalion.
- Subunit Missions: 1st Sec and 5th Sec are priority CPHD shooters. 2d Plt is priority smoke shooter for the battery.
- Coordinating Instructions: (1) Air Threat PCC, (2) Hasty Occupation PCC, (3) CPHD PCC—FDC, Guns 1 & 5, (4) Smoke PCC and (5) Casualty Evacuation PCC.
- Time Line:
  - Battery PCCs - Now to 201930
  - Advance Party/Recon - 201800
  - Battery Order - 201915
  - Main Body at Start Point - NET 202030 NLT 202130
  - In position ready to fire in PA 2 - NLT 202300
  - FA Tech Rehearsal - 202300 (FM FD4)
  - Brigade Fire Support Rehearsal - 202300 (FM CF1)
  - CPHD Observer-Gun Rehearsal - 210130 (FM FD1)
  - CPHD BCS Bump - 210200

#### 4. Service Support: R<sup>3</sup>P en route to PA 2.

#### 5. Command and Signal: I will be at battalion rehearsal until 1800.

#### Legend:

MRB = Motorized Rifle Battalion  
NET = Not Earlier Than  
PA 2 = Position Area 2

FD4 = Fire Direction Net 4  
CF1 = Command Fire Net 1  
BCS = Battery Computer System  
R<sup>3</sup>P = Rearm, Refuel and Resupply Point

Figure 3: Example of a Battery Warning Order

**5. Conduct reconnaissance.** Depending on mission, enemy, terrain, troops and time available (METT-T), reconnaissance can be a simple map analysis combined with the battery IPB information gathered from the S2. Ideally, it consists of reconnoitering the ground, establishing and verifying survey control, preparing the position to receive the battery and developing the battery defensive plan. Coordination for survey, engineer support, route

security and targets and with initial adjacent units can be completed.

A detailed sketch of the reconnoitered position is very useful to brief the movement order and the occupation plan to the section chiefs. The sketch also helps the BC plan the defensive priorities with the first sergeant.

Accomplishing these tasks requires a well-trained advance party executing a well-rehearsed drill. Detailed PCCs for

each advance party position also can minimize problems caused by missing or inoperable equipment.

**6. Complete the plan.** As the maneuver brigade and the fire supporters rehearse and modify their plans, the BC may have to adjust his initial plan. In most cases, battery critical fire support tasks won't change, but the timing and location of the execution of those tasks might.

The BC incorporates these changes as well as those required as a result of his reconnaissance and completes his battery plan. An essential part of completing the plan is organizing the battery order and using as many visuals as possible to convey the information during the briefing.

- **Organize the battery OPORD.** The battery OPORD is the BC's tool to explain his plan to the battery. Because he issues a verbal order, the BC must organize the information and strip the order down to the essentials.

The five-paragraph order is a time-tested format that works. The BC should focus on the battery-level IPB, brief only essential battery tasks and address only non-SOP requirements. He can use the task-purpose-method-endstate as a format to brief the battery's critical fire support tasks.

- Use as many visuals as possible—for example, the actual position, a terrain board, sketch, overlay and map (listed in priority). Ideally, the BC would overlook the battlefield and brief the actual terrain. A terrain board or cartoon sketch is the next best tool. Because the battery OPORD is verbal, the BC should use visual aids to help convey the plan.

The BC can minimize the time required to prepare these tools if the battery operations center (BOC) or fire direction center (FDC) constructs them by SOP while he's still making his plan. If the BC (or his BOC) can't provide overlays and maps to each section chief, he might substitute sketch maps.

- Rehearse the briefing. The final requirement in completing the plan is to rehearse the briefing.

**7. Issue the order.** The BC should present the plan, focusing on section chiefs. He should be concise and not wander from his prepared notes. Finally, he must require all leaders to back brief him to ensure they understand his plan. If the chiefs don't understand the plan, the BC should rebrief the unclear issues.

**8. Supervise.** The BC or his representative supervises activities at all stages, but the following are several final activities.

#### Position Area Terrain and Weather Considerations

- Where are intervisibility lines?
- What is the slope, soil conditions and trafficability?
- Where can I best position observations posts?
- Are there site-to-crest or intervening crest problems?
- What is the percent of illumination and time of moon rise/set and the night-vision goggles (NVG) window?
- What is the precipitation, wind and temperature?

#### Enemy Considerations

- What is the primary enemy threat to the battery?
- If ground attack:
  - What type of ground forces?
  - What are the number and type of vehicles and weapons?
  - How will they find me/what are the avenues of approach?
  - What is their mission/how will they react to me?
  - When and where can I expect to see this threat?
- If air attack:
  - What are the type/number/capabilities of the aircraft?
  - Where are the likely air routes?
  - How will they find me?
  - What is their mission/how will they react to me?
- If counterbattery:
  - How will the enemy find the battery (direction finding, radar or observation)?
  - When in the battle will I be his priority target?
- Additional Questions:
  - When and where will the enemy use chemicals?
  - What type might he use with what effects?
  - What is my best defense against the chemicals?

Figure 4: From the S2—Battery FASP Questions Checklist

- What battalion critical fire support tasks are my responsibility (in priority)?
- Who is my backup/who do I back up?
- How much ammunition of what type/lot do I need to achieve effects?
- When and how will I get the ammunition?
- What are my observers' call signs and frequencies and ground/vehicular laser designator code (G/VLLDCO), observer locations and other information for special missions (OBCO) and backup observers?
- When will the task be executed/triggered/what is the frequency over which I'll be notified?
- Where are the positions I must fire from? Are they cleared?
- What units will be around me/what are their call signs, frequencies and actions?
- What is my movement priority/approved routes?
- What event triggers my movement?

