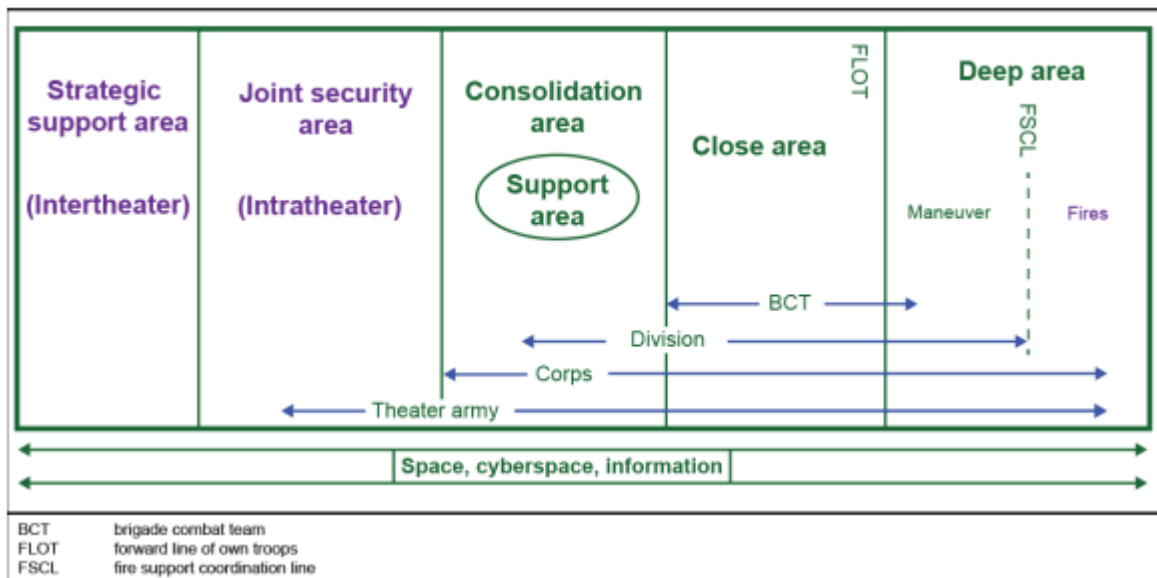


The Division Deep Area Command Post: A recommended TTP
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It is time to re-imagine the division command post. An emergent TTP in recent years, amongst division headquarters, is the establishment of a support area command post (SACP).¹ The SACP is responsible for the planning, coordination, and execution of operations in the division's consolidation and support areas. Perhaps more importantly, the SACP is an affirmation of how the U.S. Army ought to organize division command posts in the future. Simply, battlefield geometry affects the way we fight, and it can affect the way we focus. With battlefield geometry in mind, a division headquarters should be comprised of three distinct command posts: a SACP, a main command post (MCP), and a deep area command post (DACP). These distinct command posts align with existing battlefield geometry constructs, which are the consolidation and support areas, the close area, and the deep area respectively, as depicted in the figure below. Aligning command posts geometrically will lead to concentrated efforts and precise planning. This will support better shared understanding amongst the division headquarters and subordinate elements.



FM 3-0, *Operations*, Figure 1-7, Corps area of operations within a theater of operations

To understand the proposed solution, it is important to visit the existing battlefield framework. FM 3-0 describes the close area, the deep area, and the consolidation and support areas.² The close area is the area of operations assigned to subordinate units, which for a division, means it is the area assigned to brigade combat teams (BCTs). In the close area, the division conducts information collection, sustainment operations, and planning that enables freedom of action for subordinate elements.³ For divisions, the close area is where BCTs maneuver and engage in battle.⁴ The deep area is the portion of a commander's area of operations not assigned to subordinate forces, extending from subordinate forward boundaries to the higher command's designated AO. In the division deep area, divisions concentrate on conducting information collection, employing fires, and creating maneuver opportunities that precisely target enemy command and control capabilities. The division deep area is generally the area between a division's coordinated fire line (CFL) and the fire support coordination line (FSCL). The consolidation area is the portion of a commander's area of operations that facilitates the necessary security and stability tasks for freedom of action in the close area.⁵ In the division consolidation area, a BCT is responsible for conducting the host of security tasks that enables tempo in the close and deep areas. This can be offensive at first, as the assigned BCT defeats remaining enemy formations or bypasses forces with the purpose of protecting friendly forces operating within the consolidation area. The consolidation area will expand and contract as operations progress, usually growing in size as the division conducts successful offensive operations and reducing in size as friendly forces transition to defensive operations. The support area is the area of operations designated to facilitate the positioning, employment, and protection of base sustainment assets required to sustain, enable, and control operations. The amount of friendly forces operating in close proximity compounds the complexity of the consolidation and support areas. Understanding the battlefield geometry is foundational to

understanding this article's proposed concept, arraying command posts against the consolidation and support, close, and deep areas.

