

DEFINING CONDITIONS FOR SUCCESS

The Hidden
Wargaming Output

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TABLES

Figure 1. What “In Postition, Ready to Fire” Means	6
Figure 2: Sample Sketch Note Method (Table 5-6 in FM 5-0)	7
Figure 3: Sketch Note Example (Cross LD)	8
Figure 4: Sketch Note Example (Combined Arms Breach).....	9
Figure 5: Sketch Note Example (Commit the Reserve).....	11
Figure 6: Decision Support Matrix Example	11
Figure 7: Execution Checklist Example.....	12
Figure 8: Modified Execution Checklist	13
Figure 9: Modified Execution Checklist Encompassing all WfFs	14

INTRODUCTION

A common theme that battalion and brigade commanders hear at the National Training Center (NTC) is the need to “set conditions.” Setting conditions means making preparations, across all of the warfighting functions, for an upcoming operation. At its core, the difficulty in setting conditions is that each echelon must first define and understand those conditions before they can be “set.” Setting conditions by warfighting function (WfF) and establishing clear triggers for subsequent actions before an operation is one of the most difficult things that staffs and commanders struggle with. Typically, this is not a failure of buy-in from the part of the rotational training units, but rather there is a challenge in understanding the how and when to set during the planning process.

Doctrine does not provide a clear guide of how to do this. For example, a scan of Field Manual (FM) 5-0, *Planning and Orders Production* (16 May 2022)¹, only yields two matches for setting conditions, one pertaining to Army design methodology and the second to publishing a fragmentary order (FRAGORD). Similarly, Army Techniques Publication (ATP) 5-0.2-1, *Staff Reference Guide* (7 December 2020)², contains no concrete information on what setting conditions by WfFs means and how staffs go about defining those conditions. Clearly within doctrine, there is not much information explaining when staffs define conditions that must be set and how to go about doing so.

While there is no clear solution, a deeper interpretation and understanding of why there are certain steps in the military decision-making process (MDMP) yields the answer: wargaming. Typical wargaming outputs are refined courses of action (COA), decision points, critical events, and the synchronization/execution matrix. These outputs require understanding time/distance analysis, relative combat power, and sequencing of events, which are inherent in defining conditions. By making the definition of conditions a deliberate output of wargaming, staffs and command posts will be more capable to receive and analyze information, assess conditions, and make recommendations to commanders.

THE IMPORTANCE OF DEFINING CONDITIONS

Clearly defining conditions at echelon enhances situational understanding, facilitates reporting, and enables command posts to orient the formation. If units do not clearly define conditions by WfF, separate echelons will make assumptions and there will not be shared understanding. On the ground, this looks like commanders with different expectations and understanding of what the term “ready to execute” means, which results in operational friction and risk to mission.

During a recent armored brigade combat team (ABCT) rotation, a battalion battle captain and mortar platoon leader separately wrote down what their understanding of the mortar platoon being “in position, ready to fire” meant.

What conditions must be set for the mortars to be “in position”, “ready to fire”?	
Battle Captain	Mortar PL
FM communications with the main command post	FM communications with the main command post
Mortar Track MFCS in digital communications with FDC	Target list worksheet on hand
Approved targets	TTLODAC for all targets
Copy of battalion scheme maneuver on hand	Triggers for fire missions
In designated mortar firing point	FM communications with the BFISTs
Clear understanding of priority of fires	
Copy of enemy SITTEMP	
FM – Frequency Modulation MFCS – Mortar Fire Control System SITTEMP – Situation Template BFIST – Bradley Fire Support Team TTLOAC – Target, Trigger, Location, Observer, Delivery System, Attack Guidance, and Communications	

Figure 1. What “In Postition, Ready to Fire” Means³

Figure 1 highlights several important things. First, it is clear there is a gap between echelons in understanding what “in position, ready to fire” means in terms of conditions. Second, both leaders missed key elements from other WfFs that directly contribute to the mortar platoon being ready to fire. For example:

- Does the platoon have the correct mixture of ammunition on-hand to support the mission?
- Is ammunition resupply on standby to push forward?
- Did the platoon identify and reconnoiter alternate mortar firing points?
- Is the airspace clear?
- Will they fire as a platoon or split section, and do they have the correct Infantry Mortar Leader Course graduates in the correct positions to support split section?
- Which targeted areas of interest (TAI) are active?

