



# ADP 5-0

## THE OPERATIONS PROCESS

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# The Operations Process

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**\*This publication supersedes FM 5-0, dated 26 March 2010.**

# Preface

Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 5-0, *The Operations Process*, constitutes the Army's view on planning, preparing, executing, and assessing operations. (See figure 1 on page iv.) It accounts for the complex, ever-changing, and uncertain nature of operations and recognizes that a military operation is foremost a human undertaking. As such, this publication emphasizes the philosophy of mission command to include the central role of commanders (supported by their staffs) in driving the operations process.

To comprehend the doctrine contained in ADP 5-0, readers must first understand the foundations of unified land operations described in ADP 3-0, *Unified Land Operations*. Readers must also fully understand the principles of mission command described in ADP 6-0, *Mission Command*. For a detailed explanation of the operations process, readers should refer to Army Doctrine Reference Publication (ADRP) 5-0, *The Operations Process*.

The principal audience for ADP 5-0 includes Army commanders, leaders, and unit staffs (officers, noncommissioned officers, and Soldiers). Commanders and staffs of Army headquarters serving as a joint task force or multinational headquarters should also refer to applicable joint or multinational doctrine concerning the range of military operations as well as joint or multinational forces. Trainers and educators throughout the Army will also use this manual.

Commanders, staffs, and subordinates ensure their decisions and actions comply with applicable U.S., international, and, in some cases, host nation laws and regulations. Commanders at all levels ensure their Soldiers operate in accordance with the law of war and the rules of engagement. (See Field Manual [FM] 27-10.)

ADP 5-0 uses joint terms where applicable. Selected joint and Army terms and definitions appear in both the glossary and the text. Terms for which ADP 5-0 is the proponent publication (the authority) are marked with an asterisk (\*) in the glossary. Definitions for which ADP 5-0 is the proponent publication are boldfaced in the text. These terms and their definitions will be in the next revision of FM 1-02. For other definitions shown in the text, the term is italicized and the number of the proponent publication follows the definition.

ADP 5-0 applies to the Active Army, Army National Guard/Army National Guard of the United States, and United States Army Reserve unless otherwise stated.

The proponent of ADP 5-0 is the United States Army Combined Arms Center. The preparing agency is the Combined Arms Doctrine Directorate, United States Army Combined Arms Center. Send comments and recommendations on a DA Form 2028 (Recommended Changes to Publications and Blank Forms) to Commander, U.S. Army Combined Arms Center and Fort Leavenworth, ATTN: ATZL-MCK-D (ADP 5-0), 300 McPherson Avenue, Fort Leavenworth, KS 66027-2337; by e-mail to [usarmy.leavenworth.mccoe.mbx.cadd-org-mailbox@mail.mil](mailto:usarmy.leavenworth.mccoe.mbx.cadd-org-mailbox@mail.mil); or submit an electronic DA Form 2028.

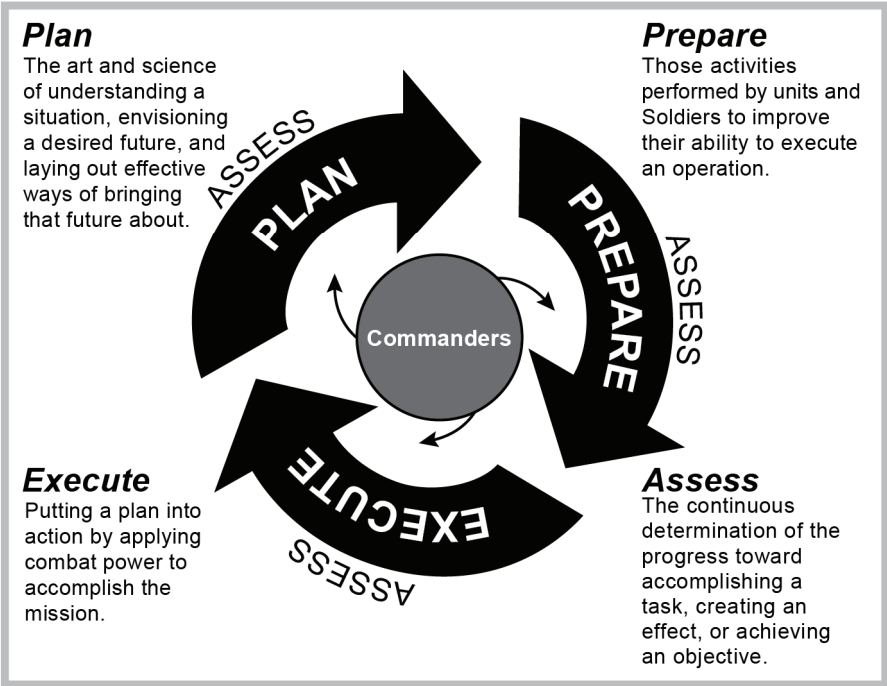
## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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## The Operations Process

The Army’s framework for exercising mission command is the **operations process**—the major mission command activities performed during operations: planning, preparing, executing, and continuously assessing the operation.



### Central idea...

Commanders, supported by their staffs, use the **operations process** to drive the conceptual and detailed planning necessary to understand, visualize, and describe their operational environment; make and articulate decisions; and direct, lead, and assess military operations.

### Principles

guided by...

