

CHAPTER 16

USING OPERATIONAL AND TACTICAL PLANNING

Thorough, sound operational planning is a prerequisite to battlefield success. Whether you are planning battalion, company, or other element activities, certain givens exist. In your planning you must identify opportunities. You must anticipate and avoid problems. You must analyze your options before making the decisions on which you will base your actions. You must balance competing risks. And you must identify and develop your best course of action.

Your key to planning a successful operation is to anticipate possible future events and to be prepared for contingencies. You will enhance both your planning and execution of your operations if you —

- Use the military planning and decision-making process.
- Develop long-range as well as short-range goals.
- Identify your goals and objectives and the end point by which you will recognize their accomplishment.
- Coordinate goals and actions internally and externally.
- Base your plans on objective planning factors.
- Continuously review your plans in light of METT-T and updated information.
- Clearly assign responsibilities and express expectations.
- Identify options that may develop during an operation.
- Stand ready to accommodate changes.

USING MILITARY PLANNING

You provide a sound basis for your operation's success when you select and carry out courses of action you have developed using military planning. Following military planning guidelines can help you answer the three key questions of operational planning

- What military condition must be produced to achieve the goal?
- What sequence of actions is most likely to produce that condition?
- How should resources be applied to accomplish that sequence of actions?

Military Planning Guidelines

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Forecast requirements by analyzing and evaluating facts and trends to predict what may occur. 2. Examine probable requirements and establish priorities for further preparation. 3. Study implications and interrelationships of probable requirements. 4. Analyze the mission to determine tasks, their complexity, and their relative importance. 5. Establish guidance for further planning that will help keep all elements focused on the commander's intent. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Prepare studies and/or estimates to help formulate courses of action and assess their feasibility. 7. Select courses of action, identify the best course, and retain other feasible courses for use in contingencies as alternate plans. 8. Prepare your plan in detail, and conduct rehearsals when time, resources, and security permit. 9. If you do not implement your plan immediately, retain it for later use. But as events occur or new information becomes available, review and revise plans accordingly. |
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ANALYZING, FORECASTING, AND RISK-TAKING

Conducting a mission analysis is crucial to your planning. Begin by gathering facts and ascertaining current conditions. Ascertain the —

- Higher-level mission and the commander's intent (one and two levels up).
- Current task organization (two levels down).
- Current unit status (locations, operation capabilities, activities).
- Logistics situation (*see discussion of logistic estimate format in FM 101-5*).

As an MP leader you must be aware of civil affairs concerns and the possible need for civil affairs support. Identify or consider the likelihood of local government support, degree of control of local government, and limitations in the civil-military area.

When facts are not available you will need to develop assumptions. Assumptions must substitute for fact where information is not known. Keep in mind that as time passes between your receipt of a mission and the execution of your plan, facts are increasingly likely to have changed. You must have sound assumptions you can use in place of fact.

Analyzing the higher-level mission and the commander's intent will help you identify what tasks are required to accomplish your own mission. As you analyze your own mission, be sure to identify both the specified and the implied tasks to be performed. Specified tasks are those stated in higher HQ orders and plans. Implied tasks (like crossing a river or passing through the lines of a unit lying between you and your objective) are not so stated, but they must nonetheless be accomplished to satisfy the overall operation. And from among the specified and implied tasks, you must be sure to identify those essential tasks that are crucial to your mission's success.

Integral to your mission planning is your analysis of mission requirements in terms of time, space, and personnel. If you are to balance the benefits of detailed planning against the need for immediate action, you must —

- Determine how much time you have between receiving the mission and the deadline for having completed it.
- Know how long it will take for you and others to obtain and process information, make decisions, issue orders.
- Know how long it will take for your subordinates to execute the orders and complete the mission or carry out the operation.

Because each unit involved in an operation performs its own planning based on the plans of the next higher

level, allocation of adequate time for subordinate units to plan is a consideration at each level. (You will have more time for acting and use less time for planning if you have already incorporated routine procedures in standing orders. Publishing SOPs reduces the number of details to be explained. It also promotes understanding and teamwork among commanders, staff, and troops.)

Keeping in mind the classic allotment of one-third time for planning and two-thirds time for execution, do reverse planning. Move backward from the time of execution to —

- Allocate time in which to accomplish each phase of an operation.
- See how much time you will have in which to rehearse if rehearsal is appropriate.
- Determine how much time you will have for developing your plan.

Using terrain analysis (*see also Appendix G*), consider the layout of the battlefield. Appreciate the opportunities and limitations of the major terrain features, transportation networks, and built-up areas. You will want to fit your operational concept and planning to that environment. Using the IPB, evaluate the area in terms of the military aspects of terrain. Be sure to consider how to exploit the opportunities afforded by weather while minimizing its adverse effects.

Using current information on the Threat, identify known enemy activities and Threat capabilities that could affect this and future operations. Attempt to anticipate the enemy's objectives and intentions.

Consider your available assets and determine acceptable levels of risk. At every echelon you must disperse your assets and prioritize your operations to meet the echelon commander's needs within the limits of your resources at hand. You must concentrate your efforts on key locations and accept risks elsewhere. Whenever you can, recognize and moderate such risks in your choice of operations and in your contingency planning.

IDENTIFYING, DEVELOPING, AND SELECTING COURSES OF ACTION

Your selected course of action will become your actual plan for accomplishing your mission. To ensure the best plan possible, identify several possible courses of action, each significantly different from the others. In identifying courses of action, do not overlook a check of the "basics" like —

- Commander's intent.
- Essential tasks.
- Effective use of C².
- Principles of war.
- Ethical considerations.

- Relative force ratio.
- Use of nuclear or chemical weapons by either side.

Consider preparing a course of action statement (and sketch, if appropriate) for each option. Your course of action statement is the "how" of your operation. It should include the five elements of the battlefield framework.

- What — the type of action.
- When — the time the action will begin.
- Where — the assigned area.
- How — the use of available assets.
- Why — the purpose of the operation.

As you develop your courses of action, analyze your relative combat power. Consider your initial array of forces. Develop schemes of maneuver. Determine C² means and maneuver control measures.

Base your planning on historical planning factors, then relook your estimates in light of your available assets, the factors of METT-T the echelon commander's intent, and your mission priorities. For example, when planning distribution of mobile assets for route coverage, you would begin with an estimate of one mobile MP team per 10 kilometers. For area coverage, begin with an estimate of one mobile MP team per 55 square kilometers.

When dispersing your assets into small combat elements consider the classic ratios of friendly to enemy forces to help ensure your elements can concentrate sufficient combat power to accomplish their mission. And consider the speed and ease of reassembling your elements if you are dispersing them to distant sites.

Classic Ratios for the Array of Friendly Units*	
DEFENSIVE ACTIONS	
Delay	Friendly 1 : 6 Enemy
Defend (dug-in)	Friendly 1 : 3 Enemy
Defend (hasty)	Friendly 1 : 2.5 Enemy
OFFENSIVE ACTIONS	
Optimum	Friendly 6 : 1 Enemy
Minimum	Friendly 3 : 1 Enemy
Attack (dug-in)	Friendly 3 : 1 Enemy
Attack (hasty)	Friendly 2.5 : 1 Enemy
Counterattack (flank)	Friendly 1 : 1 Enemy
*These are planning factors only.	

