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**BATTALION TACTICAL PLAYS--CAN
THEY INCREASE COMBAT POWER?**

A Monograph

by

Major Thomas P. Connors

Armor



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**School of Advanced Military Studies
United States Army Command and General Staff College
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how successful tactical plays can be developed.

The conclusion reached is that tactical plays can be used by commanders to improve combat power but must be properly developed to avoid the inherent disadvantages of using them. Implications for doctrine and unit organization are discussed as well as possible approaches to play development.

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ABSTRACT

BATTALION TACTICAL PLAYS--CAN THEY INCREASE COMBAT POWER?
by MAJ Thomas P. Connors. USA, 36 pages.

The catalyst for this monograph is the current trend in the U.S. Army of using battalion tactical plays and battle drills. Such an approach could be worthwhile if it increases a unit's combat power. The purpose of this monograph is to determine whether or not standardized tactical procedures, in the form of battalion tactical plays, can be used by commanders to increase combat power.

This study begins by defining tactical plays. It then examines the theory and history behind a scientific/systematic approach to war at the battalion level. The ideas of Clausewitz and B.H. Liddell Hart are used to support the contention that war at the tactical level is scientific and therefore, open to a systematic approach at the battalion level. Additionally, historical examples of a systematic approach to tactics are provided. They include the German, Japanese, and Soviet Armies.

The major portion of the monograph discusses the advantages, disadvantages, and development of tactical plays. COL Huba Wass de Czege's combat power model is used as an analytical tool to determine if the use of tactical plays provides combat power advantages. Additionally, the disadvantages are discussed. Finally, two examples are used to illustrate how successful tactical plays can be developed.

The conclusion reached is that tactical plays can be used by commanders to improve combat power but must be properly developed to avoid the inherent disadvantages of using them. Implications for doctrine and unit organization are discussed as well as possible approaches to play development.

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INTRODUCTION

There is a current trend in the U.S. Army towards using battalion level tactical plays and battle drills. This trend has been driven by current doctrine and experience at the National Training Center.

Current doctrine emphasizes a systematic approach to tactics at the small unit level. The original emphasis for the development of these drills can be found in the Army's capstone doctrinal document, FM 100-5, Operations. For example FM 100-5 recommends that "...units conducting hasty attacks make maximum use of standard formations and well understood and rehearsed battle drills, and supporting arms and services must be able to react quickly using prearranged procedures." (1) These procedures are doctrine for squads, crews, and platoons and can be found in the appropriate field manuals. There are no doctrinal drills or plays at the battalion level. (2)

A second catalyst for the development of battalion level plays has been unit experience at the National Training Center, (NTC). At the NTC, battalions fight an extremely effective and tactically proficient opposing force (OPFOR), that is almost identical to a Soviet motorized rifle regiment. For most units, the two weeks of battle are a significant emotional event which includes a search for why a unit won or lost. This search has sometimes led to the conclusion, correctly

or incorrectly, that the OPFOR was successful because it uses a combination of battle drills and standard tactical plays. As a result, U.S. battalions have attempted to develop their own unit play books.

Units may or may not be on the right track in developing tactical plays. If a systematic approach to tactics increases a unit's ability to generate combat power, than perhaps battalion plays should be used. If they do not increase combat power, battalions should not waste limited resources developing plays. Therefore, it is time to determine if tactical plays can improve combat power and if so, what are the training and doctrinal implications of a play book approach to battalion level tactics.

The purpose of this monograph is to answer these questions. This will be done by considering the theory and history behind a scientific/systematic approach to tactics, determining the advantages and disadvantages of battalion plays, and then examining examples of how successful battalion plays have been developed. Several historical examples will show that tactical plays are nothing new. Examples of developing battalion plays will include the German development of storm battalion tactics and a recent U.S. armor battalion's play development.

To determine the advantages and disadvantages of battalion plays, COL Huba Wass de Czege's combat power

model will be used as criteria for evaluating the effectiveness of plays. Tactical plays will be examined using the model to determine their impact on the key elements of combat power: firepower, maneuver, protection, and leadership.

Definitions.

Before continuing, it is necessary to define three terms that are normally associated with any systematic approach to tactics. The terms are formations, battle drills, and tactical plays.

"Formations are standard dispositions of maneuver units for operations." (3) They establish a time and space relationship for forces. Units from squad to corps use formations.

