



Research Product 98-30

COBRAS Brigade Staff Exercise Orientation Guide

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19980311 056

October 1997

Armored Forces Research Unit

U.S. Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences

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Research accomplished under contract
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Human Resources Research Organization

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REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE

1. REPORT DATE (dd-mm-yy) 1997, October			2. REPORT TYPE Final		3. DATES COVERED (from... to) July 1996 - March 1997	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE COBRAS Brigade Staff Exercise Orientation Guide			5a. CONTRACT OR GRANT NUMBER DASW01-94-D-0011			
			5b. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER 0602785A			
6. AUTHOR(S) Charlotte H. Campbell and Daniel E. Deter (HumRRO);and Kathleen A. Quinkert (ARI)			5c. PROJECT NUMBER A791			
			5d. TASK NUMBER 2228			
			5e. WORK UNIT NUMBER R05			
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) Human Resources Research Organization (HumRRO) 66 Canal Center Plaza, Suite 400 Alexandria, VA 22314			8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER			
9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) U.S. Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences ATTN: TAPC-ARI-IK 5001 Eisenhower Avenue Alexandria, VA 22333-5600			10. MONITOR ACRONYM ARI			
			11. MONITOR REPORT NUMBER Research Product 98-30			
12. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited.						
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES COR: Kathleen A. Quinkert						
14. ABSTRACT (Maximum 200 words): This Orientation Guide acquaints leaders of armored and mechanized brigades with the Brigade Staff Exercise that is part of the <i>Combined Arms Operations at Brigade Level, Realistically Achieved Through Simulation (COBRAS) Program</i> . Additionally, it provides leaders with sufficient information to decide if and how to include this in their unit training program, by providing an overview, the intent, and requirements of the exercise.						
15. SUBJECT TERMS Structured Training Brigade/Battalion Battle Simulation Simulation-Based Training COBRAS						
SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF			19. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT Unlimited	20. NUMBER OF PAGES 45	21. RESPONSIBLE PERSON (Name and Telephone Number) Kathleen A. Quinkert, Contracting Officer's Representative	
16. REPORT Unclassified	17. ABSTRACT Unclassified	18. THIS PAGE Unclassified				

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October 1997

Army Project Number
2O262785A791

Education and Training Technology

Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited.

FOREWORD

Within today's Army, two conflicting forces are at work: decreasing resources for training, and increasing demands for highly trained and proficient personnel. Force reductions and other cost efficiencies require the Army to reduce its expenditures for high-fidelity institutional and field training. At the same time, introduction of more complex systems and equipment, changes to doctrine and organization, and a changing geopolitical landscape require that training be more committed to quality and efficiency than ever before.

To meet these challenges, Congress provided Fiscal Year 1994 research and development funding for the establishment of the Force XXI Training Program (formerly known as the Virtual Brigade Training Program) at Fort Knox, Kentucky. The intent of this program is to explore and utilize simulation technologies and instructional principles to create structured training programs that fully leverage available resources in providing efficient, effective training to brigade staffs. The focus is on both preparing and equipping the Army of the 21st century and ensuring that today's Army is sufficiently ready to provide the foundation for continuing change and modernization.

The U.S. Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences (ARI), Armored Forces Research Unit (AFRU) at Fort Knox, the Force XXI Training Program, and the U.S. Army Armor Center (USAARMC) joined forces to sponsor training research and development (R&D) for one element of the Congressionally mandated effort: simulation-based training for the conventional mounted brigade. The R&D work was performed under a project known as the *Combined Arms Operations at Brigade Level, Realistically Achieved Through Simulation (COBRAS)*. The project is an element of Research Task 2228-R05.

This Orientation Guide provides an introduction to the Brigade Staff Exercise of the COBRAS project. It acquaints leaders with the exercise and provides them with sufficient information to decide if they want to include the exercise in their unit training program and understand its intent and requirements.

