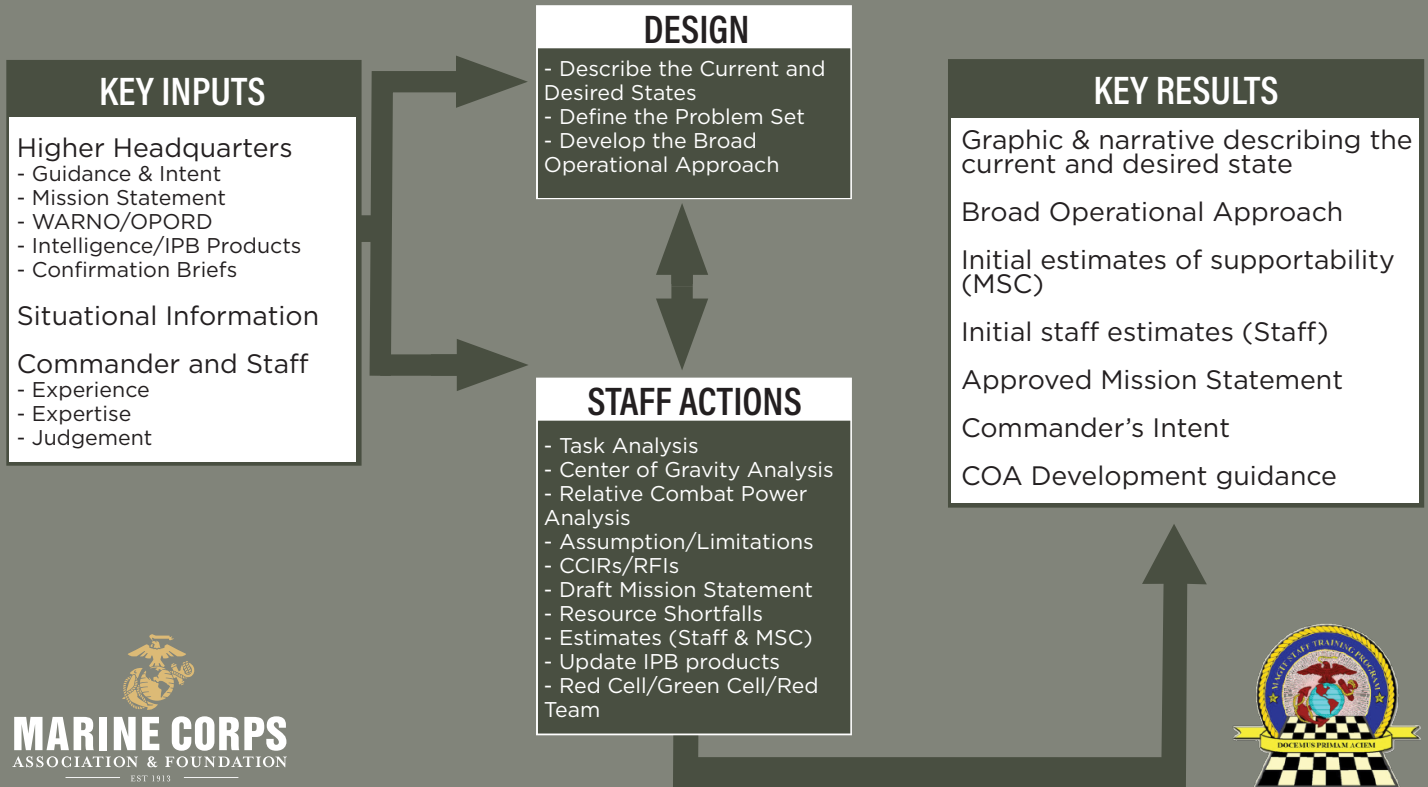


THE MARINE CORPS PLANNING PROCESS

STEP ONE: PROBLEM FRAMING



Problem Framing

Purpose: To gain an understanding of the environment and the nature of the problem set.