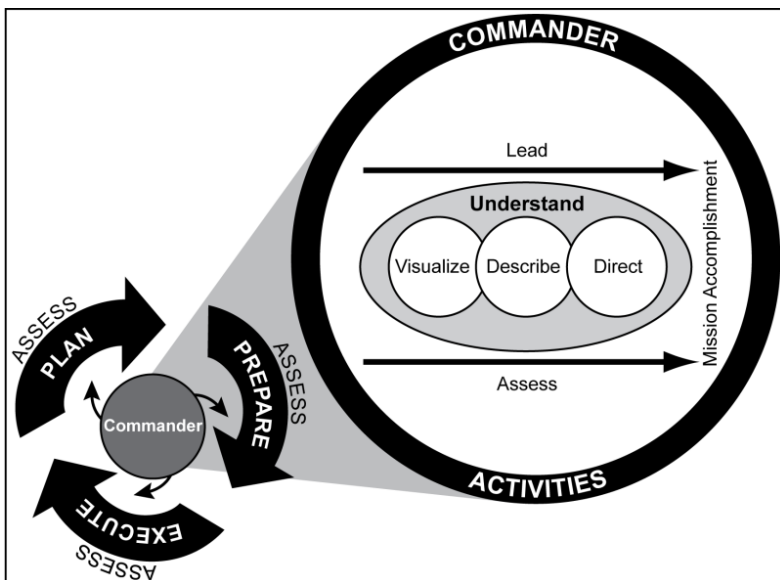
- Commanders drive the operations process
- Apply critical and creative thinking
- Build and maintain situational understanding
- Encourage collaboration and dialogue

**Figure 1. The operations process underlying logic**

This publication defines and describes the operations process. It provides principles commanders and staff consider to effectively plan, prepare, execute, and continuously assess operations.

## DEFINITION AND PURPOSE

1. The Army's framework for exercising mission command is the *operations process*—**the major mission command activities performed during operations: planning, preparing, executing, and continuously assessing the operation.** Commanders, supported by their staffs, use the operations process to drive the conceptual and detailed planning necessary to understand, visualize, and describe their operational environment; make and articulate decisions; and direct, lead, and assess military operations.



**Figure 2. The operations process**

2. The activities of the operations process are not discrete; they overlap and recur as circumstances demand. Planning starts an iteration of the operations process. Upon completion of the initial order, planning continues as leaders revise the plan based on changing circumstances. Preparing begins during planning and continues through execution. Execution puts a plan into action by applying combat power to seize, retain, and exploit the initiative to gain a position of relative advantage. Assessing is continuous and influences the other three activities.

3. Both the commander and staff have important roles within the operations process. The commander's role is to drive the operations process as depicted in figure 2. The

staff's role is to assist commanders with understanding situations, making and implementing decisions, controlling operations, and assessing progress. In addition, the staff assists subordinate units (commanders and staffs), and keeps units and organizations outside the headquarters informed throughout the operations process. (ATTP 5-0.1 discusses the duties and responsibilities of the staff in detail.)

## **PRINCIPLES OF THE OPERATIONS PROCESS**

4. The philosophy of mission command guides commanders, staffs, and subordinates as they plan, prepare, execute, and assess operations. Mission command requires an environment of mutual trust and shared understanding among commanders, staffs, and subordinates. It requires a command climate in which commanders encourage subordinates to accept prudent risk and exercise disciplined initiative to seize opportunities and counter threats within the commander's intent. Through mission orders, commanders focus their instructions on the purpose of the operation rather than on the details of how to perform assigned tasks. Doing this minimizes detailed control and allows subordinates the greatest possible freedom of action. Finally, when delegating authority to subordinates, commanders set the necessary conditions for success by allocating appropriate resources to subordinates based on assigned tasks.

5. Commanders and staffs use the operations process to integrate numerous tasks that are executed throughout the headquarters and with subordinate units. Commanders must organize and train their staffs and subordinates as an integrated team to simultaneously plan, prepare, execute, and assess operations. In addition to the principles of mission command discussed in ADP 6-0, commanders and staffs consider the following principles for the effective use of the operations process:

- Commanders drive the operations process.
- Build and maintain situational understanding.
- Apply critical and creative thinking.
- Encourage collaboration and dialogue.

## **COMMANDERS DRIVE THE OPERATIONS PROCESS**

6. Commanders are the most important participants in the operations process. While staffs perform essential functions that amplify the effectiveness of operations, commanders drive the operations process through understanding, visualizing, describing, directing, leading, and assessing operations.

### **Understand**

7. To understand something is to grasp its nature and significance. Understanding includes establishing context—the set of circumstances that surround a particular event or situation. Throughout the operations process, commanders develop and improve their understanding of their operational environment and the problem. An *operational environment* is a composite of the conditions, circumstances, and influences that affect the employment of capabilities and bear on the decisions of the commander (JP 3-0). Both conceptual and detailed planning assist commanders in developing their initial



understanding of the operational environment and the problem. Based on personal observations and inputs from others (to include running estimates), commanders improve their understanding and modify their visualization throughout the conduct of operations.

## Visualize

8. As commanders begin to understand their operational environment and the problem, they start visualizing a desired end state and potential solutions to solve the problem. Collectively, this is known as ***commander's visualization—the mental process of developing situational understanding, determining a desired end state, and envisioning an operational approach by which the force will achieve that end state.*** Commander's visualization begins in planning and continues throughout the operations process until the force accomplishes the mission. During planning, commander's visualization provides the basis for developing plans and orders. During execution, it helps commanders determine if, when, and what to decide, as they adapt to changing conditions.

