

Modification of the Planning Process for Sustainers Part 2:

The Military Decisionmaking Process

This is the second installment in a series of three articles that review the planning process, from Army design methodology through assessment. This segment discusses the modifications and distinct variations sustainment planners apply to the planning process.

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Sustainment planners and staffs conduct the military decision-making process (MDMP) in the same manner as every other proponent in the Army. What is unique about a sustainer's MDMP is the focus. The method does not change, but the format does.

Each functional area of the sustainment unit should keep a separate running estimate. This means supported battalions should have, at a minimum, running estimates for logistics (S-4), personnel (S-1), and religious support (chaplain). In a sustainment command, each branch of the support operations division maintains a running estimate.

What Is a Running Estimate?

A running estimate provides a single document to which the personnel of a specific branch or section may refer to answer questions about the current operational environment and the ability to support plans relative to that branch or section. The running estimate delineates:

- The tasks the section or branch is tracking.
- The resources applied to each task.

- The measures of effectiveness and performance indicators with current statuses.

- The risks and mitigation strategies.

You may find that this sounds deceptively similar to the components of the operational approach of Army design methodology and several of the steps comprising MDMP's mission analysis; that is correct. A properly formatted, up-to-date running estimate provides almost all of the information a planner needs to properly analyze a mission and establish the foundations for courses of action. [Army design methodology is discussed in part 1 of the series, *Design*, which was published in the March–April 2013 issue of *Army Sustainment*.]

Developing the Running Estimate

The foundation of an effective running estimate is identifying the information requirements of the branch or section. The estimate developer must ask, "What do I have to know to be able to make informed decisions?" and "What does right look like?" The answers will vary for each particular functional

area and mission set, and specific answers will change with the measures of effectiveness.

Understanding the information requirements, the sustainer next identifies how he will discover the information, the format in which he requires the information, how long the information will be of value, assumptions he will make in the absence of verified data, and the action required when the data is available. Figure 1 illustrates a way to organize this information.

Most of the information sustainers require is available in daily reports, such as the personnel status report and logistics status report, from subordinate, customer, or supplying units. Other information is available through requests for information or the common operational picture. In the case of convoys, it is best to actively participate in the development of the maneuver commander's reconnaissance and surveillance plan and request reconnaissance support from unmanned aircraft systems, engineers, and military police.

Regular reports, by definition, have a submission deadline, and

Task	Information Requirement	LTIOV (Latest time information of value)	Format	Fact [Assumption] Constraint	Source (Date/time group)	Action (Decision Point) [Variance]

Figure 1. Running estimate development matrix.

reconnaissance reports also should have a deadline. The sustainer derives the deadline from the action that the information is driving.

If a convoy is leaving a compound at 0800, reconnaissance information must be available by 0700 in order for the convoy commander to incorporate it into his plan. If the only action driving information requests is meeting the deadline to consolidate information for a report to the next higher headquarters, it is worthless information. If there is no reason to collect data, please reduce the burden on subordinates and stop asking for it.

Armed with data, the sustainer next identifies how to display it so that others may interpret it quickly. Usually, a graphical depiction is best, though some leaders prefer numbers and others bullets. Practically, this translates into how to lay out a command-post battle board, a battle update brief slide, or a common operational picture rich stickie in the Command Post of the Future (CPOF). [Rich stickie is the term used in CPOF for applying a graphic onto a digital map.] The data depicted nests directly into the information requirements. (See figure 2.)

Analysis and Assessment

Ineffective analysis has been found to be a problem that prevails throughout the Army. Soldiers have data available but lack the skills, desire, or time to analyze the data and determine its impact on operations, the area of operations, and the area of interest.

As opposed to effects-based operations, which attempt to design plans to cause effects on the second and third order, effective analysis is reviewing the information to determine how current trends are going to affect the unit directly or indirectly through the next three planning horizons if the unit does not act to change the trend.

Analysis leads directly to assessment. Sustainers must continually ask, “Am I doing the right things?” (effectiveness) and “Am I doing the right things correctly?” (efficiency). Assessment provides the sustainer with a tool to determine if the plan is moving within acceptable limits, if it is time to proceed to the next phase (a sequel) or initiate a divergent path (a branch), or if the current situation demonstrates a variance that requires a plan revision. Assessment uses the same indicators developed from the measures of effectiveness and performance that produced the information requirements.