STAFF ACTIONS

Concurrent and Complementary

1. Analyze Tasks

- Specified: Anything specified (OPORD, Mission Statement, verbal, etc)
- Implied: Necessary to accomplish a specified task
- Essential: Specified or implied tasks that **MUST** be performed to accomplish mission

2. Analyze Center of Gravity

- Enemy and friendly (COG, CC, CR, CV)

3. Develop Assumptions

- Logical
- Realistic
- Essential for Planning
- Doesn't assume away an adversary capability

4. Determine Limitations

- Restrains: what can't be done
- Constraints: something you must do

5. Develop Mission Statement

- Who, What, Where, When, Why
- Must address the problem set

6. Propose Initial CCIRs

- Planning CCIRs
- Operational CCIRs

7. Perform Ongoing Activities

- IPB product refinement
- Red Cell activities/Green Cell activities
- Refinement of staff estimates and estimates of supportability
- Battlespace refinement
- Resource shortfalls identification
- Commander's Critical Information Requirement review/update
- Requests for information



DESIGN

Goal is to achieve understanding through critical thinking and dialogue

1. Commander's Orientation
2. Describe the current and desired states of the operating environment
3. Define the problem set

- As they exist within the environment
- Preventing the environment from progressing toward the desired state

4. Develop the Broad Operational Approach

- Input and Synthesis of both design and staff actions
- Graphic and Narrative
- Commander's initial intent and guidance

**PRESENT PROBLEM
FRAMING BRIEF**

**COMMANDER'S COURSE
OF ACTION GUIDANCE**

Broad Operational Approach

ISSUE WARNO

MCPP REFERENCE GUIDES

“We should think of planning as a learning process—as mental preparation which improves our understanding of a situation. In its simplest terms, planning is thinking before doing.”

-MCDP 5 Planning

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Step One

Problem Framing

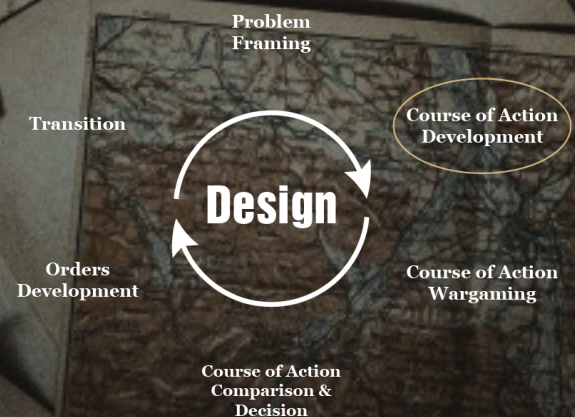
The purpose of problem framing is to gain an enhanced understanding of the environment and the nature of the problem. This greater understanding allows a commander to visualize the operation and describe his conceptual approach, providing context for the examination of what the command must accomplish, when and where it must be done, and most importantly, why—the purpose of the operation.

Since no amount of subsequent planning can solve a problem insufficiently understood, framing the problem is critical. To achieve this understanding, problem framing requires both the judgment of synthesis and the systematic study of analysis. Accordingly, problem framing consists of a commander-driven design effort supported by staff actions.

MCWP 5-10 Marine Corps Planning Process

Step Two

Course of Action Development *August Issue*



THE MARINE CORPS PLANNING PROCESS

STEP TWO: Course of Action Development

KEY INPUTS

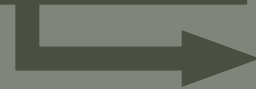
Design and Staff Actions
Operational Approach
Approved Mission Statement
Commander's Intent
Commander's COA Development Guidance

Activities

Establish battlespace framework
Array forces (friendly, adversary, population)
Assign purpose and then tasks for each subordinate element
Task organize
Sequence actions to achieve the mission
Divide operation into phases
Integrate activities across time and space
Establish control measures
Present COA Development brief to Commander

