Insights and Best Practices Focus Paper

Design and Planning

First Edition

Deployable Training Division
Joint Staff J7

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This is the First Edition of the Design and Planning Insights and Best Practices Focus Paper, written by the Deployable Training Division (DTD) of the Joint Staff J7 and published by the Joint Staff J7.

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PREFACE

The Joint Staff J7 supports the CJCS and the Joint Warfighter through joint force development to advance the operational effectiveness of the current and future joint force. This paper, written by the Deployable Training Division (DTD), helps inform both the joint warfighters and key functions within the J7, notably lessons learned, doctrine, education, and future joint force development. In addition to this paper, the DTD has also developed an overarching Joint Operations Insights and Best Practices Paper and numerous other focus papers that share insights and best practices for various challenges observed at joint headquarters. All of these papers are unclassified for broad accessibility. I commend these papers for your reading.

The DTD gains insights on operational matters through regular contact and dialogue with combatant and joint task force commanders and their staffs as they plan, prepare for, and conduct operations. The DTD observer/trainers collect and compare practices among the different headquarters, draw out and refine "insights" and "best practices," and share them with the joint force.

We are fortunate to have several senior flag officers, active and retired, assist in development and vetting of these insights and best practice papers. Of note, General (Retired) Gary Luck, a Senior Fellow at the National Defense University, plays an active part. Their participation not only helps keep the DTD trainers at the theater-strategic and operational level, but also ensures that they retain a commander-centric perspective in these papers.

Please pass on your comments to DTD's POC Mr. Mike Findlay so that we can improve this paper. Email address is: js.dsc.j7.mbx.joint-training@mail.mil.

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1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.

Insights:

- Commander-led understanding of the environment, identification of the problem, and development of an operational approach better focuses subsequent planning efforts.
- Gaining an understanding of the environment and identifying the problem requires significant dialogue with senior leaders, mission partners, and stakeholders.
- Design actions generally consist of more dialogue, questioning, and critical and artful thinking, whereas planning actions consist of more deliberate analytical thinking and detailed production of plans and orders.
- Recognize the value of design and planning, their relationship, and how they continuously feed each other. Getting design right is important to ensuring successful planning.

Design. The concept of operational design has moved the joint force away from what some viewed as a planning-centric, checklist mentality to a more commander-led, artful analysis of the environment, questioning of assumptions, focus on framing (or reframing) the problem, and the development of an operational approach to guide subsequent planning. We believe this renewed focus over the past six years on the key role of design is necessary in widening our cognitive aperture to better support National Leadership in today's complex and often ambiguous environment.

Commanders lead their staff through design to:

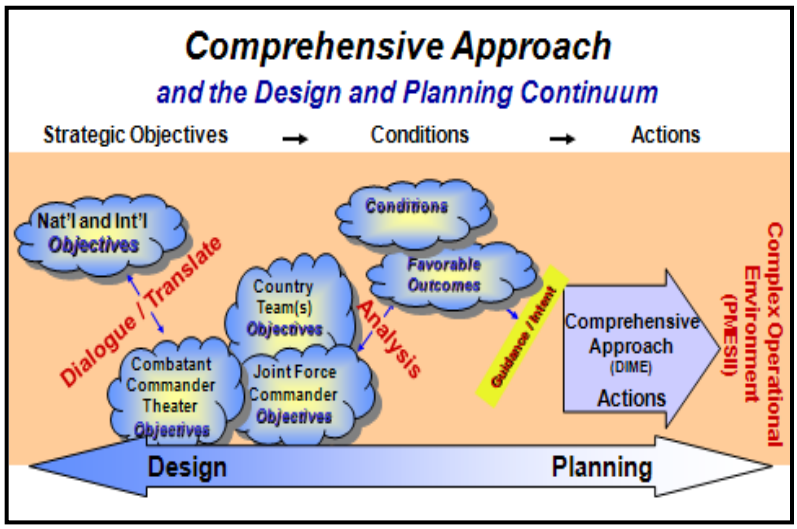
- Better understand the environment and situation.
- Identify the problem.
- Develop an operational approach to guide planning efforts.

Planning. We continue to see planning as a key to setting conditions for the success of subordinates and unified action with mission partners. Key thoughts:

- Joint commands leverage the up-front design work to guide planning.
- The HQs organize to operate in three "event horizons" to maintain a balanced perspective in setting conditions and facilitate the large number of planning efforts.
- Planners stay in constant contact with the direction the commander is taking through "touch points" – focused meetings, "huddles", and decision boards – to gain guidance or direction.
- Commander's critical information requirements (CCIRs) and assessments inform and assist the planners' situational understanding. CCIRs can drive branch and sequel decisions, and even cause a joint command to revisit design activities looking at the environment, the problem, and the command's operational approach.
- We have observed the chief of staff (CoS) or the J3 leading the management of the large number of planning efforts in the headquarters through a plans management board (PMB).

2.0 INCORPORATING DESIGN INTO JOINT OPERATIONS. Commanders understand the importance of gaining a shared understanding of the operational environment, identifying the problem facing them, and development of an operational approach to drive planning – and the important role they personally play in these activities. Operational design supports the effective exercise of command, providing a broad perspective that deepens understanding and enables visualization. We have observed joint commanders around the world distilling their understanding into broad approaches for resolving problems in tough, complex circumstances. They give timely guidance to their planners enabling detailed planning via the joint operation planning process, as well as providing clear and succinct intent to subordinates and components. Because of the nature of today's problems and environment, we recognize the importance of dialogue and translation through candid discussions with superiors, battlefield circulation, and interaction with peers and staff.

Joint commanders strive to achieve a comprehensive approach (see adjacent figure) with mission partners through continuous dialogue with higher authorities, translation of this dialogue, subsequent development of desired conditions and favorable outcomes, and issuance of guidance and intent to subordinates to achieve unity of effort with mission partners.



This mirrors a continuum of design and planning (see figure). In the design end of the continuum, the commander and staff are focused on gaining a conceptual understanding of the current operational environment and the problem. We see this occurring to a large extent at the theater-strategic and the operational levels of war. The Army's FM 6-0, *Mission Command*, summarizes the commander's role: *"The most important role commanders play in command and control (C2) is combining the art of command with the science of control. Commanders use the activities of visualizing the battlespace, describing their commander's visualization to subordinates, directing actions to achieve results, and leading the command to mission accomplishment as their decision making methodology throughout the operations process."*[1] The commander's and staff's actions are a combination of the execution of both operational art and design.

Design and Planning Continuum

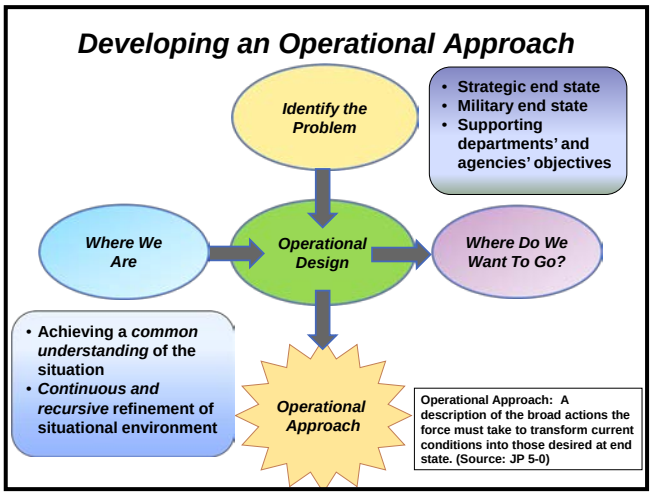
Design	Planning
Problem-setting	**Problem-solving**
Conceptual – blank sheet	• Physical and Detailed
Questions assumptions and methods	• Procedural
Develops understanding	• Develops Products
Paradigm-setting	• Paradigm-accepting
Complements planning, preparation, execution, and assessment	• Patterns and templates activity
Commander-driven dialogue	• Commander-driven process

Operational art links both written and unwritten policy and strategy into key actions in the operational environment. *"Good operational art, demonstrated as*

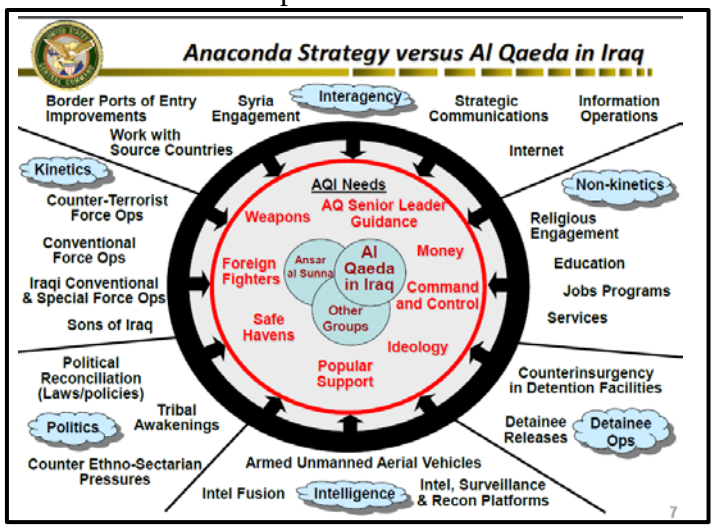
[1] Department of the Army, *Mission Command*, FM 6-0 (Washington, DC: 13 September 2011).

often as necessary to support the achievement of campaign objectives, ensures that tactical actions contribute to the attainment of the purpose of [the campaign, operation, or other military action]."[2] It is also important to note that even in the absence of a clear strategic-level end state or all necessary resources, the commander ultimately remains responsible for the success of the mission, regardless of earlier higher direction or support by others.

Design: Understanding the Situation, Identifying the Problem, Developing an Operational Approach: Design activities follow a logical methodology to understand the broader environment and identify and develop a thorough understanding of the problem, and the subsequent articulation of this understanding into an operational approach.



An operational approach links design activities to more detailed planning commonly associated with the joint operation planning process as depicted in the adjacent figure. It is the culmination of an effort to visualize how the joint force will reach intended objectives, developed from the shared, common understanding of the environment and clear identification of the problem.



An excellent example of visualization is the well-known Anaconda strategy that General Petraeus and his team developed in both Iraq and Afghanistan (see figure).[3] This single figure captured a common understanding of the environment and problem, and a clear visualization of how the force would reach intended objectives.

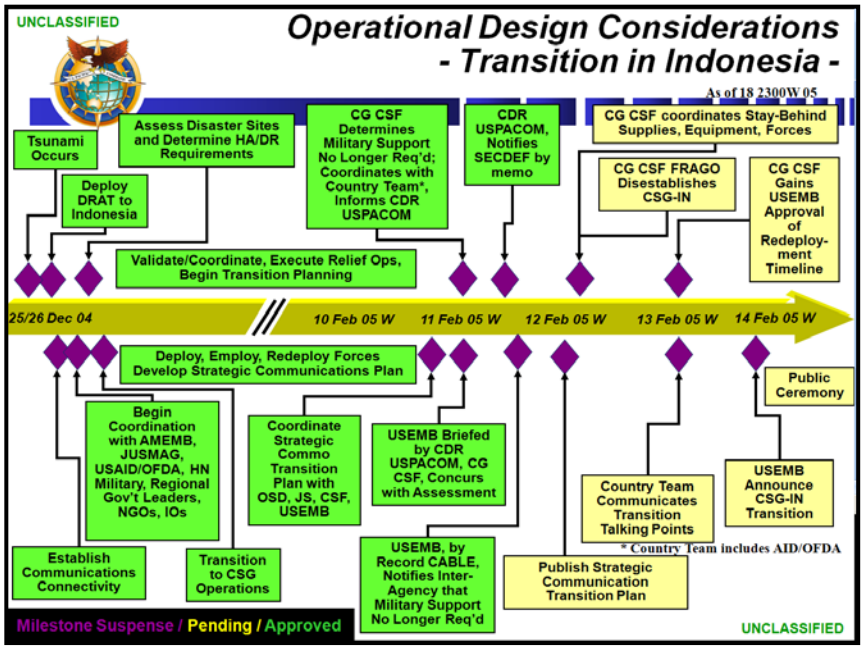
Another example of design, and specifically the linkage of the problem with the operational approach, was General Odierno's (then Commander of MNF-I) perspective in 2009 that instability in Iraq was the problem and focused his operational approach on mitigating drivers of instability. This is illustrated in his September 2009 testimony to the HASC: "There still remain underlying, unresolved sources of potential conflict. I call these drivers of instability…We continue to assist the Government of Iraq (GoI) in addressing and finding ways to mitigate these

[2] Brigadier Justin Kelly and Dr. Michael James Brennan, Alien: How Operational Art Devoured Strategy (U.S. Army War College: Strategic Studies Institute, 2009), p 98. http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pubs/display.cfm?pubid=939.