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Technical Director

COBRAS BRIGADE STAFF EXERCISE ORIENTATION GUIDE

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Preface

Purpose

This guide was originally designed for **the brigade commander and the executive officer (XO)** of a brigade that is planning to use the COBRAS Brigade Staff Exercise. It also serves as an overview of the exercise for anyone interested in learning about the intent and requirements of the exercise.

It has been written to focus attention on the benefits that the brigade will receive from conducting this tactical exercise in the brigade/battalion battle simulation (BBS).

General information

The *Combined Arms Operations at Brigade Level, Realistically Achieved Through Simulation* (COBRAS) exercise is a battle simulation training program that encompasses **planning, preparation, execution, and sustainment**.

By design, the **structured exercise** brings together the commander and his primary staff for the opportunity to focus on commander/staff decisions and team building.

The COBRAS training program is designed to provide a challenging training vehicle that affords brigade commanders and their staffs the opportunity to practice:

- Planning for tactical missions.
- Employing the brigade's combat power.
- Synchronizing rear area sustainment operations.

Further, it offers an opportunity for the commander to clearly articulate his philosophy on how his organization will function. Using a simulation-based training exercise, he can then put into practice those procedures and controls.

Continued on next page

Preface, continued

Goals

The COBRAS program is designed to assist the commander, as the brigade's principal trainer and mentor, in achieving the following goals:

- Enhanced brigade staff understanding of doctrine as it pertains to mission and theater of operation.
 - Improved command and staff teamwork, procedures, and skills for specific primary staff positions.
 - Enhanced decision-making and command and control procedures.
 - Common understanding among brigade staff of the commander's battle style and intent.
 - Enhanced staff coordination and information exchange.
-

The brigade training strategy

The COBRAS Brigade Staff Exercise gives the brigade commander and staff an opportunity to practice and refine their staff processes. The exercise will be useful for any unit as:

- A tool to use when a new commander takes over or other major changes in the Brigade Combat Team's (BCT's) leaders or staff occur. The exercise will allow the commander to communicate his decision-making process to the BCT and refine the Standing Operating Procedures (SOP) necessary to carry out that process.
- A sustainment tool to further practice and refine those processes.

It will also be useful for brigades that are scheduled for a rotation at the National Training Center (NTC) as:

- A precursor to participation in the NTC Leader Training Program (LTP).
 - An improve-and-sustain tool between the LTP and a brigade NTC exercise.
 - A means of maintaining the lessons learned after the NTC exercise.
-

The COBRAS program offers commanders the opportunity to build their command and staff team with the support of peer professional officers and an advanced simulation system.

COBRAS Brigade Staff Exercise Orientation Guide

Section 1: Guide Overview

1.1 Introduction to the Guide

Purpose of the guide

This *Brigade Orientation Guide* has five primary purposes:

- Provide an *overview* of the COBRAS Brigade Staff Exercise for leaders of armor and mechanized infantry brigades and their parent divisions.
- Provide leaders with sufficient *resource information* to enable them to decide whether and when to implement the training.
- Explain the process for *selecting the mission(s) to train*.
- Discuss *variations in implementation* and how to minimize the effects.
- Explain the *implementing actions* required to conduct the training.

A secondary purpose for the guide is to provide a general overview of the Brigade Staff Exercise for any interested readers.

Contents of the guide

The five primary purposes are covered in the following sections of the guide.

	Section	Page
2	Overview of the COBRAS Brigade Staff Exercise • Training goals and objectives. • Exercise description.	2
3	Resource Information • Personnel. • Time. • Simulation. • The training support package.	9
4	Selecting the Mission(s) to Train • The scenario and missions. • Mission selection options. • Making the selection.	16
5	Variations in Implementation • Reasons for the implementation model. • Complications caused by variations to the model. • How to minimize complications.	22
6	Implementing Actions • Planning and preparation timeline. • Commander and XO actions. • Near term implementation activities.	31

Section 2: Overview of the COBRAS Brigade Staff Exercise

2.1 Introduction

Purpose	This section provides an overview of the COBRAS Brigade Staff Exercise. It discusses: • Training goals and objectives of the program. • The exercise participants and the scenario.
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2.2 Training Goals and Objectives of the Program

