Relevant, Readable, and Accessible SOPs:

A Guide to Updating Battalion TACSOPs

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No one wants to do it. Everyone knows it needs to be done. Battalion Tactical Standard Operating Procedures often require updates. In some units the topic can be brushed aside with no real vigor in the update process (if it even happens). Units can fall into the trap of "being to busy" to start or complete updates. At times when some units manage to publish updates, the final product can be too large, too wordy, and not relevant for everyone who can learn from it. The following is a recommended guide for developing and updating BN TACSOPs. This guide was developed from the perspective of a Field Artillery Battalion preparing for a JRTC rotation. What we found was that if the update process is organized and planned, any unit can implement improved SOPs that have the potential to be embraced by the unit from the date it is published.

Relevant, usable/readable, and *accessible* can have different meanings for different units, but the following considerations can be explored before considering updates to the TACSOP.

1) Is our BN TACSOP *relevant*? Examples of *relevant* considerations are: Is it relevant to the current unit structure, to the lowest level of Soldier, and how the unit should fight? When was the last update conducted? Are units basing training events on the SOP?

2) Is our BN TACSOP *useable/readable*? Examples of *useable/readable* considerations are: Can anyone pick up this product and understand the contents of a section? Did the last author of any given section write too much? Can a new PL or PSG understand the requirements or plan for DECON that the CBRN OIC developed? Are the reporting requirements nested with higher headquarters elements?

3) Is our BN TACSOP *accessible*? Examples of *accessible* considerations are: Is a durable physical copy of the product distributed to the lowest appropriate level? Is the product enforced by leadership to be used and referenced during training events? Is a digital copy available to the unit on all available platforms to include JBC-P or JCR? Do Soldiers know how to access the SOP if they cannot access the physical product?

Define the intent of the editing: The point in which we determined that we should conduct a full re-write of the BN TACSOP, we defined the intent for editing. The intent we used was the following:

Create a relevant, useful, easy to understand, and accessible product that is easy to update after initial publishing. Separate TOCSOP, TACSOP, and PSOP topics to enable usability at the lowest levels and better facilitate updates. Use the re-write of the TACSOP as a series of LPD events for assigned sections/units in the battalion to brief their recommended changes to councils or boards. Use the LPDs to generate organizational buy-in to the new product.

Set a Hard Publish Date: We had more than 18 months to prepare a new TACSOP prior to a rotation to JRTC. But in the meantime all of the primary staff except the Chaplain were deployed to two different AORs (EUCOM and AFRICOM), and most of the Battalion was back a Fort Campbell. By the time the