[3] General David Petraeus, *Center for a New American Security's 3rd Annual Conference, "Striking a Balance: A New American Security,"* Keynote Address, Center for a New American Security, Washington, DC: 11 June 2009.

root causes of instability. Current drivers of instability include communal and factional struggles for power and resources, insufficient GoI capacity, violent extremist groups, and interference from external state and non-state actors."[4]

Time spent on design and planning often depends on the complexity of the problem and the echelon of command. During design, significant dialogue occurs between the commander and planners with respect to defining the relevant ideas about the environment and the problem. Well-informed dissenting opinions in the course of dialogue for design activities should be considered to better develop an operational approach (see figure on previous page). These opinions may be introduced by a "red team," discussed in detail in a later section. When a transition from designing to planning occurs, articulation of the Design Concept and the results of other design activities, including the initial commander's estimate, planning guidance, and commander's intent, can serve to guide subordinate commanders and staffs in detailed planning.



Design during crisis**.** Design is often abbreviated during Crisis Action Planning. The Indonesia tsunami in December 2004 (see figure), the Haiti earthquake in January 2010, and early operations in regard to Libya in 2011 are examples where the commander and planners were hard pressed to fully develop their operational approach due to the severe time constraints. They recognized this, and devoted as much time as possible up front, gaining the best possible understanding of the operational environment and the problem before moving to detailed planning and execution.

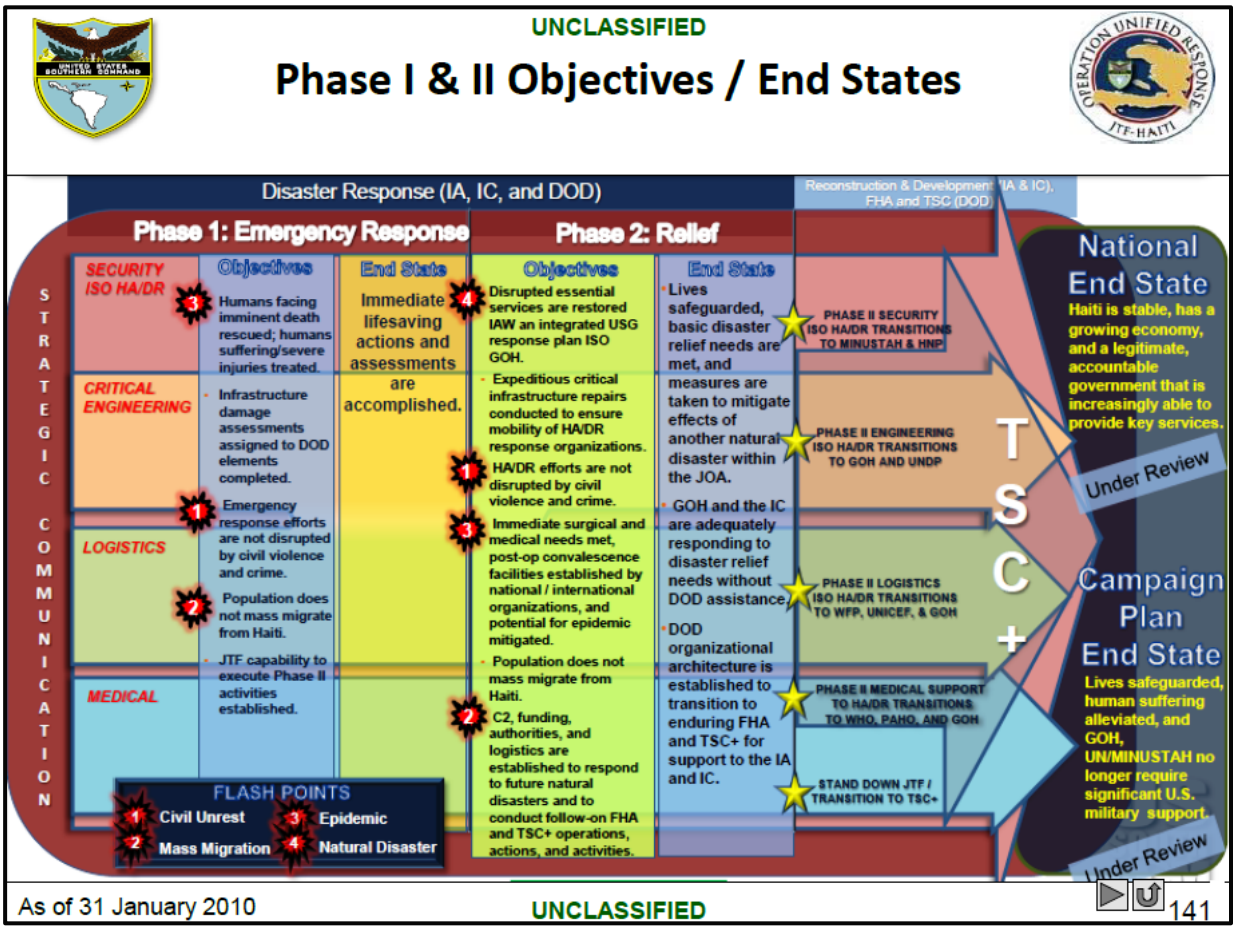
In both of these natural disasters the commanders quickly realized the nature of their roles in providing foreign humanitarian assistance, as a supporting organization to the U.S. Agency for International Development/Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (USAID/OFDA). This allowed them to gain a better focus on the problem and operational environment. In both cases, the JTF commanders also realized their every action should contribute to enhancing theater security cooperation within their area of responsibility (AOR).

In the case of Haiti, Gen Fraser (USSOUTHCOM Commander), his staff, and components had little time to react to the immediate life-saving requirements demanded by the operational environment. As time passed, the design was refined to facilitate a clearer operational approach. The commander's situational awareness grew through internal efforts, the intense media coverage, and through the significant number of external stakeholders, including the supported

[4] General Odierno's HASC Testimony, Status Of Ongoing U.S. Efforts In Iraq, 30 September 2009

U.S. Government (USG) agency USAID/OFDA, the U.S. Embassy's country team in Haiti, Haitian government officials, the United Nations (UN), nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and others.

The below figure depicts the operational approach from the USSOUTHCOM perspective. They used four lines of effort: "Security ISO HA/DR" (in support of humanitarian assistance/disaster relief), "Critical Engineering," "Logistics," and "Medical" (listed on the left) across the two phases shown. Wrapped around these is strategic communication, demonstrating how the commander's communication strategy is woven into all operations.[5] The commander and his staff worked to clearly display objectives and end states by phase, demonstrating explicitly their incorporation of three elements of design: end state, arranging operations (through phasing), and lines of effort.[6] The end state determined by the campaign plan is also shown adjacent to the national end state, creating a visual linkage between the two. While this is simply one PowerPoint slide, it demonstrates the intellectual rigor by which Gen Fraser and his staff, in coordination with subordinates and other stakeholders, developed an operational approach to assist in planning and execution of the challenging HA/DR operation.



[5] "Inform and Influence" is an emergent term being used in the field to describe the integration of information-related activities. For further discussion, see the Insights and Best Practices Focus Papers which can be found at the URLs listed on the inside front cover.

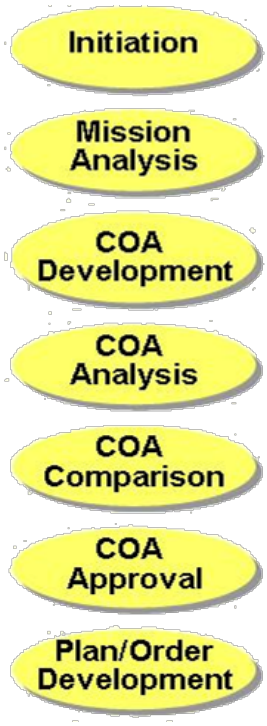
[6] Elements of operational design are defined in *Joint Operation Planning*, JP 5-0, Chapter 3.

Understanding the Operational Environment. Advances in technology – particularly information technology – have clearly impacted operations in the battlespace. One effect of technological advances is the ability of commanders to leverage many joint capabilities at lower levels. Commanders realize how important it is for them to understand, and *"give way to more collaborative and decentralized approaches, informed from the bottom up and driven by the co-creation of context."*[7] "Co-creation of context" refers to the simultaneous development of a fuller situational understanding across echelons of command and with our stakeholders leveraging each other's unique viewpoints and perspectives. As commands at all echelons simultaneously leverage means to gain information about the environment, they filter the information relevant for them to take action. This relevant information is also communicated through "collaborative approaches" so that multiple echelons can leverage information quicker. The "co-creation of context" translates to a better overall understanding of the operational environment.

This "co-creation of context" observed in recent and ongoing operations enhances the application of operational art and design in developing and refining both the higher headquarters' operational approach and lower headquarters' execution.

We see a good correlation between an increase of complexity in problems faced by the joint force and the exercise of operational art at lower echelons. The joint commander enables subordinate tactical commanders with the right tools, including technological ones, and provides flexibility through mission-type orders. Tactical commanders gain an added responsibility to be able to leverage joint capabilities, bringing them to bear effectively in the operational environment.

Identifying the Problem is Critical to Solving it. We often see joint commands struggle to incorporate results from identifying the problem and development of an operational approach into the JOPP (see figure at right). Critical time spent in crafting a problem statement may often be shelved without further reference, or the problem statement simply becomes the mission statement. Shelving the problem statement without future reference hinders the commander and planners from reviewing the creative and critical work done during initiation as they near completion of a COA decision brief or write the Commander's Estimate. The problem statement should have value at this juncture for answering whether or not they are solving the original problem. If the problem statement is merely a mission statement, then other pitfalls occur as the problem and the solution are conceptually the same item.



The problem statement should not pose a solution; that part comes as mission analysis and COA development occurs during the JOPP. Posing solutions at this point in the process runs the danger of solving the wrong problem. Writing a good problem statement allows the commander and planners to see later if the correct problem was identified. It also allows for external stakeholders to gain a shared, common understanding as early as possible.

[7] General Martin E. Dempsey, *The Army Capstone Concept and Institutional Adaptation*, Institute of Land Warfare: Landpower Essay No. 10-1, March 2010, p 4.

The problem statement should account for current circumstances, without trying to predict what future actions may occur. Any further ideas should be generated from gaining an understanding of the operational environment, taking into consideration historical knowledge, but limiting projections. It should be a warning to those who are crafting the problem statement that if a solution is proposed, even implicitly, it can lead the commander and planners to narrow the focus too soon. An example of a leading problem statement is, in the example of a disaster, "there is not sufficient shelter for displaced civilians," leading the joint command to immediately (and easily) do detailed planning for temporary sheltering as part of humanitarian assistance. This "lack of shelter," however, may be merely a symptom of a larger problem. A better way to pose the problem might be to simply include the fact of an unsheltered population as part of the analysis which leads to a complete problem statement. An additional issue is the danger of including a diagnosis of what caused the problem. The danger is that *"the causal claims implicit in diagnostic problem definitions can easily escape needed scrutiny."*[8] Put more simply, correlation does not necessarily equal causation.