Neither leader considered the conditions to fire outside of the command and control (C2) and fires WfFs. This is neither leader’s fault. Either the organization should have standard operating procedures (SOP) that define these conditions, or the staff should have identified the conditions during MDMP. Otherwise, commanders and command posts will not understand what a “We are in position and ready to fire” radio transmission means without a clear understanding of conditions. Which conditions are mission essential and which conditions are mission enhancing? Clearly, defining conditions is a critical step, but how and when should staffs and commanders at echelon identify them?

USING WARGAMING TO DEFINE CONDITIONS

Defining conditions is not a doctrinally defined output of COA analysis (wargaming) as part of the MDMP process. However, wargaming is the most appropriate step to do so. During COA analysis, the COA synchronization matrix typically includes the results of the wargame to cover the macro level detail of the operation. The Sync Matrix has conceptual level detail but will typically lack the detail and fidelity needed to synchronize and combine arms in the close fight. This is regardless of the method of analysis used. When executed correctly, it drives all WfFs of the staff to collaborate. Typical key outputs are refined COAs, refined decision points, identification of critical events, an execution checklist, and a synchronization matrix. Condition definitions support the detail needed to fully develop the COA for the decision points, critical events, and the synchronization matrix. The sketch note method lends itself well to defining conditions. However, it does not support the sketch note as detailed analysis appears in doctrine. Figure 2 is a sample sketch found in FM 5-0.

Critical Event	Seize OBJ Sword
Sequence number	1
Action	TF 3 attacks to destroy enemy company on OBJ Sword
Reaction	Enemy company on OBJ Club counterattacks
Counteraction	TF1 suppresses enemy company on OBJ Club
Assets	TF3, TF1, & TF2
Time	H+1 to H+4
Decision point	DP 3a and 3b
Commander's critical information requirements	Location of enemy armor reserve west of PL Jaguar
Control measures	AXIS zinc and support by fire position 1
Remarks	None
DP - decision point PL - phase line OBJ - objective TF - task force	

Figure 2: Sample Sketch Note Method (Table 5-6 in FM 5-0)⁴

The sketch note identifies the critical event, the enemy reaction, and required blue forces (BLUFOR/friendly) response. It also identifies units in time and space and relates them to critical events. However, it does not facilitate setting conditions because the focus is almost solely on the movement and maneuver WfF. It does not provide the detail needed for subordinate leaders to backwards plan against and for the main command post to collect reports, make decisions and/or make recommendations to the commander. The sketch note provides some detail that is useful to facilitate the construction of a synchronization matrix, but it does not translate well into future fighting products, causing the staff to repeat analysis and duplicate efforts.

A remedy for this is to add blocks of information at the bottom that can identify and specify the key conditions. As the staff moves through the war-game process, they identify events by WfF that are on the current sketch note, or even a previously built sketch note as they identify friction points later in the wargame.

An example of what this could look like is Figure 3. In this example, we take a common critical event that units often discuss but rarely detail out for setting conditions: crossing line of departure (LD). At the NTC, units infrequently identify conditions to LD in detail, resulting in friction at LD or later in the operation. Battalion command posts are often unaware of the true readiness of subordinate elements. Subordinate commanders are at a loss as to what information they should report. The operations group typically observes units reporting that they are ready to LD when they are not. In this example, the staff identified that in addition to typical LD readiness conditions, the mortar platoon needed to be “in position and ready to fire” to suppress suspected enemy observation posts (OPs). Later in the wargame, during the analysis of the combined arms breach, the staff saw that the armored breaching vehicle (ABV) would not have the opportunity after LD to execute continuity tests on the mine clearing line charge (MICLIC) and, thus, is able to add it to the conditions to LD.