## Describe

9. After commanders visualize an operation, they describe it to their staffs and subordinates to facilitate shared understanding and purpose. During planning, commanders ensure subordinates understand their visualization well enough to begin course of action development. During execution, commanders describe modifications to their visualization resulting in fragmentary orders that adjust the original order. Commanders describe their visualization in doctrinal terms, refining and clarifying it as circumstances require. Commanders express their visualization in terms of—

- Commander's intent.
- Planning guidance, including an operational approach.
- Commander's critical information requirements.
- Essential elements of friendly information.

10. The *commander's intent* is a clear and concise expression of the purpose of the operation and the desired military end state that supports mission command, provides focus to the staff, and helps subordinate and supporting commanders act to achieve the commander's desired results without further orders, even when the operation does not unfold as planned (JP 3-0). During planning, the initial commander's intent drives course of action development. In execution, the commander's intent guides disciplined initiative as subordinates make decisions when facing unforeseen opportunities or countering threats.

11. In addition to issuing their commander's intent, commanders provide planning guidance that conveys the essence of their visualization. Effective planning guidance broadly describes when, where, and how the commander intends to employ combat power to accomplish the mission within the higher commander's intent. Planning guidance includes an *operational approach*—a description of the broad actions the force must take to transform current conditions into those desired at end state (JP 5-0). The

operational approach forms the basis of the unit's concept of operations and serves as the link between conceptual and detailed planning.

12. Commanders also describe gaps in their visualization by stating their commander's critical information requirements (CCIRs). Commanders use CCIRs to focus information collection on the relevant information they need to make critical decisions throughout the conduct of operations. The two components of CCIRs are friendly force information requirements and priority intelligence requirements.

13. In addition to information commanders need, commanders also describe the information they want protected as essential elements of friendly information (EEFIs). EEFIs establish an element of information to protect rather than one to collect. EEFIs identify those elements of friendly force information that, if compromised, would jeopardize mission success.

## **Direct**

14. Commanders direct all aspects of operations by establishing their commander's intent, setting achievable objectives, and issuing clear tasks to subordinate units. Throughout the operations process, commanders direct forces by—

- Preparing and approving plans and orders.
- Establishing command and support relationships.
- Assigning and adjusting tasks, control measures, and task organization.
- Positioning units to maximize combat power.
- Positioning key leaders at critical places and times to ensure supervision.
- Allocating resources to exploit opportunities and counter threats.
- Committing the reserve as required.

## **Lead**

15. Through leadership, commanders provide purpose, direction, and motivation to subordinate commanders, their staff, and Soldiers. In many instances, a commander's physical presence is necessary to lead effectively. Where the commander locates within the area of operations is an important leadership consideration. Commanders balance their time between leading the staff through the operations process and providing purpose, direction, and motivation to subordinate commanders and Soldiers away from the command post.

## **Assess**

16. Commanders continuously assess the situation to better understand current conditions and determine how the operation is progressing. Continuous assessment helps commanders anticipate and adapt the force to changing circumstances. Commanders incorporate the assessments of the staff, subordinate commanders, and unified action partners into their personal assessment of the situation. Based on their assessment, commanders modify plans and orders to adapt the force to changing circumstances.

## BUILD AND MAINTAIN SITUATIONAL UNDERSTANDING

17. Success in operations demands timely and effective decisions based on applying judgment to available information and knowledge. As such, commanders and staffs seek to build and maintain situational understanding throughout the operations process. ***Situational understanding is the product of applying analysis and judgment to relevant information to determine the relationships among the operational and mission variables to facilitate decisionmaking.*** Building and maintaining situational understanding is essential for establishing the situation's context, developing effective plans, assessing operations, and making quality decisions throughout the operations process. Commanders continually strive to maintain their situational understanding and work through periods of reduced understanding as the situation evolves.

18. Commanders and staffs use the operational and mission variables to help build their situational understanding. They analyze and describe an operational environment in terms of eight interrelated operational variables: political, military, economic, social, information, infrastructure, physical environment, and time (PMESII-PT). Upon receipt of a mission, commanders filter information categorized by the operational variables into relevant information with respect to the mission. They use the mission variables, in combination with the operational variables, to refine their understanding of the situation and to visualize, describe, and direct operations. The mission variables are mission, enemy, terrain and weather, troops and support available, time available, and civil considerations (METT-TC).

## APPLY CRITICAL AND CREATIVE THINKING

19. Commanders and staffs apply critical and creative thinking throughout the operations process to assist them with understanding situations, making decisions, and directing action. Critical thinking is purposeful and reflective judgment about what to believe or what to do in response to observations, experience, verbal or written expressions, or arguments. Creative thinking involves creating something new or original. Creative thinking leads to new insights, novel approaches, fresh perspectives, and new ways of understanding and conceiving things.

20. Critical and creative thinking are indispensable to the operations process. For both commanders and staff, these two skills begin with a rigorous analysis of friendly and enemy forces, as they relate to one another in time and space. This analysis includes weapons system ranges, mobility options afforded by terrain and weather, operational reach, communications system range, sustainment, and other considerations of the operational and mission variables. Disciplined and focused analysis of the operational and mission variables, coupled with critical and creative thinking about the challenges and opportunities resulting from that analysis, is essential to developing a full appreciation of the range of alternatives available to accomplish assigned missions.