Battalion staff was to return, we would have less than 3 months before the Battalion's culminating training event, and 9 months to prepare for a CTC rotation. We set a publish date to allow lessons learned edits from several field training events, and to ensure we had the final hard copies before the scheduled brigade FTX. On the most condensed timeline we found it would be feasible for a good product to be staffed and generated in about 4 months-from start to finish. Below is the "Plan to Plan" schedule for our TACSOP revision. Battalion events were listed with Training Weeks at the top, while TACSOP Boards and Councils were planned around training events.
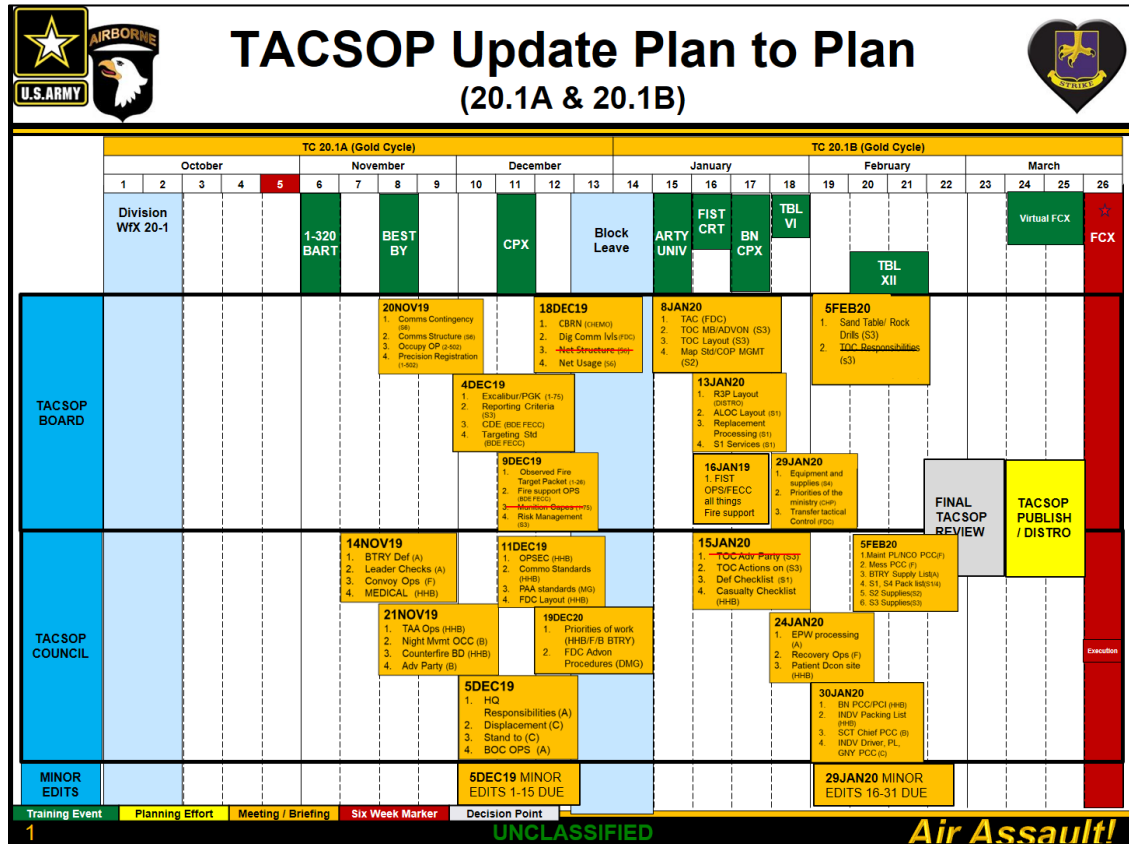
Assign the Project Officer: We selected our Project Officer (PO) considering motivation, organizational understanding, and PCS timeline to get the job completed. We eventually selected a high performing former Battery XO on her way to the Captains Career Course. The PO was in charge of recording all meeting outputs, setting the schedules for inputs and due dates, reminding assigned units/sections about products due, compiling the draft and final versions, arranging final print, and creating the distribution plan. Below is a screen shot of the excel document the PO used to help track all of the information necessary for the revision.