Battle drills are defined by the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, TRADOC, as:

A battle drill is a collective task at squad or platoon level that has been identified as one of the most vital tasks performed by that unit for success in combat. Battle drills are totally or largely METT-T independent, require minimal leader actions to execute, and are standardized for execution throughout the Army. Battle drills are usually executed or initiated on a cue such as a specified enemy action or simple leader order. Battle drills are US Army standard doctrine and may not be modified in training. (4)

Tactical plays differ from battle drills in that

they are METT-T dependent and require leader forethought and action prior to execution. There is no doctrinal definition for a tactical play. For the purposes of this study, tactical plays will be defined as:

Those missions at company, battalion, or brigade level which have been identified as most vital to the success of the battalion in combat and have been developed by the unit, or a higher headquarters, as part of an expanded tactical standard operating procedure. They are largely METT-T dependent, require forethought and leader actions to execute, and may or may not be standardized throughout the US Army. (See examples at Annex A)

Based on these definitions, we can continue by examining the theory and history behind a scientific/systematic approach to tactics.

THEORY AND HISTORY

In short, routine will be more frequent and indispensable, the lower the level of action. As the level rises, its use will decrease to the point where, at the summit, it disappears completely. Consequently, it is more appropriate to tactics than to strategy. (5)
Clausewitz

An analysis of a systematic approach to tactics, such as tactical plays, should begin with a look at the theory and history behind such an approach. The theoretical views of Clausewitz and B.H. Liddell Hart will be considered. The historical examples include the German experience in both World Wars, the Japanese Army in Burma, and the Soviets in World War II.

If war at the small unit level is more science than art, then theoretically war at that level would lend itself to a systematic approach. Clausewitz and Liddell Hart seem to agree with this.

Clausewitz considered a systematic approach to war as inevitable and necessary at the tactical level. He recognized that drills and tactical procedures "...will appear most frequently in tactics, which is that part of war in which theory can develop most fully into a positive doctrine." (6) He cautions against any drills or procedures at the operational level of war. However, he does consider formations, drills, and tactical procedures as the basis of war at the tactical level, "...and as such must have their place in the theory of the conduct of war." (7)

A more recent theorist, B.H. Liddell Hart, also considered war at the tactical level to be more science than art. He believed that a systematic approach to tactics should be used and based on "...certain principles which are of particular application to the action of the combat unit." (8) Unit training and organization would then be based on tactical procedures founded on his principles. He considered such an approach to war "...likely to be far more successful, on the battlefield than a hasty improvisation, based on no engrained lessons." (9)

History indicates that Clausewitz and Liddell Hart

were right. Some of the most successful armies have used standardized tactical plays with great success. They include the German, Japanese, and Soviet armies.

The German Army adopted a systematic approach to tactics in World War I and II. The successful German storm battalions of World War I used a standardized tactical procedure to execute their infiltration tactics. (10) Similarly, the Afrika Korps in World War II used a system of offensive plays developed by Field Marshal Rommel for the meeting engagement. (11) The Japanese Army also used tactical plays in Burma. The British called this play the "road block" or the "hook". (12) Field Marshal William Slim considered them the primary basis for the Japanese tactical success in Burma. (13)

Unlike the Germans and the Japanese, the Soviet Union standardized battle drills and tactical plays throughout their Army prior to World War II. This was done because the Soviets expected a future war to require operational maneuver on a grand scale, with large armies of primarily reservists, conscripts, and an inexperienced officer corps. To cope with a massive expansion of their army, the Soviets adopted a tactical system based on drills and tactical plays. (14) This system was successful and is still used today by one of the largest armies on earth.

The theoretical ideas behind a systematic approach

to tactics and the practical application of these ideas is nothing new. Clausewitz's and Liddell Hart's recommendations were based on advantages that drills and plays could provide at the tactical level. The Germans, Japanese, and Soviets would not have continued to use them unless they provided advantages that increased combat power. The next step is to determine what those advantages were.

ADVANTAGES OF TACTICAL PLAYS

Any decision to adopt tactical plays must be based on an assessment of the advantages of using them. To be an advantage, it must improve combat power. In order to make this determination, tactical plays must be scrutinized with a specific lens.

For this study the lens will be the combat power model developed by COL Huba Wass de Czege. This model provides an analytical framework based on the dynamics of combat power found in FM 100-5. They are firepower, maneuver, protection, and leadership. (15)

Firepower.

The first dynamic of combat power to be considered will be firepower. The combat power model considers firepower to be a function of volume of fire, lethality of munitions, accuracy of fires, target acquisition, and flexibility of employment. Volume of fire and

flexibility of employment can be enhanced by using battalion plays. The other elements are not affected by plays.

According to the model, volume of fire is a function of the number and type of weapons systems that can be brought to bear. This includes direct and indirect systems which must be synchronized for maximum effect. This synchronization requires explicit coordination of all means. (16)

Once accomplished, synchronization can increase a unit's agility. (17) Agility, or speed, can give the unit the ability to concentrate its firepower rapidly. Tactical plays can help to insure this agility and therefore, improve firepower because the majority of the explicit coordination, that insures synchronization, has been done in advance.

In the combat power model, firepower is also a function of flexibility of employment. Flexibility is derived from a means to control and mass fires quickly. (18) Battalion plays can increase the speed of controlling and massing fires. Plays provide this agility by eliminating the need to issue lengthy orders to shift the main effort.

