

## **Observer and Communication Planning: Critical for the Information Collection/ Fires Rehearsal, Crucial for the Synchronization of Fires with Maneuver**

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### **KEY TAKEAWAYS:**

- Following the information collection (IC)/ fires rehearsal rubric ensures brigades remain disciplined in synchronizing and rehearsing their information collection and fires plan.
- Brigades should focus on ensuring proper attendees are present, products are on hand, and the terrain model is to standard.
- Pay close attention to primary and alternate observer and communication planning, often a friction point at the National Training Center.

The information collection/ fires rehearsal (IC fires rehearsal) is the final opportunity for stake holding warfighting functions to come together in ensuring a common understanding of how the brigade intends to attack high payoff targets (HPT). The IC fires rehearsal is not a wargame and units should minimize the need for it becoming a back brief by effectively communicating the plan prior to execution of the rehearsal.

The IC fires rehearsal is a synchronization of assets for the brigade's close and deep fight, with associated triggers for shifting the coordinated fire line (CFL) and intelligence handover line (IHL), as well as triggers for shifting targeting priorities, priorities of fire, and weapons locating radar (WLR) zones.

Due to competing demands, to include the size and scope of operations along with time available, conducting a thorough IC fires rehearsal can prove unwieldy. At the National Training Center, we recommend following the IC fires rehearsal rubric (located at the end of this article) to ensure maximum participation and understanding from all stakeholders prior to execution of the brigade's fire support plan.

The purpose of this article is to explain the IC fires rehearsal rubric and provide amplifying commentary for observer and communication planning, two critical and often challenging components of fires planning. The IC fires rehearsal rubric provides substance for an effective

rehearsal, the style is dependent on the unit and the commander's ability to receive, process, and visualize the information.

## ATTENDANCE

The leaders listed below should attend the IC fires rehearsal:

- Brigade commander
- Brigade fire support coordinator (FSCOORD)
- Brigade intelligence officer
- Cavalry squadron commander
- Brigade fire support officer
- Cavalry squadron S3
- Brigade S6
- Brigade judge advocate general (JAG)
- Brigade staff weather officer (SWO)
- Brigade air liaison officer
- Counterfire officer
- Field artillery battalion operations officer
- Battalion fire direction officer
- All task force intelligence officers
- All battery commanders
- All task force fire support officers
- Special operations forces liaison officers (LNOs)
- The brigade operations officer
- The brigade collection manager
- Brigade aviation officer
- Brigade fires current operations (CUOPs)
- Non-lethal targeting officer

Units should not send "designated representatives." It defeats the purpose of the rehearsal, which is to establish a common understanding and synchronize efforts. Brigades should not schedule other meetings or rehearsals during the IC fires rehearsal, in order to allow the primary officers and noncommissioned officers (NCOs) the ability to attend.

## PRODUCTS ON HAND

Brigades should have fighting products to drive the rehearsal instead of scripts. These products should include:

- Target list worksheet (TLWS)
- Fire support execution matrix
- Intelligence collection matrix
- Annex D with target trigger location delivery asset communication (TTLODAC)
- Commander's critical information requirements (CCIR)
- Decision support matrix w/ priority information requirements (PIR)
- Serious incident reports (SIR)

- Information requirements (IR)
- Defense support team (DST) execution checklist (EXCHECK)
- High payoff target list (HPTL)
- Attack guidance matrix
- Target selection standards
- No strike list

The brigade combat team (BCT) fire support officer (FSO) should appoint someone ahead of time as the responsible party to capture changes to the products and send updates as required.

## TERRAIN MODEL

Terrain models provide a graphical depiction of the area of operations and are utilized for better understanding of sequencing and associated triggers. Terrain models should include: fire support coordination measures/air coordination measures, phase lines/boundaries, coordinated fire line (CFL)/fire support coordination line (FSCL), targets, named areas of interest (NAIs) / target areas of interest (TAIs), radar zones/positions, templated enemy icons, templated operations, north seeking arrow, and position area for artillery (PAAs).