## ENCOURAGE COLLABORATION AND DIALOGUE

21. Throughout the operations process, commanders encourage continuous collaboration and dialogue among commanders, staffs, and unified action partners to create shared

understanding and facilitate unity of effort. Collaboration is two or more people or organizations working together toward common goals by sharing knowledge and building consensus. Dialogue is a way to collaborate by involving the candid exchange of ideas or opinions among participants that encourages frank discussions in areas of disagreement.

22. Commanders, staffs, and unified action partners collaborate and dialogue actively, sharing and questioning information, perceptions, and ideas to better understand situations and make decisions. Collaboration and dialogue assist in developing shared understanding and purpose, building teams, and making rapid adjustments during execution.

## ACTIVITIES OF THE OPERATIONS PROCESS

23. The operations process consists of the major mission command activities: planning, preparing, executing, and assessing.

### PLANNING

24. **Planning is the art and science of understanding a situation, envisioning a desired future, and laying out effective ways of bringing that future about.** Army leaders plan to create a common vision among subordinate commanders, staffs, and unified action partners for the successful execution of operations. Planning results in a plan or order that communicates this vision and directs actions to synchronize forces in time, space, and purpose for achieving objectives and accomplishing missions.

### Integrated Planning

25. Planning consists of two separate, but closely related, components: a conceptual component and a detailed component. Conceptual planning involves understanding the operational environment and the problem, determining the operation's end state, and visualizing an operational approach. Conceptual planning generally corresponds to operational art and is the focus of the commander with staff support. Detailed planning translates the broad operational approach into a complete and practical plan. Generally, detailed planning is associated with the science of operations including the synchronization of the forces in time, space, and purpose. Detailed planning works out the scheduling, coordination, or technical problems involved with moving, sustaining, and synchronizing the actions of force as a whole toward a common goal. Effective planning requires the integration of both the conceptual and detailed components of planning.

### Planning and Operational Art

26. *Operational art* is the cognitive approach by commanders and staffs—supported by their skill, knowledge, experience, creativity, and judgment—to develop strategies, campaigns, and operations to organize and employ military forces by integrating ends, ways, and means (JP 3-0). Operational art guides the conceptual and detailed aspects of planning to produce executable plans and orders. Operational art applies to all aspects of

operations and integrates ends, ways, and means, while accounting for risk and opportunities, across the levels of war.

27. The elements of operational art (see ADRP 3-0) assist commanders and staffs in the application of operational art. These conceptual tools help commanders think through the challenges of understanding their operational environment, defining the problem, developing an operational approach, and articulating their planning guidance that drives more detailed planning.

### Elements of operational art

- End state and conditions
- Center of gravity
- Decisive points
- Lines of operations and lines of effort
- Operational reach
- Basing
- Tempo
- Phasing and transitions
- Culmination
- Risk

## Army Planning Methodologies

28. Army leaders employ three methodologies for planning. Commanders and staffs determine the appropriate mix of these methodologies based on the scope of the problem, their familiarity with it, the time available, and the availability of a staff. Methodologies that assist commanders and staffs with planning include—

- Army design methodology.
- Military decisionmaking process (MDMP).
- Troop leading procedures (TLP).

### *Army Design Methodology*

29. The ***Army design methodology*** is a methodology for applying critical and creative thinking to understand, visualize, and describe unfamiliar problems and approaches to solving them. Army design methodology is an iterative process of understanding and problem framing that uses elements of operational art to conceive and construct an operational approach to solve identified problems. Commanders and their staffs use Army design methodology to assist them with the conceptual aspects of planning.

30. Army design methodology entails framing the operational environment, framing the problem, and developing an operational approach to solve the problem. Army design methodology results in an improved understanding of the operational environment, a problem statement, an initial commander's intent, and an operational approach that serves as the link between conceptual and detailed planning. Based on their understanding and learning gained during Army design methodology, commanders issue planning guidance, to include an operational approach, to guide more detailed planning using the MDMP.

31. The understanding developed through Army design methodology continues through preparation and execution in the form of continuous assessment. Assessment, to include

updated running estimates, helps commanders measure the overall effectiveness of employing forces and capabilities to ensure that the operational approach remains feasible and acceptable within the context of the higher commander's intent and concept of operations. If the current operational approach fails to meet these criteria, or if aspects of the operational environment or problem change significantly, the commander may decide to reframe. Reframing involves revisiting earlier hypotheses, conclusions, and decisions that underpin the current operational approach. Reframing can lead to a new problem statement and operational approach, resulting in an entirely new plan.

### ***Military Decisionmaking Process***

32. The ***military decisionmaking process*** is an iterative planning methodology to understand the situation and mission, develop a course of action, and produce an operation plan or order. The MDMP combines the conceptual and detailed aspects of planning and integrates the activities of the commander, staff, subordinate headquarters, and other partners throughout the planning process. The MDMP helps leaders apply thoroughness, clarity, sound judgment, logic, and professional knowledge to understand situations, develop options to solve problems, and reach decisions. The MDMP results in an improved understanding of the situation and a plan or order that guides the force through preparation and execution.