As an example, the tactical plays used by Rommel in North Africa enhanced his flexibility of employment. The plays allowed for a rapid shift of maneuver units and supporting artillery in the meeting engagement to

bring overwhelming firepower on either flank or the rear of an enemy formation. (19)

Synchronization and agility allow units to mass fires rapidly in time and space. Tactical plays may be a means of planning and practicing synchronization ahead of time to improve a unit's chances of having the necessary volume of fire and flexibility at the decisive point.

Maneuver.

The combat power model considers effective tactical maneuver to be a function of unit mobility, effective tactical analysis, proper management of resources, and effective command, control and communications, or C3I. (20) It is possible that tactical plays can have a positive impact on each of these variables.

Unit mobility is the ability of a unit to move. It is a function of organization, formations, and movement techniques. In other words, who moves, when and where do they move in relation to the rest of the force, and how do they move. To insure rapid and effective maneuver, the who, when, where, and how of mobility must be carefully planned and orchestrated. This can be done in advance using a correctly developed tactical play. The Germans did this in World War I.

The German storm battalions built their infiltration tactics on standard procedures based on

the correct organizations, formations, and movement techniques that would insure unit mobility. Storm battalion offensive tactics included the organization of attack forces into small groups with formations deployed in depth and the close coordination of movement techniques with supporting artillery. (21)

Tactical maneuver is also a function of correct and timely tactical analysis. (22) Tactical plays can speed up tactical analysis, if the play is based on a correct, previously developed base line METT-T analysis. If the unit correctly analyzed its METT-T, it will be able to conduct a faster analysis by updating the original METT-T rather than going through the entire analysis process.

A third element of tactical maneuver is management of resources. Two critical components of this element are managing personnel and directing the energies of subordinates. (23) A U.S. armor battalion found that battalion plays could improve both components.

LTC Fred Dibella used tactical plays when he commanded 4-68 Armor in 1985-86. He found that they improved personnel management and the directing of the energies of his subordinates. First, his battalion plays required specific units and individuals to accomplish specific things. These led to tailoring the force to take advantage of individual and unit talents to accomplish specific tasks. The result for LTC

Dibella was better management of unit personnel. Additionally, battalion plays helped him to channel the energies of his subordinates by establishing a focus of effort in maintenance and training based on his battalion's plays. (24) Commanders can use plays to perform the same function as a unit Mission Essential Task List, METL, for training. However, the plays can refine and further focus the list. The overall result is more efficient management of resources.

According to the combat power model, the final element of tactical maneuver is command, control, communications, and intelligence, C3I. (25) Effective command and control can orchestrate the arrangement in time and space of the myriad of combat systems in a battalion. This is extremely difficult unless subordinate leaders understand the commander's intent and their role in accomplishing the mission within that intent. (26)

In the past, a systematic approach to tactics, such as battalion plays, has improved a commander's ability to command and control. This was true for the German storm battalions and the Japanese Army fighting Field Marshal Slim. A storm battalion commander had to control up to five storm companies, 2 machinegun companies, one infantry gun battery, a trench mortar company, and a flamethrower section. To complicate matters, the battalion attacked in three echelons

without the advantages of modern communications. (27)

The Japanese "road block" tactics in Burma required the commander to command and control a defending element to fix the British, as well as a separate mobile force conducting a flanking movement through dense jungle. He then had to control two separate actions. (28) In both cases, a standard tactical play defined the commander's intent, which was understood by subordinate leaders. The result was effective command and control.

Underlying command and control is the commander's ability to communicate. When it comes to good communications, "The less said the better." (29) If this is true, it is possible for a correctly developed tactical play to enhance communications by insuring that less needs to be said. The German and Japanese forces in the previous examples required little communications capability.

Even today, the Soviets consider battalion plays very advantageous, because they allow them to control the action and shift the main effort without recourse to long radio transmissions. They believe that the less said is also better because it prevents the "...misunderstandings which so often bedevil the sophisticated plans beloved of peace time 'staff college' solutions." (30)

It seems possible for tactical plays to improve many of the elements of tactical maneuver. They can

enhance a unit's ability to move by providing previously developed combinations of organizations, formations, and movement techniques that can be quickly adjusted based on the situation. Plays can speed up METT-T analysis by providing a completed base line analysis for the majority of situations a battalion might encounter in the offense or defense. Additionally, tactical plays can improve resource management by tailoring the battalion team for a mission and providing a focus of effort for all leaders. Finally, tactical plays can improve maneuver by increasing the commander's capability to command and control by insuring understanding of his intent. At the same time, tactical plays reduce the commander's requirements for electronic communications. The overall result of these advantages is an increase in unit synchronization and agility, which lead to improved ability to maneuver.

Protection.