Critical Event :	Cross LD				
Excheck Line Number	10				
Action	A, B, C, Sapper Companies Cross Line of Departure (LD, PL GOLD)				
Reaction	Enemy OPs call indirect fire against lead elements, maneuver MIC against elements				
Counteraction	Mortars suppress suspected enemy OPs with indirect Fire				
Units	A Co, B Co, C Co, Scouts, Mortars, FSC, Main Command Post, Tactical Command Post				
Time	H-1 to H+1				
Decision point	DP 2 - execute branch plan				
CCIR	Location of Enemy OPs; Location of enemy armor				
Control measure	AXIS ZINC; MFP1; PL GOLD; OP5; NAI 204; AXP2				
Conditions					
Intel Collection	Fires	Command & Control	Movement & Maneuver	Sustainment	Protection
TF Scouts in OP5 observing NAI 204	FSCMs bumping with BCT Fires	Upper TI operational	All companies RECON 1.5 NLT H-1	2x Role 1 ambulances staged at AXP2	MOPP Ready
Positive communication with BISE	Mortars in MFP 1	Retrans 1 active and in position	Passage Lanes Marked	Mortar CLV mix of 70% HE, 30% Smoke	JCADs active at C2 nodes
OBSTINTEL confirmed	TLW, TTLODAC, EFST with every BFIST	Radio checks completed	Rehearsals completed at platoon level	M1s and M2s 100% on fuel and CLV	1x drone Buster per company and C2 node
	NFA Established over MFP1, OP 5	JBCP and analog graphics disseminated to TC level	MICLIC continuity tests complete	100% CLS Bags filled	Dozers loaded on flatbeds
	Fires Tech Rehearsal complete	TAC prepared to deploy	Mine plows mounted on plow tank	Emergency CLIII and CLV at CTCP ready to move	
	Airspace clear	Sapper task organization complete			
LD – line of departure MFP – mortar firing point PL – phase line FSC – forward support company OP – observation posts NAI – named areas of interest MIC – motorized infantry company AXP – ambulance exchange points Co – company TF – task force DP – decision point CL – class BISE – brigade intelligence support element NFA – no fire areas OBSTINTEL – obstacle intelligence CCIR – commander’s critical information requirements BCT – brigade combat team FSCM – fires support coordination measures TLW – target list worksheet EFST – essential fire support tasks BFIST – Bradley fire support team TAC – tactical command post TTLODAC – target, trigger, location, observer, delivery system, attack guidance, and communications TI – tactical internet JBCP – Joint Battle Command Platform TC – tank/truck commander REDCON – readiness condition MICLIC – mine clearing line charge HE – high explosive CLS – combat life saver CTCP – combat trains command post MOPP – mission oriented protective posture C2 – command and control JCAD – joint chemical agent detector					

Figure 3: Sketch Note Example (Cross LD)⁵

Next, the staff analyzes the combined arms breach. They consider all the Wffs when developing the conditions necessary for the battalion to execute this breach. These conditions include not only the friendly conditions, but also some enemy conditions as part of breaching criteria. In Figure 4, the mortars are actively suppressing the enemy. The staff identifies that the support force of the combined arms breach must destroy at least two tanks and three Boyevaya Mashina Pehoti's (BMP/Soviet mechanized infantry vehicle) before they can initiate the combined arms breach.