KEY RESULTS

COA graphic & narrative
Refined IPB and intelligence products
Planning support tools
-DST/DSM/Synch Matrix
Estimates of Supportability
Staff estimates
Commander's Wargaming Guidance and Evaluation Criteria
Updated WARNO



COA DEVELOPMENT



Purpose: Develop one or more options for accomplishing the mission
in accordance with the commander's operational approach

Operational Approach

-Commander's Intent
-Commander's COA Guidance

- Types of Operations
- Forms of Maneuver
- COG* Analysis
- Battlespace Framework
- Influence & Deception Activities
- Risk Guidance

COA Criteria

1. **Feasible:** Accomplishes mission with the available time, space, and resources
2. **Acceptable:** Worth the cost
3. **Suitable:** Accomplishes the task and purpose
4. **Distinguishable:** COAs differ from each other
5. **Complete:** Addresses all the tasks

*COG: Center Of Gravity

**RCPA: Relative Combat Power Analysis

Activities

1. Establish Battlespace Framework

- Organize the battlespace
 - spatial/functional
 - deep, close, rear
 - decisive, shaping, sustaining
- Organize the force
 - Main effort, supporting effort, reserve, security

2. Array Initial Forces

- Determine RCPA* required to accomplish task
- Array forces starting with decisive operations and continuing with shaping and sustaining operations

3. Assign Purpose and Then Tasks

- What is necessary to accomplish mission?

4. Convert Generic Units to Specific Units

5. Task Organize

- Structure and resource the force to conduct operations
- Establish command and support relationships

6. Sequencing

- Arrangement of actions to achieve the mission

7. Phasing

- Divide operations into phases

8. Develop COA Graphic and Narrative and Synch Matrix

9. Establish Control Measures

10. Rough Cut COA Brief

- Rough Task Organization
- Rough COA Graphic and Narrative

11. COA Refinement

- Develop supporting concepts

12. Conduct COA Development

13. Commander's Wargaming Guidance Evaluation Criteria

MCPP REFERENCE GUIDES

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Step Two

Course of Action Development

Course of action (COA) development leads to one or more options for *how* the mission and commander’s intent might be accomplished in accordance with the commander’s understanding as a result of the design effort that began during problem framing.

Planners develop broad COAs considering a number of factors, including mission, enemy, terrain and weather, troops and support available-time available (METT-T); adversary versus friendly capabilities assessment; civilian and cultural considerations; and possible employment options.

Planners should not judge or eliminate initial or “rough-cut” COAs; all possibilities are recorded for consideration in order to provide the commander with a variety of options.

—MCWP 5-1, Marine Corps Planning Process

Step Three

Course of Action Wargaming *September Issue*



THE MARINE CORPS PLANNING PROCESS

STEP THREE: Course of Action War Game

KEY INPUTS

COA graphic & narrative
Planning support tools
Estimates of supportability
Staff estimates
Commander's wargaming guidance and evaluation criteria

Activities

Assign War Game billets
Collect documents and tools
Select War Game technique
Conduct COA War Game
Record COA War Game results
Refine staff estimates, estimates of supportability, and supporting concepts
Present War Game brief

KEY RESULTS

Identified branches and sequels
Refined IPB and intelligence products
Refined staff estimates
Refined estimates of supportability
Approved COAs for comparison and decision
Comparison criteria/guidance

Purpose To Improve the Plan

1. Validate COAs by testing each COA against a thinking adversary
2. Improve each COA
3. Evaluate strengths and weaknesses of each COA
4. Better understand the problem and environment

Inputs

- Commander's Wargaming guidance
- Commander's evaluation criteria
- IPB products
- Planning support tools

War Game Techniques

- Key Events or Sequence of Critical Tasks
- Avenue in Depth
- Belt
- Box

Activities

1. Organize for Wargaming
2. Gather documents and tools
3. Select a War Game technique
4. Conduct a War Game

- Roll call
- Orientation to the War Game board
- Commander's War Game guidance
- Confirm task organization two levels down
- Review CCIRs and assumptions
- Review critical events to be war gamed
- Identify war game method to be utilized
- Red/Green cells brief their COAs to be war gamed
- Review rules of War Game
- Execution of turns

