



Fighting the Enemy; Not the Plan: The Target Refinement Board and Agile Targeting in a Multidomain Environment

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This article outlines key lessons learned during Warfighter Exercise 23-04 as III Armored Corps (IIIAC) experimented with and ultimately implemented Targeting Refinement Boards (TRBs). Recognized as a best practice by Mission Command Training Program (MCTP) Senior Mentors, the TRB provided the mechanism to not only recognize changes in the operating environment (OE) but to then quickly adjust Army and Joint capabilities to improve accuracy of targeting. In short, the TRB enabled IIIAC to execute convergence and set conditions for subordinate division's success within the 24-hour Joint Air Tasking Order (ATO) cycle.

Through implementation of the TRB, IIIAC learned to adjust joint fires to create effects during the current operation (CUOP). The TRB mechanism drove timely and efficient updates to targeting priorities in the Targeting Working Groups (TWGs) and Targeting Decision Boards (TDBs), enhancing the overall effectiveness of the targeting process and ensuring achievement of IIIAC commander's objectives. Finally, the TRB enabled IIIAC to prioritize and allocate resources in an efficient and timely manner, enabling sustained battlefield momentum.

Problem Statement

In previous warfighting experiences, evolving battlefield conditions often out-paced IIIAC's ability to recognize and execute corresponding targeting refinements. A once-daily TWG and TDB did not facilitate informed decision making at the speed necessary to out-match the threat tempo. Entering WFX 23-04, IIIAC required a new mechanism to enable adjustments within the 24-hour ATO cycle.

Targeting Refinement Board: How it Worked

Although many of the processes associated with the TRB were implemented in part during previous exercises or by other units, IIIAC's intent in the TRB was to formalize these processes under the auspices of a single mechanism. The collective functions, products, key liaisons, and the method in which the TRB was executed allowed IIIAC to execute convergence, aligning effects across the battlefield with the speed and accuracy required in a multidomain environment. The Corps targeting enterprise was able to adjust priorities and resources to target an agile and adaptive enemy, setting conditions for subordinate units to take advantage of the created opportunity windows and achieve battlefield success. The TRB kept the Corps focused on fighting the enemy and not the plan through implementing critical adjustments to targeting priorities within each ATO.

The board occurred three times daily, located at the IIIAC's forward CUOPs command post, termed node "X-RAY." As depicted on the IIIAC TDB 7-Minute Drill Quad Chart (Figure 1), the events were facilitated by the Corps deputy fire support coordinator

(DFSCCOORD), chaired by the Corps Deputy Commanding General for Maneuver (DCG[M]), and included representatives from all Corps warfighting functions and subordinate units, including the Corps G3; division G3s and liaison officers (LNOs); and remote participation of select representatives from IIIAC's separate distributed command posts.



Target Refinement Board (TRB)

- **Purpose:** Provide the DCG-M with an assessment of current operations to synchronize or dynamically re-task lethal and non-lethal assets.
- **Frequency:** Daily every 6hrs starting from 0500Z
- **Duration:** 30 minutes
- **Location:** Xray Node Conference Room
- **Method:** CPCE MAP, broadcast via VJOC

P: Skype for Business
 A: MPE VOIP
 C: HF
 E: LNO

- **Staff Lead (OPR):** DFSCCOORD
- **Chair:** DCG-M/G3
- **Members:**
 - G2/G2 ISR Manager
 - G33
 - G35
 - DSCCOORD
 - SJA
 - CEMA
 - AMD
 - AVN
 - RCP LNOs: G1/G4/SURG
 - DIV LNOs: 1AD/1CD/3UK/CAB/Reserve

Inputs:

- Commander's targeting guidance
- Decision Support Matrix
- Intelligence and SOM update
- Current ISR Collection Plan
- Assessment last 6-10 hours and running estimates
- Friendly forces strength
- Battlefield Framework
- Updates to ATO cycle
- Targeting Special
- Last BDA

Outputs:

- Recommended changes in next 8 hours
- Recommended target refinement
- Recommended ATO updates
- Recommended lethal/non-lethal employment
- Updated running estimates & Disp/Comp of enemy

POC: MAJ David Cox; AFSCCOORD

Agenda:

- Intel Update / SITEMP (G2)
- ISR Collection Plan (ISR Manager)
- Slant (G4/G1/LNO)
- Battlefield Framework: Current and Future 8 hours out (G33/G35)
- Lethal Fires (Fires) / Non-Lethal Fires (CEMA)
- Adjustments and Recommendations

