

US COMMAND AND GENERAL STAFF COLLEGE
P920 Preparatory Course (MDMP)
Mr. Raun Watson, CTAC, 684-2422



Military Decision Making Process

Welcome to the US Army Military Decision Making Process (MDMP) Lesson. This Lesson provides an overview of the US Army's MDMP, an established and proven analytical planning process.

The MDMP is a planning model that establishes procedures for analyzing a mission, developing, analyzing, and comparing courses of action against criteria of success and each other, selecting the optimum course of action, and producing a plan or order.

The MDMP applies across the spectrum of conflict and range of military operations. Commanders with an assigned staff use the MDMP to organize their planning activities, share a common understanding of the mission and commander's intent, and develop effective plans and orders.

Our Purpose Today?

Gain familiarity with the MDMP and consider how this process can supplement or improve how School Boards make decisions.

MDMP Key Concepts

This Lesson is designed to provide an overview of the following:

- **The commander's SCHOOL BOARD! role in planning.** Commanders are in charge of the planning process. The MDMP hinges on the commander's ability to understand, visualize, describe, and direct the operation. The inherent value of MDMP lies in the results achieved, not the process - *it is a means to an end.*
- **The staff's role in planning.** The staff's effort during planning focuses on helping the commander make decisions and developing effective plans and orders. It does this by integrating information with sound doctrine and technical competence. The ~~ESS~~ Superintendent / Director manages, coordinates, and disciplines the staff's work, and provides quality control.
- **Commander, Staff, and Subordinate Interaction.** The MDMP is designed to facilitate interaction between the commander, staff, and subordinate headquarters throughout planning.
- **Performing the MDMP.** The MDMP consists of seven steps. The commander and staff perform these steps sequentially; however, there may not be distinct points at which one step ends and another begins.

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- ✓ Introduction to the MDMP
- ✓ 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

Military Decision Making Process

This lesson consists of eight sections:

- ✓ Introduction to the MDMP
 - Army Problem-Solving and the MDMP
 - Commander's role in planning
 - Staff's role in planning
 - Commander, Staff, and Subordinate Interaction
- ✓ Step 1 - Receipt of Mission
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Army Problem Solving and the MDMP

The MDMP is an adaptation of the Army problem-solving model shown on the left. This lesson describes how commanders, staffs, and subordinates interact during planning and explains each step of the MDMP shown on the right.

Army Problem-Solving Model	The MDMP
1 - Identify the Problem	1 - RECEIPT OF MISSION
2 - Gather Information	2 - MISSION ANALYSIS
3 - Develop Criteria	3 - COA DEVELOPMENT
4 - Generate Possible Solutions	4 - COA ANALYSIS <small>(WAR GAME)</small>
5 - Analyze Possible solutions	5 - COA COMPARISON
6 - Compare Possible Solutions	6 - COA APPROVAL
7 - Make and Implement the Decision	7 - ORDERS PRODUCTION

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The Commander's Role in Planning

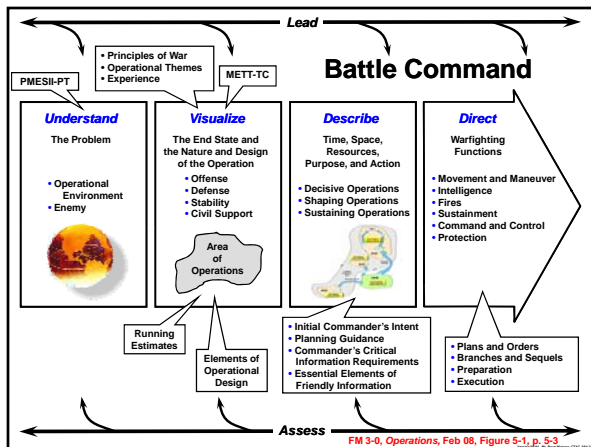
- Commanders are in charge of the planning process.
- In battle, commanders face a thinking and adaptive enemy. Commanders estimate, but cannot predict, the enemy's actions and the course of future events. In this operations process, [battle command](#) describes the commander's role.
- Battle command applies leadership to translate decisions into actions - by synchronizing forces and warfighting functions in time, space, and purpose - to accomplish missions.
- Battle command is guided by professional judgment gained from experience, knowledge, education, intelligence, and intuition. Commanders continuously combine [intuitive](#) and [analytic approaches](#) to decision making to exercise battle command.
- The [intuitive approach](#) is the act of reaching a conclusion that emphasizes pattern recognition based on knowledge, judgment, experience, education, intelligence, boldness, perception, and character.
- The [analytic approach](#) aims to produce the optimal solution to a problem from among the solutions identified. *The Army's analytic approach is the military decision making process (MDMP).*