Action

- Describe operations to all friendly units
- Describe the mission/tasks
- Describe the desired outcome

Reaction

- Describe operations of all friendly units
- Describe probable outcome of contact

Civilian Reaction

- Describe actions of other actors in the OE*

Counteraction

- Identify additional actions and resources required
- Modify COA as necessary

5. Record and display War Game results

- War Game worksheet
- Synchronization Matrix

6. Assess the War Game results



MCPD REFERENCE GUIDES

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Step Three

Course of Action Wargaming

The purpose of COA wargaming ... is to improve the plan. It examines and refines the option(s) in light of adversary capabilities and potential actions/reactions as well as other factors peculiar to the operational environment, such as the local population and how it may respond to friendly and adversary interactions ... Whether conducted formally as a disciplined, interactive process or informally through a simple “what if” conversation between the commander and staff, wargaming relies heavily on the operational judgment and experience of the participants ... A continuation of design, the process of COA wargaming contributes to a better understanding of the environment and the problem.

—MCWP 5-10, Marine Corps Planning Process

Step Four

Course of Action Comparison and Decision *October Issue*



THE MARINE CORPS PLANNING PROCESS

STEP FOUR: COA Comparison and Decision

KEY INPUTS

- Updated IPB products
- Updated, complete COAs
- COA war game worksheet
- COA evaluation worksheet
- Resource shortfalls
- Updated CCIRs
- Decision Support Template & Decision Support Matrix
- Branches and sequels identified for further planning

Activities

Evaluate COAs against Commander's Evaluation Criteria

Compare COAs

Commander's Decision

KEY RESULTS

Approved COA

Guidance for branches and sequels

Updated WARNO



COA Comparison And Decision



Purpose

For the Commander to **evaluate** all friendly COAs against established criteria, then **compare** each COA against each other, and **decide** which COA best accomplishes the mission.

1

Evaluate Course of Action

The separate evaluation of each COA against the Cmdr's Evaluation Criteria with special consideration to advantages, disadvantages, and risk.

2

Compare Courses of Action to each other

The comparison of each COA to each other using the advantages, disadvantages, and risks developed in the evaluation step.

3

Commander's Decision

The Commander selects the course of action that best accomplishes the mission. There are four options:

- Select
- Modify
- New
- Discard

4

Refine the Concept of Operations

The concept of operations is a general description of actions to be taken and a generic organization for combat that serves as the basis for supporting concepts, functional or detailed Planning, and branch and Sequel planning.

5

Update the Warning Order

The Warning Order allows subordinates to continue concurrent planning.

Potential Evaluation Criteria

Principles of war
Limitation of casualties
Exploitation of the adversary's weaknesses/friendly strengths
Population considerations
Opportunity for maneuver
Concentration on combat power
Speed
Supportability
Political considerations
Force protection
Risk assessment

MCPP REFERENCE GUIDES

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Step Four

Course of Action Comparison and Decision

During COA comparison and decision ... the commander evaluates each friendly COA against established criteria, compares them with each other, and selects the COA he believes will best accomplish the mission. ... Using his evaluation criteria, the commander leads ... a discussion about the relative merits of each COA. The staff records the advantages and disadvantages for each. ... The COA comparison provides the commander with an understanding of the relative merit of each COA. ... The commander compares the COAs against one another using the results of the COA evaluation. ... This step requires the involvement of the commander, subordinate commanders, and their staffs from start to finish.

—MCWP 5-10, Marine Corps Planning Process

Step Five

Orders Development *November Issue*



THE MARINE CORPS PLANNING PROCESS

STEP FIVE: ORDERS DEVELOPMENT

PURPOSE

The Orders Development Step translates the commander's decision into oral, written, and graphic direction sufficient to guide subordinate planning, execution, and initiative.