The third dynamic of combat power is protection. FM 100-5 defines protection as "...conservation of the fighting potential of a force so it can be applied at the decisive time and place." (31) It then breaks protection down into two components: actions taken to protect the force from enemy firepower and maneuver, and actions taken to insure the health and morale of

soldiers. (32) I will consider only the first component in determining the impact of tactical plays on unit protection.

The combat power model identifies three key determinants that provide personnel protection, equipment protection, and unit protection. They are concealment, exposure limitation, and damage limitation. These determinants of protection are a function of such things as camouflage, noise and light discipline, cover and concealment, use of protective clothing and equipment, use of hull defilade, and rear slope positions. (33) Tactical plays do not impact on these skills. Proficiency in these skills is a function of training at squad, crew, and platoon level. However, tactical plays can impact in the overall area of exposure limitation.

Exposure limitation, as an element of protection, is a function of how well a unit reacts to unexpected enemy contact. (34) Since World War II the Soviet Army has considered tactical plays a means of limiting unit exposure. The Soviets have tailored their offensive tactics to give them the ability to react quickly to enemy contact in the meeting engagement. They depend on tactical plays for the necessary speed to accomplish this. (35) Speed into action allows them to decrease their exposure time while increasing the

enemy's exposure time by preventing his deployment.

A battalion can also improve protection by limiting the exposure time of its electronic signature. This can be done by decreasing a unit's requirement to communicate electronically. As a result, the unit will be less likely to be located and less susceptible to enemy electronic jamming. Tactical plays may assist in this regard because they can be executed without lengthy or frequent radio traffic.

A unit limits its exposure to enemy weapons and electronic warfare systems by moving quickly and reducing the volume of its electronic emissions. Tactical plays can provide increased speed into action and a reduction in radio traffic..

Leadership.

Routine, apart from its sheer inevitability, also contains one positive advantage. Constant practice leads to brisk, precise, and reliable leadership, reducing natural friction and easing the work of the machine.

Clausewitz

The fourth dynamic of combat power, leadership, is considered in FM 100-5 to be the most important element. (36) The combat power model gives the most important sub-element of leadership as the leader's ability to understand the effects of battle on soldiers. (37) These effects include fear, fatigue, and uncertainty. If these can be planned for, or

minimized, leadership will be improved.

Tactical plays can provide a means of compensating for the effects of fear, fatigue, and uncertainty. First, tactical plays can help overcome the effects of fear by giving a leader confidence to know what to do in a given situation. The necessary reaction has been engrained by repetitious rehearsal of the play.

Similarly, the effects of fatigue can be reduced by plays that do not require tired leaders to go through a lengthy orders process. Moreover, the tempo of battle may not even allow wide awake leaders to conduct complete troop leading procedures. Major General James C. Fry found this to be true as a regimental commander in World War II and developed assault battle drills to speed up troop leading procedures. (38) LTC Dibella found that using battalion plays at the NTC allowed him and his staff to develop and issue a complete order in less than an hour. This allowed time for leaders' reconnaissance and the necessary rest to overcome fatigue. (39)

Fear, fatigue and uncertainty will never be overcome on the battlefield. However, tactical plays may be techniques for helping a commander and his subordinates live with these sources of fog and friction.

Commanders using tactical plays have the capability to improve some elements of the four dynamics of combat power outlined in COL Wass de Czege's combat power

model. Tactical plays, if correctly executed, can increase the speed at which a task force can generate firepower. This will be the result if the play includes the majority of the synchronization required to bring all firepower systems rapidly into the fight. It is possible for battalion plays to enhance maneuver by improving a unit's ability to move, focus its resources on specific objectives, increase the speed of conducting tactical analysis, and consequently, the speed of developing and issuing orders. Tactical plays can also enhance unit protection by limiting the unit's exposure to enemy fires as well as enemy electronic warfare efforts. Finally, tactical plays may be a means of assisting a battalion in compensating for, or working within the battlefield effects of fear, fatigue, and uncertainty.

Tactical plays are not the solution for success in battle at the tactical level. However, they seem to be able to improve a number of the elements that must combine to make up combat power. Before deciding on whether or not battalions should use tactical plays, it is necessary to examine the disadvantages of plays that can adversely impact on combat power.

DISADVANTAGES OF TACTICAL PLAYS

There are several disadvantages in any approach to standard tactical procedures that can have a detrimental impact on combat power. They include

inflexibility, predictability, and stifling of initiative.