FM 5-0, Army Planning and Orders Production, Jan 05, pp. 1-6 to 1-7 and 3-4 FM 3-0, Operations, Feb 08, p. 5-2

The Commander's Role in Planning

- The intuitive and analytic decision making approaches are not mutually exclusive. Commanders may make an intuitive decision based on situational understanding gained during the MDMP. If time permits, the staff may use a specific MDMP step, such as war-gaming to validate or refine the commander's intuitive decision.
- Commanders [understand](#), [visualize](#), [describe](#), [direct](#), lead, and assess throughout the operations process *(see illustration on next slide)*.
 - ✓ **Understand:** First, they develop a personal and in-depth understanding of the enemy and operational environment.
 - ✓ **Visualize:** They visualize the desired end state and a broad concept of how to shape the current conditions into the end state.
 - ✓ **Describe:** Commanders describe their visualization through the commander's intent, planning guidance, and concept of operations in a way that brings clarity to an uncertain situation. They also express gaps in relevant information as [commander's critical information requirements \(CCIRs\)](#).
 - ✓ **Direct:** Commanders then direct actions to achieve results and lead forces to mission accomplishment.

FM 5-0, Army Planning and Orders Production, Jan 05, pp. 1-8 to 1-9 FM 3-0, Operations, Feb 08, pp. 5-2 to 5-3



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Step 1 – Receipt of Mission

- 1- RECEIPT OF MISSION
- 2- MISSION ANALYSIS
- 3- COA DEVELOPMENT
- 4- COA ANALYSIS
- 5- COA COMPARISON
- 6- COA APPROVAL
- 7- ORDERS PRODUCTION

- The MDMP begins with receiving or anticipating a new mission.
- This mission can come from an order issued by higher headquarters or be derived from an ongoing operation.
- For example, the commander may determine – based on a change in enemy dispositions, friendly force dispositions, or other battlefield factors – that there is an opportunity to accomplish the higher commander’s intent by a means different from the original concept of operations.
- When a new mission is identified, commanders and staffs perform **process actions** and produce **outputs**. Receipt of mission consists of **four tasks**, shown in the **process column** on the next slide. Each task will be described in subsequent slides. *(Some subjects will be discussed in greater detail during the conduct of CGSOC).*



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Step 1 - Receipt of Mission

INPUT	PROCESS	OUTPUT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Mission from higher HQ or deduced by the commander and staff. ▪ Higher HQ plan, OPORD, or WARNOs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Alert the staff. ▪ Gather the tools: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Higher HQ order ✓ Maps ✓ SOPs ✓ Appropriate FMs ✓ Running estimates ✓ Other as required ▪ Update running estimates. ▪ Conduct initial assessment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Commander’s initial guidance. ▪ Initial operational timeline. ▪ Initial WARNO # 1.