33. The MDMP facilitates collaborative and parallel planning as the higher headquarters solicits input and continually shares information concerning future operations with subordinate and adjacent units, supporting and supported units, and unified action partners through planning meetings, warning orders, and other means. Commanders encourage active collaboration among all organizations affected by the pending operations to build shared understanding, participate in course of action development and decisionmaking, and resolve conflicts before publication of the plan or order.

34. The MDMP consists of a series of steps that have various inputs and outputs. The outputs lead to an increased understanding of the situation facilitating the next step of the MDMP. Commanders and staffs generally perform these steps sequentially; however, they may revisit several steps in an iterative fashion, as they learn more about the situation before producing the plan or order. The steps of the MDMP are—

- Step 1 – Receipt of mission.
- Step 2 – Mission analysis.
- Step 3 – Course of action development.
- Step 4 – Course of action analysis.
- Step 5 – Course of action comparison.
- Step 6 – Course of action approval.
- Step 7 – Orders production, dissemination, and transition.

### ***Troop Leading Procedures***

35. ***Troop leading procedures*** are a dynamic process used by small-unit leaders to analyze a mission, develop a plan, and prepare for an operation. TLP are used by commanders and leaders without a staff. These procedures enable leaders to maximize

available planning time while developing effective plans and preparing their units for an operation. Like the MDMP, troop leading procedures consist of a series of steps:

- Step 1 – Receive the mission.
- Step 2 – Issue a warning order.
- Step 3 – Make a tentative plan.
- Step 4 – Initiate movement.
- Step 5 – Conduct reconnaissance.
- Step 6 – Complete the plan.
- Step 7 – Issue the order.
- Step 8 – Supervise and refine the plan.

36. The sequence of the steps of troop leading procedures is not rigid. Leaders modify them as required. Higher headquarters issue frequent warning orders to optimize available time for subordinates to conduct their TLP.

## **Guides to Effective Planning**

37. Planning helps commanders understand and develop solutions to problems, anticipate events, adapt to changing circumstances, task-organize the force, and prioritize efforts. Effective planning requires dedication, study, and practice. Planners must be technically and tactically competent within their areas of expertise and disciplined in the use of doctrinally correct terms and symbols. The following guides aid in effective planning:

- Commanders focus planning.
- Develop simple, flexible plans through mission orders.
- Optimize available planning time.
- Continually refine the plan.

### ***Commanders Focus Planning***

38. Commanders are the most important participants in effective planning. They focus the planning effort by providing their commander's intent, issuing planning guidance, and making decisions throughout the planning process. Commanders apply discipline to the planning process to meet the requirements of time, planning horizons, simplicity, level of detail, and desired outcomes. Commanders ensure that all operation plans and orders comply with applicable domestic and international laws. They also confirm that the plan or order is relevant and suitable for subordinates. Generally, the more involved commanders are in planning, the faster staffs can plan. Through personal involvement, commanders ensure the plan reflects their commander's intent.

### ***Develop Simple, Flexible Plans Through Mission Orders***

39. Effective plans and orders are simple and direct. Staffs prepare clear, concise orders that communicate an understanding of the operation through the use of doctrinally correct operational terms and symbols. Doing this minimizes chances of

misunderstanding. Clarity and brevity are important. Shorter, rather than longer, plans aid in simplicity. Shorter plans are easier to disseminate, read, and remember.

40. Flexible plans help units adapt quickly to changing circumstances. Commanders and planners build opportunities for initiative into plans by anticipating events that allow them to operate inside of the enemy's decision cycle or to react promptly to deteriorating situations. Identifying decision points and designing branches ahead of time—combined with a clear commander's intent—help create flexible plans.

41. Commanders stress the importance of using mission orders as a way of building simple, flexible plans. *Mission orders* are directives that emphasize to subordinates the results to be attained, not how they are to achieve them (ADP 6-0). Mission orders clearly convey the unit's mission and the commander's intent. Mission orders focus subordinates on what to do and the purpose of doing it, without prescribing exactly how to do it. Commanders establish control measures to aid cooperation among forces without imposing needless restriction on freedom of action.

### ***Optimize Available Planning Time***

42. Time is a critical variable in operations. Therefore, time management is important in planning. Whether done deliberately or rapidly, all planning requires the skillful use of available time to optimize planning and preparation throughout the unit. Taking more time to plan often results in greater synchronization; however, any delay in execution risks yielding the initiative—with more time to prepare and act—to the enemy. When allocating planning time to the staff, commanders must ensure subordinates have enough time to plan and prepare their own actions prior to execution. Commanders follow the “one-third—two-thirds rule” as a guide to allocate time available. They use one-third of the time available before execution for their planning and allocate the remaining two-thirds of the time available before execution to their subordinates for planning and preparation.

### ***Continually Refine the Plan***

43. Planning does not cease with production of a plan or order. It continues throughout an operation as the order is refined based on confirmation briefings, rehearsals and changes in the situation. In addition, staffs are always refining plans for branches and sequels throughout an operation. During preparation and execution, the plan is continuously refined as situational understanding improves. Through assessment, subordinates and others provide feedback on the progress of operations. In some circumstances, commanders may determine that the current order (to include associated branches and sequels) is no longer relevant to the situation. In these instances, instead of modifying the current plan, commanders reframe the problem and develop an entirely new plan.

## **PREPARING**

44. ***Preparation consists of those activities performed by units and Soldiers to improve their ability to execute an operation.*** Preparation creates conditions that improve friendly forces' opportunities for success. It requires commander, staff, unit, and



Soldier actions to ensure the force is trained, equipped, and ready to execute operations. Effective preparation helps commanders, staffs, and subordinate units better understand the situation and their roles in upcoming operations. The major activities of preparation are listed in table 1.