## EXECUTION OF THE REHEARSAL

Once the brigade S2 briefs enemy situation and scheme of collection, the brigade commander or FSCoord provides guidance for fires and the brigade commander or cavalry squadron commander provides scheme of surveillance. As depicted on the rubric, the rehearsal should then follow a set briefing pattern by phase/sub-phase in time and space with each briefer identified and describing their portion. Units have had success breaking down the IC fires rehearsal into their deep fight and briefing it before their close fight. Regardless of which is briefed first, both require a discussion of triggers with emphasis on what is determining the trigger as either friendly or enemy actions. Time should always be used to synchronize since most assets, especially echelon above brigade (EAB) assets, are given to the brigade with associated times. As friendly actions are delayed or anticipated enemy attacks never materialize, time keeps all stakeholders synchronized in the visualization of how the brigade fight will occur with the understanding that the flexibility of the plan may also determine success.

## OVERALL ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

The IC/fires rehearsal rubric has 9 criterion scaled from 1 (worst) to 5 (best):

- Simplicity - is the plan easily understood by all?
- Friction points - were friction points introduced at key points and resolved?
- Decision points - were decision points discussed and rehearsed in relation to PIR?
- Sensor to shooter - were all targets [TGTs] rehearsed from sensor to shooter?
- Flexibility/redundancy - were secondary shooters, observers identified for all TGTs?
- Synchronization - were actions discussed in time and space with assets synchronized and sequenced properly with a well understood airspace plan?
- Protection - were radar zones synchronized with intelligence and maneuver along with suppression of enemy air defense [SEAD] and survivability move criteria?
- Mission command - is the communication plan feasible and understood by all?

- Due outs - were all due outs identified and recorded with a given suspense?

## OBSERVER AND COMMUNICATION PLANNING

Trends at the National Training Center demonstrate a general understanding and practice of the IC fires rehearsal during both leader training program (LTP) and rotation with varying levels of success. Two components of fires planning addressed in the IC fires rehearsal still challenge most units: observer and communication planning at echelon. If used as a guide while planning, the IC fires rehearsal rubric serves as a forcing function and reminder for units to account for both primary and alternate observers placed in tactically sound observation posts (OPs) to observe targets. The information collection/fires rehearsal rubric guides the brigade to have the battalion (BN) FSOs brief TTLODAC: target, trigger, location, observer, delivery system, attack guidance, and communications. If feasible, units should have the actual primary and alternate observer brief the targets themselves in order to ensure maximum understanding from sensor to shooter. Brigades who account for primary and alternate observers are able to synchronize assets, refining OP and target locations during the IC fires rehearsal, leading to successful operations. The same is true for communication planning. The brigade S6 should be involved in not only planning, but in the IC fires rehearsal to help identify and work through friction points and to explain primary, alternate, contingency, and emergency methods of communications. As with the observer plan, the communication plan requires a rehearsal for each target from sensor to shooter. The IC fires rubric serves as a reminder to ensure all targets have primary and alternate forms of communication.

## RECOMMENDATION

In addition to using the IC fires rehearsal rubric, three recommended conditions should be met ahead of time. First, the BCT FSO should bring everyone out to the terrain model at least an hour before the IC fires rehearsal start time to discuss expectations for the rehearsal, review any friction points, and ensure shared understanding prior to the rehearsal. Second, the BCT FSCOORD should see and walk the terrain model at least an hour before the IC fires rehearsal to allow time for any necessary changes and ensure his guidance is met. Lastly, the IC fires rehearsal rubric should be codified in a BCT and fires battalion's tactical standard operating procedure (TACSOP) in order to establish a bench mark for future IC fires rehearsals.

## CONCLUSION

The IC fires rehearsal is the last chance for a brigade to come together and synchronize intelligence and fires before crossing the line of departure. The IC fires rehearsal rubric is a valuable tool to help guide brigades in fires planning and rehearsing to ensure maximum participation and understanding from all stakeholders. The IC fires rehearsal rubric serves as a forcing function to ensure brigades are accounting for two of the most challenging components, observer and communications planning.

Best Practices at NTC:

- One hour prior to the IC/s Fires Rehearsal, the BCT FSO walks the terrain model with the FSCOORD and huddles with rehearsal attendees to ensure shared understanding prior to execution.
- Primary and alternate observers and methods of communication are identified and rehearsed for each target.
- The IC/ Fires Rehearsal Rubric is part of a BCT and Fires Battalion's tactical SOP.