Insights:

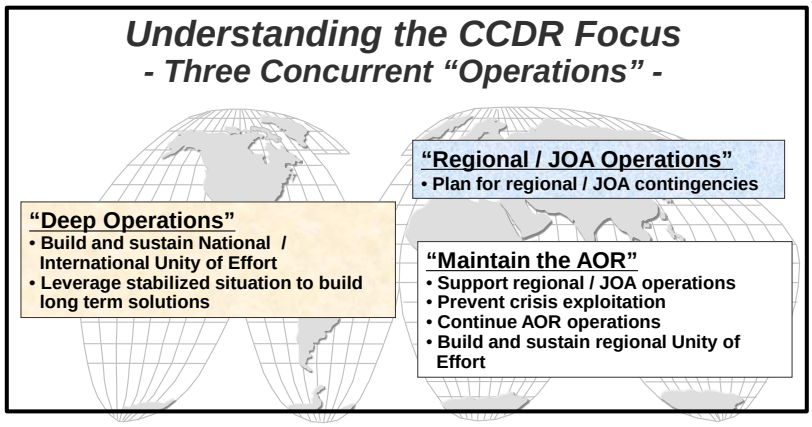
- Design is commander-centric and largely an "art of war" versus "science of war" endeavor.
- Understanding the environment is a challenge and takes significant effort. This requires substantial dialogue with senior leaders, mission partners, and stakeholders to gain a common understanding, and a clear realization that complete or "perfect" understanding is neither realistically achievable, nor required to guide planning.
- Recognize the need to spend sufficient time up front identifying the problem.
- Commanders' engagement is central to development of an operational approach. This is the culmination of the efforts to understand the environment and identify the problem. It is the "linkpoint" between design and planning.
- Commanders must ensure planners understand where they are in the design and planning continuum, to include the need to revisit design.

[8] Eugene Bardach, A Practical Guide for Policy Analysis: The Eightfold Path to More Effective Problem Solving (New York: Chatham House Publishers/Seven Bridges Press 2000), p. 97.

3.0 DESIGN FOR JOINT COMMANDS.

Design at the Combatant Command Headquarters. We see the results of significant design efforts during deliberate planning and during planning efforts in exercises at the combatant commands (CCMD). As those commands adapt deliberate planning for crisis situations, taking every situation on its own terms, some modification of the initial operational approach occurs. In shaping a commander's estimate to the national-strategic leadership, the commander's understanding of the problem often comes into focus through the articulation of risk. The CCMD's comparison of the consequences of taking or not taking a particular action embodies the careful analysis done by the entire command, which often relates to the theater-strategic dilemma.[9] Geographic Combatant Commands (GCCs) are experts in linking their theater campaign planning to emerging crises. It is at initiation of crisis action planning where the design efforts conducted during deliberate planning manifest their worth.

As a crisis emerges within the CCMD's AOR, the planning conducted in anticipation of the crisis response is adapted to the situation. This sharpens the CCMD's focus on what we have seen as the "three concurrent operations" (see figure). The "Deep Operations" include those led by the Department of State (DOS) or other USG agencies/departments requiring significant dialogue between the commander and others at the national-strategic level. These "operations" are very long-term and are focused on building and sustaining unity of effort and leveraging stabilized situations to build long-term solutions. Critical to these operations is the understanding that other USG agencies or departments may lead and act as the "supported" USG department for action. In every action that the CCMD takes, it is imperative that they are understood, synchronized, and harmonized with the lead USG department.

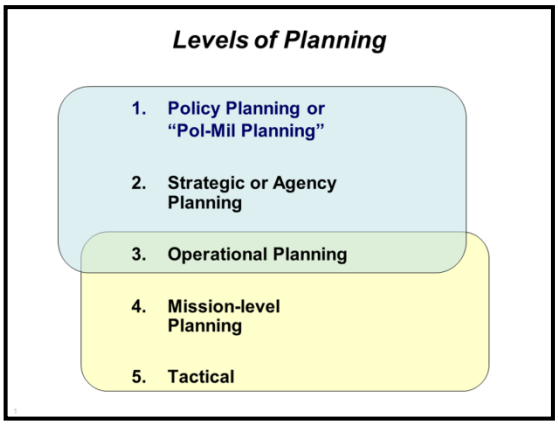


On the next level, the CCDR "maintains the AOR" and any other operations. These "operations" are normally seen as the heart of theater campaign planning, the shaping operations. The CCMD is supported in this role, and leads in cultivating the regional unity of effort throughout the AOR. Simultaneously; the CCMD also looks to potential tasks that may loom on the horizon in "Regional or JOA Operations." Here, the CCMD may be focused on directly commanding and controlling operations as the joint force commander (JFC) for that specific mission,[10] or supporting a Sub-unified, Functional, or designated JTF Commander to deter, defeat, and restore a shaping construct, or theater campaign plan execution, within one or more joint operations areas (JOAs).

[9] *Insights and Best Practices in Joint Operations*, 4th Edition. This paper can be found at any of the URLs listed on the inside front cover.

[10] As can be expected, performing as the JFC for a specific operation will tax a CCMD's ability to maintain focus on the broader AOR. This has significant implications on how the HQ organizes to support all three operations.

In addition to the three concurrent operations construct, we see multiple levels of planning that are either directly performed or supported by the CCMD. As depicted in the figure to the right, the CCMD plans primarily on the policy, strategy and operational levels. These levels roughly correspond to the traditional warfighting levels at the national-strategic, theater-strategic, and the operational levels.



The commander's dialogue with national and international leaders helps to both inform and be informed by national policy making. Typically, planners in CCMDs are very comfortable with planning at the tactical levels as shown shaded in yellow, but find the planning levels shaded in blue to be less structured and much more challenging.

Design at the Functional Combatant Command (FCC). We also recognize that FCCs have unique challenges. The breadth and depth of the global responsibilities of the FCCs make their challenges different from geographic combatant commands in some ways, and just as difficult. Synchronizing global responsibilities across all the GCCs' AORs and performing supporting roles through effective and efficient collaboration and coordination are essential. The FCC's ability to synchronize activities is often limited by authorities granted to them. Design fundamentals do not change, but planners at functional combatant commands face an added responsibility to not only understand their authorities and subject matter, but also to stay in lock-step with potentially all geographic combatant commands, the interagency and other external stakeholder inputs.

Insights:

- CCMD's operations influence the HQ's organization, planning focus, and relationships with stakeholders.
- CCMD's operations influence planning focus by prioritizing and resourcing planning efforts for the various levels of planning.
- CCMD's operations influence relationships with stakeholders: from national-strategic leaders (focusing on the "deep operations"), to embassies in the regions or other USG departments (the "regional/JOA operations" as well as the fight to "maintain the AOR"), other international or interorganizational stakeholders, higher headquarters, components, and regional contacts.
- Dialogue with national leadership is essential to shaping policy planning. Frequently this dialogue is not documented in any orders or plans. Planners at the CCMD can overcome this by frequent "touch points" (or engagements) with the commander.[11]

Design at the Joint Task Force Headquarters. Recent JTFs have approached design in many novel ways, often reflecting which of the three types of JTF headquarters they are: standing, rotational, or crisis; and whether they are functionally or geographically oriented. The mission of

[11] For further discussion on the "touch point" concept, see *Joint Operations Insights and Best Practices*, 4th Edition and the *Joint Headquarters Organization, Staff Integration, and Battle Rhythm Insights and Best Practices Focus Paper*. These two papers can be found at any of the URLs listed on the inside front cover.

each JTF HQ affects the respective challenges in approaching design. Standing JTF HQs have some advantages in that the relationships required in applying a comprehensive approach are able to be formed and cultivated over longer periods of time.

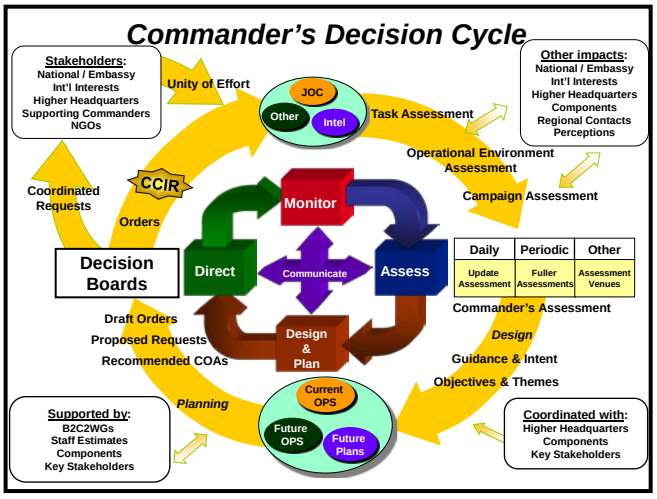
Rotational JTF HQs, such as those in the Horn of Africa and Afghanistan have the benefit of time to monitor, assess, and identify a change to the environment and problem, and as necessary change the operational approach. However, these JTF HQs also face a challenge in the tendency to revisit design activities each time a new "core" HQs deploys due to the large personnel turnover and new commander opting to develop their own individualized operational approach rather than continuing with the current approach. This can be disruptive, not only to subordinate units, but also for coordination with other mission partners and overall progress.

Functional JTF HQs (e.g., JSOTFs) have similar challenges to functional combatant commands in conducting design activities. As they support a geographic command, they must be able to collaborate with numerous external stakeholders in their supporting role. During crisis action planning the functional JTF commander sets the problem for his command nearly simultaneously with gaining an understanding of the larger crisis faced by the supported combatant commander.

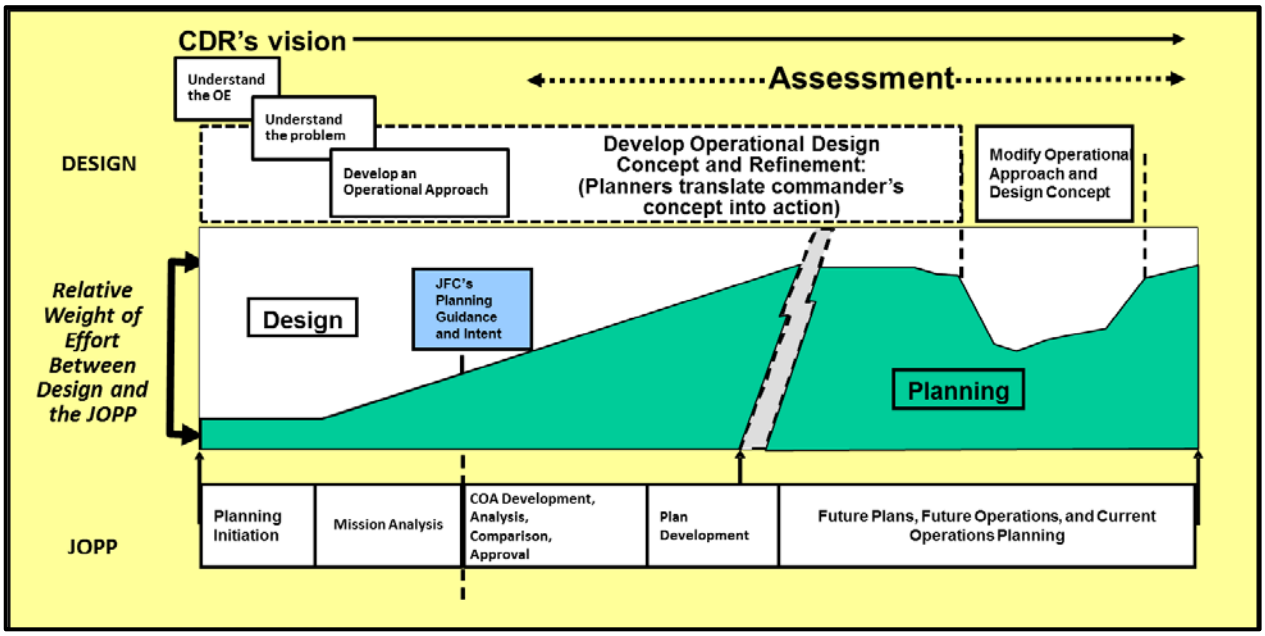
Best Practices:

- Share design products and thoughts with subordinate units and external stakeholders as early and often as possible during design activities.
- Ensure design products are at a classification that promotes sharing to the greatest extent possible.