**Table 1. Preparation activities**

Continue to coordinate and conduct liaison	Conduct rehearsals
Initiate information collection	Conduct plans-to-operations transitions
Initiate security operations	Revise and refine the plan
Initiate troop movement	Integrate new Soldiers and units
Initiate sustainment preparations	Complete task organization
Initiate network preparations	Train
Manage terrain	Perform pre-operations checks and inspections
Prepare terrain	Continue to build partnerships and teams
Conduct confirmation briefs	

45. Mission success depends as much on preparation as on planning. Higher headquarters may develop the best of plans; however, plans serve little purpose if subordinates do not receive them in time. Subordinates need enough time to fully comprehend the plan, rehearse key portions of the plan, and ensure Soldiers and equipment are positioned and ready to execute the operation. The following guidelines aid in effective preparation:

- Secure and protect the force.
- Improve situational understanding.
- Understand, rehearse, and refine the plan.
- Integrate, organize, and configure the force.
- Ensure forces and resources are ready and positioned.

### ***Secure and Protect the Force***

46. The force as a whole is often most vulnerable to surprise and enemy attack during preparation. As such, security operations—screen, guard, cover, area security, and local security—are essential during preparation. In addition, commanders ensure the various tasks of the protection warfighting function are fully integrated to safeguard bases, secure routes, and protect the force, while it prepares for operations.

### ***Improve Situational Understanding***

47. During preparation, commanders may realize that their initial understanding developed during planning may be neither accurate nor complete. As such, commanders strive to validate assumptions and improve their situational understanding as they prepare for operations. Information collection (to include reconnaissance, surveillance, and intelligence operations) helps improve understanding of the enemy, terrain, and civil

considerations. Inspections, rehearsals, liaison, and coordination help leaders improve their understanding of the friendly force.

### ***Understand and Rehearse the Plan***

48. A successful transition from planning to execution requires those charged with executing the order to understand the plan fully. The transition between planning and execution takes place both internally in the headquarters and externally between the commander and subordinate commanders. Rehearsals, to include confirmation briefings and plans-to-operations transition briefings, help improve understanding of the concept of operations, control measures, decision points, and command and support relationships.

### ***Integrate, Organize, and Configure the Force***

49. During preparation, commanders allocate time to put the new task organization into effect. This includes detaching units, moving forces, and receiving and integrating new units and Soldiers into the force. When units change task organization, they need preparation time to learn the gaining unit's standard operating procedures and the plan the gaining unit will execute. The gaining unit needs preparation time to assess the new unit's capabilities and limitations and to integrate new capabilities.

### ***Ensure Forces and Resources are Ready and Positioned***

50. Effective preparation ensures that the right forces are in the right place, at the right time, with the right equipment and other resources ready to execute the operation. Concurrent with task organization, commanders use troop movement to position or reposition forces to the correct locations prior to execution. This includes positioning sustainment units and supplies.

## **EXECUTING**

51. **Execution is putting a plan into action by applying combat power to accomplish the mission.** During execution, commanders, staffs, and subordinate commanders focus their efforts on translating decisions into actions. They apply combat power to seize, retain, and exploit the initiative to gain and maintain a position of relative advantage. This is the essence of unified land operations (see ADP 3-0).

### **Decisionmaking During Execution**

52. Decisionmaking is tied to disciplined initiative and inherent in executing operations. Commanders observe the progress of operations and intervene when necessary to ensure success. Because operations never unfold exactly as envisioned and because understanding of the situation changes, a commander's decisions made during execution are critical to an operation's success. During execution, commanders direct their units forcefully and promptly to overcome the difficulties of enemy action, friendly errors, and other changes in their operational environment.

53. Commanders make execution and adjustment decisions throughout execution. Execution decisions implement a planned action under circumstances anticipated in the

order. An execution decision is normally tied to a *decision point*—a point in space or time the commander or staff anticipates making a key decision concerning a specific course of action (JP 5-0). An adjustment decision is the selection of a course of action that modifies the order to respond to unanticipated opportunities or threats. An adjustment decision may include a decision to reframe the problem and develop an entirely new plan.

54. Executing, adjusting, or abandoning the original operation is part of decisionmaking in execution. By fighting the enemy and not the plan, successful commanders balance the tendency to abandon a well-conceived plan too soon against persisting in a failing effort too long. Effective decisionmaking during execution—

- Relates all actions to the commander’s intent and concept of operations to ensure they support the decisive operation.
- Is comprehensive, maintaining integration of combined arms rather than dealing with separate functions.
- Relies heavily on intuitive decisionmaking by commanders and staffs to make rapid adjustments.
- Is continuous and responds effectively to any opportunity or threat.

### **Guides to Effective Execution**

55. During execution, the situation may change rapidly. Operations the commander envisioned in the plan may bear little resemblance to actual events in execution. Subordinate commanders need maximum latitude to take advantage of situations and meet the higher commander’s intent when the original order no longer applies. Effective execution requires leaders trained and educated in independent decisionmaking, aggressiveness, and risk taking in an environment of mission command. During execution, leaders must be able and willing to solve problems within the commander’s intent without constantly referring to higher headquarters. Subordinates need not wait for top-down synchronization to act. The following guides aid in effective execution:

- Seize the initiative through action.
- Accept prudent risk to exploit opportunities.

