

Developing the Brigade Scheme of Fire Support



by Captain Samuel R. White, Jr.

A review of recent quarterly fire support trends from the National Training Center (NTC), Fort Irwin, California, would seem to indicate brigade fire support problems are caused by a host of unrelated issues that might call for a host of unrelated fixes. (See Figure 1.) Each trend is unique in its impact upon the mission, but all share a common beginning: the lack of a well-developed, completely disseminated and absolutely understood scheme of fire support.

The Gap—A Typical Scenario

The following is a typical scenario at the NTC. It shows a gap developing between the brigade's fire support plan and those of its subordinate units until the gap is so large the plans no longer match in form or execution.

1. Fire support rehearsals that are conducted don't ensure the brigade fire support plan is understood and synchronized.
2. The effects that fire support is to achieve are rarely addressed in detail. The method that brigades employ to determine effects don't result in missions for fire support that ensure success for the brigade.
3. The brigade deep fight quickly becomes ineffective after the first deep engagement with the enemy.
4. The transition of the fire support fight from deep to close to rear either does not take place or takes place at a time and (or) location that's unplanned.
5. Close air support (CAS) is not effectively integrated into the brigade fire support plan.
6. Staff supervision of the brigade fire support plan isn't conducted with a keen eye toward ensuring subordinate organizations' planning and preparation result in success for the brigade.

Figure 1: Recent NTC Quarterly Fire Support Trends (Brigade)

First, the brigade fire support officer (FSO) issues his fire support annex with the brigade operations order (OPORD). As the subordinate FSOs and the artillery battalion staff begin planning, they're confused regarding the scheme of fire support and sequencing of fire support events. They begin developing their plans with incomplete information, and a gap between the brigade and subordinate plans begins to develop.

The brigade FSO starts getting questions from these subordinate FSOs/staff: "Is target AN0012 to be fired before or after the FASCAM [family of scatterable mines] target?" "What is the trigger for the FASCAM target?" "When does my task force get priority of fires?" "Is CAS [close air support] attacking the MRC [motorized rifle company] before or after the obscuration fires—which ACA [air-space coordination area] will be in effect?"

By this time, the brigade FSO is overwhelmed with questions his annex doesn't cover and he isn't prepared to answer. He puts all the callers "on hold" and attempts to develop and record a scheme of fire support. The subordinates, however, continue planning with their questions unanswered. The gap widens.

The brigade FSO completes a rudimentary scheme of fire support, usually written on a yellow legal pad. Unfortunately by this time, the subordinate fire supporters have completed planning and have issued their OPORDs. The brigade FSO talks the subordinates through the scheme of fire support and all soon realize there are grave differences between the brigade plan and each subordinate plan. Each tries to adjust his plan. But the time until execution is too short, and many deficiencies go uncorrected. The gap is now a complete break between the brigade and subordinate plans.

As the brigade prepares to execute the mission, there's still no consolidated brigade scheme of fire support. Valuable preparation time needed for briefing and

rehearsing the scheme of fire support was used developing the scheme of fire support, but a quality product still doesn't exist. Fire support synchronization is broken.

In this scenario, the scheme of fire support is probably clear in the mind of the brigade FSO, but routinely most of the subordinate fire supporters are very unsure of the sequencing of the fire support events. The results of this scenario are the trends in Figure 1.

To find the root of this problem, we only have to look as far as our planning tool: the fire support annex. Our fire support annexes are inadequate as planning, preparation and execution tools. They contain target lists, controlled supply rates (CSRs), CAS allocations, organization for combat, high-payoff target (HPT) lists, execution matrices and a variety of other information—all valuable and necessary.

But what the annexes don't contain is a document that outlines the scheme of fire support for the operation. That is: what event is executed first, second and so on in our fire support plan; what and who triggers this event; and what is the desired outcome for this event?

Execution matrices give only groups of events that take place during a period, not specific events that take place at specific times. Target lists give us descriptions of the targets; the HPT list tells us which targets to attack; and our attack guidance matrix (AGM) tells us when and how to attack them. Thus, our fire support annex, though packed with information, contains no document that provides "one-stop shopping" to help plan fire support and then prepare for, rehearse and execute that plan.