The complexity of the consolidation and support areas drove the need to establish a support area command post to provide critical command and control where desperately needed. Deep area operations are likewise complex. The deep area presents the greatest threat to friendly forces, because it is where the preponderance of adversary fires capabilities operates, and enemy fires capabilities are responsible for destroying the majority of friendly forces. MCTP WFX Key Trends and Observations from FYs 2019 and 2020 identify that divisions struggle both to maintain deep-fight planning horizons and to conduct complete deep-fight shaping operations. These challenges respectively emanate from an inability to define the fight at echelon across time and space and to understand the operational environment. Divisions are able to plan successful deep operations up to 96-hours upon the start of a WFX; however, as close operations intensify, staff attention diverts to support the close area, thereby compromising deep area operations.⁶ WFX Key Trends and Observations from FY 2019 also note that division deep maneuver, such as air assaults and reconnaissance in force operations, prove successful in shaping future operations.⁷ These deep maneuver operations force the enemy to re-position defensive forces, exposing enemy forces to lethal fires while also allowing the division to conduct effective information collection. The complexity of deep area operations is reason to consider establishing a deep area command post, similar to the support area command post.

While the SACP is a tacit concept that has been practiced for years, no division has implemented or created a command post solely purposed to concentrate on deep operations. Several units have created 'Deep Operations Working Groups' that offer a more focused version of a targeting working group or targeting decision board to help maintain a deep operations attention. The ingenuity of these efforts is noteworthy, as it underscores a more complete

understanding of the operational environment, particularly the enemy threat. However, a working group is temporary in nature, and its effects are often fleeting, as its efforts succumb to competing events, requirements, and priorities (similar to other battle rhythm events) when the fighting starts. This happens because there is no clearly designated authority or entity responsible for the planning and execution of operations in the deep area in perpetuity. Units are merely dual-hatting individuals, cells, and working groups. By permanently establishing a deep area command post, the Army could clearly delineate responsibility, similar to the SACP. The deep area command post would be responsible for the planning and execution of operations in the deep area throughout the entire operation, providing the division a persistently focused command post. A deep area command post would lead to more precise and thorough targeting. Divisions would be more successful in the deep area, which will enable greater success in both the close area and consolidation and support area.

The TAC serves as a possible existent, off-the-shelf solution for manning, equipping, and operating a deep area command post. ATP 6-0.5, *Command Post Organization and Operations* describes the TAC as a tailorable command post, comprised of select staff members who temporarily control specific operations. As noted earlier, divisions struggle to define the fight at echelon. Often the TAC provides command and control to specific operations, such as the initial forward passage of lines (FPOL) and wet gap crossings (WGC); however, once those temporary operations are complete, the division struggles to re-define priorities and responsibilities for the TAC. If the TAC were re-purposed to focus exclusively on deep area operations, the division would be able maintain a deep area focus throughout the entire operation and would be in better position to achieve subsequent success in the close area and consolidation and support areas.

Establishing a DACP and SACP would allow the Division MCP to focus more attentively on operations in the close area, which includes coordinating maneuver amongst BCTs often in

complex multinational FPOLs and WGCs. The MCP would continue to exist as the division's main command post, as defined in *ATP 3-91* and *ATP 6-0.5*, but establishing geometrically aligned supporting command posts with clearly defined duties and responsibilities would allow it to distribute priorities and responsibilities more evenly as well as provide greater focus on close area operations. This will eventually lead to greater shared understanding and will enable subordinate organizations to take disciplined initiative—a mission command tenet, foundational to success in LSCO.

In theory, the idea of three command posts arrayed in support of an existing battlefield framework, is easy to understand. The concept uses an existing battlefield architecture and arrays command posts against this framework to help clearly delineate roles, responsibilities, and priorities. While this idea will face many challenges in implementation, the aggregate components already exist (in terms of personnel, equipment, and resources) to support application. With a newfound ability to focus precisely on the consolidation and support area, the close area, and the deep area, the division will be poised to succeed in LSCO.

¹ <https://usacac.army.mil/sites/default/files/publications/18-04.pdf>

² FM 3-0

³ FM 3-0

⁴ FM 3-0

⁵ FM 3-0

⁶ https://usacac.army.mil/sites/default/files/publications/18085_2.pdf

⁷ <https://usacac.army.mil/sites/default/files/publications/20-15.pdf>