

Why Sustainers Should Care About the Targeting Process

■ By Maj. Steven T. Smith

In the Army, there exists a misconception that the targeting process is only applicable to fires, movement and maneuver, and military intelligence activities. This fallacy leads sustainment units and their company-level leaders to disregard their relevance to the targeting process, and many of them do not know how to leverage it to increase Soldier survivability.

Observer-coach/trainers noticed these shortfalls at the Joint Readiness Training Center at Fort Polk, Louisiana, where two trends emerged: most sustainers did not understand how to participate in the targeting process, and sustainers do not always clearly understand their relevance to targeting working groups. Both trends occurred because sustainers do not know how the targeting process integrates sustainment problem sets into the big picture.

The purpose of this article is to help both the sustainment community and company-level leaders understand how to leverage the targeting process to increase survivability of Soldiers.

Targeting and Sustainment

Joint Publication 3-0, Joint Operations, defines targeting as “the process of selecting and prioritizing targets and matching the appropriate response to them considering both operational requirements and capabilities.” In other words, the targeting process provides an effective method for aligning capabilities against targets, both lethal and nonlethal.

Chapter 1 of Army Doctrine Reference Publication 4-0, Sustainment, describes the eight principles of sustainment as fundamental for the sustainment community’s capabilities to

maintain combat power, enable strategic and operational reach, and provide commanders with operational endurance. One of the principles the publication describes is survivability—the capability of military forces to avoid or withstand hostile actions or environmental conditions while retaining the ability to fulfill their primary mission.

Survivability is especially relevant to units performing tactical convoy operations. The targeting process can help the sustainment community and company-level leaders focus their efforts toward survivability.

Participating in Targeting

At the brigade combat team level, both the battalion and brigade S-4s can use the targeting process much like they already use the logistics synchronization meeting. Focusing on the principle of sustainment survivability, battalion and brigade S-4s can participate in targeting working groups at their respective levels in order to align mobility or counter-mobility protection assets to either a forward support company or brigade support battalion logistics convoys. (See figure 1.)

Company-level leaders typically rely on a battalion or brigade S-2 to provide analyses that predict enemy activity over both time and space. However, the missing link for convoy commanders is aligning protection assets to increase Soldier survivability. The targeting working group does not always align all friendly protection assets, such as unmanned aerial systems, close air support, air weapons teams, and scout weapon teams, with ground assets, such as forward support com-

pany and brigade support battalion logistics convoys.

The working group is a prime opportunity for the battalion or brigade S-4 to request those assets to provide survivability protection and thus increase the commander’s operational momentum in an immature environment. Once a battalion or brigade S-4 aligns an asset with a logistics convoy, the start point times become more urgent than when no predictive analysis is done.

Company-level leaders can also apply the targeting methods to everyday events. For instance, most company-level leaders conduct a daily or weekly troop-to-task coordination to align Soldiers and resources with taskings assigned by the battalion S-3 staff. This coordination is essentially an internal targeting working group.

Company-level leaders can expand the simple troop-to-task method by applying the targeting process to request aerial protection assets or ground protection assets (such as route clearance packages and military police convoy security platforms). By planning with this level of detail, leaders can better ensure their Soldiers are protected as they traverse an area of operations.

Sustainers in Working Groups

Sustainment leaders rarely participate in targeting working groups. This is largely because they are inexperienced or lack understanding of the process. The limiting factor that no one clearly understands or can demonstrate is how sustainment drives maneuver efforts. This is unfortunate because sustainment leaders’ lack of participation may drastically reduce how they protect their force in order to ensure the commander’s