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Step 2 – Mission Analysis

1- RECEIPT OF MISSION
2- MISSION ANALYSIS
 3- COA DEVELOPMENT
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- A thorough mission analysis is crucial to planning.
- Both the process and products of mission analysis help commanders refine their situational understanding and determine their mission.
- In addition to the staff's mission analysis, commanders perform their own mission analysis. This gives them a frame of reference to assess the staff's work and develop their visualization.
- The staff uses running estimates to record assessments and other information. Anticipation, prior preparation, and a trained staff are the keys to a timely mission analysis.
- Mission analysis consists of **17 tasks**, shown in the **process column** on the next slide. Each task will be described in subsequent slides. *(Some subjects will be discussed in greater detail during the conduct of CGSOC).*



FM 5-0, Army Planning and Orders Production, Jan 05, p. 3-15

Introduction to Step 2 – Mission Analysis

INPUT

- Higher HQ plan or order.
- Higher HQ IPB.
- Updated running estimates.
- Initial cdr's guidance.

PROCESS

OUTPUT

- Updated running estimates and products.
 - ✓ Initial IPB.
 - ✓ Enemy SITTEMPS.
 - ✓ MCOO.
- High value targets.
- Mission Analysis briefing.
- Restated mission.
- Initial cdr's intent.
- Cdr's planning guidance.
- Updated operational timeline.
- WARNO # 2.

- Analyze higher HQ order.
- Perform initial IPB.
- Determine specified, implied, and essential tasks.
- Review available assets.
- Determine constraints.
- Identify critical facts and assumptions.
- Perform risk assessment.
- Determine CCR / EEFL.
- Determine initial ISR plan.
- Update operational timeline.
- Write the restated mission.
- Deliver a mission analysis briefing.
- Approve restated mission.
- Develop initial Cdr's intent.
- Issue Cdr's planning guidance.
- Issue warning order.
- Review facts / assumptions.

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Step 2 - Mission Analysis

1. RECEIPT OF MISSION
2. MISSION ANALYSIS
3. COA DEVELOPMENT
4. COA ANALYSIS
5. COA COMPARISON
6. COA APPROVAL
7. ORDERS PRODUCTION

Input: Products to begin mission analysis include the higher headquarters plan or order, higher headquarters IPB, updated running estimates, and initial commander's guidance.

Process: Step 2 – Mission analysis involves 17 tasks:

- ✓ Task 7, Perform risk assessment. Risk management is the process of identifying, assessing, and controlling risks arising from operational factors, and making decisions that balance risk cost with mission benefits. Commanders and staff consider force protection issues from natural or manmade environmental hazards and the risk of potential damage to agricultural, historic, religious or cultural sites, and civil infrastructure that may result from the conduct of military operations. Risk management consists of five steps:
 - Step 1, Identify hazards
 - Step 2, Assess hazards
 - Step 3, Develop controls and make risk decisions
 - Step 4, Implement controls
 - Step 5, Supervise and evaluate

FM 5-0, Army Planning and Orders Production, Jan 05, pp. 3-20 to 3-21

Summary of Step 2 – Mission Analysis

PROCESS

INPUT

- Higher HQ plan or order.
- Higher HQ IPB.
- Updated running estimates.
- Initial cdr's guidance.

OUTPUT

- Updated running estimates and products.
 - ✓ Initial IPB.
 - ✓ Enemy SITTEMPs.
 - ✓ MCOO.
- High value targets.
- Mission Analysis briefing.
- Restated mission.
- Initial cdr's intent.
- Cdr's planning guidance.
- Updated operational timeline.
- WARNO # 2.

PROCESS

- Analyze higher HQ order.
- Perform initial IPB.
- Determine specified, implied, and essential tasks.
- Review available assets.
- Determine constraints.
- Identify critical facts and assumptions.
- Perform risk assessment.
- Determine CCIR / EEFL.
- Determine initial ISR plan.
- Update operational timeline.
- Write the restated mission.
- Deliver a mission analysis briefing.
- Approve restated mission.
- Develop initial Cdr's intent.
- Issue Cdr's planning guidance.
- Issue warning order.
- Review facts / assumptions.