Design-supported objectives	The strength of the program lies in its focus on the workings of the brigade staff. The emphasis is on the interactive tasks which occur between various sections or individuals.
Training goals	There are four performance-oriented training goals for the brigade staff: 1. Performance of the full mission requirements (planning, preparation, execution, consolidation and reorganization, and anticipation of follow-on mission requirements). 2. Sequential performance of the military decision-making process (MDMP), performed without time pressure, and of the decision-making process performed under time constrained conditions. 3. Complete production of planning and preparation products including interim products and inputs. 4. Integration of selected combat support (CS) and combat service support (CSS) functions into the staff processes of planning, preparation, and execution.

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2.2 Training Goals and Objectives of the Program, Continued

**Exercise
emphasis**

Within those four goals, the training places special emphasis on:

- CSS.
 - Planning.
 - Decision-making processes.
-

***Combat service
support***

The Brigade/Battalion Battle Simulation (BBS) is used to generate the information, cues, and simulated operations which allow CSS to be a major consideration. This requires CSS-directed staff actions during all phases of the exercise.

Rationale: The training is designed to give the staff the opportunity to function as an integrated team. Therefore, it is important that all facets of staff responsibility be incorporated.

Planning

The exercise covers the full array of staff activities. An integral part is the requirement to conduct the full planning process.

Rationale: There is considerable evidence that problems in planning and preparation are the source of many of the problems which show up in execution. Staffs expend much of their energy in getting through the planning phase and are unable to continue that intensity through the preparation and execution phases.

With continual practice and the improvement of the planning processes, brigade staffs will have better constructed and more complete plans to guide their units and will have conserved the time and energy needed to supervise preparations and then to execute the missions.

Continued on next page

2.2 Training Goals and Objectives of the Program, Continued

Decision-making process The exercise scenario addresses both the MDMP and an accelerated version of the process at different points in the story line.

- Two of the missions provide the needed time for the brigade staff to use the MDMP to develop its plan: movement to contact (MTC) and deliberate attack (DATK).
- Limited time is available in the area defense (AD) mission, requiring the brigade to use an accelerated process. An outline of an accelerated process is provided for the brigade staff members in the training support package (TSP).

Rationale: Usually a brigade will not have the time to follow all the steps of the MDMP. There is clearly a need for brigade staffs to be able to develop plans and orders under the time constraints of rapidly paced operations, to rapidly gather the correct information, analyze the critical factors, and then make and disseminate executable decisions within limited periods of time.

However, before a unit works on accelerating the planning process, it should understand and be able to execute the basic process.

Specific training objectives

In preparation for the exercise, all members of the primary training audience (listed on the next page) receive a list of the tasks they will perform during each of the missions. The exercise conditions are designed so that these tasks will be cued and will contribute to the unit's success.

2.3 Description of the Exercise

“Structured” training

The COBRAS Brigade Staff Exercise is a structured, simulation-based training program.

It is referred to as “structured” because it is very carefully constructed to focus on selected performance objectives. In this case, the focus is on *interactions among the brigade commander and his staff as they conduct planning and employ brigade assets.*

Primary training audience

The primary training audience for the exercise includes the following:

- Brigade commander.
- Executive officer (XO).
- Adjutant (S1).
- Intelligence officer (S2).
- Operations and training officer (S3).
- Supply officer (S4).
- Fire support coordinator (FSCOORD, the direct support (DS) artillery battalion commander).
- Fire support officer (FSO).
- Air defense coordinator (ADCOORD, the air defense artillery (ADA) battery commander).
- Engineer (ENGR, the engineer battalion commander).
- Forward support battalion commander (FSB commander).
- Signal officer.
- Military police (MP) platoon leader.
- Assistant S3/chemical officer.
- Military intelligence (MI) company commander.
- Army aviation liaison officer (AVN LNO) (*AD and DATK missions only*).

Members of the brigade’s staff sections, subordinate units, and supporting units will also participate, although they are not part of the primary training audience. That is, training objectives and after action reviews (AARs) are not focused on these other participants.