4.0 DESIGN AND PLANNING RELATIONSHIPS. Within the Commander's Decision Cycle[12], design and planning occurs from the 3 to 9 o'clock position in the simplistically illustrated figure to the right. The overlap between design and planning efforts is also shown. Design and planning efforts are informed by assessment and driven by commander's guidance across the three event horizons.[13]



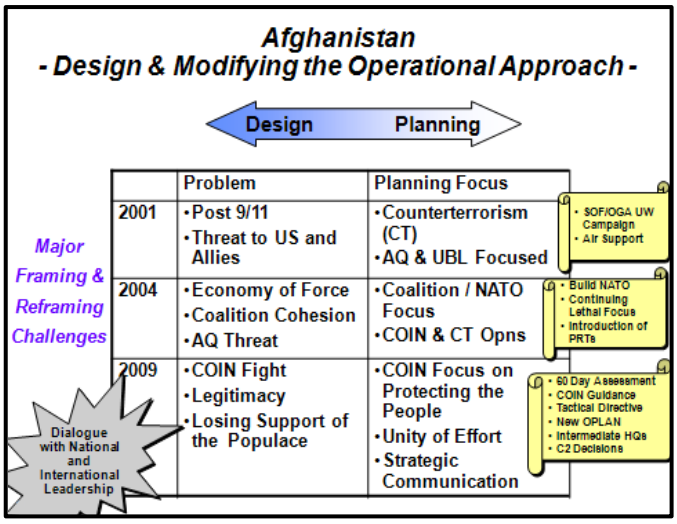
Planning is the problem-solving portion of the "design and planning continuum" introduced in the previous section. The value of following the well-established JOPP, as shown along the bottom of the figure below, continues to be reinforced through operational and exercise experiences. Planners from all Services are comfortable with the process, based on similarities throughout the military. Key to the process is the detailed analysis necessary to produce the requisite plans and orders that will direct subordinates. In addition to the required analysis, planners must strive to ensure the generated solution does not further exacerbate the problem or limit future options.



The JOPP provides a common framework for joint planning. It also provides interagency and multinational partners an outline for how U.S. joint forces plan and where to provide their input as stakeholders. We have seen that design activities occur more often during initiation and mission analysis, but still continue as elements of design are incorporated during course of action development.

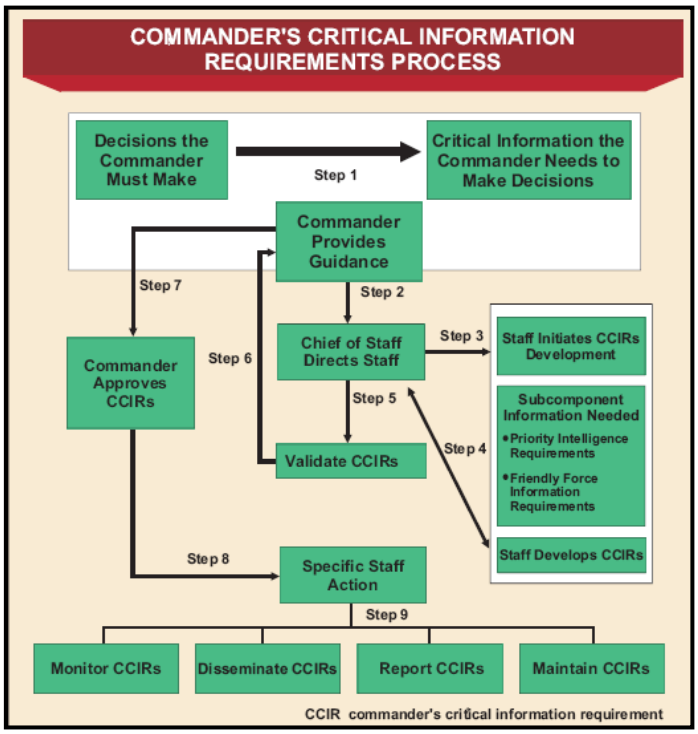
[12] For further discussion on the Commander's Decision Cycle, see *Joint Operations Insights and Best Practices*, 4th Edition, p 45. The paper can be found at any of the URLs listed on the inside front cover.
[13] For further discussion on Assessment, see the Assessment Focus paper; found on the URLs on inside front cover.

While design is incorporated into the planning process, there is a significant shift of focus toward the more detailed planning process once mission analysis is complete. During execution, we have seen the need (and subsequent decision by the commander) for HQ to revisit the original design based on changes to the operational environment, understanding of the problem, or strategic guidance. This is annotated by the figure on the previous page where the dip in planning occurs, with greater emphasis on design activities as the commander modifies the operational approach.



Our operations in Afghanistan provide a good example of revisiting design activities, as shown in the adjacent figure. While illustrative in nature, the figure depicts three significant periods where design activities were reviewed, and illustrate the resultant planning focus to modify the operational approach.

The figure depicts initial design occurring immediately following the 9/11 attacks. Then in the 2004 time frame, another relook at design and modifying the operational approach occurred as leadership identified NATO's importance to success in Afghanistan, together with the need to continue counterterrorism (CT) operations while recognizing the COIN implications. Later, in 2009 another iteration of design activities took place as we focused on the changing nature of the environment and the importance of protecting the people. These events underscore the likelihood of multiple design iterations and the importance of continuing dialogue with national and international leaders to ensure we get the context right up front before moving too quickly into detailed planning.



We have observed success at many operational level commands who follow JOPP. Focused collaborative sessions give the early JOPP steps a jump start as core planners share design thoughts with supporting working groups (WGs) and other internal and external stakeholders. As the key steps of mission analysis are accomplished, the staff creates initial estimates and the commander interacts with the staff to develop commander's critical information requirements (CCIRs). Planners help develop CCIRs across all three event horizons.

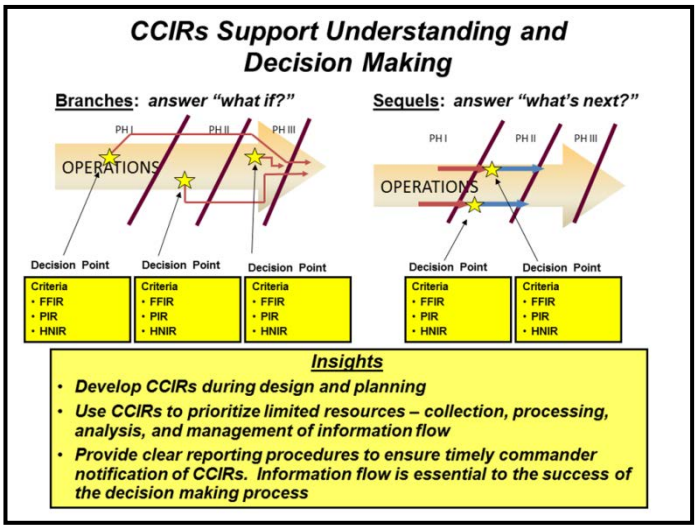
Most operational level commands we have observed develop their CCIRs during design and planning. CCIRs support decisions – both time sensitive

information requirements supporting anticipated decisions in the current operations event horizon, and the broader set of assessment/analyzed information enabling more far-reaching decisions in future operations and future plans horizons.[14]

Commanders drive development of CCIRs. We have seen the use of the CCIR process as shown in the figure on the previous page. This process lays out specific responsibilities for development, validation, dissemination, monitoring, reporting, and maintenance (i.e., modifying or deleting CCIRs).

Branch and Sequel Planning. While many CCIRs support branch and sequel plan decision requirements, the complexity of the operating environment makes it difficult to conduct predictive development of all potential decisions (and supporting CCIRs) an operational commander may face. However, this difficulty does not mean that we should stop conducting branch and sequel planning at the operational level – just the opposite; we need to focus on this kind of planning at the operational level to drive collection and analysis and set conditions for the success of the subordinates.

The complexity does suggest that some of our branch and sequel planning at the operational level may not result in the precise, fully predictive decision points with the associated CCIRs we are accustomed to at the tactical level. Additionally, unlike the tactical level, much of the information precipitating operational commanders' major decisions will not likely come from the JOC floor, but rather through interaction with other stakeholders and key leaders and from the results of "thought out" operational level assessments. Much of this information may not be in the precise form of answering a traditional, specifically worded, and time sensitive PIR or FFIR, but rather as the result of a broader assessment answering whether we are accomplishing the campaign objectives or attaining desired conditions for continued actions together with recommendations on the "so what."



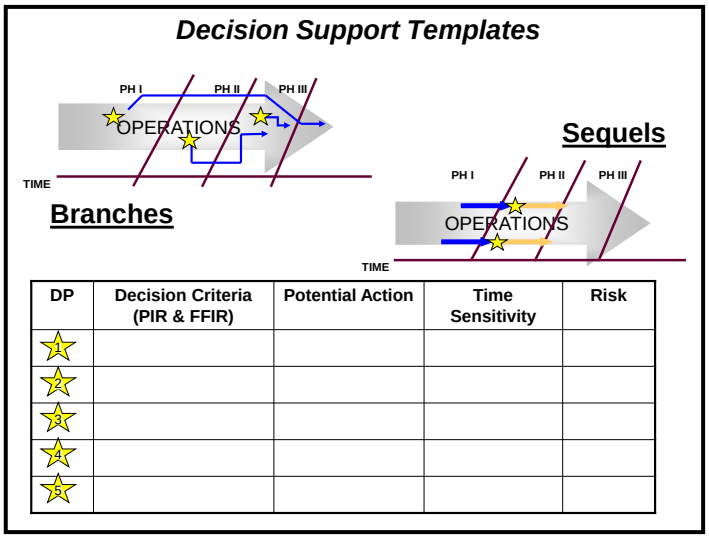
Most operational level commands begin CCIR development during mission analysis, often in conjunction with developing assumptions. Later, during COA development and analysis, planners will refine CCIRs. Planners conduct branch and sequel planning with associated decision points during COA development and analysis. We have seen branch and sequel decision points transcending all three event horizons with associated PIRs and FFIRs (and in some cases, Host Nation Information Requirements (HNIRs)) as depicted on the figure. These PIRs and FFIRs may be directly associated with developed measures of effectiveness (MOE). Analysis of these MOE helps depict how well friendly operations are achieving their objectives and may result in the decision to execute a branch or sequel plan.

[14] See also the CCIR Focus paper (URL on inside cover)

We normally see decision point requirements transcending all three event horizons. Some decision points in the current operations event horizon may have very specific and time sensitive information requirements which can be directly answered by CCIR, while those supporting branch and sequel execution are normally broader, often much more subjective, and answered through assessment venues. Decision point requirements may also include information requirements on "DIME" (Diplomatic, Informational, Military, Economic) partner actions/capabilities and operational environmental "PMESII" (Political, Military, Economic, Social, Informational, Infrastructure) conditions.

Some examples of branch plan decisions include shift of main effort, change in priority, refocusing information operations and public affairs messages, reorganization of forces, command relationship and task organization changes, and reallocation of resources. These decisions will likely require analysis, and both subjective and objective assessment venues on areas such as: the adversary's intent and changing operational environment conditions, DIME partner, coalition, and host nation capabilities and requests, and target audience perceptions (using more non-traditional collection means such as polls), to better guide the decisions.

Some sequel plan decision examples include a change in end state, objectives, or termination criteria, as well as transitions in overall phasing such as moving to a support to civil authority phase, force rotations, or withdrawal. These types of decisions will be based on broader campaign assessments providing geopolitical, social, and informational analysis and capabilities of partner stakeholders, significant changes in the operational environment, the problem, or strategic guidance.

