
**Bringing Back the Fire Support Task:
*The Future of the Fire Support Rehearsal***

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*Fire Support Lessons Learned from 3rd Infantry Division's Warfighter 19-02
in consideration for publication through Center for Army Lessons Learned*

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Reducing enemy combat power in the Deep Fight is ultimately the business of Fires and Intelligence professionals. As the Fires and Intel warfighting functions (WFFs) enable maneuver operations, the essence of that relationship hinges on the effectiveness of the Fire Support Task (FST). Commanders utilize the FST to approve the method by which they will ultimately locate and kill the enemy with surface and aerial delivered munitions. This process is essential to the prioritization and allocation of assets for intelligence collection efforts and targeting. The doctrinal Fire Support Rehearsal (FS RxL) highlights FSTs but without the level of granularity necessary to describe the execution of those tasks through all the available enablers. To properly plan, synchronize, and execute the fires and intelligence plan in support of maneuver forces, FSTs must describe the desired Effect, Purpose, Method, and Assessment (EPMA). The FS RxL and all subsequent planning must change to revolve around the FSTs as the basis of discussion for each critical event or phase. To understand the need to change the FS RxL framework, it is important to define FSTs through existing doctrine, highlight the current execution of FS RxLs, and discuss the way forward for FS RxLs with the FST as the focal point.

The Fire Support Task

The Fire Support Task is an agreement between the available fires related enablers for an operation, the Fire Support Coordinator (FSCOORD), and the maneuver commander. This agreement defines how the Fires and Intel WFFs will enable the maneuver plan through shaping efforts to attrit enemy forces prior to maneuver elements coming within range of

opposing indirect/direct fire weapon systems. ATP 3-09.90 (DIVARTY Operations and Fire Support for the Division) defines an FST as a “task given to a fire support unit or organization that supports the commander’s scheme of maneuver.”¹ Thus, FSTs translate the desired effects from the maneuver commander’s guidance for fires into a fires plan and intelligence collection plan that will integrate the various related capabilities and fires assets to enable maneuver forces.

As the 3rd Infantry Division (3ID) executed Warfighter (WFX) 19-02 in November of 2018, the division staff utilized a force ratio calculator to identify the percentage of enemy combat power that must be attrited through fires assets in order to enable the maneuver plan. The Division Fires element then applied the required enemy attrition to the FSTs using an Effect, Purpose, Method, Assessment (EPMA) framework. The current FM 6-0 model of Task, Purpose, Execution, and Assessment (TPEA) does not maximize all the related capabilities and available enablers in comparison to the EPMA structure, which utilizes a detailed and defined Method for fires assets.² EPMA closely resembles the concept of Ends, Ways, and Means referenced in the

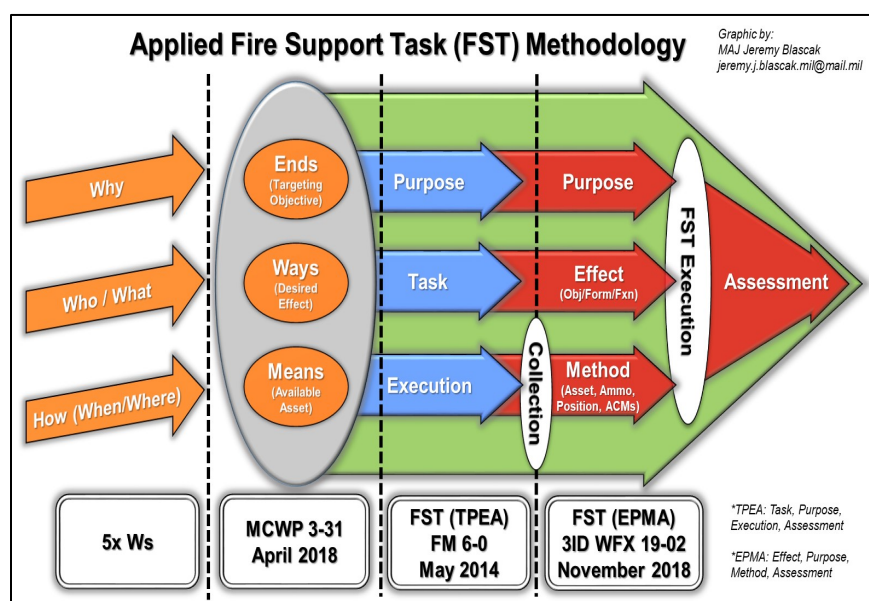


Figure 1: Fire Support Task (FST) Methodology, JAN 2019

Marine Corps Warfighting Publication (MCWP) 3-31 as a way to establish “targeting objectives (Ends), desired effects of fires (Ways), and an appropriate capability (Means) to create the desired effects based on the mission, intent, and commander’s guidance.”³ 3ID utilized the EPMA structure to synchronize all the various enablers based on the desired effect described through objective/formation/function (Ways), the targeting objective to enable the maneuver plan (Ends), and the primary/alternate enablers along with Airspace Coordinating Measures (ACMs), ammunition constraints, and positioning requirements (Means) (Reference Figure 1). An unclassified example of a 3ID WFX 19-02 FST in EPMA format is below:

FST #1: Destroy Enemy Field Artillery Assets (Specify Unit).