Continued on next page

2.3 Description of the Exercise, Continued

Missions

The COBRAS Brigade Staff Exercise includes practice on three brigade missions:

- MTC.
- AD.
- DATK.

It includes practice on all phases of these missions: planning, preparation, execution, consolidation, and reorganization.

Task organization

The exercise brigade is 3 Brigade, 55 Infantry Division (Mechanized) (ID[M]), a heavy, conventionally equipped brigade with:

- Four battalions (two mechanized infantry, two armor).
 - Cavalry troop.
 - Engineer battalion.
 - DS and reinforcing artillery battalions.
 - ADA battery.
 - Forward support battalion.
 - MP platoon.
 - Chemical company.
 - MI company.
 - Other supporting units normally associated with the brigade.
-

The terrain and threat

The locale for the missions is the Mojave Desert; specifically, it is the terrain of the NTC as portrayed in the BBS 180 km x 180 km terrain database.

The opposing force (OPFOR) in the scenario is a Krasnovian Heavy organization.

Note: Although the NTC also uses the Krasnovian Heavy organization for the OPFOR, *the enemy as portrayed in the COBRAS exercise will not be a replica of the NTC OPFOR.*

Continued on next page

2.3 Description of the Exercise, Continued

Scenario story line	The missions are linked in a continuous story line, providing a consistent context for the three missions. The continuing operations between missions over several battlefield days logically prompt CSS activities, which are a focus of the training program.
Performance feedback	Performance feedback is provided to the primary training audience in three ways: • Observers will be assigned to monitor individual members of the brigade staff. As the exercise is conducted, they will be available for discussion and suggestions on how various aspects of the staff member's job should be performed, how products should be generated, and which of the other staff members should be involved. • Observers will also conduct informal feedback sessions for small groups of staff members as needed. • The Senior Observer will conduct AARs at specified points in the exercise. The AARs will focus on staff processes required during the just completed segment of the exercise. The method for attaining that focus will be by a process of examining and discussing staff products and other process outcomes. AARs occur approximately every six hours.
The role of the brigade commander	The brigade commander and the Exercise Director (described in Section 3) are the major decision-makers in this exercise. The brigade commander is responsible for the preparation and readiness of the training audience for the exercise, for the functioning of his staff, and for maintenance of staff work areas. The exercise is designed so that the Exercise Director will be the senior trainer and will have the major role in directing the exercise.

 The *Exercise Guide* provides a complete description of the activities that will be required during the exercise.

Using that information, the brigade commander and Exercise Director will need to decide who will be responsible for guiding the scenario flow during the exercise.

Continued on next page

2.3 Description of the Exercise, Continued

Nonsupported activities

The brigade must understand that the COBRAS Brigade Staff Exercise is *not* a simulation-supported command post exercise (CPX). Some of the characteristics that separate it from a CPX include:

- It is an 8 to 10-hour a day training program; it does *not* incorporate 24-hour operations.
 - It is focused on a specific audience; it does *not* target training of subordinate task forces, the enabling skills of how to be a staff officer, or battlefield operating system (BOS) functions and capabilities (apart from the audience focus).
 - It is designed to be run with command posts (CPs) in or at the BBS simulation site; it does *not* provide for practice in setting up field CPs and communications nor other similar important parts of brigade operations.
 - It has a planned Mission, Enemy, Terrain, Troops and Time (METT-T); it does *not*, in its current configuration, support infinite variations in enemy tactics and techniques, terrain, task organization, or fighting systems (e.g., digitized).
-

Section 3: Resource Information

3.1 Introduction

Purpose	This section describes the resource requirements for implementing the exercise: • Personnel. • Time. • Simulation. It also describes the TSP that will be provided to assist in implementation.
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3.2 Personnel Requirements

Personnel requirements	The exercise requires personnel support in addition to the primary training audience (listed in Section 2). The number of persons in each role and a more precise description of their qualifications will be provided in the <i>Exercise Guide</i>, a component of the TSP (see Section 3.3). A brief description of each role is given below.
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<i>Exercise Director</i>	The Exercise Director has the major responsibilities both before and during the exercise. They include: • Overseeing the coordination and planning for the exercise. • Controlling the flow and progress of the mission events during the exercise. • Serving as the 55 ID(M) commander as needed.
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One of the division's assistant division commanders (ADCs), or someone of comparable operational and training experience, would be well suited to the role.