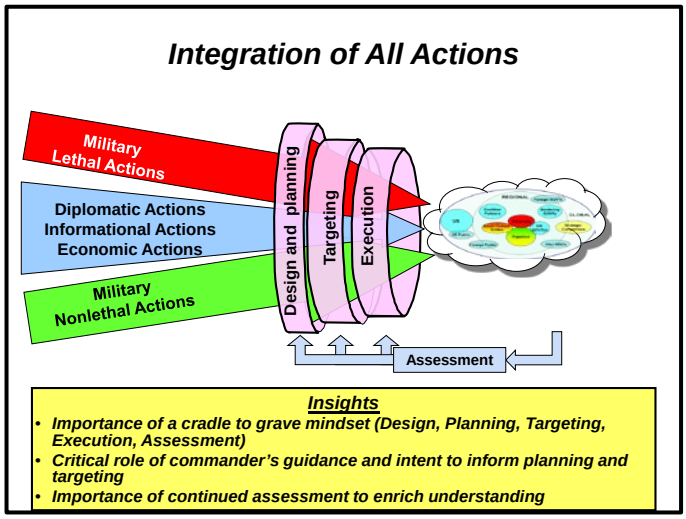


Planners often develop decision support templates (DSTs) to lay out these kinds of decisions and the associated CCIRs in more detail. DSTs helps link CCIRs (and assessment) to the decisions they support. The above figure depicts some of the information provided to the commander to gain his guidance and approval. These DSTs also help provide the clarity for collection and analysis resources to focus effort and information flow.

Integration of Lethal and Nonlethal Actions. We have seen as a best practice that commanders and planners integrate lethal and nonlethal actions up front as a fundamental part of the overall design and planning processes rather than "adding on" nonlethal actions at the end. Integrating lethal and nonlethal actions is not an intuitive process.[15] We find that planning guidance, commander's intent, and the operational framework provide the necessary up-front direction for the coherent integration of lethal and nonlethal actions at the operational level while appropriately leaving synchronization of detailed execution to subordinate tactical units.

[15] This is so important that we devote a focus paper to this topic. See the URL on inside front cover.

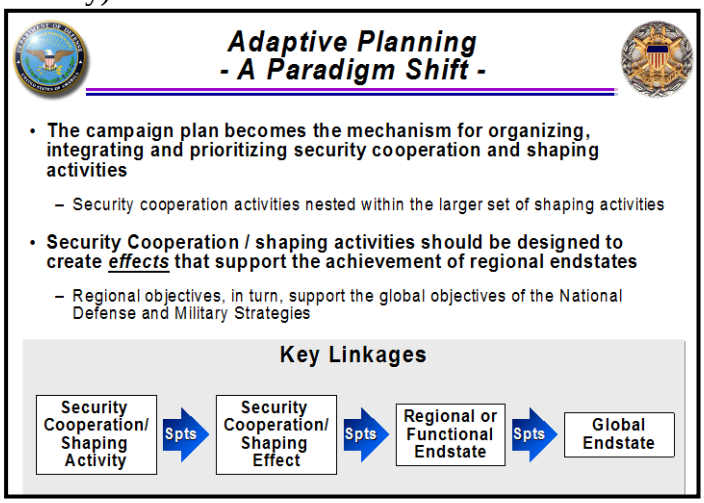
Key to success is the integration of the crucial stakeholders from both the lethal and nonlethal realms from the very beginning of the design and planning process. Together, the staff and these stakeholders can integrate the DIME actions through the coherent design and planning, targeting, execution, and assessment processes depicted in the figure on the next page.



We have observed that fully involving stakeholders from the very beginning of design and planning, enriches the planning process from analysis through COA development to orders production. Commanders have found that extensive consultation with stakeholders in visualizing the environment, developing guidance and intent, determining broader analysis criteria to analyze COAs, and making timely decisions results in more optimal plans and subsequent success in achieving objectives. This requires an important commitment to establishing and maintaining a command climate and organizational capability that actively seeks out and integrates not only military planner input into all phases of planning, operations, and assessment, but also other perspectives from outside the organization.

We have also observed that an "Inform and Influence" Line of Effort (LOE) may be appropriate in certain operational environments. In relatively nonlethal environments or in a COIN setting when nonlethal influence campaigns are required, this LOE can serve as the overarching umbrella that supports and is supported by the other LOEs (e.g., Governance, Security, Development LOEs).

Adaptive Planning Challenges. GCCs have unique challenges due to their broad theater responsibilities in both shaping and defining how to respond to crisis within their AORs. The Adaptive Planning and Execution (APEX) construct formally integrates the planning activities of the JPEC (Joint Planning and Execution Community) and facilitates the JFC's seamless transition from planning to execution during times of crisis. APEX activities span many organizational levels, but the focus is on the interaction between SecDef and CCDRs, which ultimately helps the President and SecDef decide when, where, and how to commit US military forces.[16] With the adoption of APEX we have seen the implications of this DOD-wide attempt to provide longer range guidance, more responsive planning efforts, and senior level involvement in development of those plans. APEX provides the foundation for a



[16]Joint Publication 5.0, *Joint Operational Planning*, 11 August 2011

constellation of joint and combined operations, “living plans” designed and resourced to achieve national defense and military strategic objectives in a manner that is both militarily and politically acceptable.

This constellation of planning efforts centers on a strategic-level “Capstone” plan that provides the framework for other plans that address contingencies that could happen in the GCC’s AOR. The adaptive planning process ensures each of the contingency plans take into account national interests so that actions addressing one contingency do not inadvertently impact U.S. national interests in another area. The process also allows for continual update and shared awareness of the plans. Planners are charged to work through procedures to revise these plans, utilizing collaborative planning tools.

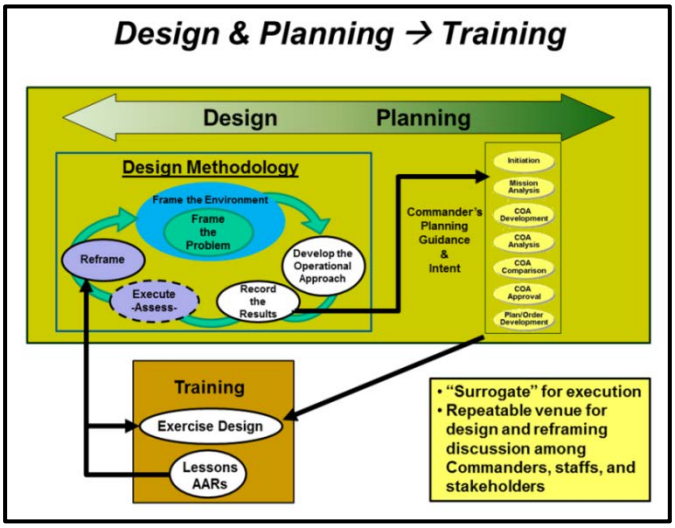
The adaptive planning process incorporates key planning guidance documents, including the Guidance for Employment of the Force (GEF) and Joint Strategic Capabilities Plan (JSCP), as well as national strategies and the Unified Command Plan (UCP). The planning process focuses efforts for GCCs in their shaping activities, as depicted in the figure to the left. The GEF combines guidance from the Secretary of Defense (SecDef) to combatant commanders on theater security cooperation and contingency planning. The JSCP, issued by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS), refines guidance provided in the GEF based on current military capabilities. It apportions limited forces and resources to combatant commanders. For both combatant commands and JTFs, these documents provide guidance and establish requirements for:

- Inclusion of stakeholders for a “comprehensive whole of government” approach.
  - Interagency and coalition partners’ involvement early in planning.
  - Know what Interagency organizations and agencies “bring to the fight.”
- Integration of Phase 0 (current Theater Security Cooperation (TSC) activities) within a campaign plan, and linking these steady state TSC actions to contingency requirements to achieve strategic end states. Linking ongoing campaign planning and Phase 0 activities to authorities, approvals, funding, and sourcing (contingency and execution sourcing) is key to success.
- Addressing short term contingency responses within the context of a broader, longer term theater strategy.
- Synchronization of theater plans with global plans – requires multiple levels of cross-command coordination.

Role of Exercises in Supporting Design and Planning. Joint Force Commanders and their HQs plan and execute training exercises based on their OPLANs, CONPLANs, and scenarios related to “most likely” and “most dangerous” crises/contingencies in their AOR. The primary purpose of these exercises is to sustain and improve the readiness of these joint HQs to command and control operations through challenging, realistic ‘live-virtual-constructive” training. A secondary role of these complex training events is to provide an intensive venue for the focused, structured dialogue that drives design and subsequent planning.

We observe numerous commanders exploiting exercises as an opportunity to focus their command’s attention on the details of the plan being exercised (executed in a constructive/virtual manner) and broaden discussion with their subordinates and other interagency and regional stakeholders on key aspects of the plan.

When approached in this manner, training exercises can serve as a "surrogate" for actual execution of a plan, and in this role support design by enhancing understanding of the environment and the problem and providing valuable insights into the operational approach. In a similar way these exercises support planning by testing assumptions, validating risk, limitations, and resource prioritization/allocation. Moreover, because of the virtual/constructive nature of this type of training exercise, the "execution" can be repeatable which facilitates the iterative nature of both design and planning.



The "output" of this training is twofold. First, observations, insights, and lessons gained during training can directly support development of future training and exercises by identifying areas for improvement. These areas can form the basis for future exercise objectives. Second and perhaps more importantly, many of the same observations and insights can inform dialogue on aspects of design and deepen the "co-creation of context" within the HQs and with subordinates and stakeholders. The adjacent figure simplistically portrays this design and planning relationship with training and exercise opportunities.

The opportunity to focus the entire joint force's time and attention on "the environment and the problem" helps to develop mutual understanding and strengthen crucial relationships among commanders and stakeholders. Armed with this enhanced understanding of the problem, the plan that seeks to solve that problem, and the people (the staff, subordinate commanders, and stakeholders), a Joint Force Commander can be better prepared to drive the commander-centric processes of both design and planning towards the ultimate goal of mission success.

Insights:

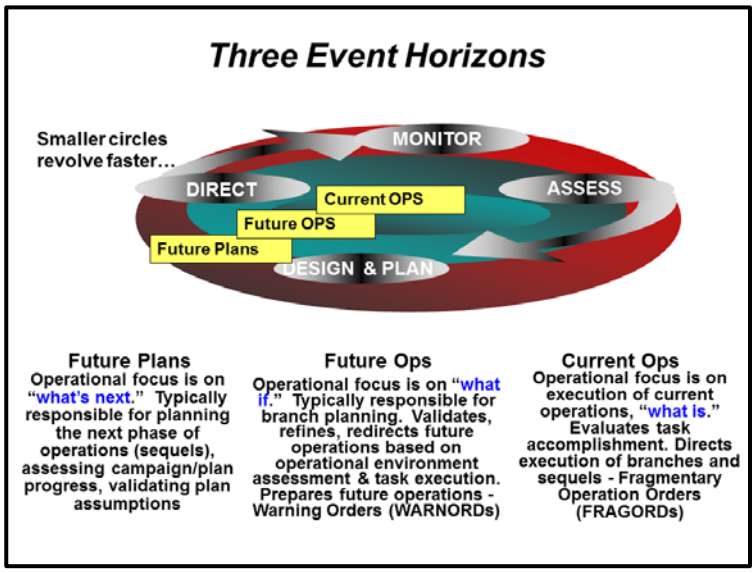
- Recognize the value of design and planning, their relationship, and how they continuously feed each other. Getting design right is important to ensuring successful planning. Thorough planning facilitates iterative revisits on "design."
- Commander involvement up front in design and in the planning process enhances and focuses planning. Commander's guidance and intent, informed by assessment, focus and guide planning efforts. Commanders may need to direct a revisit on design.
- Commanders drive development of CCIRs. Planners help develop CCIRs beginning in design and continuing during the planning process across all three event horizons.
- Recognition of the more complex environment and need to determine desired outcomes and conditions are necessary before attempting to develop operational approaches to achieve success. Consider using PMESII as a means to gain and maintain a broad perspective and understanding of the environment.
- Integrate lethal and nonlethal actions up front as a fundamental part of the overall design and planning processes.
- Leverage exercise venues to enrich design and planning.