Using the exact same standards, the sustainer also evaluates courses of action to determine which one is the best choice. The assessment capability of the running estimate not only enhances mission analysis but also provides the method of evaluation for course of action analysis.

Intelligence Preparation

Sustainers play a key role in the intelligence preparation of the battlefield. The sustainer has specific information requirements that differ from those of the maneuver planner but are equally as impor-

tant to the success of the mission. Most S-2s do not have the training or experience needed to properly estimate enemy logistics activities. This leaves the sustainment planner with two choices: train an intelligence analyst to think like a sustainer or train a sustainer to integrate the intelligence preparation of the battlefield into logistics plans.

The sustainer’s primary adversary is time. Weather, terrain, route status, and enemy activity affect the wear and tear on equipment and the time required to conduct distribution. The politics, economy, and infrastructure of the operational environment have a major impact on the sustainer’s ability to acquire contracts, make local purchases, and receive strategic and operational distribution. This affects sustainment effectiveness and efficiency.

A sustainer should know how the operational environment affects his mission and how to research the capabilities and shortfalls of what is available. The intelligence cell secures some of this information in its day-to-day operations. Having a sustainer integrated into the intelligence cell reduces redundancy in requests for information.

In many cases, the sustainer has information available or requires information that the intelligence cell does not possess. Having a sustainer integrated into the intelligence cell ensures data sharing. Intelligence preparation of the battlefield without sustainment input provides the commander and staff

with an incomplete picture of the current operational environment.

A sustainment-savvy individual in the intelligence cell can play a crucial role in developing the enemy situation template; assessing enemy capabilities, strengths, and weaknesses; and developing the enemy courses of action. As sustainers know, logistics convoys, caches, and depots are high-payoff targets. That is true for both sides of the conflict, and the best person to determine where the enemy commander will locate his sustainment assets is a sustainer.

The sustainer should analyze the enemy course of action to determine logistics reach, distribution requirements, and the cost of supplies and then provide the developers of the enemy course of action with input on the impact of these situations. This requires work that is out of the norm, but it is the right way to do things. A portion of the generic running estimate and each annex of the operations order requires enemy and operational information. The unit benefits when sustainment planners discover, articulate, and disseminate this data.

Liaisons

Liaisons are a huge cost in resources but pay great dividends when properly trained and deployed. Liaisons with higher headquarters, customers, and suppliers provide the sustainer unparalleled communication, collaborative and parallel planning, and the opportunity to influence the host command to effectively employ the capabilities of the sustainment unit. Liaisons are responsible for placing themselves in a position to understand their host unit's current operations and plans. They integrate themselves into their host unit's planning cycle and participate in its MDMP.

With or without a liaison, the sustainment unit is responsible for integrating into the customer's and supplier's planning process. The

sustainment unit is responsible for resolving issues, managing information between suppliers and customers, and synchronizing timing. For example, customers and suppliers may find themselves in conflict concerning schedules, materiel handling, changing requirements, and delivery locations.

In a throughput world, it is the sustainer who is responsible for identifying possible conflicts and either resolving them or mitigating their effects. Identifying potential issues requires knowledge of the plans of the customer and supplier and the time to react to the conflict.

Often, acting as a conduit for information, especially concerning in-transit visibility, prevents issues. The sustainer is responsible for ensuring that suppliers and customers have the information they need when they need it so that the right product is in the right place at the

right time.

Understanding the schedules of both the customers and suppliers prevents issues. When a combat sustainment support battalion knows that a maneuver brigade is going to conduct a major operation in five days, it can coordinate the stockpiling of supplies. But when the battalion learns about the operation less than a day before its start, it has no opportunity to prepare.

Critical Information Requirement

A sustainment commander's critical information requirement (CCIR) is vital to planning, execution, and assessment. Development of the CCIR begins with identifying tasks. The sustainment planner deduces what decisions are required to accomplish the identified tasks. Decisions sustainment planners must always consider are when to resupply and when the critical resupply point will be.