Attempt to anticipate the enemy's likely moves. Consider ways to obstruct dangerous approaches to your area and also avenues leading away from potential landing zones. Plan ways to combine the efforts of different resources, like enhancing your combat power for your base

response and counterincursion operations with fire support from field artillery, Army aviation, or USAF tactical aircraft. Attempt to determine the outcome of your operations by-

- Conserving unit strength through economy of force.
- Using terrain, weather, deception, and OPSEC to your advantage.
- Focusing your efforts on enemy vulnerabilities.
- Ensuring unity of effort among subordinates and with your peers.

When planning for combat operations, whenever possible develop your courses of action to avoid an enemy's strength and to strike at his weaknesses. Avoid head-on encounters with an enemy's forces. Seek to gain the element of surprise. When moving, plan to use indirect approaches and flank positions that do not attract immediate attention. Plan for fire support to increase your combat power. Plan to operate on the enemy's flanks and rear, where direct fire is most effective, psychological shock is the greatest, and the enemy is least prepared to fight. And to be able to respond to and implement changes quickly, plan supplementary or alternative control measures to modify your plan as the situation dictates.

For a combat operation your course-of-action statement and sketches should certainly include -

- Allocated forces.
- Unit boundaries.
- Axes of advance.
- Routes for a forward or rearward passage of lines.
- Air axes for the maneuver of attack helicopters.
- Other control measures like-
 - Phase lines.
 - Assembly and/or holding areas.
 - Zones or sectors.
 - Battle positions.
 - Objectives.
 - Obstacles.
 - Routes.

Projected Unopposed Rates of Movement		
Characteristics of Terrain	Foot infantry	Armored or mechanized
Built up area wider than 500 meters or without easy bypass ○ Water wider than 55', deeper than 4', faster than 5 fps. ○ Banks over 4 feet. ○ Slopes of 45% or more. 1:50k - 1/32" open, 1/8" forested. ○ Vegetation. Trees 6-8" thick less than 20' apart. ○ Elevation variations 200-400 meters per km. ○ Man-made obstacles. ○ <= 1 trail per km w/o hard surface roads.	1.0 kmph (day) .1 to .5 kmph (night)	1.0 kmph (day) .1 to .5 kmph (night)
Water up to 55' wide, up to 4' deep, slower than 5 fps. ○ Slopes of 30% - 45%. ○ Vegetation: trees 2" thick, or more than 20' apart. ○ 2 or more roads and trails per km.	2.4 kmph (day) 1.6 kmph (night)	16 kmph (day) 8 kmph (night, blacked out)
Terrain other than above	4 kmph (day) 3.2 kmph (night)	24 kmph (day) 24 kmph (night with lights/passive)

Division, Corps, TAACOM MP Companies					
	Mission	Action Elements	Support Role	Augmentation Needed for Mission Accomplishment	Capabilities Over a 24-hour period*
<p>MP COMPANY (Combat Support)</p> <p>Organic to corps MP brigade or TAACOM MP brigade.</p>	<p>Carry out any and all MP battlefield operations for BCC, AS, EPW/Ci, L&O (but not simultaneously at the same level of priority).</p>	<p>4 platoons; each platoon has 3 squads; each squad has 3 teams. Squads have separate squad leaders.</p> <p>Total: 36 3-man teams (108 persons).</p>	<p>GS for all units in AO.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corps band assets to guard EPWs (under continuous high captive rates; mass captures). • Non-MP transportation for evacuation of EPWs. • External MP to escort EPWs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Security for a TAACOM headquarters. <p>OR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Security for 1 corps main CP and 1 tac CP. <p>OR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operation of 1 EPW holding area (9 teams) and 27 mounted mobile or fixed position teams. <p>OR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 36 mounted mobile or fixed position teams for use in any combination. <p>OR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When company is assigned to TAACOM MP brigade for such purpose, security for a unified or combined headquarters.
<p>MP COMPANY (Heavy)</p> <p>Organic to combat arms division (infantry, armor).</p>	<p>Carry out any and all MP battlefield operations for BCC, AS, EPW/Ci, L&O (but not simultaneously at the same level of priority).</p>	<p>6 platoons; each platoon has 2 squads; each squad has 3 teams.</p> <p>Total: 36 3-man teams (108 persons).</p>	<p>GS with platoon in DS of each maneuver brigade unless assets required for company-level operations.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Div band assets or corps MP to— Provide close-in security for division main CP and for ASPs. Guard EPWs (under continuous high captive rates; mass captures). • Corps MP to — Provide security for designated critical assets. Support sustained combat operations. Assist HN in L&O operations within the division area (war crimes and criminal diversion of war materiel). • Non-MP transportation for evacuation of EPWs. • External MP to escort EPWs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Screening security for division main CP (6 teams), 1 division central collecting point (6 teams), and 6 mounted mobile or fixed position teams. <p>AND EITHER</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 DS platoons, each providing its brigade with either 1 forward EPW collecting point (3 teams) and 3 mounted mobile or fixed position teams or 6 teams in any combination. <p>OR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 18 mounted mobile or fixed position teams for use in any combination.
<p>MP COMPANY (AIM)</p> <p>Organic to combat arms division (armor, infantry, mechanized).</p>	<p>Carry out any and all MP battlefield operations for BCC, AS, EPW/Ci, L&O (but not simultaneously at the same level of priority).</p>	<p>5 platoons; each platoon has 3 squads; each squad has 3 teams.</p> <p>Total: 45 3-man teams (135 persons).</p>	<p>GS with platoon in DS of each maneuver brigade unless assets required for company-level operations.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Div band assets or corps MP to— Provide close-in security for division main CP and for ASPs. Guard EPWs (under continuous high captive rates; mass captures). • Corps MP to — Provide security for designated critical assets. Support special operations, such as river crossings and passages of lines. Assist HN in L&O operations within the division area (war crime and criminal diversion of war materiel). • Non-MP transportation for evacuation of EPWs. • External MP to escort EPWs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Screening security for division main CP (6 teams), 1 division central collecting point (6 teams), and 6 mounted mobile or fixed position teams. <p>AND EITHER</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 DS platoons, each providing its brigade with 1 forward EPW collecting point (3 teams) and 6 mounted mobile or fixed position teams. <p>OR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 27 mounted mobile or fixed position teams for use in any combination.

*Commanders must consider the need to ensure rest management for their troops.