5.0 PLANNING ORGANIZATION AND MANAGEMENT.

Importance of Organization. A critical component to a highly functioning staff resides in its organization for planning. A complex organization like a GCC requires a guided process for integrating the people, information and technology across the command. We have seen the organization of joint headquarters dependent upon how the command group and staff members interact with the commander's personality. A highly functioning joint planning staff can quickly translate the commander's guidance and intent, efficiently and effectively devise suitable operational approaches addressing the problem, and publish an order that is executable by the subordinates. The joint planning staff knows how the commander best receives and processes information and has a battle rhythm that complements the commander's decision cycle. A staff that adheres to rigid structures without accounting for the personality and requirements of the commander misses a key aspect of planning organization. Reconciling the commander's visualization and gaining the right decisions at the appropriate time helps the entire joint staff synchronize plans and actions in the operational environment. Organizing planning actions over time helps in reconciliation and makes efficient use of limited time and other resources.

Most commands orient across three event horizons: current operations (answering "what is"), future operations (focused on solving "what if" questions), and future plans (looking at "what's next"). Each of these event horizons usually requires some capacity for planning to develop appropriate plans and orders. Each event horizon has its own set of planning efforts that are competing for the limited personnel, capability, and expertise within the headquarters. Once event horizons are established in the joint force headquarters, staff principals are able to task personnel to be members of operational planning teams (OPTs) that analyze problems and develop options. Current and future operations planning normally fall under the purview of the J3 with future plans under the J5.

Most headquarters establish discrete time windows for these event horizons such as up to a few days for current operations, a few days to a few weeks for future operations, and a few weeks and beyond for future planning. Another way of arranging planning efforts is to focus on the questions each event horizon poses. Current operations planning capacity should be staffed to manage situations such as units in contact requiring additional support and casualty evacuation or encountering a personnel recovery (PR) situation.



Future operations planners typically develop branch plans based on the operational environment assessment of the situation tied with CCIR and decision points. Future plans planners use the fuller campaign assessment to plan for the next phase or sequels.[17]

Additionally, planning problems can also be allocated based on complexity of the problem or capacity (expertise). For example, a PR event that spans beyond several days may require a shifting of the planning effort. We have also observed some headquarters bringing forward planners into current operations to better coordinate the effort between time sensitive (PR) planning and execution.

Resourcing the requisite support for planning on each event horizon is paramount to maintaining effectiveness and efficiency in the headquarters. When the planning on one event horizon is not resourced with enough planners to handle the problems, other planners and operational planning teams are drawn into making up that shortfall, creating a void. For instance, when a command does not resource enough future operations planners, future plans planners are often drawn into future operations planning, and sequel planning is neglected. Similarly, when current operations planning is not resourced appropriately, future operations planners are drawn into current operations planning, and similar consequences result (e.g., branch planning is neglected).

Principal Roles. There are many personalities and components within the staff that deserve consideration when determining how to organize and structure for planning. We recognize that not all commands and staff face the same planning problems and must account for their environment, operating tempo, along with the span of their planning problems in considering their organization. The paragraphs below highlight some of the key individuals and their roles within the planning organization and process.

Commander. Design and planning are commander-centric activities and the commander drives the planning process. The commander maintains a dialogue with higher echelon headquarters and/or national and international leadership (along with other interagency and coalition partners) and often directly receives strategic goals and objectives. The commander then translates that dialogue into clear and concise commander's guidance and intent for his planners and subordinates. This is the essence of the comprehensive approach.

The commander's interaction with the staff enables effective planning. His daily interactions, experience, and personal investment in the AOR allow him to fill in gaps for the planning staff. This holds true not only for long-term campaign planning, but also short-term crisis action planning. Crucial to this is ensuring there is time allotted for "touch points" with the commander to interface with the staff and communicate planning guidance to them, and also focusing subordinate and component commanders with good intent to inform their planning. More interaction early in the planning process facilitates a more concise product that fits the situation and the commander's visualization of how to solve it.

Chief of Staff (CoS). We often observe the Chief of Staff driving staff integration and disciplining the planning process across the three event horizons. This role is especially critical at higher echelon commands as lead times tend to be longer for plans and the staff must also participate in other battle rhythm events. The CoS helps prioritize the planning efforts and ensures integration between the staff principals with primary responsibility for the event horizons – the J3 (current ops), the J35 (future ops), and the J5 (future plans). The CoS also facilitates the

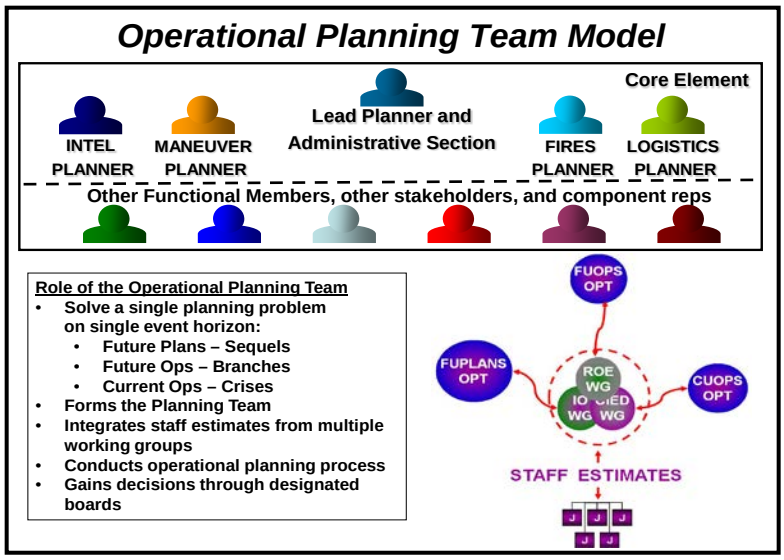
[17] See the *Assessment Insights and Best Practices Focus Paper* which can be found at any of the URLs listed on the inside front cover.

commander's ability to make decisions and receive information at the right time and place, tailored to the commander's unique personality and character. We often find this prioritization effort is a joint effort between the J3, J5, and CoS with different individuals leading the effort based on the personality of the HQ.

Staff Principals. Staff principals play an instrumental role in the organization of planning efforts. The heads of the staff sections, or J-codes, are responsible for not only providing personnel to the planning teams, but also for providing their functional expertise and a common, relevant, and focused staff estimate to inform planning problems. Because planning is conducted simultaneously with other battle rhythm activities, the staff principal may not be able to attend all planning sessions. Staff principals send their personnel to serve within various working groups and participate in planning efforts. It is imperative that the staff principal train his personnel to not only maintain situational awareness of the functional "lane" but also know where that lane intersects with other functional lanes and know the status of available resources.

One technique we often see is to conduct an internal staff huddle to review current planning efforts, disseminate a common current status of resources, and synchronize the efforts to ensure the staff does not overextend its resources within the planning efforts. A staff principal sitting in a decision board should not be surprised by the assessment and/or options provided by a planning team member from that section. A well-informed staff principal integrated within the planning process helps reduce potential disagreements within the staff.

Subordinate/Component/Coalition Interaction. An important consideration within the planning organization is the interaction with subordinate or component headquarters. Liaison officers (LNOs) and their continuous dialogue with these elements serve to create a better informed plan through updated and accurate assessments on capabilities and situational awareness of the environment. They also serve to inform the planning staff on constraints or restraints concerning caveats or dialogue with outside agencies. A planning staff that has empowered LNOs both horizontally and vertically can greatly enhance the planning process. LNOs are not unlimited and must be allocated as a resource. Additionally, LNOs do not negate the requirement for direct dialogue with subordinate command and staff counterparts. One successful technique we have observed is planners conducting distributed collaborative sessions (e.g., VTC, DCO, Adobe Connect, chat) with subordinate and component counterparts to facilitate interaction and dialogue and increase overall understanding of planning efforts.



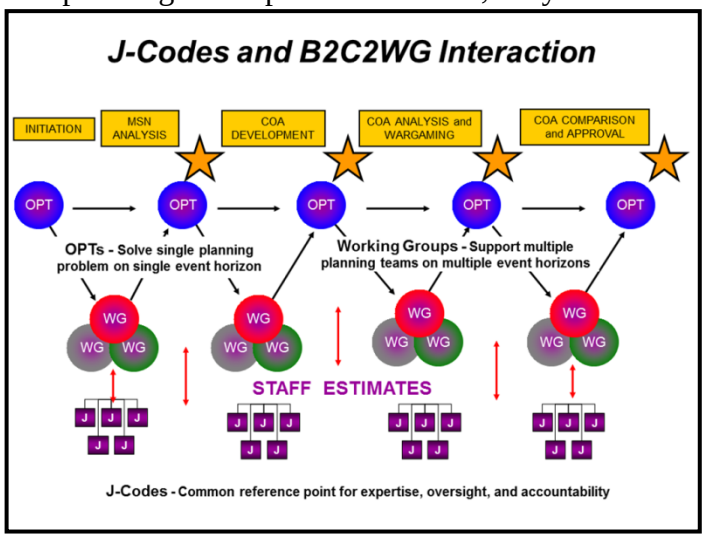
B2C2WGs. Boards, bureaus, centers, cells, and working groups form the core of how to integrate the efforts of the staff across the event horizons and inform the commander to make decisions. These are essentially meetings on the battle rhythm that form the core of the decision making process. As mentioned earlier, the staff principals provide continuous and updated staff

estimates. WGs are focused on a particular functional area to provide additional estimates on the problems. These estimates from the working groups and joint staff inform the operational planning teams (OPTs) developing the plans. The number of B2C2WGs should be kept at a manageable level to prevent the staff from being overwhelmed by a full calendar of meetings that can actually impede planning efforts.

OPTs are central to integrating staff efforts in planning (see figure on previous page). Generally led by the J3 and J5, these planning teams should be the conduit to both inform and be informed by WGs.

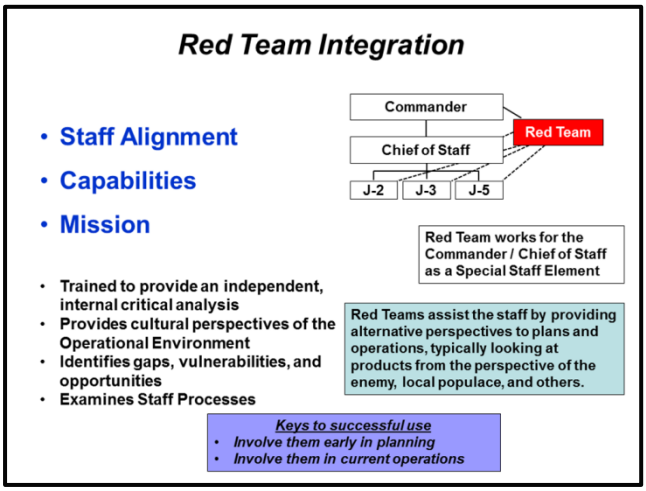
The composition of these planning teams is tailored based on the planning task; we normally see a minimum of a maneuver planner, an intelligence planner, and a logistics planner as the core of the planning team.

The planning teams provide coherent, fully coordinated staff recommendations to the commander at regular intervals (we use the term "touch points" to denote the various meetings with the commander) during the planning process for guidance and decision. J-code directors and sections remain important players in this OPT and WG interaction. They monitor planning and working group actions, and provide the functional staff estimate input that provide much of the basis for the OPT and WG analysis and recommendations.