Clausewitz considered a good commander to be one who could take advantage of the opportunities that chance presents on the battlefield. Any systematic approach to tactics, if too dogmatic, can eliminate one of the tools a commander has to deal with chance, flexibility. Lack of flexibility will adversely impact on maneuver by decreasing the unit's ability to shift the main effort or quickly react to the unexpected. If tactical plays do not provide this flexibility, a commander can be held hostage by chance. (40)

Inflexibility can be particularly evident when battalion commanders and staff officers use battalion plays to skip a METT-T analysis and apply the play as a "cookie cutter" solution to any situation. This has occurred at the NTC when units have copied a play that was successful for another unit, used it without a tactical analysis, and failed trying to execute a play based on another unit's METT-T. (41)

Tactical plays can also adversely affect flexibility in task organizing. Plays that call for a specific company to always execute a specific task in an engagement, decrease the battalion's flexibility to assign different missions to different companies, based on METT-T. Additionally, unexpected attachments from other battalions may be confused trying to execute an

unfamiliar play.

Tactical plays may decrease a unit's protection by making it predictable. Predictability forfeits the element of surprise and allows the enemy to anticipate your direction of attack, or your most likely position in the defense. As a result, a unit's exposure may be increased. Predictability is an inherent weakness of tactical plays. However, its effects can be nullified by agility.

A predictable unit can win if it is more agile than the enemy. The Japanese method of attack in Burma was always the same and therefore, predictable by the British. The British knew the Japanese would always fix them, execute a flanking movement, and establish a road block on the British lines of communication. However, they could not move fast enough to prevent the Japanese from executing this well rehearsed procedure. Japanese predictability was not a vulnerability, because the British could not move quickly enough to exploit it. (42)

Similarly, the Soviets do not consider the predictability of their tactical plays to be a vulnerability. They consider the speed that they derive from plays to more than compensate for predictability by allowing them to quickly achieve a combat power advantage. (43)

A final argument against battalion plays is that

they can adversely affect leadership by stifling initiative. This could happen if units rigidly adhere to the plays rather than the intent of the play, which is the commander's intent. A subordinate may fail to do what is required because it is not his part in the play. For example, one company's task may be to provide overwatch fires in an attack. The company commander may not consider it his job to attack an unexpectedly exposed enemy flank, even though the intent of the play was to create and attack an open flank in the enemy position. Initiative will be stifled by adherence to the tactical play rather than the commander's intent.

Tactical plays can have three disadvantages; inflexibility, predictability, and stifling of initiative. Inflexibility results from a dogmatic approach to plays that make them similar to battle drills. The impact is a degradation of firepower and maneuver because the unit is incapable of reacting to the unexpected and shifting the main effort accordingly. Predictability increases a unit's exposure and therefore, reduces protection. Finally, tactical plays can become an end rather than a means. When this happens, initiative stops operating freely within the commander's intent.

The disadvantages of tactical plays seem to be the result of plays that are based on an incorrect METT-T

analysis, or are not flexible within the commander's intent. Both of these elements should form the start point for developing a tactical play. (44) Therefore, how tactical plays are developed could have an impact on minimizing their disadvantages.

DEVELOPMENT OF TACTICAL PLAYS

There is probably no one best way to develop a tactical play. However, if they are to have a positive impact on combat power they must be based on a correct METT-T analysis, an understanding of the commander's intent, the correct organization to execute within the commander's intent, and repetitious, realistic training. To illustrate this, a past and present example of play development will be considered.

During World War I, the German Army High Command, OHL, developed a new offensive doctrine based on infiltration tactics. Storm battalions would be the spearheads of these tactics. The tactical plays used by these battalions were developed by the original storm battalion commander, Captain Willy Rohr. (45)

Captain Rohr based his tactics on a METT-T analysis specifically for the Western Front and the unique composition of his battalion. (46) The commander's intent, to bypass enemy resistance and constantly drive forward, was understood by all subordinate leaders. (47)

Storm battalions were organized to execute within

the commander's intent. They were a complete combined arms team for that time, consisting of organic infantry assault companies, heavy machine gun companies, a howitzer battalion, and a mortar company. The numbers of infantry and machine gun companies varied but otherwise, storm battalions were a fixed combined arms organization. (48)

This organization was then trained using company and battalion training outlines to execute their tactical plays. Training emphasized synchronization of direct and indirect fires with maneuver. This involved extensive and repetitious live fire training that was realistic enough to cause casualties. (49)

Interestingly, when Rohr first developed tactics for his storm battalion, an effort was made to prevent other units from copying and blindly applying his procedures. Other units were required by the German Fifth Army, to which Rohr's battalion was attached, to train with Rohr's battalion to gain a complete understanding of the tactics. After two weeks they could return to their units and begin developing them as storm battalions. (50) The storm battalions were highly successful from their introduction in 1915 until the Armistice.