Division, Corps, TAACOM MP Companies (continued)					
	Mission	Action Elements	Support Role	Augmentation Needed for Mission Accomplishment	Capabilities Over a 24-hour period*
<p>MP COMPANY (Airborne)</p> <p>Organic to combat arms division (airborne).</p>	<p>Carry out any and all MP battlefield operations for BCC, AS, EPW/CI, L&O (but not simultaneously at the same level of priority).</p>	<p>4 platoons; each platoon has 3 squads; each squad has 2 teams.</p> <p>Total: 24 3-man teams (72 persons).</p>	<p>GS; but at beginning of combat operations 1 platoon deploys with each brigade, providing DS until the airhead is established. Then platoons revert to GS.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Div band assets or corps MP to – Provide close-in security for division main CP and ASPS. Guard EPWs (under continuous high captive rates; mass captures). • Corps MP to – Provide security for designated critical assets. Support special operations, such as river crossings and passages of lines. Conduct extensive combat operations within the division rear. Assist HN in joint L&O operations within division area (war crimes and criminal diversion of war materiel). • Non-MP transportation for evacuation of EPWs. • External MP to escort EPWs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During assault phase until airhead is established, 6 mounted mobile or fixed position teams to deploy for DS of each brigade and 6 teams for GS near division main CP. <li style="text-align: center;">OR • After airhead is established, 1 division EPW collecting point (6 teams) and 18 mounted mobile or fixed position teams providing GS. <li style="text-align: center;">OR • 24 mounted mobile or fixed position teams for use in any combination.
<p>MP COMPANY (Air Assault)</p> <p>Organic to combat arms division (air assault).</p>	<p>Carry out any and all MP battlefield operations for BCC, AS, EPW/CI, L&O (but not simultaneously at the same level of priority).</p>	<p>4 platoons; each platoon has 3 squads; each squad has 2 teams.</p> <p>Total: 24 3-man teams (72 persons).</p>	<p>GS for all units in AO.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Div band assets or corps MP to – Provide close-in security for division main CP and for ASPS. Guard EPWs (under continuous high captive rates; mass captures). • Corps MP to – Provide security for designated critical assets. Support special operations, such as river crossings and passages of lines. Conduct extensive combat operations within the division area. Assist HN in joint L&O operations within division area (war crimes and criminal diversion of war materiel). • Non-MP transportation for evacuation of EPWs. • External MP to escort EPWs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 24 mounted mobile or fixed position teams for use in any combination.
<p>MP COMPANY (Light)</p> <p>Organic to combat arms division (light infantry).</p>	<p>Carry out any and all MP battlefield operations for BCC, AS, EPW/CI, L&O (but not simultaneously at the same level of priority).</p>	<p>3 platoons; each platoon has 3 squads; each squad has 2 teams.</p> <p>Total: 18 3-man teams (54 persons).</p>	<p>GS for all units in AO.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Div band assets or corps MP to – Provide close-in security for division main CP and for ASPS. Guard EPWs (under continuous high captive rates; mass captures). • Corps MP to – Conduct circulation control and combat operations within the division area. Support special operations, such as river crossings and passages of lines. Assist HN in joint L&O operations within division area (war crimes and criminal diversion of war materiel). • Non-MP transportation for evacuation of EPWs. • External MP to escort EPWs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Screening security for division main CP (6 teams), division EPW collecting point (6 teams), and 6 mounted mobile or fixed position teams.

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MP Special-Purpose Companies

	Parent Unit	Mission	Action Elements	Support Role	Capabilities Over a 24-hour period*
MP GUARD COMPANY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elements of TA functional commands like PERSCOM's MP PW Bde or US Confinement Bn. TRANSCOM's Railway Opn Bn. OR • TAACOM/Corps MP Bde's EPW/CI Bn When PERSCOM not present in theater OR • MP Bdes/Bns as needed. 	Depending on mission of parent unit, guards – EPW/CI. OR US military prisoners. OR Sensitive material on US military installations & facilities.	3 platoons; each platoon has 3 squads; each squad has 10 persons. Squads have separate squad leaders. Total: (90 persons.)	GS for all elements of its parent unit or all units in the theater.	Provides 60 individual* guards at any one time for security of any one of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 military installation/facility (up to 200,640 square meters) containing sensitive material. OR • 1 confinement facility of 500 US military prisoners. OR • 1 internment facility containing up to 2,000 EPW/CIs. OR • 3 railway terminals (up to 8 tracks each) for protection of EPW/CI or sensitive material within the terminals.
MP ESCORT GUARD COMPANY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elements of TA functional commands like PERSCOM's MP PW Bde or EPW/CI Bn. • TAACOM/Corps MP Bde's EPW/CI Bn when PERSCOM not present in theater 	Escort EPW/CI during movement.	4 platoons; each platoon has 3 squads; each squad has 3 teams; each team has 3 persons. Squads have separate squad leaders. Total: 36 3-man teams (108 persons).	GS for all elements of its parent unit or all units in the theater.	Provides 36 teams* for security of EPW/CI during movement at levels shown, when all assets are employed in any one mode. Can escort – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2,000 – 3,000 by train. OR 1,500 – 2,000 by vehicle. OR 1,000 – 1,500 by marching.
MP SECURITY COMPANY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elements of TA functional commands like TRANSCOM's Terminal Railway Opn Bn, TA's Petroleum Gp, and TA's Conventional Ordnance Bn. • MP Bdes/Bns as needed. 	Provide close-in security for critical combat supplies and facilities.	4 platoons (2 fixed, 2 mobile); each platoon has 3 squads; each squad has 3 teams; each team has 3 persons. Squads have separate squad leaders. Total: 36 3-man teams (108 persons).	GS for all elements of its parent unit or all units in the theater.	Provides 18 mounted mobile patrols (1 team each) and 18 fixed positions (1 team each)* for security of any one of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 division conventional ASPs. OR • 2 corps/TAACOM conventional ammo storage areas. OR • 360 km of pipeline. OR • 1 deep water port not to exceed 139,233 square meters. OR • Critical sites such as terminal transfer points, water points, viaducts, and ADP and commo facilities.
MP HEAVY SECURITY COMPANY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elements of TA functional commands like TA's Special Ammo Ord Bde, Ord Bn. • MP Bdes/Bns as needed. 	Depending on mission of parent unit, provides – In-depth security for special ammunition. OR Security for critical Army assets.	4 platoons; each platoon has 4 squads; each squad has 3 teams; each team has 3 persons. Squads have separate squad leaders. Total: 48 3-man teams (144 persons).	GS for all elements of its parent unit or all units in the theater.	Provides 48 mounted mobile or fixed positions (1 team each)* for security of any one of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exclusion area security for 1 weapons holding area and 2 NASPs. OR • Security in-depth for 2 NASPs and 1 airhead (during weapons transfer). OR • Security of critical materiel during in-theater movement. OR • Area security for 480 km of pipeline, terminal transfer points, water points, viaducts. OR • Area security for 1 deep water port (not to exceed 174,041 square meters). OR • Area security/limited combat operations in an area up to 2,600 square km in corps, 4,000 square km in TAACOM/rural area, 1,000 square km in high-density urban terrain.