Critical Event:	Combined Arms Breach				
Excheck Line Number	75				
Action	TF executes Combined Arms Breach of enemy obstacle belt				
Reaction	engage breach assets with fires				
Counteraction	Suppress enemy fires assets with fires				
Units	A (TF Breach), B (TF Support), C (TF Assault), Sappers (TF Reduction), TAC, Mortars, Scouts				
Time	H+8 to H+10				
Decision point	DP 3 - Request BCT Reserve Company				
CCIR	Point of Breach; Point of Penetration; Location of Enemy Defensive Positions				
Control measure	SBF Baker; ALST POSN CHARLIE; ECP DOZER; AXP 5; LRP 4; OBJ LARRY; OBJ MOE; OBJ CURLY				
Conditions					
Intel Collection	Fires	Command & Control	Movement & Maneuver	Sustainment	Protection
TF Scouts identify Point of Breach & Penetration	FSCMs bumping with BCT Fires	TAC and S3 in position forward	B Co in SBF BAKER; destroy 2x tanks, 3x BMP	2x Role 1 ambulances staged at AXP2	
BCT Collection in NAI 304 (BCT PIR 2)	Mortars in MFP 2, firing AE2010 (Suppression)	Retrans 1 Active at CP 295	Engineer equipment staged at ECP DOZER	Emergency CLIII and CLV at LRP 4	
	TF has Priority of Fires		C Co at ASLT POSN CHARLIE, >90% Combat Power		
	FA Prepared to Fire AE4010 (Obscuration)		A Co >90% Combat Power, tank plows dropped		
CCIR – commander’s critical information requirements TAC – tactical command post TF – task force DF – direct fire DP – decision point BCT – brigade combat team Co – company SBF – support by fire POSN – position OBJ – objective ASLT – assault AXP – ambulance exchange point MFP – mortar firing point ECP – entry control point FA – field artillery BMP – Boyevaya Mashina Pekhoti DF – direct fire NAI – named areas of interest					

Figure 4: Sketch Note Example (Combined Arms Breach)⁶

In time-constrained environments, there is pressure for staffs to cut corners and skip steps of the MDMP. Units typically curtail, if not completely omit, wargaming, as it consumes a significant amount of time. However, identifying conditions that must be set by warfighting functions becomes even more important in these time constrained environments. As the unit is under pressure to plan and execute with reduced time, subordinate echelons are prone to overlooking key preparations and staffs are likely to ignore defining conditions that must be set. In doing so, friction during execution increases as units encounter obstacles created because of the lack of preparation and foresight.

Even in a time constrained environment, the staff can still implement the above process in a more rapid manner. First, the staff can focus on identifying several critical events for an operation. In the offense, these events will typically be crossing LD, executing a breach, isolating an objective, and actions on the objective. In the defense, the typical events are engagement area development, conduct of the defense, and reacting to a penetration. Once the staff identifies those events, the WfF proponents identify the key conditions by WfF to support each event. Then either the synchronization matrix or execution checklist will capture these conditions in a FRAGORD for execution.

LINKAGES TO OTHER WARFIGHTING PRODUCTS

Conducting this level of analysis during wargaming also helps the staff build and refine additional warfighting products. By identifying specific conditions, wargaming increases the detail level of fighting products. Additionally, command posts and subordinate commands have specific reporting requirements that are useful for tracking readiness levels and informing the commander on readiness and risk.

Units can and should use this method for determining actions that are triggered by decision points. Most unit decision support matrices (DSMs) have very general actions detailed in the “Then” column of the DSM, such as: “Commit the reserve,” “Execute branch plan,” or “Transition to defensive operations.” Decision points often occur in time constrained environments or during crisis events. Planning out the actions by WfF that result from a decision point relieves commanders and command posts of analysis while in contact and enable command posts and staffs to execute necessary actions and movements without having to develop those actions “on the fly.” Instead of having a general phrase in the “Then” column of the DSM, the unit has actions taken by each WfF because of that decision. Figure 5 is an example of a sketch note that a staff made during wargaming.