TOPIC	TYPE	EDITING UNIT/Section	EDITING OIC/NCOIC	DUE FOR REVIEW	COUNSEL/BOARD DATE	Status	FINAL APPROV	NOTES
Actions on sustaining casualties	Council	HHB	MED	12-Nov-19	14-Nov-19	In-Process		Need revision from clapp NLT 5DEC
Mass casualty operations	Council	HHB	MED	12-Nov-19	14-Nov-19	Complete	14-Nov-19	
Contingency Planning	Board	S6	1LT F	18-Nov-19	20-Nov-19	Complete	20-Nov-19	
Communications Structure	Board	S6	1LT F	18-Nov-19	20-Nov-19	Complete	20-Nov-19	
Occupy an Observation Post	Board	2-502 FIST		18-Nov-19	20-Nov-19	Incomplete		
Precision Registration	Board	1-502 FIST		18-Nov-19	20-Nov-19	Complete		
Excalibur/PGK	Board	1-75 FIST		2-Dec-19	4-Dec-19	Complete	4-Dec-19	
Crater Analysis	Board	1-26 FIST		2-Dec-19	4-Dec-19	Complete	4-Dec-19	
Reporting Criteria	Board	S3	1LT E	2-Dec-19	4-Dec-19	Revision need by		Due 19DEC19 - all reports updated
Collateral Damage Estimation	Board	BDE FIRES		2-Dec-19	4-Dec-19	In-Process		
Targeting Standards	Board	BDE FIRES		2-Dec-19	4-Dec-19	In-Process		
HQ Responsibilities	Council	A BTRY		3-Dec-19	5-Dec-19	Revision need by		Due 19DEC19 - Need to completely change HQ responsibiliti
Displacements	Council	C BTRY		3-Dec-19	5-Dec-19	Complete	5-Dec-19	
Stand To	Council	B BTRY		3-Dec-19	5-Dec-19	Complete	5-Dec-19	
BOC Operations	Council	A BTRY		3-Dec-19	5-Dec-19	Complete	5-Dec-19	
CMD/SPT Relationships & Responsibilities	Minor Edit	S3		3-Dec-19	5-Dec-19	Incomplete		
Adjacent Unit Coordination	Minor Edit	HHB		3-Dec-19	5-Dec-19	Incomplete		
LNO Operations	Minor Edit	HHB		3-Dec-19	5-Dec-19	Incomplete		
Risk Management (ADD DRAW)	Board	S3	CPT K	7-Dec-19	9-Dec-19	Revision need by		
Priority for Destruction (RELOOK)	Minor Edit	FIST		5-Dec-19	5-Dec-19	Incomplete		
Btry FDC Occupation Drill	Minor Edit	DMG		3-Dec-19	5-Dec-19	Incomplete		
Operations Security (RENAME)	Council	HHB	S2	9-Dec-19	11-Dec-19	Complete	11-Dec-19	
Commo Standards (move to top)	Council	HHB	S6	9-Dec-19	11-Dec-19	Complete	11-Dec-19	
Position Area Standards	Council	HHB	MG	9-Dec-19	11-Dec-19	Revision need by		asap final revisions
Btry FDC Fire Msn Drill	Minor Edit	MG		3-Dec-19	5-Dec-19	Incomplete		
MET	Minor Edit	DMG		3-Dec-19	5-Dec-19	Incomplete		
BN/Btry FDC Layout	Council	HHB	DMG	9-Dec-19	11-Dec-19	Complete	11-Dec-19	

Revision Process Outlined: No one wants to sit in meetings all day. We developed a series of drags, councils, and boards to streamline the revision progress. Across all the meetings, we had maximum participation from Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) in the unit.

TACSOP Drags: Our unit conducted three separate TACSOP Drags. These were the longest meetings, but we organized them in a way that were quick decisions. If kept on schedule these meetings lasted between 60-90 minutes. Drag #1 reviewed only the existing table of contents. Drag #2 was an azimuth check on the revision processes thus far. Drag #3 was the final approval meeting for the TACSOP.

TACSOP Drag#1: The group in attendance spent a maximum of 30 seconds on each topic from only the table of contents, with physical or digital copies of the TACSOP on hand. In attendance were all staff OICs, NCOICs, Master Gunners, and several SMEs from units. This meeting was ran by the PO and chaired by the Battalion Executive Officer. As the table of contents was reviewed, group members reviewed personal copies of the TACSOP. As each section was listed off, the group quickly considered *relevance, usability/readability* and discussed and the following:
1. Should this topic be removed from the TACSOP (is it irrelevant, redundant, "fluff doctrine," or of little use?)
2. Does this topic only require a minor edit? (no formal update)
3. Should this topic have a major revision?
   a. Should it go to the TACSOP Council? Or
   b. Should it go to the TACSOP Board? (see below for description)
4. Should this topic be in the TACSOP, TOCSOP or both?
5. After every topic was reviewed answering the above questions the following was asked:
   a. What topics should be added to the TACSOP?

Action after Drag #1:
1. PO and CSM assigned unit or section responsibility for updates.
2. PO set the Council and Board Schedule.
3. PO sets submission dates for updates

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4. S3 shop published OPORD for TACSOP re-write.

Councils: TACSOP Councils were NCO led, briefed, and actioned. The PO kept records and facilitated this meeting. Each TACSOP Council meeting was chaired by the CSM. Other members of the council were the 1SGs and Master Gunners. During each council meeting, selected NCOs in the Battalion briefed their proposed changes to the previously assigned topics. The Council discussed the proposed changes and approved or rejected concepts. Proposed changes that were rejected were re-drafted and briefed at follow-on Councils. These meetings normally lasted approximately 10 minutes per topic (1-2 pages). 4 topics were planned for each council, with time allotted in follow-on council meetings for changes that were not approved.