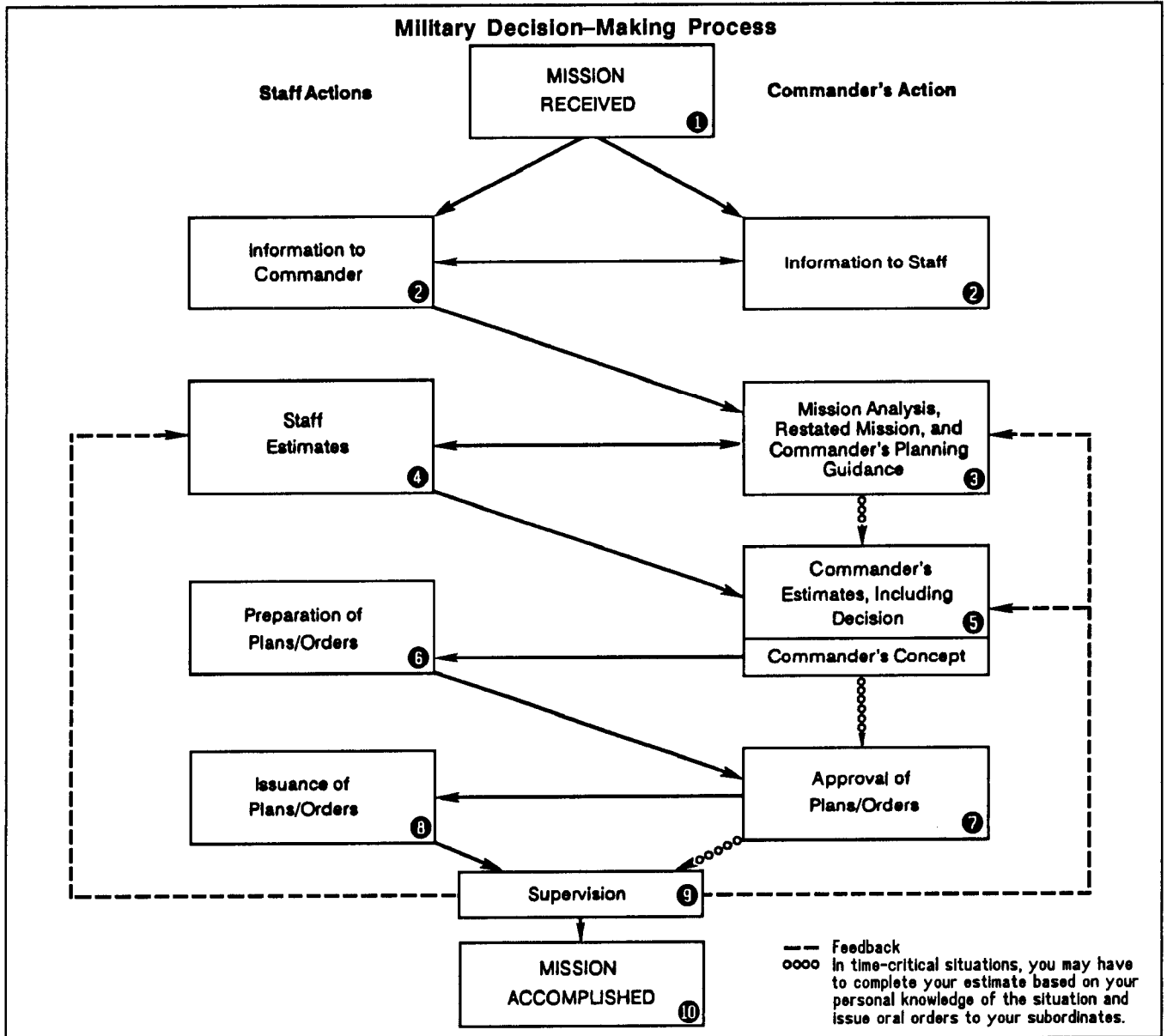
*Commanders must consider the need to ensure rest management for their troops.

To be able to modify your movement and to assure access for your support, show multiple routes throughout the AO. Identify alternate routes for elements whose movement is vital to the success of the plan.

When you have developed all feasible courses of action, assess them. Consider constraints and restrictions on each course of action. Weigh your available courses of action in light of your element's or unit's capabilities; the IPB

for your areas of operation, responsibility, and interest; the commander's intent; and your mission priorities.

Decide on your best course of action. Follow the military decision-making process. Technological advances on today's battlefield have reduced the time available for decision-making while increasing the possibilities that must be considered. Using the military decision-making process will help ensure sound, reasoned decisions.



The process will help you analyze facts and develop assumptions that are based on the broadest available information and the widest range of choices at hand. Input to decision-making can be as detailed-or as simple- as time and the rapid changes of tempo on the battlefield permit. The time expended on the process can vary from an hour at lower tactical levels to days at a higher operational level.

By following the process you will consistently invite and listen to staff advice and information, and seek and compare feasible courses of action. Then you can select your best course of action and issue your orders based on all of the above as well as on your personal judgment. *For detailed explanation of the formal decision-making process, see FM 101-5.*

COORDINATING AND INTEGRATING PLANS

Concurrent planning is usually undertaken by different levels of command and different staff sections to conserve time and promote the early detection and solution of problems. At each successive level, planning includes those details required for that particular level.

All parties participating in a plan must be kept informed so that the planning will be coordinated throughout the command. Coordination ensures that the elements of planned actions fit together. Coordinate your efforts internally and externally at all appropriate levels.