A similar success story has been the recent experience of LTC Dibella's battalion at the NIC in 1986. The 4-68 Armor, conducted a highly successful

rotation using tactical plays for every simulated battle. (51)

The plays used by 4-68 Armor began with a thorough METT-T analysis for three primary tactical missions; attack, defend, and meeting engagement. It was accepted that this METT-T was always subject to change based on the current situation. Unless there was no time available, orders would not be issued until the original basic METT-T had been updated. (52)

Before the plays were developed, the commander's intent was established. Moreover, actions were taken by the commander to insure understanding of his intent for each play. He was directly involved in the play development to keep them in line with his intent. Additionally, he conducted assessment of junior leaders to make sure they understood his intent and their role in accomplishing the mission within the intent. (53)

The next step was to organize a team. The organization was not unique to what a U.S. heavy battalion can expect to have OPCON or attached to it. What was unique was that all task force elements were organic to 4-68 Armor. The task force's armor, infantry, air defense artillery, engineers, and all other usually attached elements became a permanent part of 4-68 Armor at home station. The task force, like the storm battalion, was now a fixed combined arms organization. (54)

As with CPT Rohr's storm battalion, LTC Dibella's battalion conducted intense and repetitious training to execute the plays. Task force level training included numerous computer driven command post exercises and field training exercises. Simultaneously, repetitious training in squad, crew, and platoon battle drills was conducted to establish a solid small unit training foundation to support the battalion's tactical plays. (55)

The result was a unit that had worked out in advance the majority of the synchronization of firepower and maneuver. The task force was able to rapidly generate combat power and won every engagement during two weeks of simulated combat against a very proficient OPFOR regiment. (56)

The method of developing plays may vary from unit to unit. Successful plays have four common denominators characteristic of any good operations order: thorough METT-T analysis, understanding of the commander's intent, the correct task organization for the mission, and repetitious training. Successful execution requires a sound training base that has practiced synchronizing the fight.

CONCLUSIONS

Tactical plays are a systematic approach to war at the tactical level. The idea for such an approach is nothing new among theorists. The practical application of this idea is also not new. Armies throughout history have used drills and procedures to increase agility and synchronization.

Tactical plays are more than drills or standard operating procedures. They are greatly expanded SOPs that provide a unit an off the shelf solution to a tactical situation. They are in no way perfect, but they can provide a good enough solution for a unit in combat that does not have the time to develop a 100% solution.

Tactical plays do enhance combat power. They can provide a solution that has the majority of the synchronization of firepower and maneuver worked out in advance. This gives a unit the ability to quickly synchronize the fight. The result is a more agile unit with greater flexibility. This has a positive impact on the first two dynamics of combat power, firepower and maneuver.

The synchronization and agility derived from tactical plays can also increase protection, the third dynamic of combat power. Protection is increased because units using tactical plays have security from enemy direct and indirect fires, as well as enemy EW

assets. This security is derived from speed and the decreased requirement to communicate electronically when using tactical plays.

Finally, tactical plays do improve leadership, the fourth element of combat power. Plays can compensate for the battlefield effects of fear and fatigue by giving unit leaders the necessary confidence and ability to react almost automatically. Confidence can overcome the effects of fear and automatic reaction can overcome the effects of fatigue. Additionally, plays can overcome the effects of uncertainty if they are based on a thorough understanding of the commander's intent by subordinate leaders. This understanding can allow them to be more certain about using their initiative within the commander's intent.

All of these advantages can be decreased by improperly developed tactical plays. Improperly developed plays can decrease flexibility and therefore, leave the unit open to the affects of chance on the battlefield. They can also cause a unit to be less agile due to improper synchronization. Consequently, a unit can lose the speed required to compensate for the inherent disadvantage of predictability. Finally, improperly developed plays will not clearly define the commander's intent. The consequence will be lack of initiative at all levels.

Properly developed plays are the tip of an

organization and training iceberg. They are based on a correct METT-T analysis, and understanding of the commander's intent, the correct organization to execute within the commander's intent, and repetitious, realistic training.

Current U.S. Army training and doctrine provide the means to insure correct METT-T analysis and development of the commander's intent. However, current organization and doctrine are not adequate for developing tactical plays.

Current doctrine does not provide guidelines for play development at the battalion level. In the absence of guidelines, many battalion play books for FORSCOM battalions are almost identical to the plays used by 4-68 Armor. Some doctrinal guidelines on play development, might prevent units from trying to incorrectly apply plays to their battalions that were developed by another unit using its METT-T.

Tactical plays require repetitious training with all elements of the task force. All elements must train together to reinforce habitual relationships and insure common understanding of the commander's intent. If these elements belong to other organizations, they may not be available during training. This can be avoided if U.S. battalions are organized at home station the way they will fight. This would require the Army to adopt a fixed, combined arms organization

at the battalion level.

Assuming the necessary doctrinal and organizational requirements are met, play development could take a bottoms up or top down approach. With a bottoms up approach each maneuver battalion could develop its own plays based on that battalion's METT-T. This would be similar to the manner in which CPT Rohr and LTC Dibella developed plays for their units. A serious disadvantage to this approach is that it might encourage units to bypass the requirement for a thorough METT-T analysis and simply copy each others plays.