#### ***Seize the Initiative Through Action***

56. Commanders create conditions for seizing the initiative by acting. Without action, seizing the initiative is impossible. Faced with an uncertain situation, people naturally tend to hesitate and gather more information to reduce the uncertainty. Although waiting and gathering information might reduce uncertainty, it will not eliminate it. Waiting may even increase uncertainty by providing the enemy with time to seize the initiative. It is far better to manage uncertainty by acting and developing the situation.

#### ***Accept Prudent Risk to Exploit Opportunities***

57. Uncertainty and risk are inherent in all military operations. Successful commanders are comfortable operating under conditions of uncertainty, as they balance various risks while taking advantage of opportunities. *Prudent risk* is a deliberate exposure to potential

injury or loss when the commander judges the outcome in terms of mission accomplishment as worth the cost (ADP 6-0). Reasonably estimating and intentionally accepting risk is not gambling. Gambling, in contrast to taking prudent risk, is staking the success of an entire action on a single event without considering the hazard to the force should the event not unfold as envisioned. Therefore, commanders avoid taking a gamble. Commanders carefully determine risks, analyze and minimize as many hazards as possible, and then take prudent risks to exploit opportunities.

## ASSESSING

58. *Assessment* is the determination of the progress toward accomplishing a task, creating an effect, or achieving an objective (JP 3-0). Assessment is a continuous activity of the operations process. The focus of assessment, however, changes for each operations process activity. During planning, assessment focuses on understanding current conditions of an operational environment and developing an assessment plan, including what and how to assess progress. During preparation, assessment focuses on determining the friendly force's readiness to execute the operation and on verifying the assumptions on which the plan is based. During execution, assessment focuses on evaluating progress of the operation. Based on their assessment, commanders direct adjustments to the order, ensuring the operation stays focused on accomplishing the mission.

### Assessment Process

59. Assessment involves the continuous monitoring and evaluation of the current situation to determine progress of an operation. Broadly, assessment consists of the following activities:

- Monitoring the current situation to collect relevant information.
- Evaluating progress toward attaining end state conditions, achieving objectives, and completing tasks.
- Recommending or directing action for improvement.

60. Primary tools for assessing include running estimates, after action reviews, and the assessment plan. Running estimates provide information, conclusions, and recommendations from the perspective of each staff section. Running estimates help to refine the common operational picture and supplement it with information not readily displayed. Both formal and informal after action reviews help identify what was supposed to happen, what went right, and what went wrong for a particular action or operation, and how the commander and staff should do things differently in the future. The assessment plan includes measures of effectiveness, measures of performance, and indicators that help the commander and staff evaluate progress toward accomplishing tasks and achieve objectives. (See ATTP 5-01.1 for doctrine on building assessment plans.)

### Running Estimates

61. Effective plans and successful preparation, execution and assessment hinge on accurate running estimates. A *running estimate* is the continuous assessment of the

**current situation used to determine if the current operation is proceeding according to the commander's intent and if planned future operations are supportable.**

Detailed running estimates begin in planning and are continuously updated during preparation and execution. In their running estimates, the command and staff continuously consider the effects of new information and update facts, assumptions, and conclusions. Running estimates from the staff always include recommendations to the commander.

## **Guides to Effective Assessment**

62. Throughout the conduct of operations, commanders integrate their own assessments with those of the staff, subordinate commanders, and other partners in the area of operations. The following guides aid in effective assessment:

- Commanders prioritize the assessment effort.
- Incorporate the logic of the plan.
- Use caution when establishing cause and effect.
- Combine quantitative and qualitative indicators.

### ***Commanders Prioritize the Assessment Effort***

63. Commanders establish priorities for assessment in their planning guidance, CCIRs, and decision points. By prioritizing the effort, commanders avoid excessive analyses when assessing operations. Committing valuable time and energy to developing excessive and time-consuming assessment schemes squanders resources better devoted to other operations process activities. Commanders reject the tendency to measure something just because it is measurable. Effective commanders avoid burdening subordinates and staffs with overly detailed assessments and collection tasks. Generally, the echelon at which a specific operation, task, or action is conducted should be the echelon at which it is assessed.

### ***Incorporate the Logic of the Plan***

64. Effective assessment relies on an accurate understanding of the reasons and logic used to build the plan. Each plan is built on assumptions and an operational approach. The reasons and logic why the commander believes the plan will produce the desired results are important considerations when staffs determine how to assess operations. Recording and understanding this logic helps the staffs recommend the appropriate measures of effectiveness, measures of performance, and indicators for assessing the operation.

### ***Use Caution When Establishing Cause and Effect***

65. Although establishing cause and effect is sometimes difficult, it is crucial to effective assessment. Sometimes, establishing causality between actions and their effects can be relatively straightforward, such as in observing a bomb destroy a bridge. In other instances, especially regarding changes in human behavior, attitudes, and perception,

establishing links between cause and effect proves difficult. Commanders and staffs must guard against drawing erroneous conclusions in these instances.

### *Combine Quantitative and Qualitative Indicators*

66. Effective assessment incorporates both quantitative (observation-based) and qualitative (opinion-based) indicators. Human judgment is integral to assessment. A key aspect of any assessment is the degree to which it relies upon human judgment and the degree to which it relies upon direct observation and mathematical rigor. Rigor offsets the inevitable bias, while human judgment focuses rigor and processes on intangibles that are often key to success. The appropriate balance depends on the situation—particularly the nature of the operation and available resources for assessment—but rarely lies at the ends of the scale.