Doctrinal Reference:

- Army Techniques Publication (ATP) 3-09.42, *Fire Support for the Brigade Combat Team* (01 March 2016)
- ATP 3-60, *Targeting* (07 May 2015)
- Field Manual (FM) 3-96, *Brigade Combat Team* (19 January 2021)

Reference Supporting Collective Tasks:

*06-BDE-5066, Employ Fires*

*06-BDE-1084, Synchronize Fire Support*

*06-BDE 1092, Synchronize Field Artillery Operations*

## **IC FIRES REHEARSAL RUBRIC**

**Attendance:** BDE commander, FSCoord, BDE S2, CAV squadron commander, BDE FSO, CAV S3, BDE S6, BCT, JAG, BCT SWO, BCT ALO, Counterfire Officer, FA BN S3, BN FDO, ALL TF S2s, ALL BATTERY commanders, ALL TF FSOs, SOF LNO, BDE S3, BDE collection manager, BCT BAO, BDE fires CUOPs, non-lethal targeting officer.

**Products on hand:** FSEM, IC Matrix, TLWS, Annex D with TTLODAC, CCIR, DSM (w/PIR, SIR, IR), DST, EXCHECK (if applicable), HPTL, AGM, TSS, NSL

**(Fighting products should drive rehearsal, not scripts)**

### **Terrain Model**

- FSCMs/ACMs/phase lines/boundaries/CFL/FSCL
- Targets
- NAI/TAI
- Radar zones/radar positions
- Templated enemy icons (utilize S2 Soldiers for this)
- Templated OPs
- North seeking arrow
- PAAs

**CAV S3/FSO/S2** briefs PIRs answered in last 12-24 hours and updated CAV situation

### **BCT S2 Overview**

Overall enemy situation discussed (1-2 minutes)  
Overall scheme of collection discussed (1-2 minute summary)

**BCT commander or FSCoord** discusses BCT commander's guidance for fires

**BCT commander or SCO** discusses BCT commander's guidance for surveillance  
focus, tempo, engagement/disengagement criteria, displacement criteria

**BCT SWO** briefs the weather effects for all fires assets and potential adverse impact on relevant aspects of the fire support rehearsal.

### **Briefed by phase/sub-phase in time and space**

**BCT S3** overview conception of operation

**ALO** describes fixed wing airspace plan in time and space (must occur, can occur at relevant time in briefing)

**BAO** describes rotary wing aviation plan in time and space/ACM plan (must occur at relevant time in briefing)

Briefs task and purpose of aircraft, location of targets or engagement areas, number of aircraft on station, weapons configuration, airspace coordinating measures used (and time to fly air corridor legs), aerial observation (if any), time on station, suppression of enemy air defenses plan, triggers (readiness level upgrade and launch times), communications plan (command, control, air-to-ground and air-to-air) and forward arming and refueling point rotation.

**ADA officer** briefs the current air threat, air defense capabilities and coordinating measures, and airspace clearance and integration including indirect fire trajectories.

**BCT JAG** briefs applicable ROE (i.e. law of war considerations for urban operations)

**BCT FSO** defines close and deep fights via BDE CFL

**BCT FSO** defines HPTL and POF for the phase

Deep

**BCT Collection Manager**

NAI or TAI Number and Location (group similar and appropriate NAIs)

Collection asset / capability

Location of the collection system / sensor and times of collection

Task of the collection effort (i.e. using SIGINT, identify enemy 2S6M)

Purpose (i.e. to identify enemy AD elements from the 801st BTG, answer PIR 2, support CDRs decision point 2, and is #1 target from the HPTL)

Triggers (i.e. detection and identification will trigger a specific effort or event)

Sensor to shooter plan

AASLT Cherry / ICE calls

Armed UAS should detail the process when the UAS transfers from a collection role to that of CAS and include the information on how the asset transfers to the JTAC for C2 and munitions release

**BCT 2** defines enemy actions in that phase and how they relate to IC

Enemy description

Time enemy in position/ movement times of enemy

Activity (defending/moving)

Forms of contact

Asset to cue

T/P (answering what PIR)

How does BCT receive info?

How is information disseminated?

Which NAIs trigger TAIs?

Asset to identify/confirm

How does BCT receive info?

How is information disseminated?