Targeting List With Sustainment Highlights

Current Operations				Future Operations				
DTG	FEB 16	FEB 17	FEB 18	FEB 19	FEB 20	FEB 21	FEB 22	
S-2	Route ZINC 0900–1000 IED emplacement window and 1500–1600 IED emplacement window between Turani and Dara Lam.							
	Route GOLD 0800–1100 IED with small arms attacks around CP 10A; 1400–1500 IED with mortar fire around CP 13B.							
	A/DACG 0600–0800 mortar fire; 1700–1900 mortar fire.							
	BSA 0530–0630 mortar fire; 1700–1900 mortar fire; enemy recon of BSA (1230–1400 be on the lookout for a white Ford observed).							
RCP	RCP 1: Route ZINC, SP BSA, arrive at Turani at 0730 and stop at Dara Lam at 1545.							
	RCP 2: Route GOLD, SP BSA, arrive at CP 10A at 0730 and stop at CP 13B at 1430.							
BSA	0430 stand-to until complete and 1630 stand-to until complete.							
A CO/BSB	T: LOGPAC P: SPT IBCT1 SP 1300	T: LOGPAC P: SPT IBCT2 SP 1130	T: Sling P: SPT Recon	T: LOGPAC P: SPT IBCT1 SP 1300	T: LOGPAC P: SPT IBCT2 SP 1130	T: Sling P: SPT Recon	T: LOGPAC P: SPT IBCT1 SP TBD	T: Sling P: SPT Recon
B CO/BSB	T: LOGPAC P: SPT A CO SP 1300	T: LOGPAC P: SPT A CO SP 1130		T: LOGPAC P: SPT A CO SP 1300	T: LOGPAC P: SPT A CO SP 1130		T: LOGPAC P: SPT A CO SP TBD	
C CO/BSB	T: LOGPAC P: SPT A CO SP 1300	T: LOGPAC P: SPT A CO SP 1130		T: LOGPAC P: SPT A CO SP 1300	T: LOGPAC P: SPT A CO SP 1130		T: LOGPAC P: SPT A CO SP TBD	
UAV	T: Recon GOLD / 13B 1300–1400	T: Recon Turani 1100–1200		T: Recon GOLD / 13B 1300–1400	T: Recon Turani 1100–1200		T: Recon GOLD / 13B SP TBD	
AWT/AVN	T: SPT Convoy GOLD / 13B SP 1315 / 1415	T: SPT Convoy Turani SP 1115		T: SPT Convoy GOLD / 13B SP 1315 / 1415	T: SPT Convoy Turani SP 1115		T: SPT Convoy GOLD / 13B SP TBD	
S-3 Staff	Battle track current mission FEB 16. Finalize coordination for FEB 17 missions. Issue order for FEB 18 mission. Conduct targeting covering FEB 16–23.							
SPO Staff	Finalize coordination for FEB 18–19 missions. Provide S-3 staff details in targeting meeting for missions FEB 19 and forward. Conduct targeting covering FEB 16–23.							
Legend A/DACG = Arrival/departure airfield control group CP = Command post P = Purpose SPO = Support operations AWT/AVN = Air weapons teams/aviation DTG = Date time group RCP = Route clearance package SPT = Support BSA = Brigade support area IBCT = Infantry brigade combat team RT = Route T = Task BSB = Brigade support battalion IED = Improvised explosive device Sling = Sling load operation TBD = To be determined CO = Company LOGPAC = Logistics package SP = Start point UAV = Unmanned aerial vehicle								

Figure 1. This table is an example of a targeting list that includes sustainment tasks. When planning current and future operations, targeting working groups can help sustainment leaders match protection assets to ensure Soldier survivability. The brown and yellow overlapping area indicates times when future operations planning will take place during current operations.

operational reach and endurance.

S-4s are not the only sustainers who play a vital role in the targeting process. Battalion medical officers and brigade surgeons also play critical roles. For example, the brigade surgeon can participate in nonlethal effects working groups in order to provide a different perspective on nonlethal targeting. The medical officers can also work with organizations such as the U.S. Agency for International Development, Doctors without Borders, the World Health

Organization, and the American Red Cross.

The targeting process can assist both company-level leaders and sustainment units to increase operational reach and survivability by mapping out both friendly and enemy key events over space and time. The targeting process enables sustainment leaders to effectively protect the force, thus satisfying the sustainment principle of survivability in order to promote combat power, enable strategic and opera-

tional reach, and provide commanders with operational endurance.

Maj. Steven T. Smith was the brigade combat team sustainment observer-coach/trainer at the Joint Readiness Training Center at Fort Polk, Louisiana, when he wrote this article. He holds a bachelor's degree in secondary education from Louisiana State University. He is a graduate of the Combined Logistics Captains Career Course and is currently attending Intermediate Level Education.