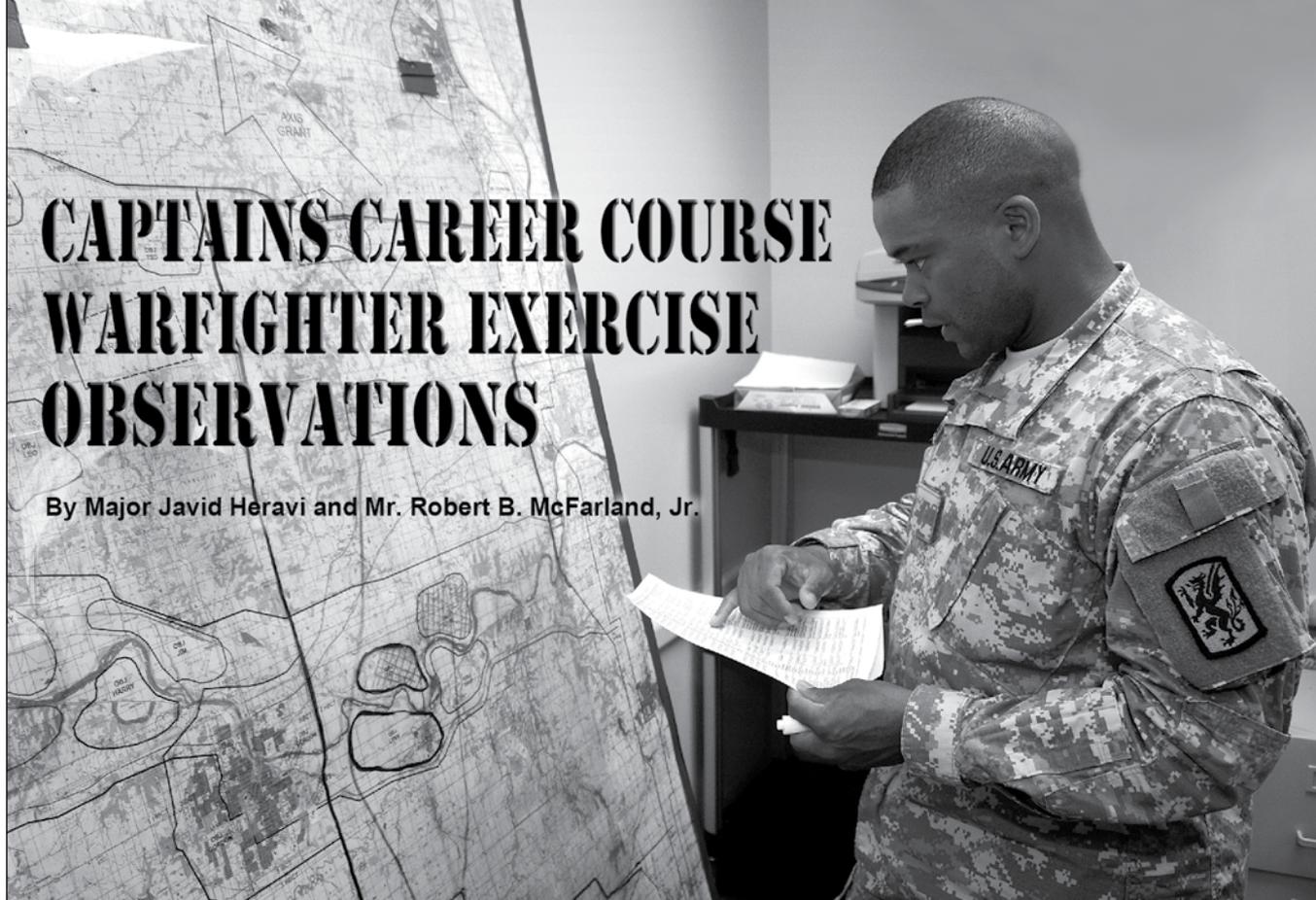


# CAPTAINS CAREER COURSE WARFIGHTER EXERCISE OBSERVATIONS

By Major Javid Heravi and Mr. Robert B. McFarland, Jr.



**A**s a member of the Army National Guard maneuver enhancement brigade (MEB) staff support team, I recently had the opportunity to observe Captains Career Course (CCC) students during the five-day capstone Warfighter Exercise. During the exercise, students fill positions as either a commander or staff officer of a brigade combat team (BCT) or MEB. I have observed two MEB staffs during separate Warfighter iterations, one Active Army and one Reserve Component. While observing the MEB staffs during the military decision-making process (MDMP), I have noted strengths and weaknesses common to both iterations. However, each CCC class is unique, and two iterations do not indicate a trend. I merely wish to share my observations and encourage others to observe, participate, and share their findings as well.