Post TRB Checklist:

Integrating Updates

- Notify TOC
- Adjust ATO
- Adjust ISR assets
- Notify Yankee and HSMC
- Update and changes are posted on Share Portal

Implement Change

- Disseminate lower through LNOs
- Execute Change (ISR/ATO/Non-Lethal Assets)
- Assess & Refine

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Figure 1: Target Refinement Board (MG Christopher Beck [DCG-M], LTC Rich Farnell [DFSCCOORD], CW5 Abel Almanza [Corps Targeting Officer], MAJ Chad Lorenz [G2 OPs OIC])¹

Three TRB's occurred within each ATO cycle, off-set from but informing key Corps events such as the daily TWGs and TDBs. Each TRB was scheduled for 30-minutes, and each featured a similar structure, although the rhythm of the battle also highlighted the utility of focusing each event on a particular topic. The first session within the ATO cycle included a focus on the validation of resources, the second session focused on dynamic adjustments to intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) and fires execution within the current ATO cycle, and the third session focused on forecasting adjustments for the next ATO cycle.

Critical to the TRB's successful implementation was the Corps commander's decision to empower the Corps DCG(M) within the commander's intent to dynamically reallocate ISR and kinetic/non-kinetic assets within the ATO cycle. On multiple occasions, battlefield conditions required adjusting elements of a plan previously approved by the commanding general (CG) in the daily TDB. This flexibility allowed the DCG(M) to drive accurate refinements to the deliberate targeting plan, ensuring capabilities were aligned correctly, accounting for continuous changes in conditions. During the TRB, participants focused on providing updates on execution within the ATO, arming the DCG(M), G3, and DFSCoord with key information, such as battle damage assessments (BDA) to enable informed strike and re-attack decisions associated with specific enemy formations and capabilities.

Targeting Refinement Board Structure

Notably, the TRB did not replace the deliberate targeting process. The TWG and TDB remained the commander's primary mechanisms for approving targeting priorities. Correspondingly, the TRB served as a targeting refinement tool for CUOPs. Planned and scheduled resources were adjusted to fight the enemy and not the plan.

In practice, the TRB differed from a standard TDB and TWG in the following aspects:

1. Occurred 3 x daily versus a 1 x daily TDB.
2. Limited in scope – decisions made impacted only the 24- versus the 96-hour time horizon.
3. Did not direct larger maneuver adjustments (such as changes to unit objectives, allocation of the Corps reserve, etc.).

Decisions emanating from the TRB centered on ISR coverage locations and prioritization, Class 5 allocation, and high priority target list prioritization accounting for known BDA generated within the 24-hour ATO.

Each TRB began with a G35 battlefield framework update, followed by a G2 enemy situation template (SITEMP) and ISR posture update. The DFSCoord then provided a Fires Running Estimate (FRE) update, sharing perspectives on the Corps execution of previously planned joint fires and effects. This real-time assessment provided all participants with an understanding of the current fight necessary to inform decisions regarding changes to the plan within the ATO.

1. Battlefield Framework Update: The IIIAC Corps G35 representative updated participants on gaps and opportunities in terms of the commander's battlefield framework. The purpose of this overview was to provide LNOs and each warfighting function representative with a common understanding of the current battlefield conditions. This context was necessary to best inform decisions about the future execution of joint fires and effects in a multidomain operations (MDO) construct. In this respect, the TRB enabled IIIAC to successfully posture effects in convergence windows. Division LNOs,

tactical air control party (TACP), and sustainers fully understood the current fight and provided bottom-up refinements to assist the DCG(M) and DFSCOORD in providing insight to the Corps commander and FSCOORD during Corps-level battlefield update assessments and targeting meetings. LNOs from respective divisions along with the Field Artillery Brigade LNO were able to discuss how they were able to shape the fight in time, space, resources, and purpose according to their proposed plans. With this context, they were able to make sound recommendations, informed by the existing battlefield geometries, to drive flexible and adaptive fires – dynamic targeting. In the same way, the Corps Collection Operations Management (COM) representative from the Corps Expeditionary MI Brigade (E-MIB) could make recommendations about adjustments to

“Convergence is an outcome created by the concerted employment of capabilities from multiple domains and echelons against combinations of decisive points in any domain to create effects against a system, formation, decision maker, or in a specific geographic area.”