Continued on next page

3.2 Personnel Requirements, Continued

Note: Brigade commander as Exercise Director It is *not* recommended that the brigade commander serve as Exercise Director. If he chooses to do so, he should at the very least appoint an assistant to serve as the controller during the conduct of the exercise itself. There are two reasons for this guidance:

- The commander is considered a key participant and member of the target training audience during the exercise and should be completely immersed in his role in the exercise.
 - The individual who controls the flow and progress of the exercise will know too much about the planned outcomes to also be a member of the training audience.
-

COBRAS Coordinator The COBRAS Coordinator assists the Exercise Director in coordinating and helping the unit prepare for the training. He will probably do most of the work to plan and coordinate resources for the exercise. The COBRAS Coordinator should be a member of the Assistant Chief of Staff, Operations (G3) planning or training staff.

This officer could come from the brigade being trained. However, the need to draw resources from across the division suggests assigning a coordinator who can task assets outside the brigade which is receiving the training.

Blue Forces Controller The Blue Forces Controller will assist the Exercise Director during the final preparations and actual conduct of the training. This officer must have BBS expertise and must be familiar with the full range of operations at and below brigade level.

The Blue Forces Controller will be in charge of the activity at the Blue (friendly) simulation workstations and will also be the primary link between the Exercise Director and the simulation workstations during the training.

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3.2 Personnel Requirements, Continued

Observers The observers provide feedback to the brigade staff in training. They are not a permanent observation team and will likely have to be tasked from another similar unit. They should hold comparable positions and have comparable levels of experience as the training audience member(s) they are observing.

A minimum of 11 observers is recommended to support the exercise (10 for the MTC). They observe and coach only the primary training audience (brigade staff). If other elements of the brigade and its assets are to receive coaching and observation, additional observers will be required.

The TSP contains observation and AAR materials for each of the 11 observers.

Role-players Role-players drive the exercise from the BBS workstations by playing the roles of the division staff, the OPFOR, and the brigade's subordinate and supporting units. A minimum of 41 role-players should participate, as described in the *Exercise Guide*.

- *Division staff role-players* portray selected members of the division staff.
 - G3 operations/plans.
 - G2 (intelligence electronic warfare [IEW]).
 - Division FSO.
 - Division air defense artillery officer (ADAO).
 - Division ENGR.
 - G4 operations/CSS.
 - Army aviation staff officer (AD and DATK only).

These roles are best represented by division staff officers or assistant staff officers in those functional areas.

- The OPFOR Controller should be someone who is already familiar with the tactics and techniques of the Krasnovian Heavy organization.
 - The Blue Forces role-player positions (33) in the subordinate and supporting units will usually be filled by the brigade's subordinate unit personnel. While these role-players will have exceptional practice opportunities, there is no planned observation and feedback system for them.
-

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3.2 Personnel Requirements, Continued

BBS interactors BBS interactors (39) act as the role-players' agents in running the simulation. They should receive the BBS training described in the *BBS Site Manager's Guide* in the TSP.

Additional staff participants Additional staff members are required to support the exercise. They perform their normal roles in assisting the primary training audience.

The exact composition and numbers of these supporting staff members will be determined by the brigade commander. The minimum personnel to support the training without creating unnecessary distractions for the primary training audience includes:

Assistant Staff Officers	Staff NCOs	RTOs
Assistant S2	TAC Ops NCO	TAC RTO
Assistant S3	CP Ops NCO	CP Ops RTO
Assistant S4	S1/S4 NCO	CP S2 RTO
	Fire Support NCO	FSO RTO
		REAR RTO

Total personnel In summary, the minimum total personnel requirement, in addition to the 16 members of the primary training audience, includes:

Exercise Director	1
COBRAS Coordinator	1
Blue Forces Controller	1
Observers	11
Role-players	41
Interactors	39
Additional brigade staff participants	<u>12</u>
	106

3.3 Time Requirements

**Preparation
and execution
time**

There are many activities required in preparing for and conducting the exercise. The time required of each participant varies according to their roles and responsibilities, as described below.