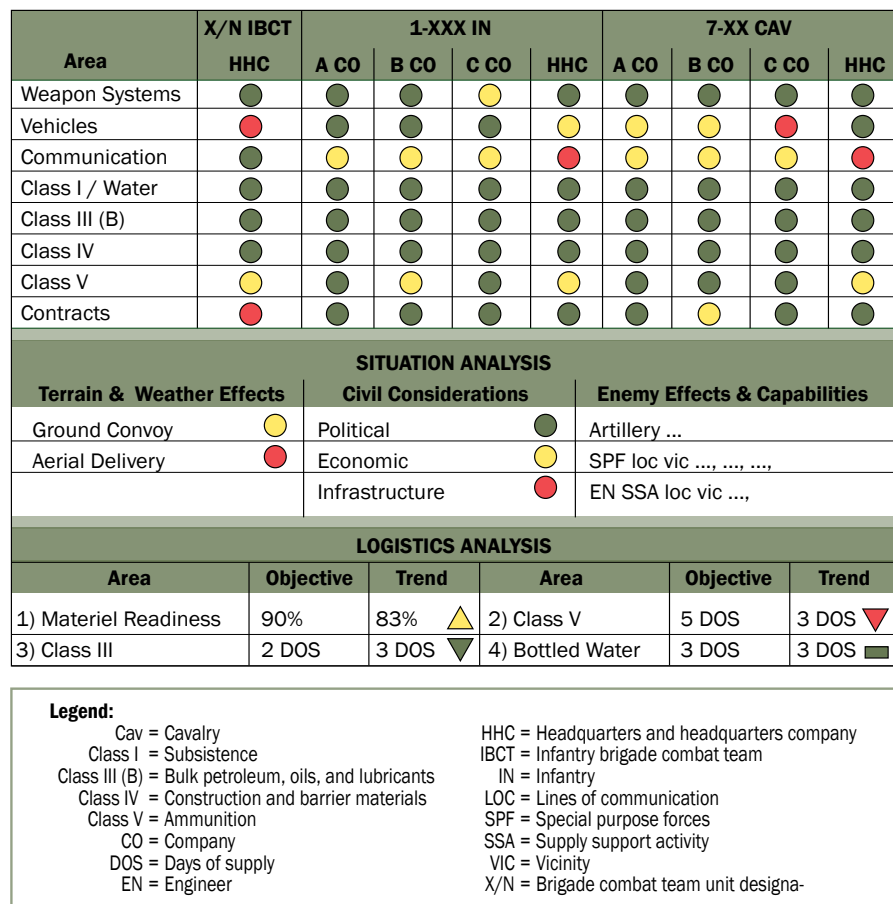


Figure 2. An example of a graphic running estimate for a brigade combat team S-4.

Priority	PIR#	DP#	Intelligence Requirement	NAI	Location (Grid)	Indicator	R&S Tasks	NAI Start DTG	NAI Stop DTG

Capable Assets			Reporting	Coordination	Action Required	Remarks
Own	Higher	Adjacent				

Legend:	DTG = Date/time group	PIR = Priority intelligence requirement
DP = Decision point	NAI = Named area of interest	R&S = Reconnaissance and surveillance

Figure 3. Decision support matrix headers.

Methods of sustainment, locations of sustainment points, and composition of sustainment elements are other decision considerations. Sustainers develop decision points relative to the status (such as class of supply, maintenance, or transportation), numbers (such as quantity or cost), weather, and enemy and civil considerations.

Synchronization Matrix

With decisions identified, the sustainment planner prepares the information requirement (question) and defines indicators. This information focuses the intelligence cell's efforts and facilitates the development of a decision support matrix (DSM), which will aid in developing the reconnaissance and surveillance plan. (See figure 3.)

Carefully considering required decisions and developing a DSM reduces anxiety during execution. Linking a completed DSM to the synchronization matrix assists in assessment by providing indicators of variances.

Sustainment planners have historically done well preparing a logistics synchronization matrix, which is helpful for ensuring the coverage of all areas, tracking progress, and timing. I recommend that the sustainment planner consider using the synchronization matrix for devel-

oping courses of action rather than waiting until course of action analysis (wargaming) to begin to fill out the details.

Early use facilitates a more thorough development and a more rapid wargame. As in the wargame, the detailed tasks and purposes charted against time phases supports battle tracking of current operations.

The synchronization matrix is a great tool, but sustainment planners should not make it the end product. The objective of the synchronization matrix is to coordinate and synchronize the operation.

The sustainment planner should consider whether to integrate the concept of support into the maneuver plan development and analysis or to participate in the maneuver planning cycle and then develop a detailed plan with multiple courses of action and separate analysis later. Both have advantages.

The determining factor typically comes down to time available. Using its supporting unit's support operations section (or forward support company planners), the maneuver unit J/G/S-4 can effectively conduct concurrent planning to develop the most effective sustainment courses of action to support maneuver operations.

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