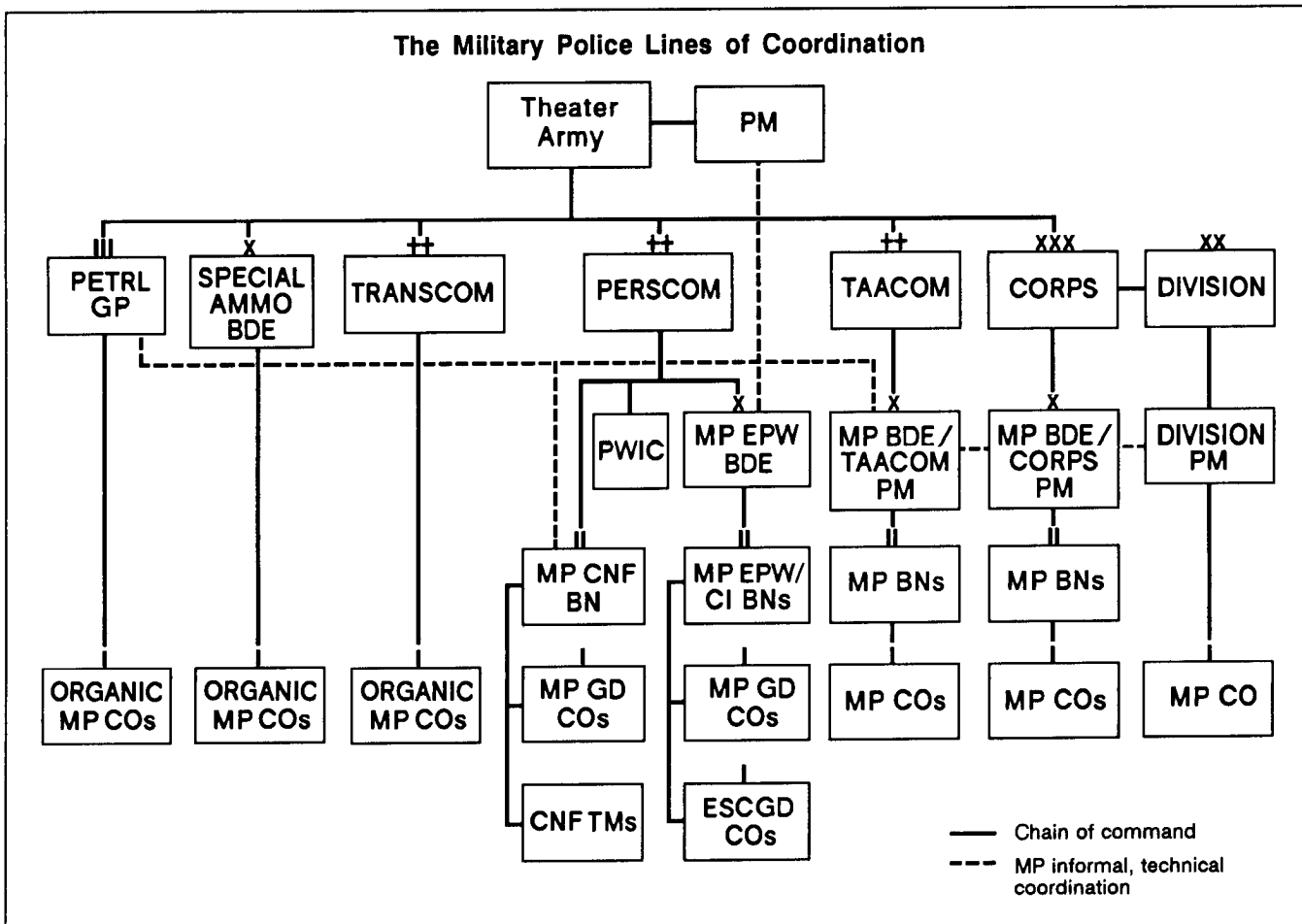
planning is coordinated through conferences and liaison visits between units and agencies concerned. Much of the coordination essential to operational success is carried out at each echelon through the integrative functions of the echelon commander's technical and tactical staff. The staff members, each in a position responsible for one or more functional areas or broad fields of interest, work closely with each other to integrate their command activities and to coordinate plans crossing areas of responsibility, interest, or technical concerns. Staff members also maintain continuous coordination

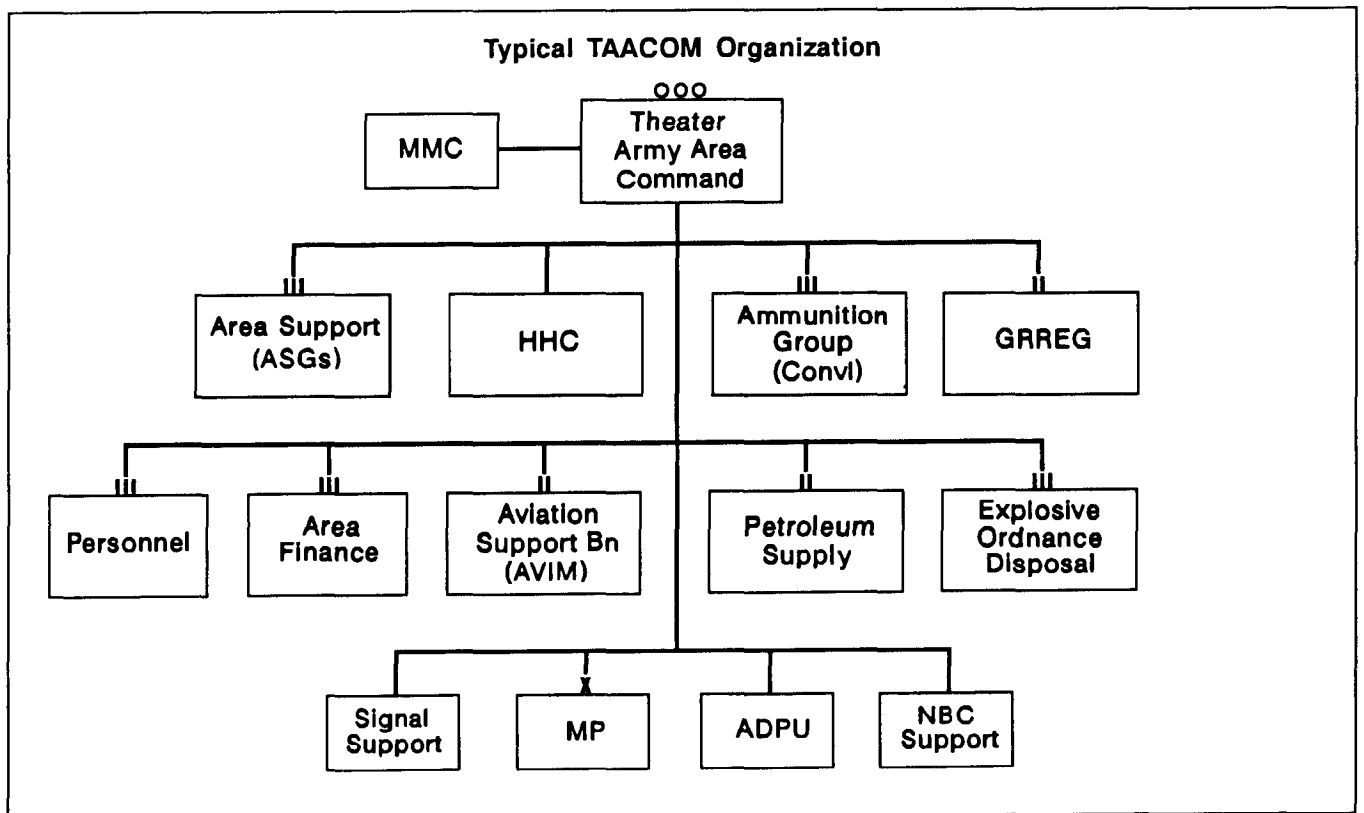
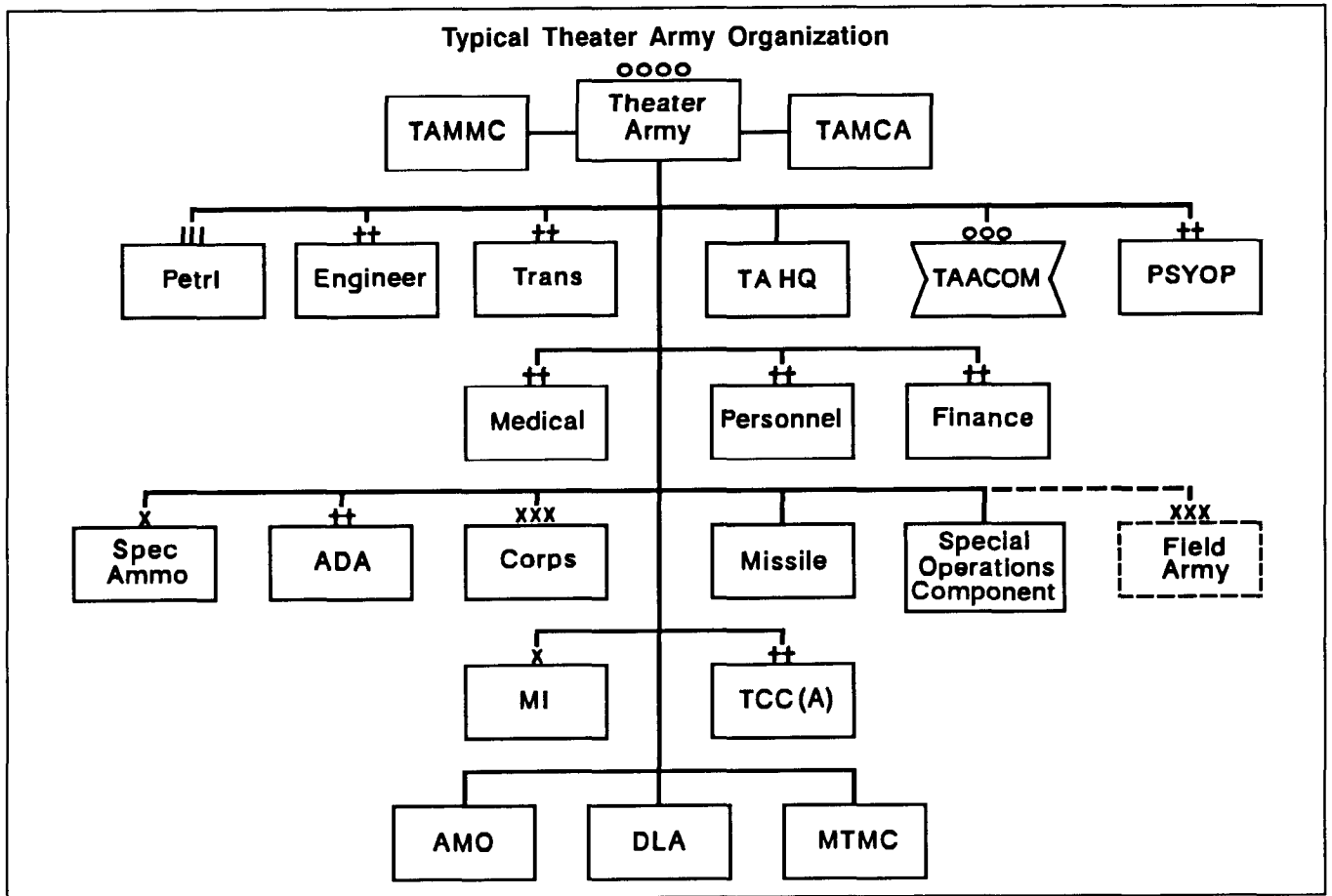
with their functional counterparts on staffs at other levels of command.