*Exercise
Director and
COBRAS
Coordinator*

Preparation for the exercise should begin 12-16 weeks before implementation. This will allow sufficient time for taskings, reproduction and distribution of TSP materials, and loading of simulation files.

These are responsibilities of the Exercise Director and COBRAS Coordinator.

*Brigade training
audience*

The brigade staff (primary audience) will need 2-5 days of preparation time to:

- Become familiar with the scenario and tactical situation.
 - Prepare overlays and maps.
 - Review the brigade tactical standing operating procedures (TACSOP).
 - Study the task lists provided in the TSP.
-

*Role-players
and interactors*

The role-players and interactors will participate in 2-3 days of BBS training. Role-players will also need to review the tactical situation for their units.

**Conduct of the
exercise**

The exercise is designed and resourced for training days of 8-10 hours in length.

It takes approximately 14 days to conduct all three missions. The missions can also be conducted separately in 4-5 days each. Missions can be partitioned and the situation archived for continuation at a later time.

3.4 Simulation Requirements

**Simulation
center and staff**

The exercise requires the support of an established simulation center that has run brigade level exercises using the BBS. The staff of the simulation center should be familiar with the general capabilities and characteristics of this type of exercise.

The permanent staff at the simulation center should be qualified to use BBS to meet exercise requirements. They should have an existing training program which they use for training BBS interactors.

The exercise requires the use of brigade planning areas, CPs (tactical command post [TAC], MAIN, and REAR), and a large area for briefings, rehearsals, and AARs. These should all be located in or near the simulation center so that minimal time is lost in assembling personnel for these events.

**BBS
configuration**

The exercise requires BBS version 5.0 with the NTC 180 x 180 km terrain database.

The MTC and AD require 15 BBS workstations, while the DATK requires only 14.

3.5 The Training Support Package

Training support package

The TSP is extensive. It supplies the scenario, conditions, and instructions needed to conduct the exercise. It includes the following:

- *Exercise Guide*, including how to plan, coordinate, and conduct the exercise.
 - BBS tapes with preloaded personnel, equipment, and supply specifications.
 - Documentation of all BBS specifications and initialization conditions.
 - Corps and division orders and overlays.
 - Scenario timelines and training schedule.
 - OPFOR campaign plan, schemes of maneuver, and order of battle.
 - Guides and initial situation packages (ISPs) for role-players.
 - Guides and job aids for BBS interactors.
 - Guides, task lists, and ISPs for the primary training audience.
 - Guides, observation task lists, ISPs, and AAR framework for observers.
-

Distribution of TSP materials

The materials needed to run a COBRAS Brigade Staff Exercise are controlled by the COBRAS Coordinator. After the exact configuration of the exercise is determined, he/she will assemble and distribute the materials according to that configuration and his/her preparation timeline.

To allow personnel to prepare for the exercise, many of the materials are distributed before the training begins; these are referred to as readaheads. Other items are issued during the exercise, in accordance with the training and the scenario.

 The *Exercise Guide* contains complete instructions for reproducing and distributing all components of the TSP.

Section 4: Selecting the Mission(s) to Train

4.1 Introduction

The selection process	There are several options available for selecting which missions to train. The information provided here will help determine which missions are best for the brigade in terms of task and mission difficulty, as well as the time available.
Information to support the selection process	The following paragraphs (Section 5.2) provide more details about the events in the three missions and how the missions are related. The different selection options will then be presented (Section 5.3). This information should be considered when deciding which mission(s) will be selected for the brigade's training. Some considerations in the decision making are discussed in Section 5.4.

