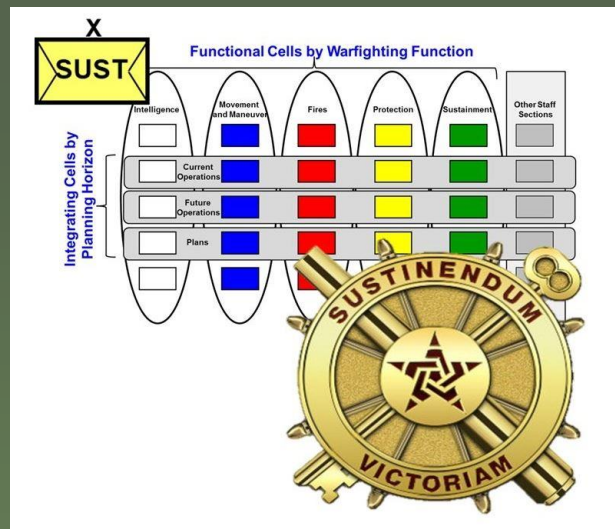


# NEWS FROM THE CTC

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## Functional and Integrating Cells within Sustainment Brigade Staffs Enable the Operations Process



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# Functional and Integrating Cells within Sustainment Brigade Staffs Enable the Operations Process

By MAJ Richard Reeves

**Preface.** This article is primarily intended for Army sustainment officers and NCOs who are newly assigned to a sustainment brigade staff. Such individuals, having spent the majority of their careers (so far) down in companies or battalions, are often unaware of the processes and procedures they must undertake to successfully accomplish their mission. This article is the result of the author's own observations, both as a former member of a sustainment brigade staff, and as a sustainment observer, coach/teacher in the Mission Command Training Program (MCTP) stationed at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. Since joining MCTP, he has observed expeditionary sustainment commands and sustainment brigades at seven Army War Fighters (WFXs) and conducted sustainment training at 12 mission command training (MCT) weeklong seminars.

**Introduction.** One of the most important ways to measure the success of a headquarters (HQ) staff is to evaluate their operations process. Did they get the job done? Did they give their commanders the products they needed in a timely manner so that they could effectively execute mission command? Commanders organize their staffs into functional and integrating cells to enable collaboration, synchronization and to generate an effective battle rhythm. When the battle rhythm functions properly, the principles of mission command become evident in the staff – they come together as a cohesive team; they share a mutual understanding; and they use the commander's intent to take disciplined initiatives as they work their way through the operations process.

**Background.** The HQs staff of any organization is an integral component of the commander's ability to conduct mission command. The staff's role is to assist commanders with understanding situations, making and implementing decisions, controlling operations, and assessing progress (Army Doctrine Reference Publication [ADRP] 5-0, para. 1-9). Functional cells group personnel and equipment by warfighting function (minus mission command) while integrating cells personnel and equipment by time horizon (Field Manual [FM] 6-0, para. 1-29). Incorporating these cells into the staff's traditional "S" sections ensures a logical delegation of duties and responsibilities. It maps out the operations process, enables synchronization of information, and the collaboration of effort.

**MTOE Staff vs. Warfighting Functions.** Most sustainers are familiar with the MTOE-structured staff (or Modified Table of Organizations & Equipment) where the staff section one (S1) is personnel, S2 is intelligence, S3 is operations, S4 is logistics, etc. Figure 1 below is an example of this kind of structure. However, due to misconceptions

about the cells, newly assigned officers and NCOs in sustainment brigades often believe that in order to create functional and integrating cells, they must tear apart the “MTOE” structure until the commander concludes the exercise.