KEY INPUTS

Approved COA
CONOPS

ACTIVITIES

- Refine the Concept of Operations
- Prepare the order or plan
- Orders reconciliation
- Orders crosswalk
- Approve the order or plan

KEY RESULTS

Approved order or plan
Planning support tools



MARINE CORPS
ASSOCIATION & FOUNDATION
EST. 1913



ORDERS DEVELOPMENT



Activities

-Refine the Concept of Operations: Refined staff estimates and IPB products from the approved COA allow planners and supporting staff sections to proceed with functional and detailed planning.

-Prepare the order or plan: The CoS or XO dictates the format for the order, sets and enforces the time limits and development sequence, and assigns responsibility for annex development to the appropriate staff sections.

-Orders reconciliation: An internal process during which the staff conducts a detailed review of the entire order

-Orders crosswalk: An external process in which the staff compares its order with the order of higher, adjacent, and subordinate commanders to achieve unity of effort and ensure the superior commander's intent is met.

**-Approve the order or plan:
Commander's signature**

Types of Combat Orders

Operations Order (OPORD)

A directive issued by a commander to subordinate commanders for the purpose of effecting the coordinated execution of an operation.

Fragmentary Order (FRAGO)

An abbreviated form of an operation order issued as needed after an operation order to change or modify that order or to execute a branch or sequel to that order.

Warning Order (WARNO)

A preliminary notice of an order or action that is to follow.

Execute Order

An order to subordinates that directs them to execute existing orders or plans and conveys guidance not provided in earlier instructions.



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Step Five

Orders Development

The purpose of orders development is to translate the commander’s decision into oral, written, and/or graphic communication sufficient to guide implementation and promote initiative by subordinates ... Orders appear in a variety of forms, ranging from detailed, written documents with numerous annexes to simple verbal commands ... When writing plans or orders, words matter ... A good order is judged on its usefulness—not its size ... The orders development step in the MCPP communicates the commander’s decision in a clear useful form that can be understood by those executing the order.

—MCWP 5-10, Marine Corps Planning Process

Step Six

Transition *December Issue*



THE MARINE CORPS PLANNING PROCESS

STEP SIX: TRANSITION

KEY INPUTS

Approved order or plan
Planning support tools
IPB and intelligence products



ACTIVITIES

-Transition brief
-Transition events (rehearsals, drills exercises, briefs)
-Confirmation briefs



KEY RESULTS

Subordinate commanders and staff ready to execute the order
Ongoing development of plan for branches and sequels

Successful transition enhances the situational understanding of those who will execute the order, reinforces the intent of the commander, promotes unity of effort, and generates tempo.

TRANSITION



Transition Briefs (Future to Current Ops, HHQ to lower)

- Internal transition is when the planning staff moves its plan to execution (Future Operations to Current Operations)
- External transition occurs between the commander and subordinate commanders

Transition Events

Confirmation Brief (Subordinate to HQ)

Transition Event Options

- Map brief
- Terrain model brief
- Communications exercise
- Rehearsal of concept drill
- Combined Arms rehearsal
- Key leader rehearsal
- Reduced force rehearsal
- Full dress rehearsal

MCCP REFERENCE GUIDES

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—MCDP 5, Planning

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Step Six

Transition

Transition may involve a wide range of briefs, drills, or rehearsals necessary to ensure a successful shift from planning to execution... At a minimum, this step includes CONOPS brief along with the handover and explanation of any execution tools developed during planning, such as a decision support matrix or an execution checklist... Transition is a continuous process that requires a free flow of information between commanders and staffs by all available means... Transition occurs at all levels of command. A formal transition normally occurs on staffs with separate planning and execution teams. For transition to occur, an approved order or plan must exist... Regardless of the level of command, a successful transition ensures those who execute the order understand the commander’s intent, the CONOPS, and any planning tools.

—MCWP 5-10, Marine Corps Planning Process

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