4.2 The Scenario and Missions

Scenario background	The brigade has deployed to the theater of operations. After building combat power and leaving the lodgement area, the brigade participated in a field training exercise (FTX). During the FTX tensions between Mojave and Krasnovia heightened. The FTX was terminated, and the brigade moved to a tactical assembly area.
Movement to contact (MTC)	The exercise begins with the receipt of the division order while the brigade is in the assembly area. The brigade staff follows the MDMP to plan their mission as the task forces continue to report their status. The brigade order is issued to the subordinate and supporting units, who then prepare their plans while the brigade continues its preparation. The brigade conducts the rehearsal, refines the plan, and then moves to the attack position and conducts reconnaissance. The brigade executes the MTC and makes contact with the enemy regimental advance guard main body (AGMB). As the enemy withdraws, the brigade receives the warning order (WARNO) for the area defense along a phase line where the MTC is terminated. A division order which will give the brigade the mission of conducting an AD along that phase line is expected. The brigade consolidates and reorganizes as it prepares for the transition to the AD.

Continued on next page

4.2 The Scenario and Missions, Continued

Area defense (AD)

The brigade transitions from the MTC to the AD mission. During this transition, the brigade must perform the normal combat service support functions. Among other actions this includes replenishing the brigade's supplies, evacuating and repairing its damaged or inoperable equipment, and evacuating wounded soldiers to appropriate medical treatment facilities. The success of these sustainment operations will determine the brigade's starting condition for its AD.

When the brigade receives the division order for the AD, there is only enough time for planning using the accelerated MDMP. As subordinate units continue CSS reporting, the brigade order is prepared and issued.

Reconnaissance and counterreconnaissance activities go on as brigade preparation continues. The enemy attacks as the brigade defends. (The division-ordered rearward passage of lines (RPOL) is not represented in the exercise.)

Deliberate attack (DATK)

After the AD mission, the brigade moves to an assembly area. This provides it sufficient time out of enemy contact to plan and prepare for the DATK and to improve its combat capability to make the DATK a feasible mission.

The brigade receives the order to conduct the DATK as part of the division attack. It continues normal replenishment and other CSS activities in the assembly area as it plans and prepares for the mission.

The brigade planning follows the MDMP model. After the brigade order is issued, subordinate units plan their roles. The brigade conducts its rehearsal and executes the DATK. After it consolidates on the objective, the exercise is terminated.

4.3 Options for Mission Selection

The six options There are six options for mission selection. The options, and the training days required for each, are listed below.

Option	Mission(s)	Training Days
1	MTC - AD - DATK	14
2	MTC - AD	9
3	MTC	5
4	AD - DATK	9
5	AD	4
6	DATK	5

Description of Option 1 Option 1, to train on all three missions, permits the brigade's planning process to begin before hostilities develop and to continue throughout the three missions. It requires the brigade to use both the full MDMP and the accelerated MDMP.

Option 1 provides the most robust opportunity to practice CSS tasks. CSS activity influences the operation from when the brigade begins its transition from the FTX to combat through the completion of the DATK.

Description of Option 2 Option 2 starts with the MTC, as described for Option 1. It then transitions to the AD and ends when the brigade has completed its defenses, consolidated its forces, and knows the status of its units. The RPOL and the move to the assembly area are not included in the training.

Both the full MDMP and the accelerated MDMP will be practiced, and CSS activities are ongoing. The brigade's posture at the beginning of the AD depends on its losses in the MTC and on the resupply, replenishment, and other CSS activities that take place during the transition.

Description of Option 3 Option 3 is to train on only the MTC. It provides a logical entry into the exercise, with the brigade units performing reorganization activities and reporting their status as the staff plans the mission using the MDMP. The exercise ends when the enemy AGMB breaks contact and assumes its temporary defense.

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4.3 Options for Mission Selection, Continued

**Description of
Option 4**

Option 4 includes both the AD and the DATK. This is the most challenging for a brigade staff because it begins in the middle of a fast-moving story.

The AD exercise starts with the brigade still in limited contact with the enemy following the MTC. The brigade's readiness posture represents what a brigade could expect following a MTC. This condition will require the brigade to rapidly assess its combat capability and conduct the resupply, replenishment, and other CSS activities to ready itself for the AD mission.