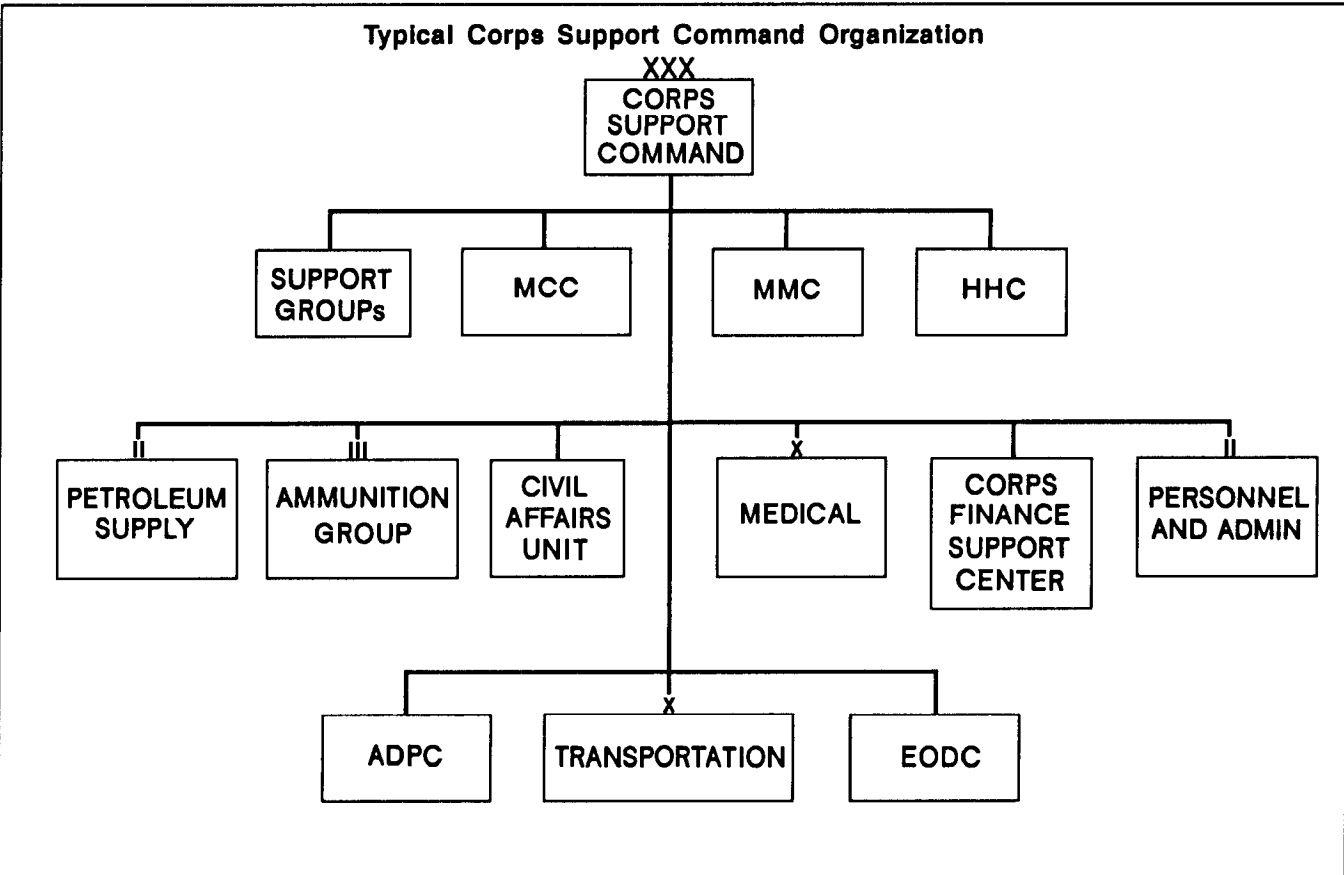
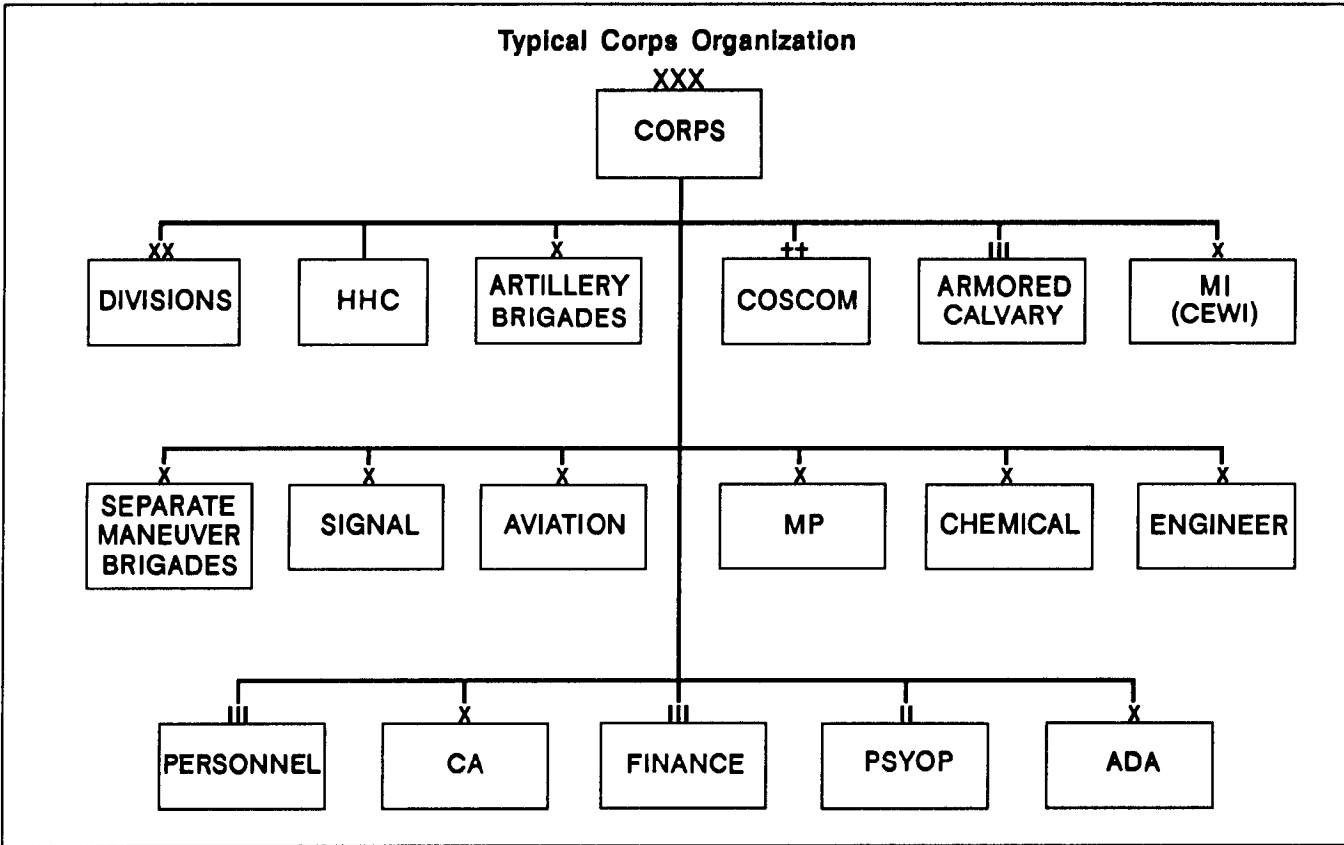
As an MP leader you channel your coordination and integration efforts up through the chain of command to your command's PM. As the command's adviser and planner for MP operations at each echelon, the PM is a member of the commander's staff.