-FM 3-0, *Operations*, 1 October 2022²

the intelligence handover line to ensure sensors were aligned appropriately, enabling an effective sensor to shooter loop.

2. G2 Enemy SITEMP Update: The G2 X-RAY node officer in charge (OIC) provided a threat SITEMP update inclusive of enemy composition, disposition, and specified observed deviations from previous assessments. The G2 assessment detailed enemy units down to the brigade/regiment level, including fires and air defense artillery (ADA) formations, and specifically highlighting assessed remaining capabilities and the next 6-to-12-hour outlook. This update provided the situational awareness necessary to refocus ISR and fires assets against the current and updated threat picture.

3. Corps E-MIB COM Update: The Corps E-MIB’s A/S3 was postured at X-RAY node and served as the Corps collection operations management representative for all Corps ISR assets. The representative provided an ISR update, briefing current collection posture and focusing primarily on assets under the Corps’ operational control, such as Grey Eagle Unmanned Aerial System (UAS) and High-Altitude Balloons (HABs). The update included number of assets remaining; location (often in relation to anticipated ADA threats); asset coverage areas; processing, exploitation, and dissemination (PED) analysis priorities; and the next 6-to-12-hour collection plan.

Appropriately prioritized PED analysis was a key outcome of the TRB, given that a HAB’s collection capability in terms of geographical coverage often exceeded the PED analytical capacity with IIIAC’s intelligence enterprise. As such, IIIAC made deliberate decisions to focus analysis on imagery-based message traffic derived from specific templated enemy locations.

Following the TRB, the COM representative directly communicated the updated guidance to the X-RAY ISR operations OICs, enabling the expeditious refocusing of Grey Eagles and HABs to collect on the updated named areas of interest (NAIs). The COM

representative also communicated the adjustments to the Corps ISR Mission Manager and Collection Management (CM) personnel to ensure future ISR planning was synchronized with the updated collection posture.

4. Fires Running Estimate Update: Figure 2 shows the FRE. The FRE update and related follow-on discussion built flexibility between and inside ATO days to facilitate convergence during the dynamic targeting process. In conjunction with staff estimates, the FRE did the following:

- Developed an understanding of how Corps targeting priorities and convergence efforts dynamically affected each fight and set conditions for the subordinate commands. It ensured Corps shaping requirements were definitively fulfilled to manage expectations to help the divisions understand what part of the fight belonged to them.
- Kept coordination, synchronization, and implementation of surface-to-surface, air-to-surface, and non-kinetic assets converging in each ATO cycle.
- Permitted the Corps commander, DCG(M), and DIV commanders to compare Should-Hit-Data (SHD) and Did-Hit-Data (DHD) by ATO cycle during targeting meetings to assess progress of Corps' shaping efforts.
- Included estimated and confirmed BDA occurring within the ATO cycle based on inputs collated by the G2 Targeting (G2T) team. The G2T team gathered updates from ISR operations, combined joint special operations task force (CJSOTF), TACPs, Corps aviation, and other elements. This analysis allowed Corps and divisions to understand the current enemy SITEMP and reshape targeting priorities based on current effects and anticipated opportunities. These observations and adjustments were also used in the TWG to ensure future fires planning was synchronized with the updated threat status.
- Helped to delineate Corps and division targeting refinements and adjustments by ATO to maximize targeting effects in respective areas of responsibilities.
- Enabled synchronization of fire support coordination measures (FSCMs), airspace coordinating measures (ACMs), and kill box operations, which enables convergency of fires and ensure quicker effects on the enemy.
- Allowed better management of ISR coverage to quicken the pace of convergence.
- Improved effectiveness of offensive attacks on enemy long-range assets.

End Notes

1. MG Christopher Beck (DCG-M), LTC Rich Farnell (DFSCOORD), CW5 Abel Almanza (Corps Targeting Officer), MAJ Chad Lorenz (G2 OPs OIC).
2. Field Manual (FM) 3-0, *Operations*, 1 October 2022.
3. MG Christopher Beck (DCG-M), LTC Rich Farnell (DFSCOORD), CW5 Abel Almanza (Corps Targeting Officer), MAJ Chad Lorenz (G2 OPs OIC).
4. FM 3-0, *Operations*, 1 October 2022.



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