Critical Event:	Decision Point 2: Commit the Reserve				
Excheck Line Number	90				
Action	TF Reserve (3/B) is committed to support A Co, C Co				
Reaction	launch counterattack; nonpersistent chem strike against breach elements				
Counteraction	Initiate FPF (AE 4030)				
Units	C Co, 3/B				
Time	H+8 to H+10				
Decision point					
CCIR	A Co or C Co < 70% Combat Power; Loss of 2x Plow Tanks				
Control measure	SBF Baker; ALST POSN CHARLIE; ECP DOZER; AXP 5; LRP 4; OBJ LARRY; OBJ MOE; OBJ CURLY				

Conditions					
Intel Collection	Fires	Command & Control	Movement & Maneuver	Sustainment	Protection
Request Collection on NAI 306	Request FPF (AE4030)	A Co assumes control of Reserve	Reserve moves to A Co location	Emergency CL III moves forward to CP 106	Don protective masks and close hatches
	Shift priority of fires to B Co		B Co shifts fires to suspected enemy counterattack (CP 296)		

CCIR – commander’s critical information **TF** – task force **CO** – company **FPF** – final protective fire **SBF** – support by fire **ASLT** – assault **POSN** – position **ECP** – entry control point **CL** – class **CP** – checkpoint **AXP** – ambulance exchange point **LRP** – logistics release point **OBJ** – objective **NAI** – named area of interest

Figure 5: Sketch Note Example (Commit the Reserve)⁷

With that analysis, the DSM now has the detail needed for the various command posts and the battle staff to drive actions that support the commander’s decision. The benefit of this additional detail in the DSM is that when leaders are cold, tired, and hungry, they can fall back on the previously executed analysis to begin issuing orders and initiating unit movement proactively. See Figure 6 as an example.

If (PIR)	And (FFIR)	Then
Greater than MIP remains on OBJ LARRY	Breach or Assault Force below 70%	IC: Shift collection to NSI 306 Fires: Request AE4030 PoF to B CO C2: A CO assumes control of reserve M2: Commit reserve to A CO; B CO shifts fires towards CP 296 Sust: move CLIII to CP 106 Pro: Don masks and close hatches
PIR – priority intelligence requirement OBJ – objective FFIR – friendly forces information requirements Pro – protection IC – information collection MIP – motorized infantry platoon PoF – priority of fire NAI – named area of interest C2 – command and control CO – company CP – checkpoint M2 – movement and maneuver Sust – sustainment CL – class		

Figure 6: Decision Support Matrix Example⁸

Many units also use execution checklists (EXCHECK) as a method to synchronize and control operations. Like synchronization matrixes (SYNCHMAT), EXCHECKs are often an output of the wargaming process. Many leaders prefer the EXCHECK because of the ease of reading, the ability to clearly show sequencing, and the utility in tracking the progress of the operation. The friction that many units face when building and using EXCHECKs is that they skip over important details and conditions setting to enable actions on the EXCHECK. In addition, there is temptation for leaders to take and use the EXCHECK they receive from their higher headquarters without adding any refining information appropriate to their echelon. Leaders also fail to identify parallel actions.

Many units also struggle to structure their EXCHECKs and populate them with meaningful information to enable synchronization and control. When the EXCHECK does not provide the return on investment, they stop using them. Figure 7 is an example of a typical brigade combat team (BCT) EXCHECK that units produce at the NTC.

Line number	Action	Trigger	Reporting from	PACE	Pro-Word
1	1-1 CAV LD to SCREEN along PL FAT TIRE / ZONE recon to PL MIKE	Time: NLT 06 2000 FEB 24	1-1 CAV	P: JBCP O/I A: FM, BDE CMD C: HF E: Runner	Atlanta
2	2-1 IN initiates attack to seize OBJ Bloodhound	1-1 CAV E of PL PAUL	2-1 AR	No change	Baltimore
3	3-1 AR LD to control OBJ RED SOX	4-1 AR in ATK POSN/ 2-1 IN	3-1 AR	No change	Denver
4	OBJ Red Sox Control established by 3-1 AR		3-1 AR	No change	El Paso
5	4-1 AR attacks to seize OBJ PITBULL	3-1 AR control established at OBJ RED SOX	4-1 AR	No change	Gainesville
6	3-1 AR attacks to seize OBJ SHEPHERD	4-1 AR crossing PL PAUL	3-1 AR	No change	Hampton
7	4-1 AR seizes OBJ RHODESIAN	Hampton	4-1	No change	Indianapolis
8	OBJ SHEPHERD seized	Hampton	3-1 AR	No change	Jacksonville
9	OBJ TERRIER seized	Jacksonville	4-1 AR	No change	Little Rock
CAV - cavalry LD - line of departure IN - infantry OBJ - objective AR - armor NLT - no later than PL - phase line PACE - primary, alternate, contingency, emergency O/I - operation/intelligence JBCP - Joint Battle Command Platform BDE - brigade FM - frequency modulation HF - high frequency CMD - command					