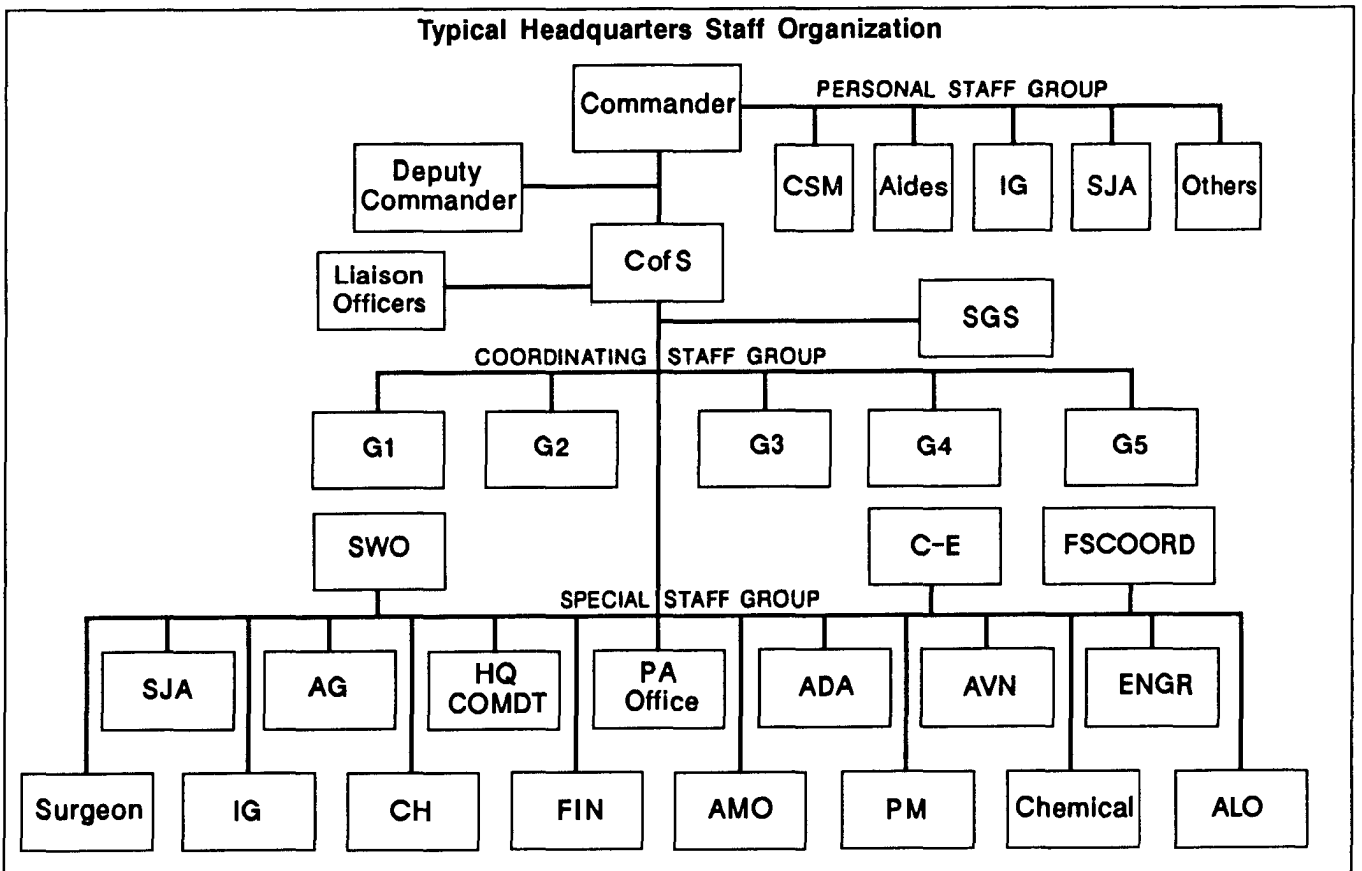
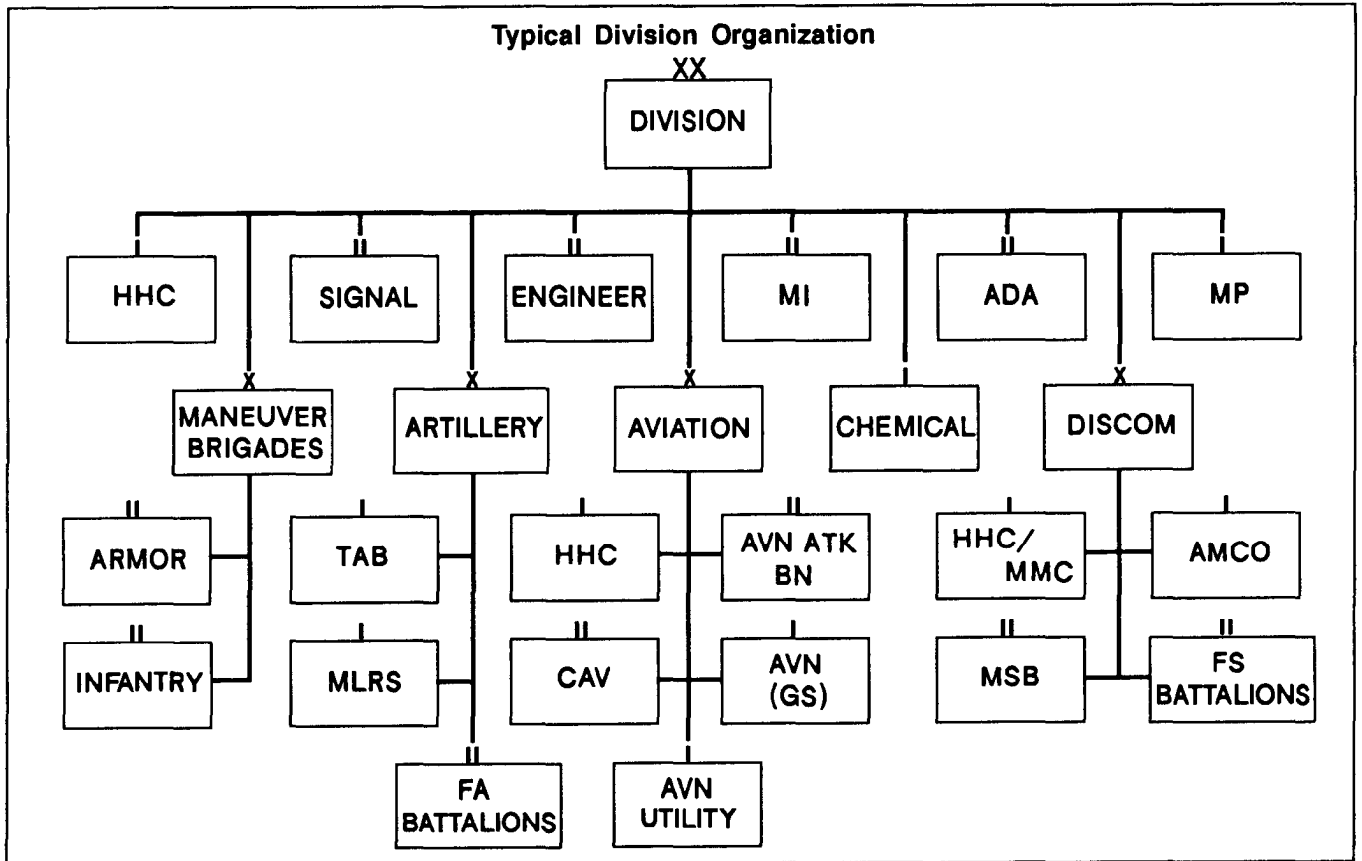
At each echelon the PM works day-to-day with the commander's staff who supervise MP resources and functions or whose areas of responsibility influence MP support. At corps and division the PM works closely with the G3 section to support tactical route movements. He coordinates BCC for logistical and administrative ground movements with the G4. He coordinates EPW and CI matters with the G1 and the G2. When needed, he coordinates with the G4 and the G5. At echelons not having general staffs, the PM coordinates with the general staffs' functional counterparts. And at all echelons, to enhance MP support and foster help among MP elements, the PM maintains an informal, technical line of coordination with the senior MP of each other echelon or command.