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Summary of Step 4 – COA Analysis

INPUT	PROCESS	OUTPUT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Running estimates. IPB (enemy COAs). COA statement and sketch. Supporting staff functional COAs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gather the tools. List all friendly forces. List assumptions. List known critical events and decision points. Determine evaluation criteria. Select the war game method. Select a method to record and display results. War game the battle and assess the results. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> War game results include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Concept of operations. ✓ Synchronization matrix. ✓ Operations overlay. ✓ Decision support template (DST). ✓ Task organization. ✓ Missions to subordinates. ✓ Updated CCIR.

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Step 5 COA Comparison

1. RECEIPT OF MISSION

2. MISSION ANALYSIS

3. COA DEVELOPMENT

4. COA ANALYSIS (OPERATIONS)

5. COA COMPARISON

6. COA APPROVAL

7. ORDERS PRODUCTION

- COA comparison starts with all staff members analyzing and evaluating the advantages and disadvantages of each COA from their perspectives.
- Using the evaluation criteria developed before the wargame, the staff outlines each COA, highlighting its advantages and disadvantages. The staff compares feasible COAs to identify the one with the highest probability of success against the most likely enemy COA and the most dangerous enemy COA.

The selected COA should also:

- Pose the minimum risk to the force and mission accomplishment.
- Place the force in the best posture for future operations.
- Provide maximum latitude for initiative by subordinates.
- Provide the most flexibility to meet unexpected threats and opportunities.

COA analysis consists of **three tasks**, shown in the **process column** on the next slide. Each task will be described in subsequent slides.

(Some subjects will be discussed in greater detail during the conduct of CGSOC).

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Introduction to Step 5 – COA Comparison

INPUT

PROCESS

OUTPUT

- Wargame results.
- Running estimates.

- Conduct a COA advantage and disadvantage analysis.
- Compare COAs.
- Develop a recommended COA.

- Decision matrix.
- COA decision briefing.

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Step 5 – COA Comparison

- **Input:** Products to begin COA comparison include wargame results and updated running estimates.
- **Process:** Step 5 – COA comparison involves **three tasks**:
 - ✓ **Task 1, Conduct a COA advantage and disadvantage analysis.** This analysis can be conducted using any technique that facilitates reaching the best recommendation and the commander making the best decision. The most common technique is a decision matrix using any of the following:
 - Numerical analysis.
 - Subjective analysis.
 - Broad categories analysis.

Examples of each type of analysis are shown in subsequent slides.

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Example of a Numerical Analysis

Numerical analysis: Criteria are those assigned in COA Analysis, Task 5. The COS/XO may emphasize one or more criteria by assigning weights to them based on their relative importance.

The staff assigns numerical values for each criterion after wargaming the COA. Values reflect the relative advantages or disadvantages for each criterion for each COA action. **The lowest number is best.**

CRITERIA	WEIGHT	COA 1	COA 2	COA 3
Maneuver	3	2 (6)	3 (9)	1 (3)
Simplicity	4	3 (12)	1 (4)	2 (8)
Fires	1	2 (2)	1 (1)	3 (3)
Intelligence	1	3 (3)	2 (2)	1 (1)
Mobility/Survivability	1	1 (1)	3 (3)	2 (2)
Sustainment	1	3 (3)	2 (2)	1 (1)
Command / Control	1	1 (1)	1 (1)	3 (3)
Tactical Risk	2	2 (4)	2 (4)	3 (6)
Information Opns	1	1 (1)	1 (1)	3 (3)
Total Weighted Total		18 (33)	16 (27)	19 (30)

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Example of a Subjective Analysis

Subjective analysis: Advantages and disadvantages may be those based on intuitive opinion of the commander and/or staff.

COURSE OF ACTION	ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
COA 1	Decisive operation avoids major terrain obstacles. Adequate maneuver room for decisive operation and reserve.	Decisive operation faces stronger resistance at beginning.
COA 2	Decisive operation gains good observation early. Shaping operation provides flank protection to the decisive operation.	Initially, reserve may have to be employed in AO of shaping operation. Needs detailed and rehearsed procedural and positive controls.
Additional COAs as needed		
DISCUSSION		

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Example of Broad Categories Analysis

Broad categories analysis: Advantages (+), disadvantages (-), or no difference (0) may be shown for broad categories.