- *Effect: Destroy 1x Artillery Battalion’s ability to place indirect fires on friendly forces.*
- *Purpose: In order to seize Division Objective and enable friendly scheme of maneuver.*
- *Method: Primary - MLRS/HIMARS (Discuss positioning / ammunition restraints).
Alternate - Fixed Wing (Discuss Airspace Control).*
- *Assessment: No indirect fires for eight hours and/or Enemy Artillery BN below 30% combat power.
Favorable RCPA (Relative Combat Power Analysis). Check PIR/DSM for follow-on action.*

After FST execution, the EPMA structure incorporates a timely assessment to rapidly provide feedback into the targeting cycle. During FST assessment at WFX 19-02, 3ID reviewed the current Priority Intelligence Requirements (PIRs) and Decision Support Matrix (DSM) to verify that the FST met all the details approved by the commander in the “if/and/then” statement. In the event the FST did not meet DSM requirements for the commander to make a decision, the fires and intelligence WFFs determined re-attack criteria to incorporate back into the FST and the 24-hour targeting cycle. Therefore, the EPMA framework proved to be extremely successful in WFX 19-02 as it provided the details necessary to execute the fires plan while effectively communicating that information across all the WFFs. The EPMA method streamlined the 3ID fires planning process and 24-hour targeting cycle in comparison to the doctrinal TPEA structure which lacks the detail needed for a fight against a near-peer competitor across complex terrain.

<u>SEQUENCE OF EVENTS:</u>	
INITIAL SET:	
BRIEFER	TOPIC
BCT FSNCO	Roll call
BCT S3	Terrain model orientation
BCT S2/Fires BN S2	Enemy initial set (same format as BCT CAR)
S7/ IOCOORD	Town assessments, ongoing IO OPS, themes, messages
FSO	Commander’s guidance for fire support (FSTs, Priority of fires, FSCMs)
BAO / S3 Air	AC2 Orientation
BCT S3/FSO	Current friendly set (Same as S3 initial set for BCT CAR)
MICO	IEW Baseline/ Collection plan overview
BOLT	Briefs ROE and relevant restrictions in theater (I.E. PID, Collateral Damage Assessments. Can be mission specific determined by terrain, population, and other coalition forces)
OFFENSIVE OPERATION: (Brief in the following sequence for each event)	
S3 FSO	ACTION: BCT scheme of maneuver/critical event
MICO	Collection/ ISR scheme (Who is seeing what?)
BCT FSO/TF FSO	Friendly action checklist (TTLODAC-F format)
BAO / S3 AIR / ALO	Airspace activation/ deconfliction
Fires BN S3/FDO	Btry/Gun Location (s), TGT #, number of rounds by type
CA/PSYOP	IO Actions
S2	REACTION: Accurate subsequent enemy actions (enemy action checklist)
S3/FSO	COUNTER-ACTION: BCT scheme of maneuver/critical event
MICO	Collection/ ISR scheme (Who is seeing what?)
BCT FSO/TF FSO/	Friendly action checklist (TTLODAC-F format)
BAO / ALO / S3 AIR	Airspace activation/ deconfliction
DS BN S3/FDO	Btry/Gun Location (s), TGT #, number of rounds by type
CA/PSYOP	IO action checklist

Figure 2: BCT FS RxL Excerpt, FS Planning White Paper, FA School, JAN 2009

The Fire Support Rehearsal

Current FS RxLs typically resemble an Operation Order (OPORD) brief beginning with a list of the FSTs by either TPEA or Task, Purpose, and Desired Effect, then transition into the details of each target. To convey that information, most FS RxLs use the Fires Support Execution Matrix (FSEM) and Target Description, Trigger, Location, Observer, Delivery System, Attack Guidance, and Communications (TTLODAC) for planned targets to create a thorough understanding of the sensor to shooter linkage for each target from trigger to delivery asset (Reference Figure 2). The underlying issue is that this

method focuses on the technical aspects of prosecuting individual targets while failing to connect the commander's intent and maneuver plan to the required shaping efforts and targeting assessment. The FSEM and TTLODAC are useful at lower echelons but for the Brigade, Division, and Corps level, the current doctrinal FS RxL fails to answer the essential question of how the unit intends to find the enemy and kill them.