Figure 7: Execution Checklist Example⁹

There are a few issues with this EXCHECK. First, the numbering does not allow for easy revision, and any adjustments identified in the combined arms rehearsal require a full renumbering of all events. Second, the primary, alternate, contingency, emergency (PACE) column filled with “no change” makes it largely irrelevant. Third, all the events are solely oriented on the movement and maneuver WfF, which prevents full WfF synchronization. However, with refinements to the structure, the EXCHECK becomes a more effective synchronization tool.

Line Number	Est. Time	Condition	Action	Report Form	Triggers	Pro-Word
5	H HR (06 2000 FEB 24)		1-1 CAV LD to SCREEN along PL FAT TIRE/ZONE RECON to PL MIKE	1-1 CAV	Line 10	Atlanta
10	H + 3	1-1 CAV at PL PAUL	2-1 IN initiates ATTACK to SEIZE OBJ BLOODHOUND	2-1 AR	Line 15	Baltimore
15	H + 5	4-1 AR in ATK POSN/2-1 IN at OBJ RED SOX	3-1 AR LD to CONTROL OBJ RED SOX	3-1 AR	Line 20	Denver
20	H + 7		OBJ RED SOX CONTROL established by 3-1 AR	3-1 AR	Line 25	El Paso
25	H + 7	3-1 AR CONTROL established at OBJ BLOODHOUND	3-1 AR ATTACKS to SEIZE OBJ PITBULL	4-1 AR	Line 30	Gainesville
30	H + 7.5	4-1 AR crossing PL PAUL	3-1 AR ATTACKS to SEIZE OBJ SHEPARD	3-1 AR	Line 35, 40	Hampton
35	H + 8	Hampton	4-1 AR SEIZES OBJ PITBULL	4-1 AR	Line 40	Indianapolis
40	H + 8.5	Hampton	OBJ SHEPARD SEIZED	3-1 AR		Jacksonville
45	H + 8.5	Jacksonville	4-1 AR ATTACKS to SEIZE OBJ TERRIER	4-1 AR		Little Rock
CAV – cavalry PL – phase line AR – armor ATK – attack POSN – position IN – infantry OBJ – objective LD – line of departure EST – estimated						

Figure 8: Modified Execution Checklist¹⁰

The EXCHECK has become more useful by adding and removing specific fields. The staff and subordinate units can more easily inject additional lines identified during rehearsals without throwing off the entire numbering sequence by increasing the line number increments. Establishing planned H-Hour (time of execution) times allows commanders to better plan sustainment and other actions around the operation. Establishing which follow-on events are triggered by an action helps leaders identify actions being completed in parallel. However, Figure 8 is still movement and maneuver centric. Staffs can correct this by identifying conditions by WfF. After adding the conditions by WfF, the EXCHECK in Figure 9 now has sufficient detail to allow staffs and subordinate units to plan for future actions and operate in parallel without waiting on direction from their higher headquarters.