Figure 5: From the S3—Battery FASP Questions Checklist

• Perform final PCIs. A BC or designated leader conducts a PCI to determine the unit's readiness to execute its tactical mission. The PCI serves several purposes. It allows the BC to check (personally or through his subordinates) that section actions are in accordance with his decisions or tactical SOPs.

The inspection also gives the BC a chance to exercise personal leadership. A commander should not underestimate the importance of talking with soldiers—demonstrating sincere concern for and reinforcing his confidence in them.

To be most effective and efficient, PCIs must be planned. Solid PCC checklists in a unit SOP provide a starting point—the BC only needs to decide who will check when and where. Regardless, a commander should never delay or artificially sequence combat preparations to meet PCIs. A BC must inspect as thoroughly as time allows and correct any deficiencies on the spot. (This information was adapted from FM 71-123, Pages 2-33 to 2-35.)

• Conduct battery rehearsals. Like PCIs, effective rehearsals set the conditions for the battery to accomplish its mission. METT-T dictates the type of rehearsal

conducted, but the closer the battery can replicate actual mission requirements, the better the results.

However, if the FDC doesn't have all the actual data from the position from which the battery will fire, rehearsing with an educated guess as to the deflection and range shifts is better than failing to rehearse. Just by setting off this best-guess data, Redlegs on the guns can anticipate needing alternate aiming reference points or the possibility that camouflage nets will interfere with the mission.

• Execute the mission. During execution, the BC must update his plan as the tactical situation changes. The battery can more easily handle changes to a base plan it understands well.

Troop leading procedures continue during execution as the mission changes or as the battery receives a new mission.

## Conclusion

In battle after battle at the NTC, the opposing force (OPFOR) defeats blue force (BLUFOR) units. While there are many causes for BLUFOR losses, the BC can do his part to help the BLUFOR win by

using the maneuver TLP adapted for the battery orders process. These TTP don't guarantee victory for the BLUFOR, but they do provide the BC the tools to improve his battery's performance and its chances of success.



**Captain (Promotable) Scott A. Westley is the Armor Task Force Fire Support Combat Trainer and, previously, a Firing Battery Combat Trainer at the National Training Center (NTC), Fort Irwin, California. He commanded B Battery, 1st Battalion, 20th Field Artillery and A Battery, 333d Field Artillery, both in the 1st Cavalry Division at Fort Hood, Texas. He's a graduate of the Combined Arms Services Staff School (CAS<sup>3</sup>) at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas.**

**Captain Thomas L. Kelly is the Light Firing Battery Combat Trainer and the Assistant Field Artillery Battalion Tactical Operations Center (TOC) Combat Trainer at the NTC. He also has served as Assistant Operations and Plans Officer in both heavy and light artillery battalions and commanded B Battery, 3d Battalion, 320th Field Artillery, in the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), Fort Campbell, Kentucky. Captain Kelly is a CAS<sup>3</sup> graduate.**

## Choosing the Hard Right Over the Easy Wrong

**W**elcome to the battalion, Lieutenant. Sit down. I want to explain my basic philosophy for making decisions. It will help you understand the way I think about things and keep you on the right track.

In most cases when you make a decision, you'll have two choices: an easy one and a hard one. The first choice will be easy to make and easy to get your subordinates to go along with. However, it usually will involve turning your back on something you shouldn't. The second choice will be harder. Sometimes people won't appreciate your decision because it may take them more time and effort to meet your standard and cause them some discomfort. But in the long run, the hard choice will be better for everyone.

The easy choice is rarely the right choice. One of the toughest decisions leaders have to make is where to set standards. We need to set high standards that force people to work hard

and push themselves. Too often, we think that "taking care of soldiers" means taking it easy on soldiers—that's not the case.

Let me give you an example. You're looking at your platoon's position and you see a soldier has spent a lot of time digging a foxhole. The hole is armpit deep and big enough for two people. It looks good and the soldier is getting ready to have an MRE [meals-ready-to-eat]. When you examine his field of fire, you realize he can't see most of his sector because he has dug the position in a bad place—10 yard behind where it should be. The tired, muddy soldier explains the section chief told him to dig the position there. The section chief tells you the gunnery sergeant said the position looked good a few minutes ago.

The easy choice is to keep on walking. Nobody else has noticed the problem, and if the gunnery sergeant approved the position, he may know something you don't. Besides, the soldier is worn out from digging the first

position, and the section chief and the gunnery sergeant will resent your making changes. After all, the position is only for training—no one is *really* going to attack. There seems to be little to gain and plenty to lose by making the soldier dig a new foxhole.

I want you to make the hard, right choice every time. It won't be easy, but I'm counting on you. If you don't make that soldier dig another fighting position, you have told him, the section chief, the gunnery sergeant and anyone else who comes by that you don't know a good position from a bad one—that you don't know how to take care of soldiers in combat. Or worse, you've told them you don't care whether your positions are good or bad.

You need to enforce high standards from your first day and choose the hard right over the easy wrong. It's what good leaders do.

Okay, Lieutenant—good luck and stay *Battle Ready!*

Selected FAOAC Leadership Vignette  
CPT Brendan H. O'Malley, FA  
Fire Control Officer  
XVIII FA Brigade (Abn), Fort Bragg, NC