Solutions—Synchronizing the Plans

A scheme of fire support must be developed during planning and published with the brigade OPORD. This scheme can either be written in paragraph form or outlined on a work sheet. An effective scheme of fire support work sheet is shown in Figure 2.

The work sheet issued at the brigade OPORD briefing must reflect how the brigade fire support plan will be executed. To be able to execute this work sheet, it should be initiated during course-of-action (COA) development. The fire support events determined at that stage will be very general—for example, "employ CAS in EA [engagement area] Red," "artillery

BRANCH	★ GO TO # _____		★ GO TO # _____		★ GO TO # _____	
TRIGGER	CRP @ NAI R16		Engr. Veh @ AN9001		N MRB TAI 14	
	DAY	LIM. VIS	DAY	LIM. VIS	DAY	LIM. VIS
	NK371141	NK361140	NK461141	NK453133	NK473131	NIA
FS EVENT	#	AN9001	#	AN0046	#	CAS at TAI 14
OBSERVER/ EXECUTER	COLTs		COLTs		ETAC	
	PRIMARY	ALTERNATE	PRIMARY	ALTERNATE	PRIMARY	ALTERNATE
	COLT 4	COLT 6	COLT 3	COLT 6	Raven II	Raven 21
PURPOSE	EFFECT	FUNCTION	EFFECT	FUNCTION	EFFECT	FUNCTION
	DISRUPT DELAY LIMIT OTHER	MRR ability to atk 2 MRBs abreast	DISRUPT DELAY LIMIT OTHER	N MRB breach FASCAM by 10 min	DISRUPT DELAY LIMIT OTHER	N MRB movement thru breach
TASK	ATK GUID.	WHAT	ATK GUID.	WHAT	ATK GUID.	WHAT
	Delay N MRB	10 minutes	Destroy	2 mine plows 1 roller	Destroy	1 T-80 5 BMPs
WEAPON/ MUNITIONS	Arty FASCAM		Arty CPH		CAS	
	UNIT(S)	MUNITIONS	UNIT(S)	MUNITIONS	UNIT(S)	MUNITIONS
	A/B 1-67 FA	(98) AMS (26) APS	A1-67 FA	(3) CPH	2 F-16	6 MK 87 CEM
REMARKS	Launch 2 F-16 From ground alert				ACA Blue AN0097 SEAD	

- Legend:**
- ACA = Airspace Coordination Area
 - AMS = Anti-Materiel Short
 - APS = Anti-Personnel Short
 - BMPs = Soviet-Made Infantry Fighting Vehicles
 - CAS = Close Air Support
 - CEM = Combined Effects Munitions
 - CFL = Coordinated Fire Line
 - CFZ = Critical Friendly Zone
 - COLTs = Combat Observation Lasing Teams
 - CPH = Copperhead
 - CRP = Combat Reconnaissance Patrol
 - DP = Decision Point
 - DS = Direct Support
 - ETAC = Enlisted Tactical Air Controller
 - FASCAM = Family of Scatterable Mines
 - FSE = Fire Support Element
 - FSO = Fire Support Officer
 - LD = Line-of-Departure
 - MRB = Motorize Rifle Battalion
 - MRR = Motorized Rifle Regiment
 - NAI = Named Area of Interest
 - PL = Phase Line
 - SEAD = Suppression of Enemy Air Defenses
 - TAI = Targeted Area of Interest
 - TF 3-5 AR = Task Force 3-5 Armor

Instructions:

BRANCH—Completed only if the execution of this or another fire support event is tied to a decision point. If this is the case, the DP number is written inside the star and the alternate fire support event number is noted in the space after “Go To.”

TRIGGER—The trigger for the fire support event. The brigade determines the trigger, which is written across the top line—for example, “MRB at NAI 14” or “TF 3-5 AR crosses LD,” etc. The executor of the event provides the entries for the box, which will be the grid and type of trigger for day and limited visibility operations.

FIRE SUPPORT (FS) EVENT—The actual event that’s to be executed. Examples—“Activate CAS Target Box 5,” “Activate CFZ 1,” “CFL to PL Blue,” “Priority of Fires to TF 3-5 AR,” etc. The fire support event also should be numbered for reference. The number should be in sequence for ease of use and understanding.