Line Number	Est. Time	Condition	Action	Report Form	Triggers	Pro-Word
5	H HR (06 2000 FEB 24)	IC: UAS collection on NAI 201 Fires: 5-1 FA in PAA1 C2: Retrans 1 est CP 101; Task Org complete; COMMEX complete M2: Bns in ATK POSNs; 2/4 ABV FMC Sust: FLE est CP 101; Task org complete; COMMEX complete Pro: M-SHORAD >3/4; CCLs loaded	IC: 1-1 CAV LD to SCREEN along PL FAT TIRE/ZONE RECON to PL MIKE Fires: Shift CFL to PL CORONA	1-1 CAV	Line 10	Atlanta
10	H + 3	IC: 1-1 CAV at PL Paul; NAI 202 active Fires: POF to 2-1 IN; CFL PL CORONA M2: 2-1 IN REDCON 1.5	M2: 2-1 IN initiates ATTACK to SEIZE OBJ BLOODHOUND Fires: BPT Execute AE 2040	2-1 IN	Line 15	Baltimore
15	H + 5	IC: Observing NAI 203 Fires: POF to 3-1 AR M2: 2-41 IN BALTIMORE; 3-1 AR REDCON 1.5	M2: 3-1 AR LD to CONTROL OBJ RED SOX Fires: BPT execute AE 2045	3-1 AR	Line 20	Denver
20	H + 7		OBJ RED SOX CONTROL established by 3-1 AR	3-1 AR	Line 25	El Paso
25	H + 7	IC: observing NAI 204 Fires: POF to 4-1 AR M2: 3-1 AR EL PASO Pro: Establish ECP JOHN DEER	M2: 4-1 AR attacks to SEIZE OBJ PITBULL Fires: BPT execute AE 2050, AE 2055	4-1 AR	Line 30, 31,32	Gainesville
30	H + 7.5	Fires: CFL shift to PL REBECCA M2: AR 4-1 AR crossing PL PAUL; 3-1 AR REDCON 1.5	M2: 3-1 AR move to ATK POSN TANGO, ready to attack to seize OBJ SHEPARD	3-1 AR	Line 35, 40	Hampton
31	H + 7.5	M2: 4-1 AR GAINSVILLE Pro: RTE FORD clear	Sust: BSA initiates jump to CP 601	8 BSB		Philly
32	H + 8	IC: observing TAI 205 Fires: AE 2050 suppression effective M2: 4-1 AR in SBF	Fires: executes AE 2055 M2: 4-1 AR initiates suppression of enemy BPs IVO OBJ PITBULL; TM reduction at RED-CON1	4-1 AR	Line 33	First Down
33	H + 8	IC: 2 T-90, 6 BMP destroyed TAI 205 Fires: AE 2055 obscuration initiated M2: First Down	M2: 4-1 AR initiates Breach	4-1 AR	Line 34	Second Down
34	H + 8.5	M2: SECOND DOWN, Breach Lane Open, Lanes Marked	Fires: BPT execute AE 2060 M2: 4-1 AR Assaults to seize OBJ PITBULL; TF Reduction in position ready to improve lane	4-1 AR	Line 35	Touchdown
35	H + 9	M2: 4-1 AR TOUCHDOWN	M2: 4-1 AR SEIZES OBJ PITBULL	4-1 AR	Line 40	Indianapolis
40	H + 9	IC: Observing TAI206 Fires: POF to 3-1 AR M2: 3-1 AR HAMPTON	Fires: BPT execute AE 2065 M2: 3-1 AR Seizes OBJ TERRIER Sust: CT CPs initiate forward movement	3-1 AR	Line 45	Jacksonville
45	H + 10	IC: Observe NAI207 Fires: CFL shift to PL MELISSA C2: Retrans 2 established CP 102 M2: 3-1 AR JACKSONVILLE	IC: 1-1 CAV LD to SCREEN along PL MILLER Fires: Established PAA2 C2: Jump MCP to CP 109 M2: Bns established hasty defense Sust: 8 BSB establishes BSA CP 601 Pro: Dig priority 2-1 IN, 4-1 AR, 3-1 AR	BCT Main		Little Rock
TAI – targeted area of interest SBF – support by fire BMP – Boyevaya Mashina Pehoti LD – line of departure BPT – be prepared to BSA – brigade support area IVO – in vicinity of TF – task force CTCP – combat trains command post MCP – main command post FMC – fully mission capable Sust – sustainment FLE – forward logistics element Pro – protection M-SHORAD – Maneuver – Short Range Air Defense PAA – position area for artillery CCL – combat configured load PL – phase line IN – infantry REDCON – readiness condition ECP – entry control point CFL – coordinated fire lane RTE – route IC – information collection HR – hour UAS – unmanned aerial system NAI – named area of interest FA – field artillery CAV – cavalry POF – priority of fire C2 – command and control EST – establish CP – checkpoint COMMEX – communications exercise ORG – organization BN – battalion ATK – attack POSN – position ABV – assault breacher vehicle BSB – brigade support battalion						