The Military Police Lines of Coordination









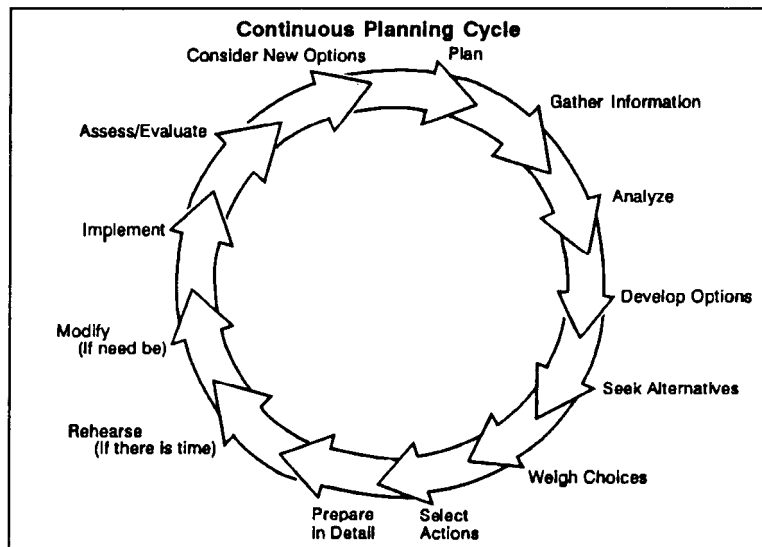
ASSESSING AND ADAPTING FOR CHANGE

Military planning and decision-making, like troop-leading, is a continuous, cyclical process. As you are planning and carrying out current operations you are also making decisions about and planning future operations. At platoon level an operation may be planned, and initiated almost immediately. At battalion, an operation may be planned and initiated within a few hours. At corps, several months may be required to plan and initiate a major operation.

During the planning cycle you look for options, develop alternatives, implement ideas, assess progress, and look for new options. When the information on which a plan is based changes — as a result of new data, or conditions, or events — corresponding changes must be made in the plan.

The ability to make appropriate changes in decisions and plans requires a certain flexibility of mind, a crucial trait for a good planner. Anticipate change. To avoid surprises, think of as many "what ifs" as you can. Prepare for them. Have contingency plans ready to counteract events that might endanger your mission's accomplishment.

Be prepared to modify your actions and your plan to fit changing situations. You must continually reassess



your plan. Adjust your planning as the threat and your own tactical situation change. Do not change a plan at the first difficulty— you would forfeit the coordination it represents. But do plan for, and accommodate, change.

The amount of detail considered and the degree of coordination needed in planning will vary, depending on the size and type of command, the experience of the participant, the complexity of the operation, and the time available for planning.