Boards: TACSOP Boards were chaired by the XO and ran by the PO. Members of the board were commanders, primary staff officers, and the Master Gunners. Similar to the council, the board approved or rejected briefed SOP changes. Changes that needed more work, were re-drafted and briefed at a later time. Board meetings normally lasted no more than 10 minutes per topic (1-2 pages). 4 topics were planned for each board, with time allotted in follow-on board meetings for changes that were not approved.

Drag #2: This intent of Drag#2 was to convene the XO, CSM, primary staff, command teams, and master gunners for an azimuth check on the state of the revision. At this meeting, the TACSOP, in digital form was displayed via projector on the wall. Each page was reviewed. The following was succinctly confirmed with the group:
1. Has the change been updated?
    a. If so, are there any major issues?
2. What unit or section is responsible for this change?
3. If the suspense has been missed, when will the change be briefed? Does the unit or section have a valid request for an extension?
4. Based off of any training conducted since re-write began, should any topic be added or removed?

Drag #3: The intent of Drag #3 was the final meeting for approval of the TACSOP. Prior to this meeting, all councils and boards approved changes to the TACSOP. The Battalion XO chaired the meeting with the CSM. All Battery Command Teams, Master Gunners, Staff, and individuals that developed changes to the TACSOP were present. All individuals present had digital or physical copies of the final version on hand. In less than 75 minutes, the group reviewed every page. The follow questions were asked:
1. Are there any major issues with this page or topic?
    a. If anyone in the room answered this question "yes". The reasoning was quickly stated, and if there was a general concurrence, that topic was set for a final council or board meeting.
2. Are there any minor issues with this page or topic?
    a. If there was a minor issue (format, spelling, etc) that issue was quickly noted by the PO for correction.

Additional Considerations:

Unit AARs: During our SOP revision, we planned on some processes we could have executed more thoroughly. Part of the initial plan was to have a robust and disciplined AAR system. Below is an example of the unit AAR format. The example unit AAR format below has several out-puts that assist in SOP

revision. The first section in the top right, correlates directly to the SOP revision process as the current SOP is written. At the bottom, the assessment of equipment directly ties to the SOP as the unit should constantly revising packing lists based on MTOE changes or purchased equipment. Routine sustains and improves can also have impacts on the SOP as well.

Example FiST AAR

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Commanders intent:
Integrate and synchronize fires with all other warfighting functions in BDE, BN, CO, and PLT operations against a near-peer OPFOR.

Activity conducted:
Fire Support for JFE, Offense, and Defense

Training SOPs:
- Clarity on clearance/ownership of fires when BN elements are operating in another BN's AO (e.g., 1-26 elements including BN MTRs conducting GAC through 2-502 AO)
- PACE: codify role names for FIST JBC-P users
- Codify reports including FSO Synch

Improves:
- BN needs to troubleshoot Upper TI for both TOC and TAC, and needs HF IAW **BDE Fires PACE** - (P) AFATDS Upper TI, (A) AFATDS FM DIG/JCR, (C) AFATDS HF, (E) FM V. See below for other equipment gaps
- BDE PACE for distributing Annex D
- Aviation assets pushing to BN/CO Fires nets was feasible during periods of minimal other fire mission, but a separate aviation net at BN/CO level could streamline comms
- BN needs to prioritize and reduce FA requests ("16 TGTs in defense") to BDE
- Reporting battle rhythm and PACE between CO-BN-BDE

Sustains:
- FOs operating from OPs during the defense helped companies paint a clearer picture of CO AOs for BN
- BN Fires Plan = FSEM, TTLODAC, HPTL-AGM-TSS, Fires Overlay

Assessment of Equipment: (maintenance or purchase needs?)