BCT rehearses attacking HPTs sensor to shooter

BCT discusses asset to assess battle damage/effects

Close

**BN FSOs** describe TTLODAC for BCT allocated targets/assigned TAIs (discussed by actual observer if tactically feasible to attend)

**CFF** rehearsed sensor to shooter for each target

**BN FSOs** discuss mortar firing points

**FA BN S3/FDO** discusses:

Triggers to move batteries/platoons and survivability move criteria

Sequencing in time and space (batteries unavailable due to ongoing fire missions or movement)

As part of sensor to shooter CFF, state fire order

Special considerations (i.e. high angle fire)

**TAPL** discusses radar plan in time and space

Radar movement plan/locations/AOS

Cueing schedule (in time and space as triggered by other actions)

Radar zones (CFZ, CFFZ, ATIZ, censor zones)

Radar support during high volume missions

IC/Fires rehearsal must induce **friction**

Adjustment of smoke, alternate shooters, alternate observers, sequencing of fire missions (i.e. all guns occupied), counterfire

**BDE FSO** ends by reviewing due outs, target refinement cut-off time (if it did not occur prior to rehearsal) and fires technical rehearsal time



## OVERALL ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

### Simplistic

- 1: Over complicated, not understood  
5: Feasible plan that is understood by all

1    2    3    4    5

### Friction Points

- 1: Not discussed, no injects  
5: Introduced at key points and resolved

1    2    3    4    5

### Decision Points

- 1: Not discussed  
5: Discussed and rehearsed in relation to PIR

1    2    3    4    5

### Sensor to Shooter

- 1: TGTs not rehearsed  
5: All TGTs/TAIs rehearsed sensor to shooter

1    2    3    4    5

### Flexibility/Redundancy

- 1: No secondary shooter nor observer  
5: Actions discussed in time and space; assets synchronized and sequenced properly; airspace plan well understood

1    2    3    4    5

### Synchronization

- 1: Back brief only  
5: Actions discussed in time and space; assets synchronized and sequenced properly; airspace plan well understood

1    2    3    4    5

### Protection

- 1: Radar zones not discussed/survivability criteria not discussed/SEAD not discussed  
5: Radar zones synchronized with intelligence and maneuver/survivability move criteria understood by all/SEAD plan understood by all

1    2    3    4    5

### **Mission Command**

- 1: Obvious communications issues unresolved  
5: Communications plan feasible and understood by all

1 \_\_\_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_\_\_ 5

### **Due Outs**

- 1: No due outs identified or recorded  
5: All due outs identified, recorded, and suspense given

1 \_\_\_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_\_\_ 5

### **ACRONYMS**

AASLT	Assault
ACM	Airspace Control Measures
AD	Air Defense
ADA	Air Defense Artillery
AGM	Attack Guidance Matrix
ALO	Air Liaison Officer
AOS	Azimuth of Search
ATIZ	Artillery Target Intelligence Zone
ATP	Army Techniques Publication
BAO	Brigade Aviation Officer
BCT	Brigade Combat Team
BDE	Brigade
BN	Battalion
BTG	Brigade Tactical Group
C2	Command & Control
CAS	Close Air Support
CAV	Cavalry
CCIR	Commander's Critical Information Requirements
CDR	Commander
CFF	Call for Fire
CFFZ	Call for Fire Zone
CFL	Coordinated Fire Line
CFZ	Critical Friendly Zone
CUOPS	Current Operations
DSM	Decision Support Matrix
DST	Defense Support Team
EAB	Echelons Above Brigade
EXCHECK	Execution Checklist
FA	Field Artillery
FM	Field Manual
FSCL	Fire Support Coordination Line
FSCOORD	Fire Support Coordinator
FSEM	Fire Support Execution Matrix
FSO	Fire Support Officer
HPT	High Payoff Target

HPTL	High Payoff Target List
IC	Information Collection
IHL	Intelligence Handover line
IR	Information Requirements
JAG	Judge Advocate General
JTAC	Joint Terminal Attack Controllers
LNO	Liaison Officer
LTP	Leader Training Program
NAI	Named Areas of Interest
NCO	Noncommissioned Officer
NSL	No Strike List
OP	Observation Post
PAA	Position Area for Artillery
PIR	Priority Information Requirement
POF	Priority of Fire
ROE	Rules of Engagement
SCO	Squadron Commander
SEAD	Suppression of Enemy Defenses
SIGINT	Signal Intelligence
SIR	Serious Incident Report
SOF	Special Operational Forces
SWO	Staff Weather Officer
TAI	Target Areas of Interest
TACSOP	Tactical Standard Operating Procedure
TAPL	Target Acquisition Platoon Leader
TARGO	Targeting Officer
TGT	Target
TLWS	Target List Worksheet
TSS	Target Selection Standard
TTLODAC	Target Number, Trigger, Location, Observer, Delivery System, Attack Guidance, Communication
UAS	Unmanned Aircraft System
WLR	Weapons Locating Radars