



TACTICAL PLANNING HANDBOOK



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Introduction to the Tactical Planning Handbook

The NGC Innovation Tactical Planning Handbook utilizes NATO's new tactical planning doctrine, Allied Planning Publication (APP) 28 – Tactical Planning for Land Forces.

The Handbook provides a common approach to planning operations at the tactical level. It describes the tactical planning process - a process used by commanders and staffs to analyse a mission, develop, analyse, and compare courses of action, decide on the optimum course of action, and produce a plan and order for execution.

It has been designed and written for utilizations of the Corps level and below.

This handbook will be used by the Operations Planning Group (OPG) members in order to (IOT) run a collaborative planning process with same understanding at higher and subordinate Formations/ Units level.

NGC has adopted APP-28, but is also blending the process and techniques with hard earned lessons of various Corps planning best practices. These practices are clearly highlighted (blue or yellow boxes) in the handbook.

Like all doctrine, this booklet must be viewed as a guide as opposed to a process that must be slavishly followed. There is sometimes a tendency for planning staff to get too caught up processes, it is imperative that planning staff remain focused on the goal: the timely provision of a plan and orders that enable the defeat of the enemy.



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Note that the original APP-28 Table of Contents has been replaced by a table of Contents specific to this NGC publication for ease of access and reference:

CHAPTER / SECTION		PAGE
PREFACE — OVERVIEW OF OPERATIONAL AND TACTICAL LEVEL PLANNING		
CHAPTER 1 — OVERVIEW OF TACTICAL PLANNING FOR LAND FORCES		
1.1	Section I — Mission Command and Operations Process	1-1
1.2	Section II — Planning, Plans and Orders	1-3
1.3	Section III — Structure and Roles	1-6
CHAPTER 2 — PHASE I — UNDERSTANDING THE SITUATION AND PROBLEM		
2.1	Section I — Tactical Planning for Land Forces Overview	2-1
2.2	Section II — Phase I — Step 1: Receipt of Mission	2-3
2.3	Section III — Phase I — Step 2: Mission Analysis	2-19
2.4	Section IV — Phase I — Sup-Step 2A: ORDERS ANALYSIS	2-20
2.5	Section V — Phase I — Sub-Step 2B: Evaluation of Factors	2-33
2.6	Section VI — Develop and Issue a Warning Order	2-50
CHAPTER 3 — PHASE II – CONSIDER AND DEVELOP COURSES OF ACTION		
3.1	Section I — Phase II — Step 3: Course of Action Development	3-1
3.2	Section II — Phase II — Step 4: Course of Action Analysis	3-21
3.3	Section III — Phase II — Step 5: Course of Action Comparison	3-26
CHAPTER 4 — PHASE III – COMMUNICATION		
4.1	Section I — Phase III — Step 6: Commander’s Decision	4-1
4.2	Section II — Phase III — Step 7: Orders Production, Dissemination and Transition	4-3
CHAPTER 5 — PLANNING IN A TIME-CONSTRAINED ENVIRONMENT		
5.1	Section I — Responsibilities	5-1
5.2	Section II — Time Saving Techniques	5-1
CHAPTER 6 — FACTORS		
6.1	General	6-1
6.2	Mission	6-1
6.3	Enemy Forces	6-1
6.4	Terrain and Weather	6-1
6.5	Troops and Support Available	6-2
6.6	Time Available	6-2
6.7	Civil Considerations	6-3