FACTORS	COA 1	COA 2
Casualty estimate	+	-
Medical evacuation routes	-	+
Suitable location for medical facilities	0	0
Available Enemy Prisoner of War (EPW) facilities	-	+
Suitable command post locations	-	+
Courier and distribution routes	-	+
Effects of attachments and detachments on force cohesion, casualty reporting, and replacement operations	-	+
Residual risk	+	-

Note: The factors in the above example are neither all-inclusive or always applicable.

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Step 5 – COA Comparison

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- 2. MISSION ANALYSIS
- 3. COA DEVELOPMENT
- 4. COA ANALYSIS (OPERATIONS)
- 5. COA COMPARISON**
- 6. COA APPROVAL
- 7. ORDERS PRODUCTION

* Input: Products to begin COA comparison include wargame results and updated running estimates.

- **Process:** Step 5 – COA comparison involves **three tasks**:
 - ✓ **Task 2, Compare COAs.** Actual comparison of COAs is critical. The staff may use any technique that facilitates reaching the best recommendation and the commander making the best decision.
 - The most common technique is the decision matrix (illustrated previously), which uses evaluation criteria to assess the effectiveness and efficiency of each COA.
 - Decision matrices alone cannot provide decision solutions. Their greatest value is providing a method to compare COAs against criteria that, when met, produce battlefield success. They are analytical tools that staff officers use to prepare recommendations.

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Summary of Step 5 – COA Comparison

INPUT	PROCESS	OUTPUT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wargame results. Running estimates. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct a COA advantage and disadvantage analysis. Compare COAs. Develop a recommended COA. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decision matrix. COA decision briefing.

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- ✓ **Step 6 - Course of Action Approval**
- ✓ Step 7 - Orders Production

Step 6 - COA Approval

1. RECEIPT OF MISSION

2. MISSION ANALYSIS

3. COA DEVELOPMENT


4. COA ANALYSIS (OPERATIONAL)

5. COA COMPARISON

6. COA APPROVAL

7. ORDERS PRODUCTION

- For COA approval, the staff evaluates the results of the decision matrix, updates running estimates, and prepares a decision briefing for the commander.
- COA approval consists of **three components**:
 - ✓ The staff recommends a COA, usually in the form of a decision briefing (shown in the **process column** on the next slide).
 - ✓ The commander decides which COA to approve (shown in the **output column** on the next slide).
 - ✓ The commander issues the final planning guidance (shown in the **output column** on the next slide).



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Introduction to Step 6 – COA Approval

INPUT	PROCESS	OUTPUT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Staff decision matrix. ▪ Running estimates. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The staff recommends a COA, usually in a decision briefing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Commander approves a COA. ▪ Commander issues the final planning guidance. ▪ WARNO # 3.

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. RECEIPT OF MISSION 2. MISSION ANALYSIS 3. COA DEVELOPMENT 4. COA ANALYSIS (WARGAME) 5. COA COMPARISON 6. COA APPROVAL 7. ORDERS PRODUCTION 	<h3 align="center">Step 6 - COA Approval</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ After completing its analysis and comparison, the staff identifies its preferred COA and makes a recommendation. If the staff cannot reach a decision, the COS/XO decides which COA to recommend. ▪ The staff then delivers a decision briefing to the commander. The COS or XO highlights any changes to each COA resulting from the wargame. The decision briefing includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ The intent of the higher and next higher commanders. ✓ The status of the force and its components. ✓ The current IPB. ✓ The COAs considered, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Assumptions used. ▪ Results of running estimates. ▪ Summary of wargame for each COA. ▪ Advantages and disadvantages (including risk) of each COA. ✓ The recommended COA.
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. RECEIPT OF MISSION 2. MISSION ANALYSIS 3. COA DEVELOPMENT 4. COA ANALYSIS (WARGAME) 5. COA COMPARISON 6. COA APPROVAL 7. ORDERS PRODUCTION 	<h3 align="center">Step 6 - COA Approval</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ After the decision briefing, the commander selects the COA he believes will best accomplish the mission. If the commander rejects all COAs, the staff starts COA development again. ▪ If the commander modifies a proposed COA or gives the staff an entirely different one, the staff wargames the new COA and presents the results to the commander with a recommendation. ▪ After selecting a COA, the commander issues the final planning guidance. This guidance includes a refined commander's intent (if necessary) and new CCIR to support execution. The guidance may also include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Additional guidance on priorities for WFF activities. ✓ Orders preparation. ✓ Rehearsal. ✓ Priorities for sustainment resources. ✓ Acceptable risk. ▪ Based on the commander's decision and final planning guidance, the staff issues a WARNO to subordinate headquarters.
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Summary of Step 6 – COA Approval