## **CONCLUSION**

67. The doctrine in this publication provides a starting point for the execution of the operations process. It establishes a common frame of reference and the intellectual tools Army leaders use to plan, prepare for, execute, and assess operations. By establishing a common approach and language, the doctrine in this publication promotes mutual understanding and enhances the effectiveness during the conduct of operations. The doctrine in this publication is a guide for action rather than a set of fixed rules. While it provides an authoritative guide for leaders and Soldiers, it requires original application adapted to circumstances. In operations, effective leaders recognize when and where doctrine, training, or even their past experience no longer fits the situation and adapt accordingly.

# Glossary

The glossary lists acronyms and terms with Army or joint definitions. Where Army and joint definitions differ, (Army) precedes the definition. Terms for which ADP 5-0 is the proponent are marked with an asterisk (\*). The proponent publication for other terms is listed in parentheses after the definition.

## SECTION I – ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

<b>ADP</b>	Army doctrine publication
<b>ADRP</b>	Army doctrine reference publication
<b>CCIR</b>	commander's critical information requirement
<b>DA</b>	Department of the Army
<b>EEFI</b>	essential element of friendly information
<b>FM</b>	field manual
<b>JP</b>	joint publication
<b>MDMP</b>	military decisionmaking process
<b>METT-TC</b>	mission, enemy, terrain and weather, troops and support available, time available, and civil considerations
<b>PMESII-PT</b>	political, military, economic, social, information, infrastructure, physical environment, and time
<b>TLP</b>	troop leading procedures
<b>U.S.</b>	United States

## SECTION II – TERMS

### **\*Army design methodology**

A methodology for applying critical and creative thinking to understand, visualize, and describe unfamiliar problems and approaches to solving them.

### **assessment**

The determination of the progress toward accomplishing a task, creating an effect, or achieving an objective. (JP 3-0)

### **commander's intent**

A clear and concise expression of the purpose of the operation and the desired military end state that supports mission command, provides focus to the staff, and helps subordinate and supporting commanders act to achieve the commander's desired result without further order, even when the operation does not unfold as planned. (JP 3-0)

**\*commander's visualization**

The mental process of developing situational understanding, determining a desired end state, and envisioning an operational approach by which the force will achieve that end state.

**decision point**

A point in space or time the commander or staff anticipate making a key decision concerning a specific course of action. (JP 5-0)

**\*execution**

Putting a plan into action by applying combat power to accomplish the mission.

**\*military decisionmaking process**

An iterative planning methodology to understand the situation and mission, develop a course of action, and produce an operation plan or order.

**mission orders**

Directives that emphasize to subordinates the results to be attained, not how they are to achieve them. (ADP 6-0)

**operational approach**

A description of the broad action the force must take to transform current conditions into those desired at end state. (JP 5-0)

**operational art**

The cognitive approach by commanders and staffs—supported by their skill, knowledge, experience, creativity, and judgment—to develop strategies, campaigns, and operations to organize and employ military forces by integrating ends, ways, and means. (JP 3-0)

**operational environment**

A composite of the conditions, circumstances, and influences that affect the employment of capabilities and bear on the decisions of the commander. (JP 3-0)

**\*operations process**

The major mission command activities performed during operations: planning, preparing, executing, and continuously assessing the operation.

**\*planning**

The art and science of understanding a situation, envisioning a desired future, and laying out effective ways of bringing that future about.

**\*preparation**

Those activities performed by units and Soldiers to improve their ability to execute an operation.

**prudent risk**

A deliberate exposure to potential injury or loss when the commander judges the outcome in terms of mission accomplishment as worth the cost. (ADP 6-0)



**\*running estimate**

The continuous assessment of the current situation used to determine if the current operation is proceeding according to the commander's intent and if planned future operations are supportable.

**\*situational understanding**

The product of applying analysis and judgment to relevant information to determine the relationships among the operational and mission variables to facilitate decisionmaking.

**\*troop leading procedures**

A dynamic process used by small-unit leaders to analyze a mission, develop a plan, and prepare for an operation.

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# References

Field manuals and selected joint publications are listed by new number followed by old number.

## REQUIRED PUBLICATIONS

These documents must be available to intended users of this publication.  
FM 1-02 (101-5-1). *Operational Terms and Graphics*. 21 September 2004.  
JP 1-02. *Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*.  
8 November 2010.

## RELATED PUBLICATIONS

These documents contain relevant supplemental information.

## JOINT PUBLICATIONS

Most joint publications are available online:  
<[http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/new\\_pubs/jointpub.htm](http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/new_pubs/jointpub.htm)>  
JP 3-0. *Joint Operations*, 11 August 2011.  
JP 3-33. *Joint Task Force Headquarters*. 16 February 2007.  
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Most Army doctrinal publications are available online:  
<<http://www.apd.army.mil>>.  
ADP 3-0 (FM 3-0). *Unified Land Operations*, 10 October 2011.  
ADP 6-0 (FM 6-0). *Mission Command*. 17 May 2012.  
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FM 27-10. *The Law of Land Warfare*, 18 July 1956.

## WEB SITE

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**17 May 2012**

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