CHAPTER / SECTION		PAGE
CHAPTER 7 — RISK IN PLANNING		
7.1	Introduction	7-1
7.2	Overview	7-1
7.3	Levels of Risks	7-2
7.4	Risk Management (RM) Approaches	7-2
7.5	Risk Management Process Steps	7-5
7.6	HQ Staff Roles	7-13
7.7	Risk Register	7-14
7.8	Causes and the Different Types of Risk	7-17
7.9	Assumptions	7-17
7.10	Terms and Definitions	7-20
CHAPTER 8 — RUNNING ESTIMATES		
8.1	Introduction	8-1
8.2	Running Estimate Mission	8-1
8.3	Essential Qualities of Running Estimates	8-2
8.4	Running Estimate Across the Operation Process	8-3
CHAPTER 9 — ASSESSMENT		
9.1	General	9-1
9.2	Fundamentals of Assessment	9-1
9.3	Assessment Activities	9-2
9.4	Assessment Process	9-6
9.5	Guides to Effective Assessment	9-8
CHAPTER 10 — WARGAMING		
10.1	Introduction	10-1
10.1	Purpose	10-1
10.3	Wargaming Methods	10-1
10.4	Participants	10-2
10.5	Formal Wargame Preparation	10-4
10.6	Suggested Wargame Layout	10-5
10.7	Wargaming Results	10-8
10.8	General Notes on Best Wargaming Practices	10-8
10.9	Participant Briefing Notes	10-9
10.10	Wargaming Process	10-11
CHAPTER 11 — REHEARSAL OF THE CONCEPT DRILL (ROC DRILL)		
11.1	Introduction	11-1
11.2	ROC Drill Aim and Intention	11-1
11.3	Techniques	11-2
11.4	Supporting Tools	11-2



CHAPTER / SECTION		PAGE
11.5	Responsibilities	11-4
11.6	ROC Drill Execution	11-5
CHAPTER 12 — ORGANIZING THE FORCE FOR BATTLEFIELD SUCCESS		
12.1.	Introduction	12-1
12.2	The Operation Structure.	12-1
12.3	The Army Operational Framework	12-1
12.4	Conclusion	12-8
CHAPTER 13 — ANNEXES		
13.1.	ANNEX A – Tactical Planning for Land Force, Quick Reference Guide	13-A-1
13.2.	ANNEX B – Templates	13-B-1
13.2.1.	APPENDIX 1 – Example of Course of Action Characteristic Matrix	13-B-1
13.2.2.	APPENDIX 2 – Example of a Sync Matrix	13-B-1
13.2.3.	APPENDIX 3 – Example of a Decision Brief	13-B-2
13.3.	ANNEX C – OSW FORMATS	13-C-1
13.3.1.	APPENDIX 1 – Warning Order (WNGO)	13-C-1
13.3.2.	APPENDIX 2 – Operation Plan (OPLAN) / Operation Order (OPORD) / Fragmentary Order (FRAGO)	13-C-4
13.4.	ANNEX D – Lexicon	13-D-1
13.4.1.	PART I – List of Acronyms and Abbreviations	13-D-1
13.4.2.	PART II – Terms and Definitions	13-D-2
13.4.3.	PART III – Planning Lexicon for Tactical Terms	13-D-4



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PREFACE – OVERVIEW OF OPERATIONAL AND TACTICAL LEVEL PLANNING

1. Introduction.

In order to (IOT) understand the interaction of operational and tactical level planning, readers should be familiar with the operational level planning process (OLPP) and the fundamentals of operational planning addressed in NGC Innovation Operational Planning Handbook [based on Allied Joint Publication (AJP-5) and the Comprehensive Operations Planning Directive (COPD) Version 3.0].

2. Levels of Command

The Operational Planning Process are primarily applicable across the strategic and operational levels of command but directly affect and require input from the tactical level, and as such needs to be understood by all. The NATO agreed definitions of the levels of command are below.

- a. Strategic Level. The level at which a nation or group of nations determines national or multinational security objectives and deploys national, including military, resources to achieve them.
- b. Operational Level. The level at which campaigns and major operations are planned, conducted and sustained to accomplish strategic objectives within theatres or areas of operations.
- c. Tactical Level. The level at which activities, battles and engagements are planned and executed to accomplish military objectives assigned to tactical formations and units.