OBSERVER/EXECUTOR—The individual or unit charged with executing the fire support event. The brigade’s initial assignment is written across the top line (e.g., “TF 3-5 AR”). This subordinate FSE provides the brigade the entries for the box when it has sub-assigned responsibility for execution—for example, “A Mechanized FSO primary, C Tank FSO alternate.”

PURPOSE—The reason this event is being executed. Circle the “Effect” desired on the associated enemy formation. When stating

the “Function,” be very specific in determining the enemy function you wish to interdict. This block is a good double check to ensure the commander’s guidance is included in the scheme as the guidance is issued in the same basic Effect/Function format.

TASK—The task associated with the event. Again, be very specific in defining the task. Statements such as “Neutralizing the forward detachment” aren’t specific enough. “Destroying 3 BMPs from the forward security element” is much more specific. The task must support the purpose: “Destroy 3 BMPs from the forward security element,” (the task) to “Disrupt the forward security element’s ability to fix TF 3-5 AR” (the purpose).

WEAPON/MUNITIONS—The system that will accomplish the task. The brigade allocates the asset across the top line. The organization responsible for the asset provides the brigade the information for the box. For example, if the brigade FSO has determined that artillery will be used for this event, he notes “Arty” across the top line. After conducting its initial planning, the DS artillery battalion selected (e.g., 1-23 FA) determines, for example, that A and B Batteries will engage the enemy by firing three rounds of DPICM as noted in the box: “A/B 1-23 FA” and “3 DPICM.”

REMARKS—Any other information that should be included for clarification and synchronization.

Figure 2: Brigade Fire Support Work Sheet

engages MRB [motorized rifle battalion] in EA Green," etc.

The "meat" of the work sheet will be developed during the war-gaming session. This will require the FSO, targeting officer, fire support NCO (FSNCO) and air liaison officer (ALO) participate in the session. (During war gaming, the assistant brigade FSO runs the fire support element, or FSE).

The FSO should be around the map board interacting with the rest of the targeting team during war gaming. He and the targeting team will war-game the effects desired and timing of the CAS in EA Red and the artillery in EA Green. The targeting officer and FSNCO (in the plans tent with a map board, overlay, the initial work sheet and a clean work sheet) are doing the detailed work to develop the fire support plan and the work sheet.

Here's an example of the process. The targeting team determines the CAS in EA Red will be four aircraft employing Maverick missiles controlled by the Air Force's Enlisted Tactical Air Controller 1 (ETAC 1) to destroy six BMPs (Soviet-made infantry fighting vehicles) from the lead MRB. The targeting officer then determines the target grid in EA Red and annotates all the information as a fire support event on the clean work sheet. (This clean work sheet becomes the *revised* scheme of fire support work sheet.)

If the targeting team determines an ACA is required for the CAS, it becomes a fire support event, and the targeting officer enters the information on the revised work sheet. The targeting officer and the ALO coordinate and fill out a CAS target box (CTB) card, if used. (For an explanation of a CTB card, see my article "A Technique for Employing CAS" also in this edition.) If artillery suppression of enemy air defenses (SEAD) is required, it's listed as another fire support event on the work sheet.

This same process is followed for artillery engagements of the enemy. If the targeting team determines artillery fires in EA Green are still required, the team develops effects and timing (synchronization). The FSNCO develops the actual six-digit target on his map board and overlay, and then the targeting officer enters the information on the revised work sheet.

This process continues until the entire plan—all fire support events with branches and sequels—have been war-gamed. The result is the fire support scheme work sheets are completed at the end of the war-gaming session. The work sheets may

need to be rewritten for legibility, but they're ready for publication in the brigade OPORD as the scheme of fire support. All fire support events must be included on the work sheet—including, implementation of fire support coordinating measures (FSCMs), radar zones, radar cueing, shifting of priority of fires, movement of observers, intelligence and electronic warfare (IEW) jamming and artillery movement.

The bottom line is the discussion and synchronization necessary must take place during the planning phase—not during the preparation phase. Planning in this fashion allows brigade FSOs to issue a fire support plan that subordinate organizations can use to develop their plans without fear of massive changes as execution time draws near.

The scheme of fire support must be planned for throughout the brigade's battlespace. Units need to include the complete scheme on the work sheet. Too often, the brigade does not plan a complete scheme of fire support, leaving out the close fight. The brigade fire support plan often ends after the last deep engagement. Practically, as well as doctrinally, this is not correct.