3ID reorganized the FS RxL structure for WFX 19-02 by beginning with an intelligence assessment of what enemy assets present the most threat to friendly forces and followed with how collection assets will identify them. The fires representatives then prioritized those threats and determined each FST's Effect, Purpose, and Method to achieve the commander's desired end-state. The FST EPMA structure then became the core of the FS RxL with a discussion on each critical event by FST where all the related capabilities and enablers to include Electronic Warfare (EW) and Information Operations (IO) have the opportunity to rehearse and synchronize across the WFFs. 3ID used this rehearsal structure to combine the Fire Support RxL with the Intelligence Collection (IC) RxL in an effort to synchronize and deconflict the plan while effectively communicating it across the formation. The FST EPMA structure then fed directly into the 3ID Combined Arms RxL (CAR) for WFX 19-02 creating a continuous thread from one rehearsal to the next further solidifying a common understand and reducing potential friction points.

Conclusion

The Fire Support Task (FST) is a contract between the maneuver commander, Fire Support Coordinator (FSCoord), and fires assets to support the maneuver plan with surface and aerial delivered munitions. To achieve the commander's intent for fires, it is essential to frame FSTs by Effect, Purpose, Method, and Assessment (EPMA) when fighting on complex terrain against near-peer competitors. The FS RxL must then incorporate the FST EPMA structure as the focal point of the discussion to ensure thorough planning across the WFFs and a common understanding of the requirements to achieve the desired enemy attrition and maneuver commander's end-state. To effectively shape as a division, 3ID utilized the FS RxL and the FST EPMA structure to identify what enemy assets could "kill the division" and focused all available capabilities to reduce those threats before they became a threat to the brigades.

"3ID must do three things: Sustain the fight, Manage transitions, and Shape the close fight..."
 – Major General Quintas, 3ID WFX 19-02, Nov 2019

Fires and Intelligence Rehearsal Script (Example)	
PH III (Critical Event – Shaping Fires)	
•	Scheme of Maneuver (Operations Officer)
•	Focus of Fires (FSO) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ HHQs Shaping Efforts ○ Unit Shaping Efforts ○ HPTL, FSCMs, POFs, Restrictions
•	Radar Management (Counter-Fire Officer) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ AoS, Queing, Zones
•	Air Defense (ADAM/BAE)
•	Fire Support Tasks (Prioritized LAW HPTL) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ ENY Situation for FST (Intelligence Officer) ○ Collection Plan to support FST (Collection Manager) ○ Effect (FSO) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Objective / Formation / Function ○ Purpose (FSO) ○ Method (FSO) (Assets briefed as they would engage target) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Surface Fires (Artillery Operations Officer) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary/Alternate PAA for planned targets • Movement Triggers • Range Considerations • Ammo Expenditure ▪ Fixed Wing (Joint Fires / ALO) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allocations • Airspace Control • Weaponing ▪ Rotary Wing (CAB FSO) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary/Alternate by planned targets • Movement timing / FARP plan • SEAD • Ammo Expenditure ▪ Cyber Electromagnetic Attack (CEMA Officer) ▪ Information Operations (IO Officer) ○ Assessment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ MOP/MOE (FSO) ▪ Collection Asset (Collection Manager) ▪ Results of Shaping efforts (Intelligence Officer)

Figure 3: FS RxL Example, 3ID WFX 19-02, NOV 2018

About the Author

Major Jeremy Blascak, U.S. Army, is a Field Artillery officer and a division fires planner with the 3rd Infantry Division. He earned a BS in Information Technology from George Mason University, an MA in Management and Leadership from Webster University, and an MA in Military Studies from Marine Corps University. His military experience includes assignments with the 82nd Airborne Division, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), Pacific Command (PACOM), and two deployments to Afghanistan. Recent publications include a December 2018 article with the Fort Sill Fires Bulletin on the Future of Field Artillery Warfighting.

Endnotes

¹ Headquarters Department of the Army, *Division Artillery Operations and Fire Support for the Division*, ATP 3-09.90 (Washington, DC: Headquarters Department of the Army, October 2017) 2-8.

² Headquarters Department of the Army, *Commander and Staff Organization and Operations*, FM 6-0 (Washington, DC: Headquarters Department of the Army, May 2014) D-22.

³ Headquarters United States Marine Corps, *Marine Air-Ground Task Force Fires*, MCWP 3-31 (Washington, DC: Headquarters Department of the Marine Corps, April 2018) 3-3.