- For BN-BDE Fires PACE (see above) - (P) 1-26 has 1x GRIPP for Upper TI in TAC; a second for Fires would be beneficial (A) Finish installing JBC-P in HHB934 (C) HF (E) QEAM mast/mounting kit, additional TOC kit

- For CO-BN PACE: 2x COM 201s/CO FIST to range FM D/V with FOS; at least 1x MBITR and/or 152/FO for increased mobility while maintaining FM D/V

1   UNCLASSIFIED   *Air Assault!*

Final Product: As we hit the midpoint of the revision process, we began to plan what type of product we were going to order. We had several considerations for the final physical version of the product see notes below.
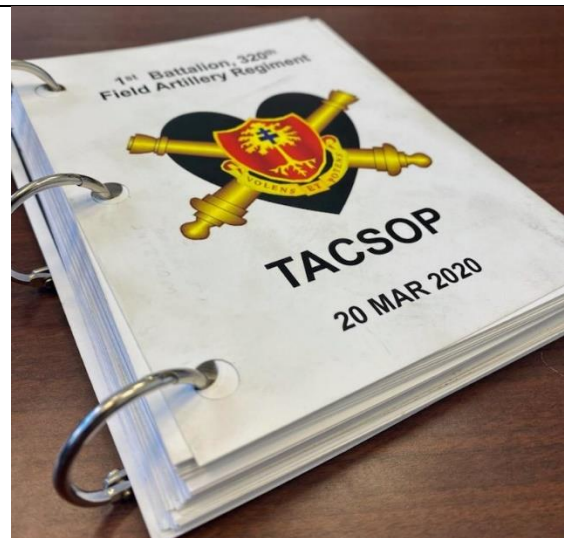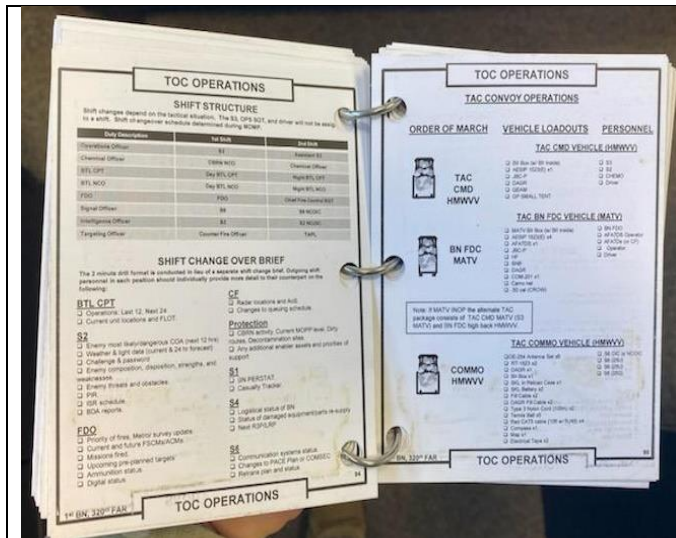
(Top Left): Small Enough to fit in a cargo pocket, easy to read check list style information that is not redundant or too wordy, printed on a tear resistant paper, top and bottom section title makes the document easier to navigate.

(Top Right and Bottom Left): The decision for ring clips was made to facilitate single page updates to the TACSOP.

(Bottom Left): Version control was planned to be executed at the BN Level to assist in further updates.

Organizational Buy-in: We put a lot of effort into ensure shared understanding with the plan. We did generate significant organizational buy-in to the new TACSOP at most of the platoon level leadership and higher. However, even with Operations Orders, briefs to key individuals, and robust planning, we could have done better to ensure subordinate units understood this plan. Often, Officers or NCOs arrived to councils or boards having put little thought or development into proposed changes. Some individuals were not aware of the TACSOP "Plan to Plan," and claimed they only had a day or two to get ready. To alleviate this issue, a recommended course of action could be for the PO to attend company level training meetings, brief the plan, instruct units/sections on requirements, and receive the point of contact that would be responsible to provide comments. This will generate more organizational buy-in to the product and facilitate further subordinate level input rather than a single NCO or Officer who is briefing and recommending changes.

TACSOP Project Officer SOP: In order to ensure continuity the TACSOP Project Officer created an internal SOP to facilitate personnel change over. Below is a copy of continuity information that includes distribution procedures, accountability, managing revisions, and printing information.