## Mission Analysis

**D**etermine Specified, Implied, and Essential Tasks. Students readily identify specified tasks within the base operations order (OPORD) and applicable annexes and do a remarkable job of identifying implied tasks. Moreover, students understand the purpose for the tasks. In some cases, MEB staffs do not yet understand the doctrine behind certain portions of these specified and implied tasks, while in other cases the doctrine is in the developmental stage. Regardless, the MEB staff struggles to provide a sufficient solution for a difficult tactical problem. Specifically, the MEB intelligence officer (S-2) needs to better refine the threat and its intentions. Likewise, the operations officer (S-3) needs to better understand the threat and

its impact on selected courses of action both at the tactical level and, to an extent, at the operational level, thereby allowing the MEB commander to apply effects in a much more focused manner.

## Course of Action Development

**A**nalyze Relative Combat Power. The MEB staff does not sufficiently understand the enemy and terrain and therefore limits its ability to divide the tasks into executable portions for company-size units. Conducting a thorough relative combat power analysis can be difficult to grasp and understand, but is essential in course of action (COA) development. CCC students readily apply doctrinal rules of thumb and, with the assistance of the S-2, the MEB staff understands how and when to make minor or major adjustments to the planned capability. However, the MEB staff does not sufficiently break down tasks and associate them with terrain, resulting in a failure to understand execution through time and space.

**Array Initial Forces.** A failure to understand the threat through time and space results in the inability to effectively array initial forces two levels down. In the Warfighter Exercise scenario, the MEB conducts maneuver support operations along two main supply routes and four alternate supply routes of significant length. Both S-2s templated enemy positions in the area of operations (AO), but did not identify specific areas along the routes where certain enemy tactics, techniques, and procedures were more likely to occur. As a result of this faulty analysis, the S-3 never considered where small arms fires, indirect fires, or improvised explosive

devices ( IEDs) were likely, and therefore did not task units able to mitigate the likely threat. A natural outcome for this error in MEB planning would be that route clearance capabilities are not focused against probable IED emplacement areas, military police capabilities are not focused on areas with templated Level II threat units, and chemical decontamination capabilities do not deploy in the vicinity of all chemical weapons storage points.

**Task Organize and Assign Headquarters.** Functional chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear (CBRN); engineer; and military police battalions were not adequately task-organized nor assigned operational areas that would allow them to effectively accomplish their mission. One MEB staff assigned functional battalions an AO, but provided no means through task organization of accomplishing tasks suitable to the capabilities best performed by another branch; the other MEB staff assigned no subordinate AOs within the MEB AO, and the three functional battalions operated freely within the MEB boundaries.

### Course of Action Analysis

**B**oth MEB staffs selected the box method of wargaming. As neither staff was able to effectively visualize the threat through time and space, this method should have shown the shortcomings in understanding the threat. However, wargaming relies heavily on doctrine, judgment, and experience. In both cases, the MEB S3 failed to select a small enough area for concentration. As a result, the MEB staffs were unable to analyze their plan in sufficient detail.



### Summary

**W**hile a comparison between CCC students and the capabilities of an MEB staff may be subject to ridicule, there are lessons to be learned from observing staff processes in any environment. The MEB is designed with a robust staff fully capable of analyzing the threat and developing solutions to neutralize or defeat it. It is also composed of a much more senior staff. However, like the CCC students who are brought together shortly before exercise execution, many MEBs are newly formed and their staffs have not had the opportunity to fully exercise themselves as an MEB in a Warfighter-type scenario. Two CCC classes have shown that a failure to focus the efforts of the staff in a synchronized and coordinated manner may result in any organizational staff encountering some of the same shortcomings experienced by the CCC students during their Warfighter Exercise.

Despite the shortcomings I have identified, the CCC students did prove their mettle throughout the exercise. Both the student commanders and their staffs performed remarkably well in a challenging environment. They were able to rapidly form a skeleton MEB staff, analyze a division OPOD, conduct MDMP, and develop—and then execute—their plan within a five-day period. As a capstone combined arms staff exercise, both the Warfighter Exercises and the students involved were successful.



*Major Heravi is a member of the North Carolina Army National Guard's 130th MEB. He is stationed at Fort Leonard Wood as part of the Maneuver Support Center (MANSCEN) Directorate of Training, Maneuver Support Training Division, MEB Army National Guard Staff Support Team. He has recent operational experience as an Engineer Group S2 in Iraq. He may be contacted at 573-563-6840 or <javid.heravi@us.army.mil>.*

*Mr. McFarland is chief of the Maneuver Support Training Division, Department of Career Studies, MANSCEN Directorate of Training, Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri. A retired Army infantry lieutenant colonel and former battalion commander, he is a graduate of the Command and General Staff College and the School of Advanced Military Studies (SAMS).*

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