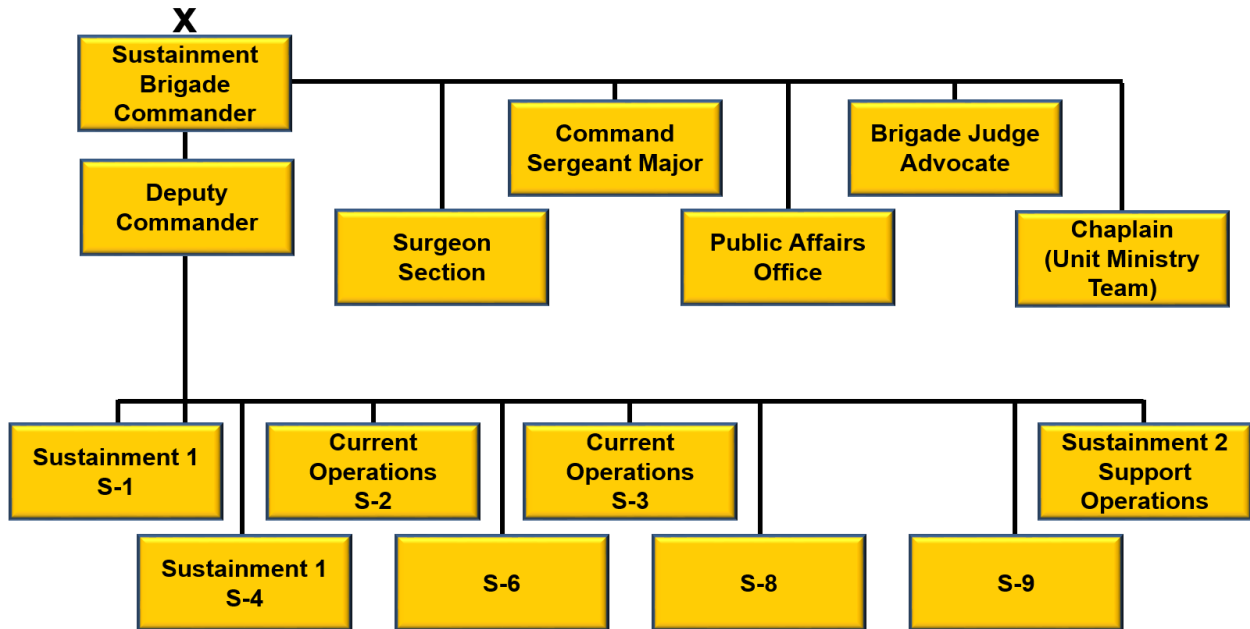


Figure 1. (Army Techniques Publication [ATP] 4-93, Figure 1-1. Sustainment Brigade Staff Organization) Note - Plans branch removed to reflect current MTOE changes

Figure 2 below unintentionally reinforces this notion. It does not show the “S” sections. Nor does it show how staffs should incorporate functional and integrating cells within the “S” sections depicted in Figure 1. When Sustainers see depictions like Figure 2, it incorrectly confirms their assumptions that the cells supersede “S” sections in field environments.

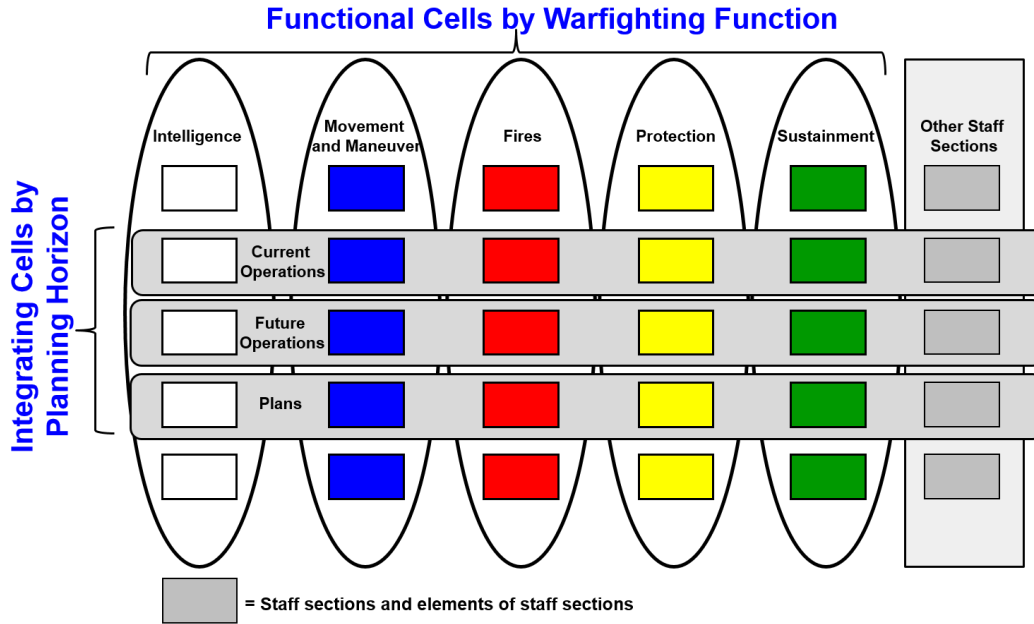


Figure 2. (FM 6-0, Figure 1-1. Command Post Organization)

Having observed numerous exercises, I propose that Figure 3 (below) corrects these assumptions by showing how both structures are compatible. It overlays the functional and integrating cells onto the SB MTOE organization chart. It depicts the linkage between MTOE sections and two types of cells. Moreover, it portrays which “S” staff section OICs will oversee the functional and integrating cells.