Figure 9: Modified Execution Checklist Encompassing all WfFs¹¹

CONCLUSION

Establishing conditions for execution is critical to success; however, doctrine does not clearly define the process of how to do so. In the absence of a detailed, doctrinal “how to,” many organizations struggle to define the required conditions. Within BCTs at the NTC, this results in operational plans that are movement and maneuver centric that do not adequately consider all the warfighting functions. Such plans create risk to mission and force and reduce the BCT’s operational reach.

To define conditions, staffs must execute some type of COA analysis in the form of wargaming. Proper wargaming brings all the WfF proponents to the table and creates the opportunity for good synchronization. Planners looking at a critical event and asking the question of whether capabilities are “in position, ready to __,” allows them to visualize on the map where those capabilities need to reside and identify the required preparations to enable them to fully support the operation. With this approach, planners ensure that the BCT can leverage all its resources toward accomplishing the mission.

The process of defining conditions is not an activity performed in isolation. Clearly defining conditions before execution creates the opportunity to add detail and refinement to existing warfighting products that commanders at echelon need to fight. Doing so not only alleviates the cognitive demands placed on commanders at the forward line of troops, but it also empowers command posts to be proactive in driving the operation and providing commanders with readiness assessments.

Commanders and staffs cannot answer the question “Are conditions set?” until they define those conditions. Doctrine does not provide the clear answer, but it does inform how we can do it. Commanders empower their subordinates, their command posts, and their organizations for success by making the effort to clearly define conditions as part of wargaming.

ENDNOTES

1. Planning and Orders Production, FM 5-0 (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 2022), https://armypubs.army.mil/ProductMaps/PubForm/Details_Printer.aspx?PUB_ID=1024908.
2. Staff Reference Guide Volume I, ATP 5-0.2-1 (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 2020), https://armypubs.army.mil/ProductMaps/PubForm/Details_Printer.aspx?PUB_ID=1021331.
3. What “In Position, Ready to Fire” Means. Panther Team, Operations Group, National Training Center, Fort Irwin, 28 May 2024.
4. Table 5-6. Sample sketch note method. Field Manual (FM) 5-0, Planning and Orders Production, 16 May 2022, page 5-47.
5. Sketch Note Example (Cross LD), Panther Team, Operations Group, National Training Center, Fort Irwin, 28 May 2024.
6. Sketch Note Example (Combined Arms Breach). Panther Team, Operations Group, National Training Center, Fort Irwin, 28 May 2024.
7. Sketch Note Example (Commit the Reserve). Panther Team, Operations Group, National Training Center, Fort Irwin, 28 May 2024.
8. Decision Support Matrix Example. Panther Team, Operations Group, National Training Center, Fort Irwin, 28 May 2024.
9. Execution Checklist Example. Panther Team, Operations Group, National Training Center, Fort Irwin. 28 May 2024.
10. Modified Execution Checklist. Panther Team, Operations Group, National Training Center, Fort Irwin. 28 May 2024.
11. Modified Execution Checklist Encompassing all Wffs. Panther Team, Operations Group, National Training Center, Fort Irwin, 28 May 2024.



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