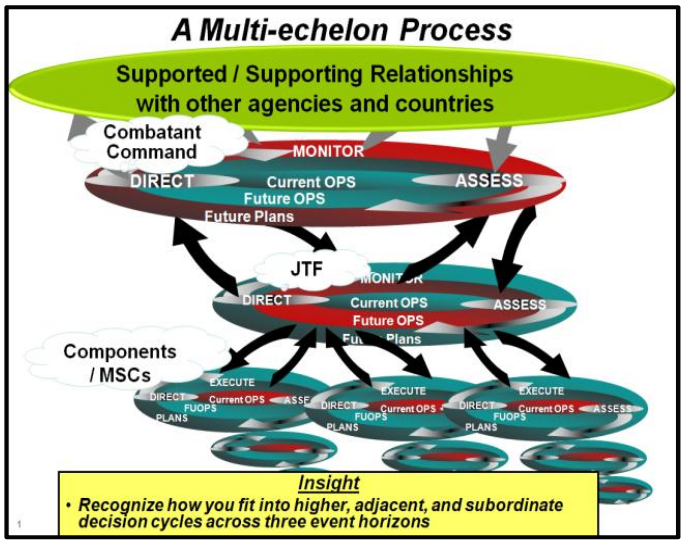
The adjacent figure depicts the important role of OPTs in the planning process. For example, consider how a joint force headquarters may develop a plan. The OPT is established from members of the appropriate event horizon, most likely future operations, and determines the planning timeline. Vital resources are not only from contributions of various established working groups, but also from those external stakeholders throughout the theater also working the same planning issue. The OPT interacts with WGs to develop detailed information relevant for planning to continue plan or order development. The OPT will request specific information from the working groups and in turn inform them of changing requirements and decisions throughout the process.

The commander issues guidance, intent and formally approves the planning effort outcomes throughout the planning process at decision boards. The commander also determines the priority of this planning effort as well as the operation itself to inform the working groups and staff leads.



Another tool we have seen commanders successfully use is a red team. A red team may be valuable to a joint force commander by helping to take bias out of plans in development.[18] Successful use of a trained, independent and critically thinking red team can link design and planning strongly through their identification of vulnerabilities, threats and opportunities, and help the OPT reduce risk. Their organization, working directly for the CoS or the commander, is essential for the right interaction. At the CCMD level, we have seen this kind of technique adopted in ideas such as USPACOM's Strategic Focus Groups. The Strategic Focus Groups are categorized by geographic areas of interest within the AOR, participate in B2C2WGs throughout the battle rhythm and provide alternative thinking from a variety of perspectives. The group may formulate alternative strategies for command consideration. Particularly important in this concept is the ability of the command to grow and maintain the right subject matter expertise to perform this function.

Vertical Integration. Headquarters organizing for planning should understand how they fit into the decision cycles of other units across the three event horizons. Our observations indicate that in today's complex environment, the need to coordinate, synchronize, and collaborate has increased exponentially. The figure on the right depicts how understanding the multi-echelon processes with higher headquarters, subordinate commands and adjacent units is critical to the joint force creating unified action in the operational environment.

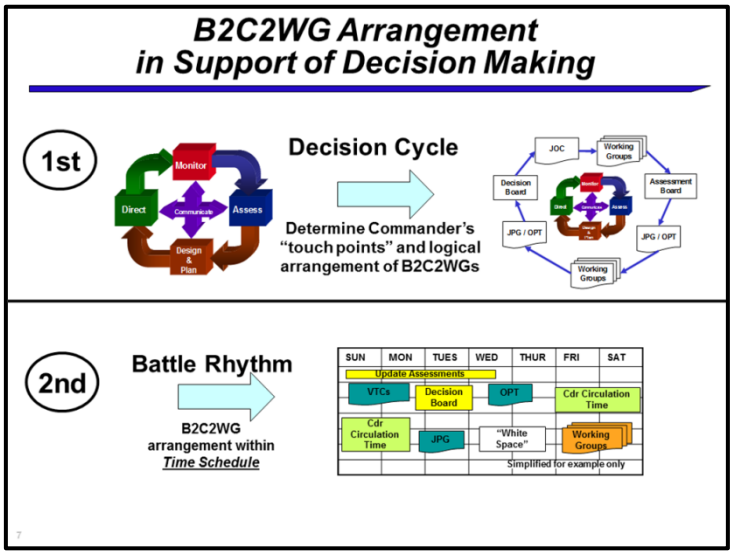


The decision cycle at the combatant command or JTF level should nest with other decision cycles. There should be recognition that higher HQ decision cycles are normally more deliberate and slower moving because of their requirements to coordinate with increasingly more stakeholders. Improper management of planning efforts and resources has cascading impacts at lower echelon HQ planning efforts. We have seen this result in last-minute taskings and in FRAGOs and other orders that have shortened timelines for the subordinate HQ to respond.

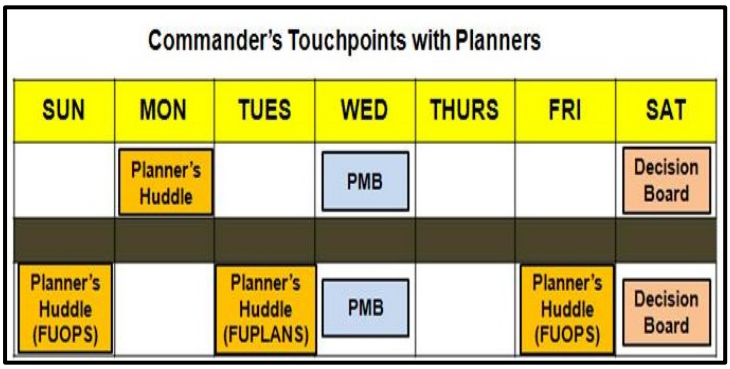
Plans Management. There will often be more planning problems than resources dedicated to solve them. Two points become evident: first, the commander and staff cannot artificially limit the number of planning problems to their capacity to plan; second, there must be a deliberate means to prioritize the planning efforts within the staff to ensure the most important planning efforts are receiving the proper personnel and commander's guidance to adequately develop the plan.

[18] For further insight into bias, see the *Intelligence Operations Insights and Best Practices Focus Paper* and the *Assessments Insights and Best Practices Focus Paper* (each paper can be found at any of the URLs on the inside front cover); "Heuristics and Biases in Military Decision Making," in Military Review, September-October 2010, p 40-52; and the U.S. Army's Red Teaming Central at https://redteaming.bcks.army.mil.

The first step in achieving efficiency and effectiveness is establishing a viable battle rhythm to serve the command and staff needs. The adjacent figure illustrates a technique to develop or check how an organization develops this battle rhythm. The initial step is to determine how and with what frequency the commander prefers to receive information and give guidance through venues such as "touch points." This is overlaid on the commander's decision cycle and then arranged over time. This provides a logical foundation to the battle rhythm. This logical arrangement ensures the commander is comfortable with the battle rhythm and that there is enough interaction between the commander and planning teams to keep an open flow of guidance and direction in maintaining the planning momentum. This leads to a cycle that is sustainable for long-term operations.



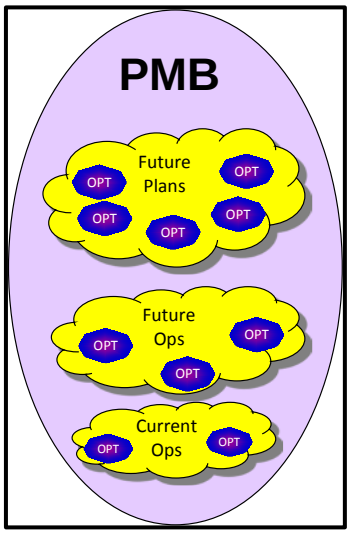
We have seen that some headquarters conduct plans-related touch points through a battle rhythm event called a "Planners Huddle." This is a venue where planners receive guidance and direction from the commander in a small setting. Having this event on the battle rhythm precludes planners from having to set up an appointment to get on the commander's calendar to get his guidance and direction on the ongoing planning efforts. Some headquarters, however, only have one planners huddle on the weekly battle rhythm (see top line of figure). We then see the tendency to "cram" future plans and future operations briefs to the commander in a time constrained period, causing a loss of fidelity in some cases. The planners are rushed in their briefings because they have to yield to other planners on the staff. The commander will either ask them to get back with him/her at a later time to give the commander the fidelity he/she needs to give guidance, or the commander will give less guidance and direction than what the planners needed to move the planning process along.



We see planners having greater success when the planners huddle is on the battle rhythm at least three times per week (see bottom line of the figure above). This provides future plans and future operations planners dedicated venues with the commander where they alternate briefs. Typically, future operations planners need more touches with the commander because of the proximity of their event horizon, which generally creates a situation with more information to appropriately integrate into planning. The future plans event horizon planners usually require less frequent

touch points with the commander because the time to execution is longer, more thought and coordination time are required, and less information is available.

The need to clarify the overlap in planning responsibilities manifests itself at the operational level. Planners at the combatant command level maintain open communications with the subordinate commands and component planners to ensure relationships are as clear as possible.



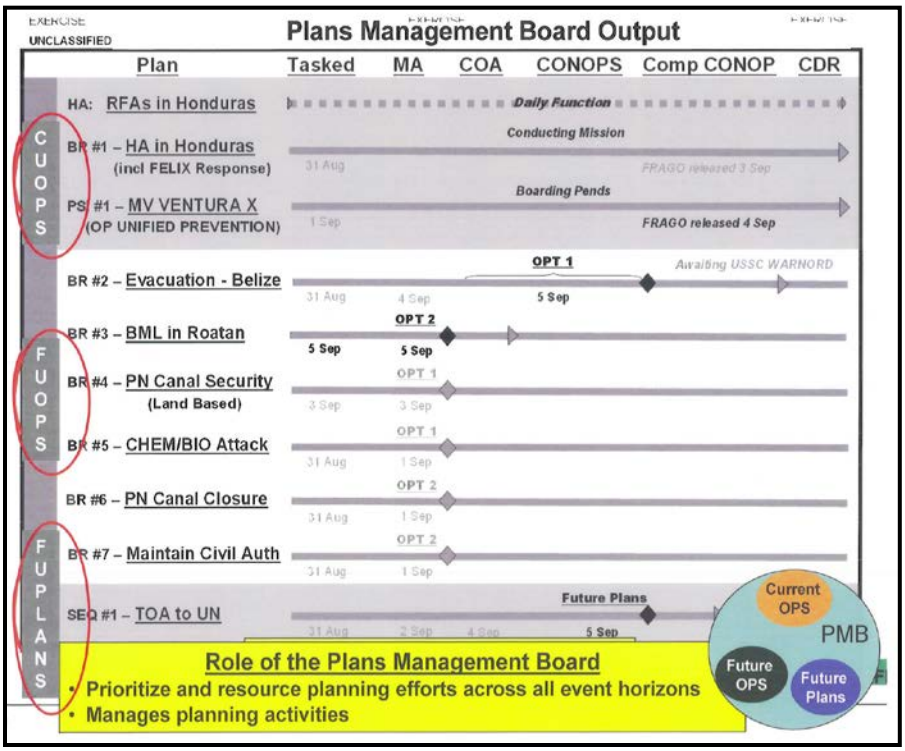
Once a battle rhythm is established, the staff can then focus attention on prioritizing planning efforts. A best practice observed in the field is the implementation of a plans management board (PMB). As seen on the right, each of the three event horizons includes associated planning efforts with assigned OPTs managing the JOPP to develop executable plans.

The role of the PMB includes:

- Direct and prioritize planning efforts across all event horizons.
- Coordinate and synchronize activities between staff directorates.
- Resource planning teams and manage their interaction with B2C2WGs.
- Manage planning process: timelines and guidance.