Perhaps a better approach would be a top down development of tactical plays. In this case a higher headquarters, division or even corps, could provide basic outlines of tactical plays for the defense, offense, and the meeting engagement. The plays could then be further developed by each battalion based on any peculiar elements of that unit's METT-T. The advantage would be some degree of standardization that could also increase the speed at which brigade headquarters could develop and issue orders. This was basically the successful approach taken by Rommel in North Africa. (57)

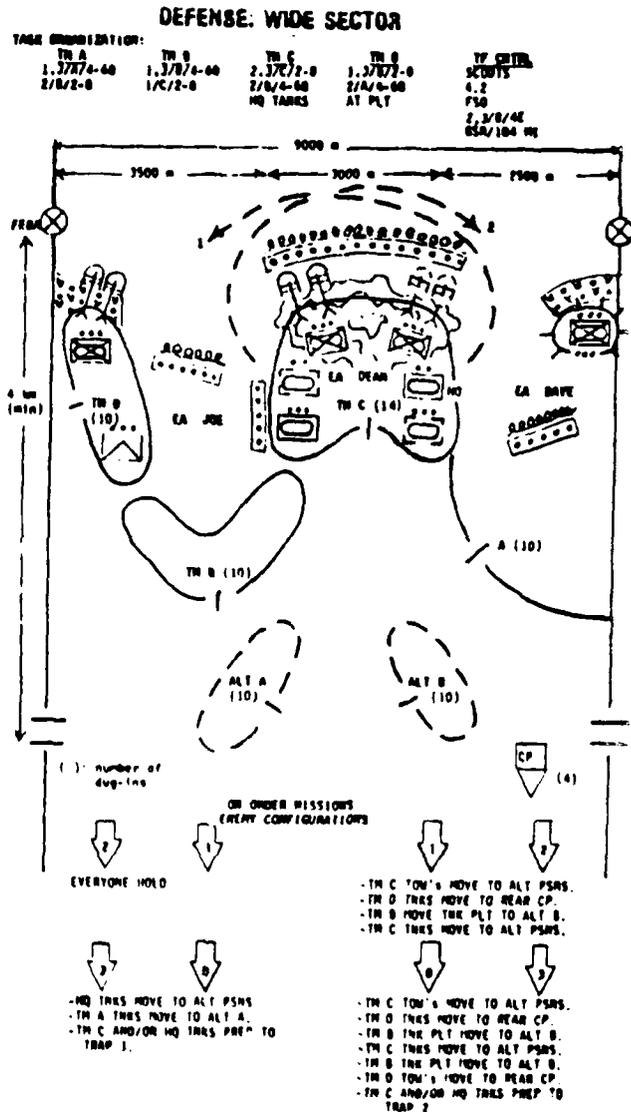
Tactical plays are a means of improving combat power without the requirement to acquire new technology

or weapons systems. To develop them requires leaders to think about what they will have to do in combat, plan for it, organize for it, and train for it. What a novel idea.

ANNEX A: Sample Battalion Tactical Plays

SEQUENCE
DAY ATTACK

1. -SSR OUT TO OVERWATCH SECTOR
 - SCOUTS OUT (1 SECTION ON RTE LION, PRECEDES TM D. RECON OBJ.
 - 2 SECTIONS ON AXIS SILVER TO CLEAR TF AXIS. RECON OBJ)
 - TM C ESTABLISH C-RECON SCREEN
2. -DISMOUNTS OUT
 - TM D ALONG LION TO DISMOUNT PT. TRACKS LINK W/SCOUT TRACKS. ACT AS COMMO RELAY. DISMOUNTS MOVE TO REAR/FLANK OF OBJ. HIDE. PREP TO ASSAULT. ATs SET IN OVERWATCH OF OBJ. CARRIERS CALLED FORWARD O/O
 - TM C (-TANKS) ALONG SILVER TO CLEAR INTERMEDIATE OBJ DEAN
3. -TF MOVES IN DIAMOND. TM A ON SIDE OF OPEN TERRAIN.
 - LINK W/TM C AT OBJ DEAN.
4. -DEAL W/SHAPE PLT AND OBJ OBSTACLES
 - TM A SET VIC CPL, OVERWATCH OBJ
 - TM B & C EXECUTE CLOSE ASSAULT TACTICS
 - COORD. INDIRECT FIRES/SMOKE ON SHAPE PLT & OBJ.
 - BYPASS OR BREACH MINEFIELD ON FLANK SIDE (TM B & C)
 - ELIMINATE SHAPE PLT.
5. -UNLEASH TM D
6. O/O TM B & C ASSAULT FROM FLANK; TM A OVERWATCHES. O/O CALLED FORWARD
7. CONSOLIDATE, TM D CARRIERS LINK W/DISMOUNTS. REDRGANIZE



SOURCE: 4th Battalion, 68th Armor, "Task Force Tactical Standing Operating Procedures." Ft Carson, CO, 1985.