### Sustainment Brigade Cells: **Functional** and **Integrating**

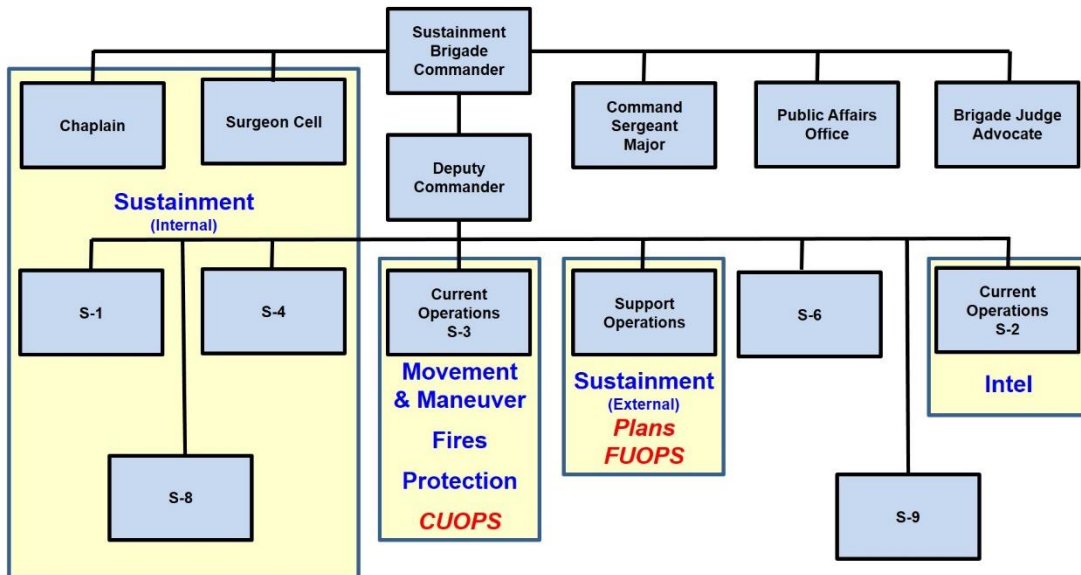


Figure 3. Sustainment Brigade Functional and Integrating Cells Note – Plans branch removed to reflect current MTOE changes

**Staff Organization.** This construct of functional and integrating cells incorporated within the HQs sections gives the commander a highly organized staff with designated POCs for every aspect of the operations process. CUOPS, with its movement & maneuver, fires and protection cells, is the realm of the S3. The SPO (support operations) section oversees external sustainment within the FUOPS planning horizon, and it prepares for the future with its long term planners. The S4's sustainment functional cell (that includes the S1, S8, Surgeon and Chaplain) oversees all sustainment internal to the brigade. Finally, the S2, S6 and S9 are enablers to all three planning horizons, and thus it is critical that they incorporate themselves into the workings of the other staff sections. The Deputy Commanding Officer (DCO) incorporates them all (including the public affairs officer and the staff judge advocate) into a functioning staff. The DCO is the approving authority for the SOPs that each section and cell develops. Moreover, as the HQs integrator, the DCO confirms that the mechanisms put in place by the SOPs ensure a high degree of synchronization and collaboration.

**Working Groups/Boards and Battle Rhythms.** Running a command post is extremely challenging. The necessity of developing structure, delegation, and codification of duties and responsibilities is paramount to mission success. Working groups (WG) and boards are two types of Army meetings that give the staff the structure they need within their battle rhythm. WGs are meetings where the participants come up with courses of action (COA) for future mission accomplishment. Boards are meetings where the commander (or commander's appointed representative) chooses a particular COA to continue the mission. When executed efficiently, these meetings become the backbone of a coherent battle rhythm that collectively points the staff towards synchronization with higher sustainment headquarters as well as supported maneuver commanders.

**Army SOP for Meetings.** One reason why fully-staffed SBs have difficulties with working groups and boards is because they fail to rigorously adhere to the Army's standard operating procedures (SOP) for meetings (FM 6-0, para. 1-68). When asked about meetings, most sustainers will tell you that they are too long, and often lack coherence. The DCO should mitigate this phenomenon with a well-organized battle rhythm. Before the DCO adds a meeting to the battle rhythm, the requestor of the meeting must satisfy the DCO that it is a necessary addition. The requestor should provide the following with his request:

- How often does this meeting need to occur?
- Who needs to attend the meeting?
- What inputs does the requestor need to proceed with the meeting?
- Do the outputs of the meeting serve a purpose?

**Conclusion.** Working groups and boards executed by functional and integrating cells are the key components of the unit's battle rhythm. Cells do not exacerbate the staff's OPTEMPO problems. Instead, they are a means by which the staff can streamline their duties and responsibilities. The cells allow the DCO to avoid the necessity of micromanagement because the cells distribute all major duties and responsibilities

across the entire staff. Cells facilitate staff section collaboration, and this collaboration enables the commander to make informed decisions...which is a critical component of accomplishing the mission.

The Key Points of this article are these:

- Functional and integrating cells do not destroy the “MTOE” staff concept.
- Functional and integrating cells add organization, synchronization, and collaboration to the staff sections.
- A well-organized battle rhythm allows the staff to conduct the operations process effectively.
- Staffs often poorly implement functional and integrating cells because they don’t know the purpose of working groups and boards.
- The Army’s SOP for meetings prevents attendees from wasting their time.

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