The brigade must plan for deep, close and rear. If the brigade only plans deep and puts the burden for all close planning on the task forces, the transition from deep to close never happens as envisioned by the brigade FSO.

If, instead, the brigade plans the fire support fight throughout the zone or sector, it plans one continuous fight and ensures a transition from deep to close to rear. The plan is integrated and developed by one headquarters, as opposed to trying to paste together three plans (deep, close and rear) developed by three headquarters (brigade, task force and forward support battalion).

The brigade FSE develops the fire support plan—subordinate FSEs refine it. The scheme of fire support work sheet facilitates this planning and refinement. In transitioning from deep to close to rear, the brigade is not handing off fires to subordinate headquarters, it's handing off responsibility for executing the brigade fire support plan to subordinate headquarters.

Conduct complete and thorough staff supervision of the plan. The crux of this function is the techniques and procedures necessary. The scheme of fire support work sheet provides an excellent staff supervision document. If fire support events are assigned to subordinate ele-

ments for execution, the brigade FSE can review all entries in that specific events column.

The subordinate elements submit the execution details of that event to the brigade FSE (e.g., exact trigger description and grid, the time the trigger was emplaced, observer location, batteries that will fire the target, volume of fire and munitions, etc.). The brigade FSE enters the data on the work sheet in the appropriate box. A blank box indicates information not yet received from the subordinate organization; the brigade FSE can query the subordinate agency to determine the status of the planning and preparation for that event.

As the brigade FSE receives the information, it determines whether the subordinate's plan will accomplish the event properly (e.g., trigger is in the proper location, volume of fire is sufficient to achieve the required effects, etc.). If refinement is necessary, the brigade FSE directs the refinement take place.

Ideally, subordinates plan to fully accomplish the brigade scheme of fire support. This can only be assured by frequent and complete briefings by the subordinate to the brigade FSO or fire support coordinator (FSCoord). The briefings begin immediately after the brigade OPORD is issued to ensure all fire supporters completely understand the brigade scheme of fire support and their individual responsibilities in executing the scheme.

The subordinate briefs the brigade FSO or FSCoord when his plan is complete but before it's published. This briefing probably will be conducted on the radio or mobile subscriber radio terminal (MSRT) and is extremely important to ensure that flaws in the subordinate's plan are discovered *before* the plan is issued. Periodic briefings to the brigade FSE during the preparation phase should be required (triggers, observer locations, battery locations, etc.).

The branch plans developed by the staff must be completely supported by fire support and have a scheme of fire support for each branch plan. (See Figure 3 for examples of potential enemy avenues of approach calling for branch plans.) The scheme of fire support work sheet reflects branches to the plan (Figure 4).

The key to successfully executing branch plans are well-developed decision support products. Although the scheme of fire support work sheet is not meant to replace a decision support matrix (DSM), it's designed to supplement it. The work sheet gives the FSCoord and FSO an additional decision-making tool. Just as

the DSM reveals to the commander the array of options available, the scheme of fire support work sheet shows the range of fire support options available based on different enemy or friendly situations and decisions already made.

Conclusion

If the brigade scheme of fire support is developed during the planning and refined during preparation, fire supporters will be able to follow it easily during execution. Any deviation from the plan will be by choice, not by accident.

The work sheet is applicable at all echelons, including the company fire support team (FIST) level. The brigade FSO may need six or seven work sheets to cover the brigade scheme of fire support, whereas the company/team FSO may only need one work sheet to cover the four or five events his company is responsible for. The level of detail in the work sheets depends on the amount of time available, but the more detailed, the better.

Fire supporters at each echelon must use the same execution matrix (or work sheet). It's unrealistic to expect a coordinated effort across the brigade if each echelon is using a different format for its coordination document (execution matrix). The brigade should train all fire supporters on the scheme of fire support work sheet *before* trying to use it across the brigade.

A well-planned, well-coordinated brigade scheme of fire support goes a long way toward synchronizing fires on the battlefield—which, in turn, goes a long way toward assuring victory for the Blue Forces.