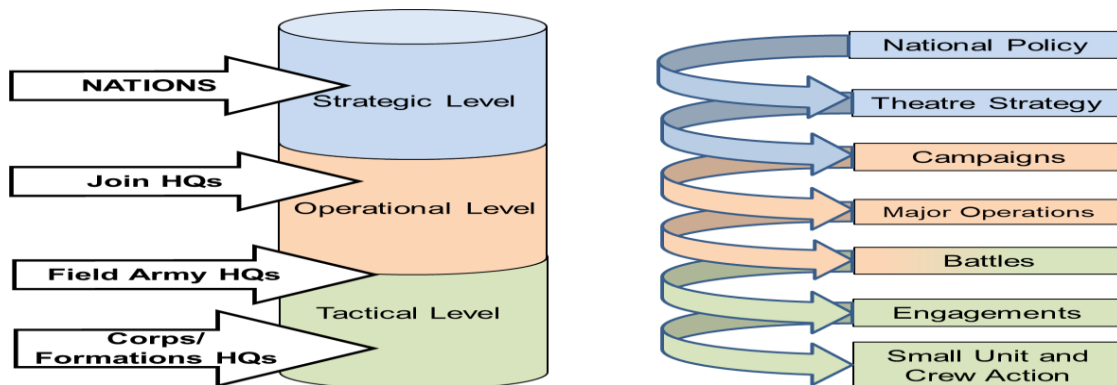


Figure P-1 – The Levels of Command

3. The application of the Operations Planning Process (OPP) at the operational level carried out by designated Joint HQs or Higher Tactical Level Headquarters (Field Army HQs), follows four phases:

- a. Phase 1 – Initial Situational Awareness of a Potential / Actual Crisis
- b. Phase 2 – Operational Appreciation of the Strategic Environment
- c. Phase 3 – Operational Estimate
 - (1) Phase 3A - Mission Analysis
 - (2) Phase 3B - Course of Action Development



- d. Phase 4 – Operations Plan Development
 - (1) Phase 4A – Operational Concept of Operations (CONOPS) Development
 - (2) Phase 4A – Operational Operations Plan (OPLAN) Development

4. The application of the Operations Planning Process (OPP) at the tactical level carried out by designated Corps and below tactical level HQs, consists of three phases and seven steps. The phases and steps are:

- a. Phase 1 – Understanding the Situation and Problem
 - (1) Step 1 – Receipt of the Mission
 - (2) Step 2 – Mission Analysis
 - (a) Step 2a – Order Analysis
 - (b) Step 2b – Evaluation of Factors
- b. Phase 2 – Consider and develop COAs
 - (1) Step 3 – COA Development
 - (2) Step 4 – COA Analysis
 - (3) Step 5 – COA Comparison
- c. Phase 3 – Communication
 - (1) Step 6 – Commander’s Decision
 - (2) Step 7 – Orders Production, Dissemination, and Transition

5. The inter-relations among Levels of Command shown in Figure P-2.

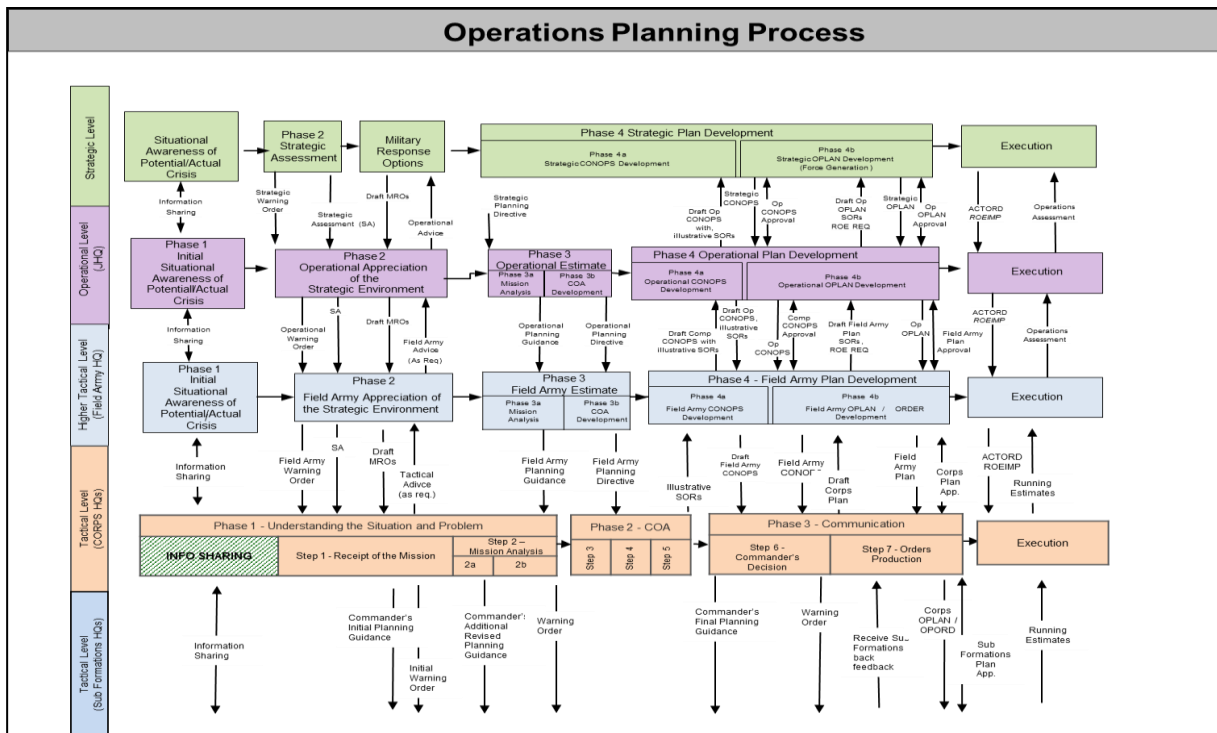


Figure P-2 - Strategic, Operational and Tactical Planning Flow Chart



6. CORPS Visualisation

a. Introduction.

(1) A Corps Visualisation should not be considered a necessary requirement for planning, but rather a planning tool that is available for use and adaptation if it would add value in the planning process.

(2) There are two possible versions presented below for consideration – a British Army-based version (best suited for linking the Corps role to a higher tactical plan) and a US Army-based version (best suited for describing how the Corps will sequence and fight its plan).

b. British Army Format for a Corps Visualisation

(1) This version is an adapted operational framework, and helps visualise the linking of CORPS level HQ's role and tasks / tactical effects into the higher operational scheme of manoeuvre and intent.

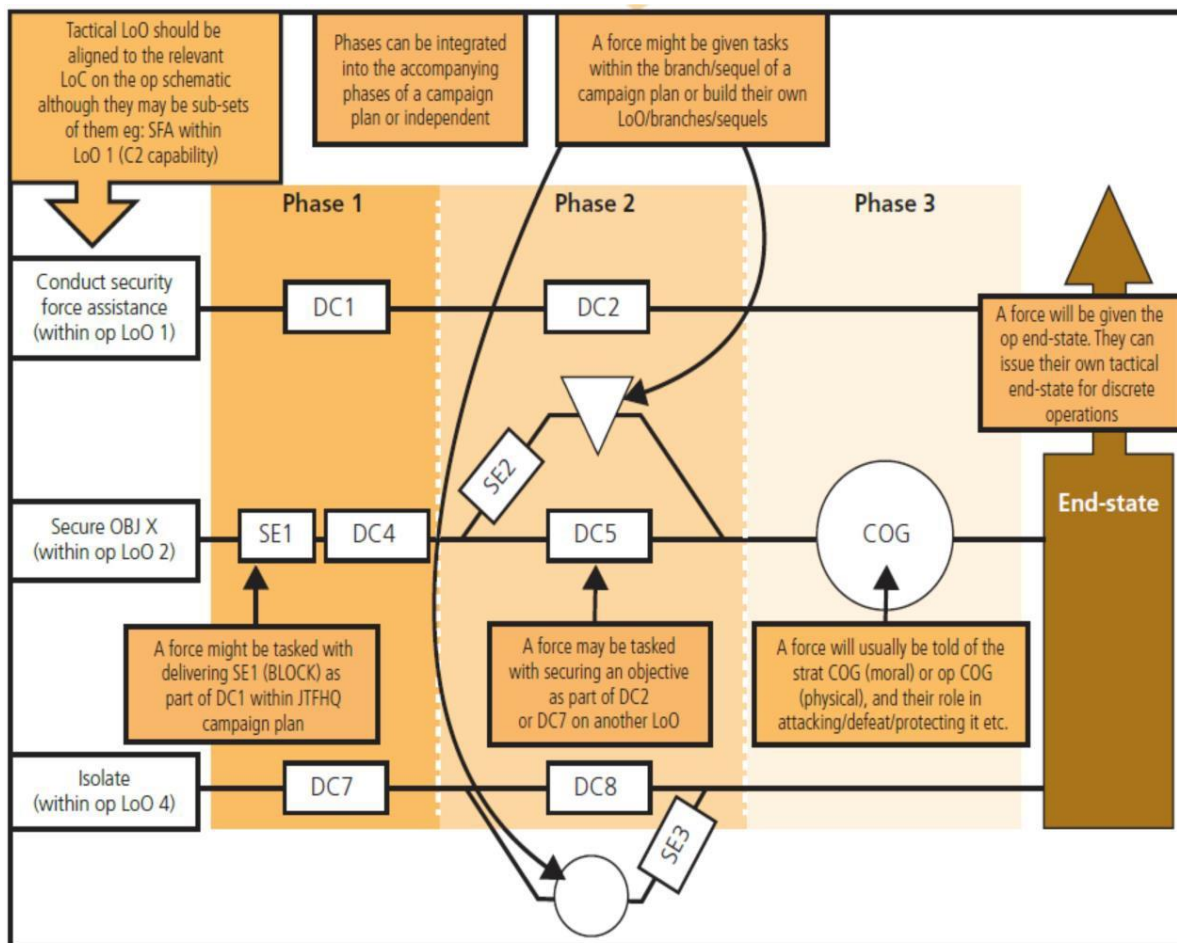
(2) Framework Concepts:

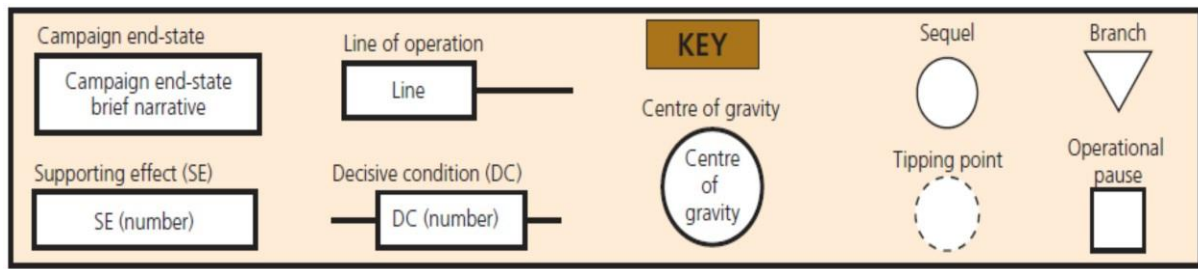
Operational end-state or the outcome	An end-state is the condition which needs to be achieved at the end of an operation, so it also explains the extent of the contribution required from a commander or force. End-states are most commonly used at the operational level, but may be used in tactical planning if doing so adds clarity and aids understanding. Although the outcome is singular and synonymous with the end-state, a series of outcomes can exist at each level of warfare.
Transition and termination	These are vital considerations in the design of an operation. Will include the resolution of a conflict as well as mutual acceptance of terms and conditions. Commanders and staff must clearly understand exit criteria.
Objectives	A goal which contributes to the desired outcome. Objectives can sit at the strategic through to the tactical level noting that, at the tactical level, they should be clearly defined and attainable.
Decisive conditions (DC)	A decisive combination of circumstances deemed necessary to achieve a campaign or operational objective.
(Supporting) effects	The intended consequences of actions. When these effects are realised, decisive conditions are realised.
Lines of Operation (LoO)	In a campaign or operation, a line linking decisive conditions or points in time and space on the path to the centre of gravity. Lines may be functional, thematic or environmental.
Sequencing and synchronising	Sequencing is the logical arrangement of effects and activities based on their interdependencies. Synchronisation applies time and space considerations to sequences and thus establishes their feasibility.
Phases	These represent distinct stages in the progress of a campaign leading to decisive conditions to reach the outcome.
Contingency plans (branches and sequels)	A plan which is developed for possible operations where the planning factors have been identified or can be assumed. Branches provide alternative ways to achieve DCs within a



	phase. Sequels provide an alternative option for the next phase, based on the outcome of the current phase.
Culminating point	A culminating point is reached when the current situation can be maintained, but not developed to any greater advantage. To attempt to do so, without a pause or reinforcement, would risk over-extension and the vulnerability this may cause.
Operational pause	An operational pause can be imposed on an operation or campaign out of necessity or through choice. Although a pause tends to reduce tempo in the short term, it may increase it later on. Pauses are used to avoid culmination. They should be exploited to regain or strengthen a hold on the initiative and increase momentum
Tipping point/fulcrum	The point during a campaign when an approximate, albeit fluctuating, equilibrium between opposing forces is disrupted significantly. One side starts winning and the other losing, potentially irreversibly. The very act of attempting to define it and its distinctive criteria, however, can help to identify opportunities and create the requisite conditions for success.

(3) Example of a Corps Visualisation Framework (UK approach)





c. US Army Format for a Corps Visualisation

(1) The operational framework “is a cognitive tool used to assist commanders and staffs in clearly visualizing and describing the application of combat power in time, space, purpose, and resources in the concept of operations.” It allows the commander to describe operations by echelon geographically within the context of an Area of Operations (AO). The operational framework provides an organizing construct for how the commander intends to organize the AO geographically (deep, close, support, and consolidation areas), by purpose (decisive, shaping, and sustaining operations), and by effort (main and supporting).

(2) Framework Concepts:

End State and Conditions	The end state is a set of desired future conditions the commander wants to exist when an operation ends. Army operations typically focus on achieving the military end state that may include contributions to establishing nonmilitary conditions.
Centers of Gravity	A center of gravity is the source of power that provides moral or physical strength, freedom of action, or will to act.
Decisive Points	A decisive point is a geographic place, specific key event, critical factor, or function that, when acted upon, allows commanders to gain a marked advantage over an enemy or contribute materially to achieving success.
Lines of Operations	A line of operations is a line that defines the directional orientation of a force in time and space in relation to the enemy and links the force with its base of operations and objectives.
Lines of Effort	A line of effort is a line that links multiple tasks using the logic of purpose rather than geographical reference to focus efforts toward establishing a desired end state. Lines of effort are essential to long-term planning when positional references to an enemy or adversary have little relevance.
Tempo	Tempo is the relative speed and rhythm of military operations over time with respect to the enemy. It reflects the rate of military action.
Phasing and Transitions	A phase is a planning and execution tool used to divide an operation in duration or activity. A change in phase usually involves a change of mission, task organization, or rules of engagement. Transitions mark a change of focus between phases or between the ongoing operation and execution of a branch or sequel. Shifting priorities among offensive, defensive, stability, and defense support of civil authorities (DSCA) tasks also involve transitions.



Culmination	The culminating point is a point at which a force no longer has the capability to continue its form of operations, offense or defense.
Operational Reach	Operational reach reflects the ability to achieve success through a well-conceived operational approach, and it is applicable to Army forces operating as part of the joint force
Basing	A base is a locality from which operations are projected or supported
Risk	Risk is the probability and severity of loss linked to hazards. Risk, uncertainty, and chance are inherent in all military operations.
Operational Framework	The operational framework “is a cognitive tool used to assist commanders and staffs in clearly visualizing and describing the application of combat power in time, space, purpose, and resources in the concept of operations.” The operational framework provides an organizing construct for how the commander intends to organize the AO geographically (deep, close, support, and consolidation areas), by purpose (decisive, shaping, and sustaining operations), and by effort (main and supporting).
Decisive Operations	The decisive operation is the operation that directly accomplishes the mission.
Shaping Operations	A shaping operation is an operation at any echelon that creates and preserves conditions for success of the decisive operation through effects on the enemy, other actors, and the terrain.
Sustaining Operations	A sustaining operation is an operation at any echelon that enables the decisive operation or shaping operations by generating and maintaining combat power.
Main Effort (ME)	The main effort is a designated subordinate unit whose mission at a given point in time is most critical to overall mission success.
Supporting Effort (SE)	The supporting effort is a designated subordinate unit with a mission that supports the success of the main effort.
Deep Area	The deep area is where the commander sets conditions for future success in close combat.
Close Area	The close area is the portion of the commander’s area of operations where the majority of subordinate maneuver forces conduct close combat.
Support Area	A support area is the portion of the commander’s area of operations that is designated to facilitate the positioning, employment, and protection of base sustainment assets required to sustain, enable, and control operations.
Consolidation Area	The consolidation area is the portion of the land commander’s area of operations that may be designated to facilitate freedom of action, consolidate gains through decisive action, and set conditions to transition the area of operations to follow on forces or other legitimate authorities. Commanders establish a consolidation area, particularly in the offense as the friendly force gains territory, to exploit tactical success while enabling freedom of action for forces operating in the other areas.



(3) Example of a Corps Visualisation Framework (US approach)