A PMB allows the CoS (or in some cases the J3 or J5) to interact with staff directors and OPTs to prioritize and allocate resources among multiple planning efforts. There are activities that should be completed prior to the execution of the PMB. These activities include:

- Planners from Current Operations (CUOPS), Future Operations (FUOPS), and Future Plans (FUPLANS) prioritizing planning efforts within their event horizons.
- Conducting a venue to prioritize planning efforts prior to PMB. A technique we have seen is to have a command group decision maker (e.g., Deputy CoS) gather planning representatives from all event horizons to prioritize planning efforts. This can be an informal weekly huddle to execute this effort.



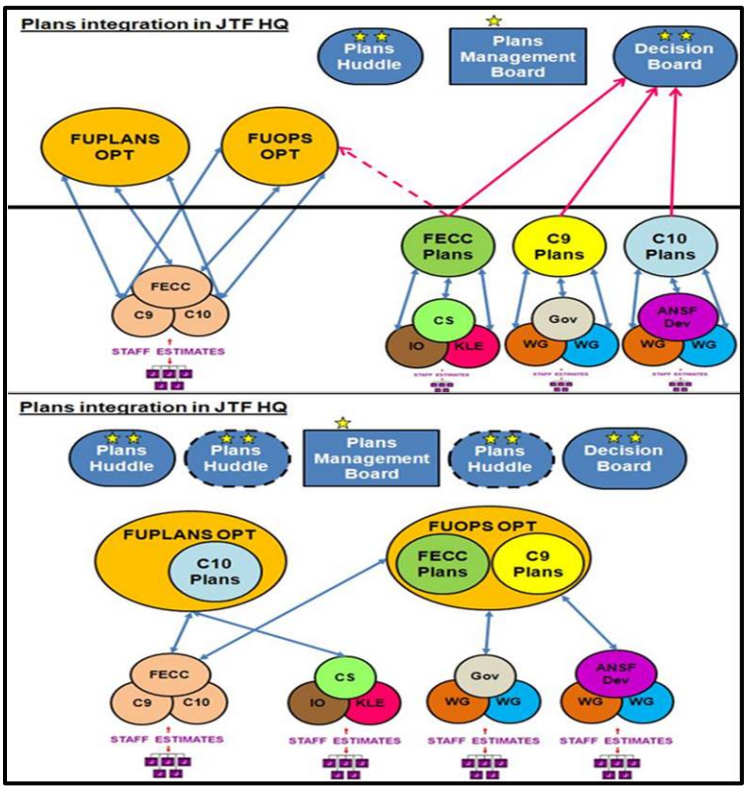
During the PMB, the CoS leads the coordinating and synchronizing of activities between staff directorates. The PMB reviews staff

work, enforces planning timelines and adjusts priorities given changes in guidance or circumstances. The CoS also acts as the arbitrator and ultimately the decision maker when a conflict for planning resources surfaces among the directorates. It is important to maintain the integrity of the board and ensure all problems requiring a planning effort are presented from each of the event horizons. This will help ensure a broader understanding of the breadth and depth of the problems facing the organization. The figure above depicts the output from a PMB.

The end result of the PMB should be:

- Updated priorities across the three event horizons for planning.
- Resourced OPTs commensurate with those priorities.
- A clear agenda for the next decision board chaired by the commander.

Another best practice using a slightly different method than the PMB is the use of a "Council of Colonels/Captains" concept in which a group of sub-directorate level O-6s convenes for staff coordination. Their first task is to view key briefings where principal directors and the command's leaders chart a way ahead operationally. After this review (typically watched from a distributed location nearby), the council, having a clearer common understanding of the command's direction, coordinates and synchronizes planning activities to support the direction. This technique generally occurs at a combatant command headquarters with empowered directorate-level chiefs.

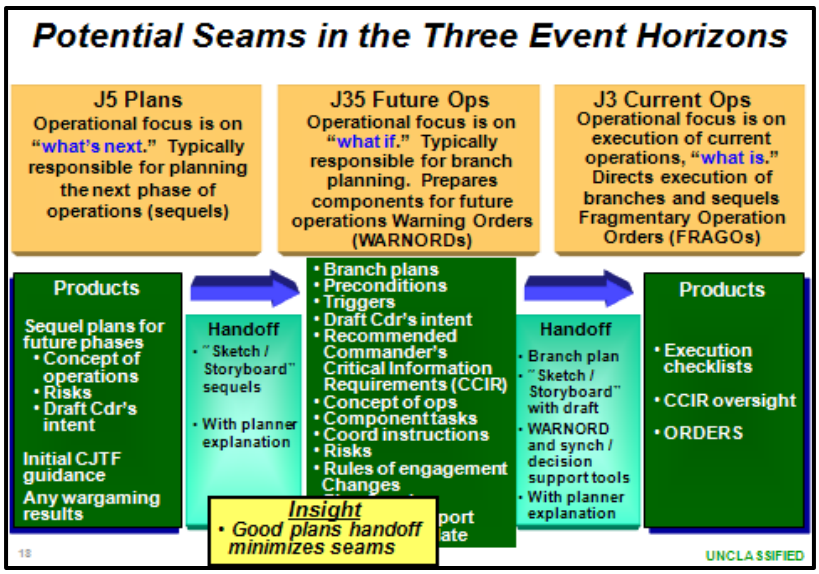


Sometimes planning efforts are generated in a staff section that is outside of the established plans process. We have seen planning efforts conducted independent of the future plans, future operations, and current operations event horizons. Examples of these "outside" efforts are: sustainment support planning, stability operations planning and local security forces support planning.

The danger is that these planning efforts are more prone to losing visibility from the commander and CoS because they are not generally followed and managed through the PMB. These planners still require touch points with the commander and as such need to be integrated into the established planning management process such as the planners huddle as depicted in the top of the figure on the previous page.

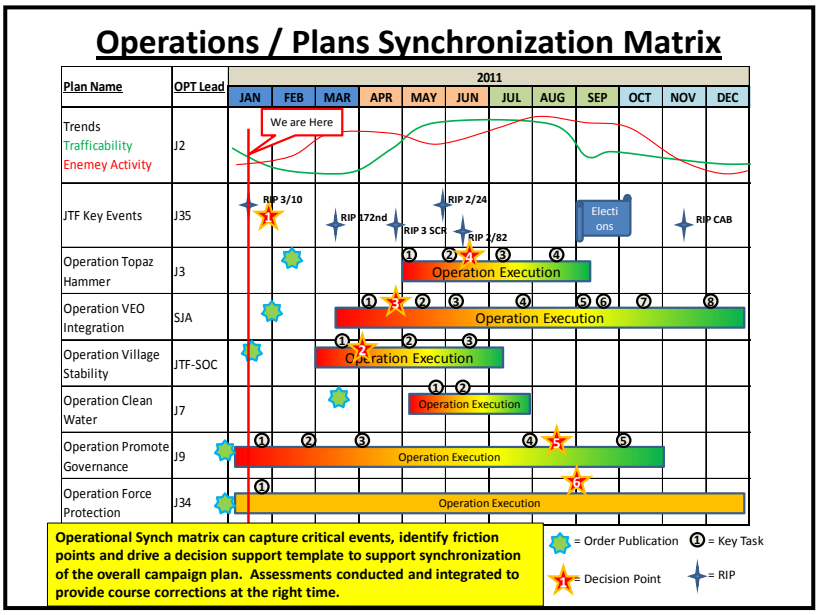
These "outside" planning efforts can benefit by incorporating them with the future operations or future plans event horizons planning efforts. This allows all efforts to get vetted through the PMB for resources. Also, the commander and CoS will have situational awareness of all planning efforts in the headquarters, which is the general intent of the PMB.

As the planning process and procedures are established and operating effectively, it is worth taking a look at how the three event horizons interact with each other. Using the example provided in the adjacent figure, we see that the event horizons are bounded by the questions they answer, i.e., "what is," "what if," and "what's next."



Commanders and key staff will determine the composition of the personnel in these event horizons and provide their left and right operating limits. Regardless of organization, seams and gaps in the planning process usually exist because of the large number of efforts simultaneously undertaken. The figure below shows some of the products associated with the event horizons and the areas in between the event horizons represent the potential seams.

An overextension of limited resources across multiple planning efforts, missing a requirement to plan, or failure to hand over a plan properly to the next event horizon, leads to friction between the commander and his staff. It is important to mitigate this friction by identifying the potential seams and putting in place solid standard operating procedures in the interaction between the event horizons and integration of working groups in the planning process.



The J5 Plans (future plans) starts the planning process and develops a concept of operations for the plan, sequels, or next phases normally as a COA sketch and statement. As the plan matures and is closer to execution, it is handed off to J35 Future Ops (future operations plans) with a deliberate hand over brief and normally a planner continuity (a planner goes with the plan from J5 plans and serves on the FUOPS OPT). Once the plan is complete and prepared for execution, the completed plan with all the decision matrices and tools are handed over to current operations through an orders brief to allow the current operations cell to track the battle and inform the commander of CCIRs. The figure above includes methods of seam mitigation and handoff described. By conducting handover of plans in

this technique, the CoS must balance the planning priorities by event horizon with the appropriate personnel and staff resources as the future operations cell may become the center of gravity of the planning effort.

We have seen HQ use tools like an Operations/Plans Sync Matrix to capture critical events, identify potential friction points, and drive decision support templates to support synchronization of the overall campaign plan. The figure shows an example synchronization matrix technique that is helpful to visually display both planning efforts and operation execution requirements.

Best Practices:

- Develop the planning organization for the headquarters. Avoid internal HQ "stovepipes" (J3 and J5) – a common problem.
- Headquarters should understand how they fit into the decision cycles of other units across the three event horizons.
- Commanders and staffs need to ensure that 1) the planning process is disciplined and 2) if a problem requires an OPT, it is sanctioned and resourced in the proper venue (i.e., PMB).

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Glossary
Abbreviations and Acronyms

AAR – After-Action Review
AOR – Area of Responsibility
APEX – Adaptive Planning and Execution
B2C2WG – Boards, Bureaus, Centers, Cells, and Working Groups
C2 – Command and Control
CCIR – Commander's Critical Information Requirements
CCMD – Combatant Command
COA – Course of Action
COIN – Counterinsurgency
CONPLAN – Concept Plan
CoS – Chief of Staff
CUOPS – Current Operations
CT – Counterterrorism
DCO – Defense Connect Online
DIME – Diplomatic, Information, Military, and Economic
DOS – Department of State
DR –Disaster Response
DST – Decision Support Templates
DTD – Deployable Training Division
FCC – Functional Combatant Command
FFIR – Friendly Forces Information Requirements
FRAGO – Fragmentary Order
FUOPS – Future Operations
FUPLANS – Future Plans
GCC – Geographic Combatant Command
GEF – Guidance for Employment of the Force
HA – Humanitarian Assistance
HA/DR – Humanitarian Assistance/Disaster Response
HNIR – Host Nation Information Requirements
HQ – Headquarters
ISO – In Support of
J3 – Operations Directorate of a Joint Staff
J35 – Future Operations Cell of a Joint Staff
J5 – Strategic Plans and Policy Directorate of a Joint Staff
JOA – Joint Operations Area
JOC – Joint Operations Center
JOPP – Joint Operation Planning Process
JSCP – Joint Strategic Capabilities Plan
JTF – Joint Task Force
LNO – Liaison Officer
LOE – Line of Effort
MSC – Major Subordinate Command
NATO – North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGO – Nongovernmental Organization
OE – Operational Environment
OFDA – Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance
OPLAN – Operation Plan
OPT – Operational Planning Team
PIR – Priority Intelligence Requirement
PMB – Plans Management Board
PMESII – Political, Military, Economic, Social, Infrastructure, and Information
PR – Personnel Recovery
SecDef – Secretary of Defense
TSC – Theater Security Cooperation
UCP – Unified Command Plan
UN – United Nations
USAID – United States Agency for International Development
USG – United States Government
USPACOM – United States Pacific Command
USSOUTHCOM – United States Southern Command
VTC – Video Teleconferencing
WARNORD – Warning Order
WG – Working Group

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