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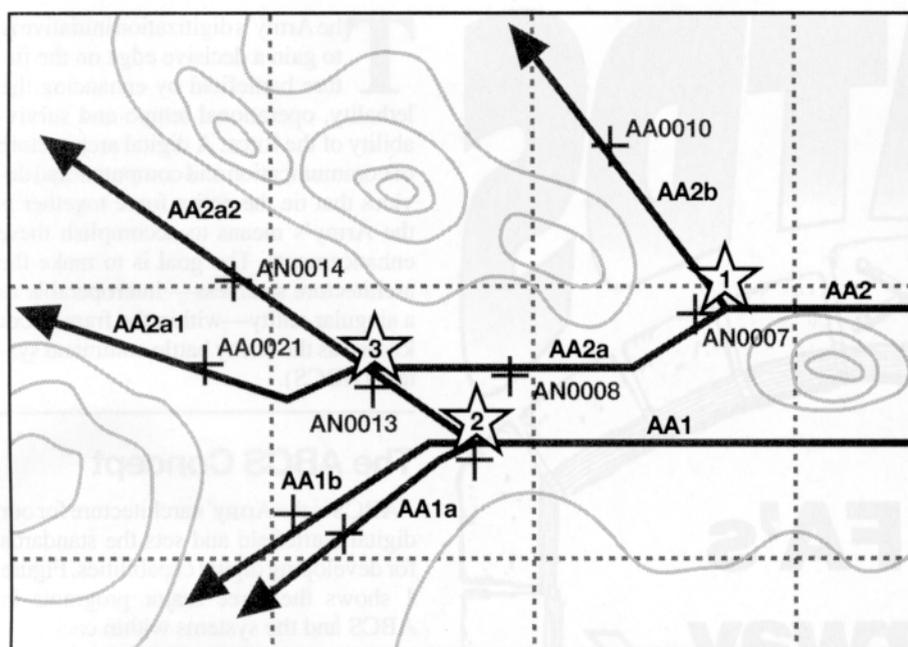
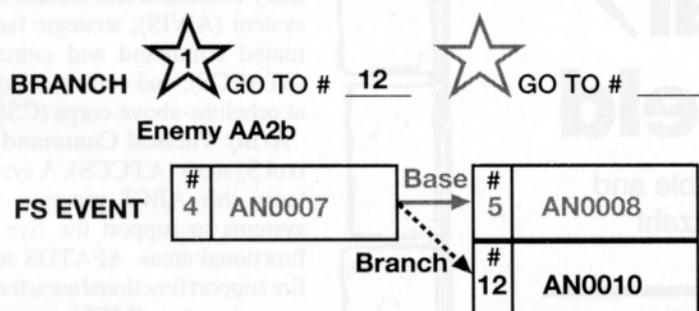
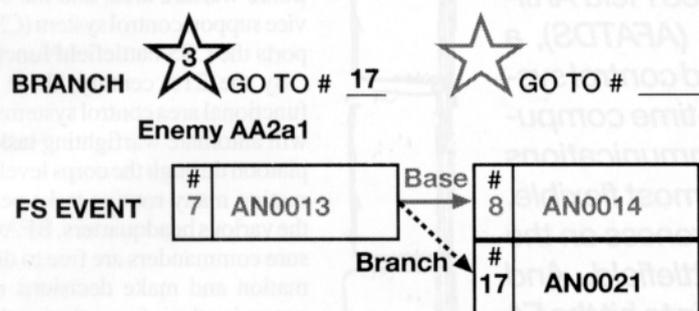


Figure 3: Potential Enemy Avenues of Approach. The plan in this movement-to-contact is based on the enemy attacking along AA2 to AA2a to AA2a2. We have branch plans we'll execute if the enemy attacks along any other avenue of approach. Decision points (DPs)—as defined on our decision support matrix and template (DSM/DST)—outline the options available to the commander in choosing to execute a branch plan.



As the enemy attacks along AA2, he reaches DP1 (see Figure 3). If he turns north (AA2b), we'll execute a branch plan and jump into the work sheet at Event 12 (AN0010), which is the first event in the branch plan. If the enemy stays south (AA2a), we'll continue to execute the base plan at Event 5.



Further along the scheme of fire support, the enemy reaches DP3 (Figure 3) and can proceed as we planned initially (AA2a2) or go south (AA2a1). If he goes south, we jump to Event 17 (AN0021); otherwise we continue on to Event 8.

Figure 4: Developing Branch Plans on the Work Sheet