INPUT	PROCESS	OUTPUT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff decision matrix. Running estimates. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The staff recommends a COA, usually in a decision briefing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Intent of the higher and next higher commanders. The status of the force and its components. Current IPB. COAs considered (assumptions used, running estimates, summaries of each, advantages and disadvantages, and risk of each COA). Recommended COA. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commander approves a COA. Commander issues the final planning guidance. WARNO # 3.

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Military Decision Making Process

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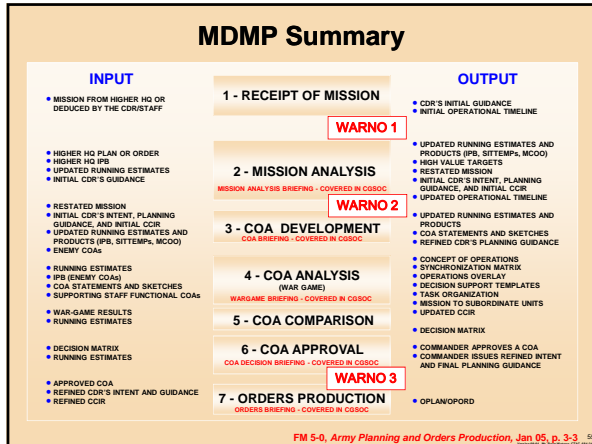
- Introduction to the MDMP
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Step 7 - Orders Production

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. RECEIPT OF MISSION 2. MISSION ANALYSIS 3. COA DEVELOPMENT 4. COA ANALYSIS (IPB/INTENT) 5. COA COMPARISON 6. COA APPROVAL 7. ORDERS PRODUCTION 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The staff prepares the order or plan by turning the selected COA into a clear, concise concept of operations and required supporting information. The concept of operations for the approved COA becomes the concept of operations for the plan. The COA sketch becomes the basis for the operation overlay. Orders and plans provide all information subordinates need for execution. Commanders review and approve orders before the staff reproduces and disseminates them unless they have delegated that authority. Traditionally, the COS/XO or operations officer receives it. If possible, the order is briefed to subordinate commander face to face by the higher commander and staff. The commander and staff conduct confirmation briefings with subordinates immediately afterwards. The specific format for orders will be covered in greater detail during CGSOC.
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MDMP Review

This Lesson addressed the following Key Concepts in order to provide an overview of the Military Decision Making Process:

- The commander's role in planning.** Commanders are in charge of the planning process. From start to finish, their personal role is central. The MDMP hinges on the commander's ability to understand, visualize describe, and direct the operation. The inherent value of MDMP lies in the results achieved, not the process - *it is a means to an end.*
- The staff's role in planning.** The staff's effort during planning focuses on helping the commander make decisions and developing effective plans and orders. It does this by integrating information with sound doctrine and technical competence. The Chief of Staff (COS) or Executive Officer (XO) manages, coordinates, and disciplines the staff's work, and provides quality control.
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- Performing the MDMP.** The MDMP consists of seven steps. The commander and staff perform these steps sequentially; however, there may not be distinct points at which one step ends and another begins.

An exam is provided at the end of this lesson to assess your learning.