Top Guns TACSOP Management

Distribution and Use:

- TACSOPs are issued to Top Guns personnel based on position.
- BTRY commander's and staff section OICs sign for their Battery or staff section's complete allotment of TACSOPs from the TACSOP Management POC on a DA Form 2062.
- Commanders and staff OICs sub-hand receipt TACSOPs within their batteries and staff sections.
- Personnel in TACSOP-alloted positions are expected to have a hard copy TACSOP on hand during all field training exercises, with the flexibility to adjust contents based on individual needs.

Accountability:

- TACSOPs are tracked by serial number.
- Routine TACSOP accountability will take place as part of BN level inspections during recovery operations.
- Inspections will verify that all copies of the TACSOP are complete and reflect all changes and additions.
- Commanders and Staff OICs should inspect TACSOPs prior to BN inspections at the end of recovery and prepare a memorandum for lost or damaged copies.
- New copies will be issued as appropriate by the TACSOP Management POC.
- All reserve copies are the responsibility of the TACSOP Management POC.

Revisions:

- The working copy of the TACSOP is maintained by the TACSOP Management POC as a PowerPoint file, also available in the shared drive.
- **General Revisions:** Email only the slides that include the proposed changes to the TACSOP Management POC. The POC will review the changes with two additional SMEs before they become final.
- **Post-Field Exercise TACSOP Feedback**: Include all TACSOP comments in exercise AARs. For small corrections or changes, also follow the general revisions procedure. For the proposal of TACSOP additions or significant changes to procedure, the TACSOP Management POC will review the proposal with two SMEs. If the SMEs agree, the POC will schedule a board of experts to write the new procedure.
- All revised pages after the March 2020 version will be indicated as changes by adding "V#" (# = 2, 3…) following the page number in the bottom right corner.
- Printed changes and additions are distributed to Commanders and Staff OICs by the TACSOP Management POC for insertion into individual TACSOPS.

Printing:

- The TACSOP is printed 4.25''w X 5.5"h on tear-resistant paper with three drilled holes. All pages are b&w excluding a color cover and reporting section. 1'' metal book rings for binding are available separately at Eagle Mart through GPC purchase.
- Printing is conducted through FTCKY Defense Logistics Agency (DLA) at 5212 Oregon Avenue, next to CIF and across from Eagle Mart. The DLA print representative is Mr. XXXXX at (O) XXX-XXX-3133, (C) XXX-XXX-4696, and XXX.XXXX@dla.mil
- As necessary, the TACSOP Management POC sends a saved pdf (of the revised or added slides only) to the DLA print representative for a quote using the listed specifications.
- Once a quote is obtained, the GPC holder who will place the print order submits a GPC request and justification memo through S4. The GPC holder must have an account with Document Services Online.
- Print orders are placed in DSO by the GPC holder according the the DSO Customer Guide instructions. The GPC holder must have the PDF of pages to be printed, the quote from DLA, and proof of funding to place the order.

POCs:

- CPT AXXX XXXXXX at AXXX.XXXX.mil@mail.mil (through July 2020.) 1LT at XXX.HXXX.mil@mail.mil

Conclusion: What we found during this revision process was that our previous SOPs were largely based on another unit's SOPs. Often that unit was referenced and other installations were referenced in the material. We were able to remove information that was referenced in other publications or documents that had the potential to be outdated. We reduced the size of the TACSOP by more than 100 pages and drastically reduced the word count to make the document more user friendly. The lowest level user now had the ability to access relevant and easier to understand processes. During the unit's rotation to JRTC, observers gave considerable praise about the document.

Major Nathan D. Levy is Field Artillery Officer and a 2007 a graduate of Arizona State University. In 2018, he completed his graduate degree capstone project working with the Army Knowledge Management Proponent Office through the Florida Institute of Technology. Major Levy has operational experience with Operation Iraqi Freedom, Operation Enduring Freedom, Operation Resolute Support, Operation Freedom Sentinel, and AFRICOM RAF. Major Levy currently serves as the 2nd BCT Fire Support Officer in the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault).