

FM 3-09.31
MCRP 3-16C

Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures For Fire Support for the Combined Arms Commander



U.S. Marine Corps

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PREFACE

Like its predecessors TC 6-71 (1988) and the first field manual-version of FM 6-71 (1994), this publication is intended for you, the combined arms brigade or battalion commander, and your staffs to help you synchronize fires with your scheme of maneuver. You know from experience that combat forces must be employed as part of the combined arms team. Maneuver and fires must be synchronized and orchestrated by the combined arms commander to realize the full potential of each arm and maximize the combat power of the combined arms team. The same applies in principle to firepower. Mortars, cannon and rocket artillery, naval gunfire, and air support on the lethal side, and intelligence and electronic warfare (IEW) and information operations (IO) systems on the non-lethal side, are various means of fire support. Each has its own advantages and disadvantages. Each provides a measure of capability the others lack: responsiveness, flexibility, and accuracy from mortars and artillery; precision and destructiveness from close air support; disruption of command and control and capability to exclude collateral damage from IEW and IO systems. Using all of these means in combination creates a synergistic effect - the whole system is far more effective than its parts. The proper application of fire support requires as much skill and orchestration from the combined arms commander as it does from the fire support coordinator (FSCoord). This is what this publication is about, to help clarify the art of applying fire support at the right time and place on the battlefield.

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Unless this publication states otherwise, masculine nouns or pronouns do not refer exclusively to men.

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By Order of the Secretary of the Army:

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By direction of the Commandant of the Marine Corps

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Chapter 1

SYNCHRONIZATION

"There is still a tendency in each separate unit...to be a one-handed puncher. By that I mean that the rifleman wants to shoot, the tankier to charge, the artilleryman to fire...That is not the way to win battles. If the band played a piece first with the piccolo, then with the brass horn, then with the clarinet, and then with the trumpet, there would be a hell of a lot of noise but no music. To get the harmony in music each instrument must support the others. To get harmony in battle, each weapon must support the other. Team play wins. You musicians of Mars must not wait for the band leader to signal you...You must each of your own volition see to it that you come into this concert at the proper place and at the proper time..."

General George S. Patton, Jr., 8 July 1941, address to the men of the 2nd Armored Division, The Patton Papers, Vol. II, 1974

1-1. Synchronization is the arrangement of military actions in time, space and purpose to produce maximum relative combat power at a decisive place and time. Combined arms operations are the synchronized and simultaneous application of several arms, such as infantry, armor, aviation, artillery, engineer, intelligence, and air defense to achieve greater effects on the enemy than that achieved if each arm were used against the enemy in sequence or against separate objectives. The challenge to the combined arms commander is to achieve synchronization. While success in any battle, engagement, or operation is never guaranteed, its achievement is much more likely for the commander who can synchronize military actions.

1-2. The range of operations for which the combined arms commander must be able to synchronize military actions is broad. While primarily concentrating on offensive and defensive operations, he must also be able to synchronize his unit's activities during stability and support operations (SASO) when given those missions. In [Chapter 2](#) this manual will address synchronization by defining important responsibilities for commanders and staff members of maneuver brigades and battalions.

1-3. [FM 3-100.40](#) (100-40), *Tactics*, is the basic doctrinal reference for tactics. Knowledge of its contents is assumed for maneuver commanders. Similarly, armor and mechanized commanders delineate their tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTP) in the FM 71-series, infantry in the FM 7-series and aviation in the FM 1-series. Combined arms commanders must *insist* that their FSCOORDs and FSOs understand the maneuver TTP of these manuals - fire supporters must take it upon themselves to become as well versed as possible in maneuver TTP. Conversely, FSCOORDs and FSOs should