ANNEX A: Sample Battalion Tactical Plays

NOTES: (WIDE SECTOR)

1. HQ TANKS ATTACHED TO TMC. REMAIN IN REAR TO COORDINATE ALL TMC TANK FIGHTING POSITIONS
2. TM A GIVEN SECTOR FOR ECONOMY OF FORCE MISSION. INF PLT DUG INTO STRONG POINT W/OBSTACLES TO ANCHOR FLANK. TM A CDR RESPONSIBLE FOR SELECTING ALT B POSITIONS AND EA DAVE OBSTACLES
3. TM B ANCHORS MAIN ENGAGEMENT AREA (EA JOE) IN FISHHOOK B.P. TM B CDR RESPONSIBLE FOR SELECTING ALT A POSITIONS AND COORDINATING W/TM D CDR ON OBSTACLES IN EA JOE
4. TM C DEFENDS OBSTACLE & SHOOTS INTO BOTH EAs. INF PLTS DIG INTO OBSTACLES W/PCs FOR MOBILITY. TM C TOWs DISMOUNTED
5. TM D DEFENDS FLANK. INF PLT DUG INTO STRONG POINT W/OBSTACLES TO ANCHOR FLANK. AT PLT ATTACHED TO TMD. DISMOUNT ALL TOWs
6. MCRTARS SUPPORT TMC SFA, THEN PULL BACK W/CO/TMS
7. CENTER DUG-INS MUST BE 2-WAY CAPABLE TO CREATE EA DEAN
8. NEED MULTIPLE REHEARSALS/ MARKED ROUTES
9. NEED ENGINEER MATRIX
10. TOTAL NUMBER OF DUG-INS: 74
11. NO ROCK-N-ROLL UNLESS NEAR MISS

DECEPTION PLAN

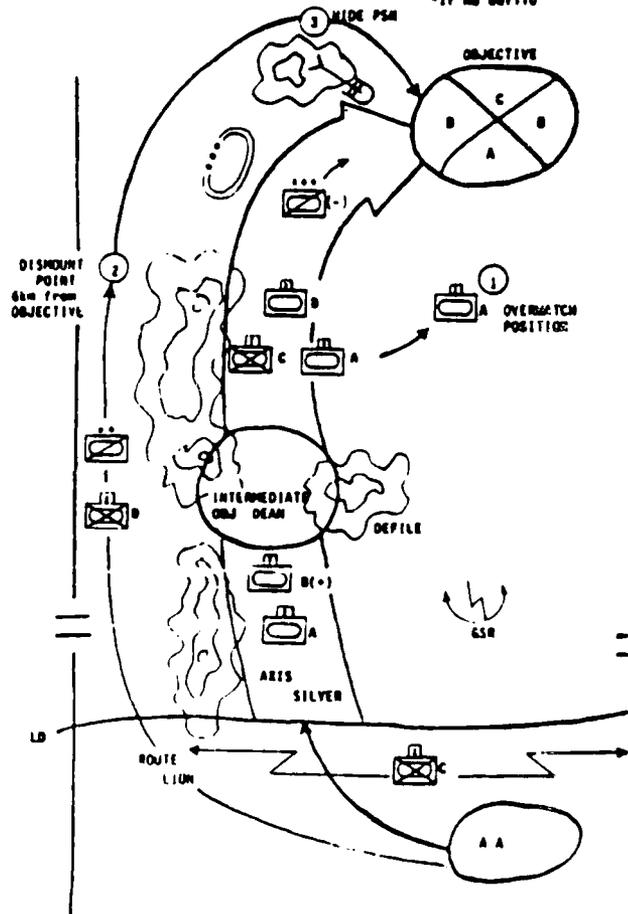
1. FLY RIDGE LINES W/TM D/TOC KILLER TEAMS IN UH 1s TAKE OUT ENEMY OPs (S-2)
2. INITIAL TM PSNS FAR FORWARD. MOVE BACK 1 2 HOURS PRIOR TO BMNT.
3. TM C MOVE FIRST
4. SMOKE SECTOR DURING ENGINEER OPNS AFTER REAL PSNS STAKED OUT (SMOKE)
5. DUMMY ENGINEER OPNS IN FORWARD PSNS (SMALL SCALE)
6. TANK PANELS FOR TMD & TMC W/HOFFMANS (S 4)

DAY ATTACK

TASK ORGANIZATION:

TMA	TMB	TMC	TMD	TF CENTER
A/4-60	1,3/8/4-60	2,3/C/2-8	B/2-8	SCOUTS
2/8/4E*	1/C/2-8	2/8/4-60	AT PLT	4.2
	HQ TANKS	2/8/4E		658/104 RI
	3/8/4E			750

*if no defile



SOURCE: 4th Battalion, 68th Armor, "Task Force Tactical Standing Operating Procedures." Ft Carson, CO, 1985.

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