The time available demands that the brigade use the accelerated MDMP to plan the AD. When the mission is completed (before the RPOL), the exercise is paused; it then resumes with the brigade in an assembly area. The RPOL, the movement to the assembly area, and part of the time in the assembly area are compressed in the scenario (i.e., not included).

For the DATK, the brigade will have ample time to perform the MDMP.

Beginning at the AD is useful when the brigade does not wish to train on the MTC. It is a difficult starting point, however. The brigade staff must be fully read into the exercise and be ready to take control at a point in the scenario when the brigade is very active.

**Description of
Option 5**

Option 5 is to conduct only the AD. The initial conditions are the same as for option 4, with the brigade just completing the MTC.

As with Option 4, the entry point for this option will offer a considerable challenge to the brigade staff. The time available demands that the brigade use the accelerated MDMP to plan the AD. The mission continues, terminating as the brigade consolidates its forces as in Option 2.

**Description of
Option 6**

The final option includes only the DATK. The brigade has (notionally) completed the MTC and AD missions and is located in an assembly area. Its readiness posture is representative of a unit that has fought the previous two missions. CSS activities are ongoing as the brigade continues planning (using the MDMP) and preparations for the attack and replenishes and improves its combat readiness.

The exercise is designed to terminate as the brigade seizes its objective and consolidates, before the extended replenishment and repair effort which would precede any subsequent mission.

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4.3 Options for Mission Selection, Continued

Differences among the options

The three missions are each included in more than one option. In Options 1, 2, and 3, the brigade begins with the MTC. This mission is conducted the same way for each of the three options.

Options 1, 2, 4, and 5 all include the AD, but there is a significant difference in how it is represented. When the brigade transitions into the AD from the MTC (Options 1 and 2), the conditions and events are generated from the brigade's execution of the MTC.

However, when the exercise begins with the AD (Options 4 and 5), the brigade staff is required to quickly assimilate the situation, perform a time-constrained planning process, and be ready to defend. It will require some mental agility on the part of the staff to generate the intelligence preparation of the battlefield (IPB) which would reflect its current understanding of the battlefield at the point where the exercise begins. If the brigade has significantly tailored the METT-T (e.g., changing the task organization or brigade boundaries), it will be even more difficult. The initial conditions for starting with the AD are based on the exercise's standard task organization, enemy, and sector.

Options 1, 4, and 6 include the DATK. Because selected events between the AD and the DATK are not included in the exercise, conditions for the start of the DATK are predetermined. Thus the DATK mission is conducted in the same way for each of these three options.

Similarities among the options

The table below lists the segments within each mission. As can be seen, the three missions have many aspects in common.

MTC Segments	AD Segments	DATK Segments
Mission Analysis	Accelerated MDMP Planning	Mission Analysis
Course of Action (COA) Development		COA Development
Wargaming		Wargaming
COA Comparison		COA Comparison
Orders Preparation	Orders Preparation	Orders Preparation
Rehearsal	Rehearsal	Rehearsal
Mission Execution	Mission Execution	Mission Execution
Consolidation/ Reorganization		

4.4 Making the Selection

Basis for the selection

The brigade commander has the best appreciation of the unit's readiness to participate in the exercise and of their training needs. He should, therefore, be the decision maker concerning which missions to select.

This decision should be made at least 14 weeks prior to the exercise. The Exercise Director is expected to assist in making the decision. He should be able to advise the commander on the content of each of the missions.

More detail about the missions

Each of the starting missions is supported by a prepared ISP. It will be given to the brigade staff training audience in the readahead materials. The ISP contains a narrative summary of the events leading to the first mission that will be conducted.

Note: The brigade staff does *not* get the division order for the first mission prior to the start of the exercise.

Scheduling option

The brigade may want to run two or three of the missions but have no training time blocks long enough to accommodate more than one mission. Because of the capabilities of simulation and the flexibility in entry point support in the different ISPs, the missions can be run in separate training periods.

If desired, the BBS database can be stored as an archive at any convenient stopping point in a mission (e.g., the segments shown on the previous page). Using that database, the exercise can then be continued during another training period.

Section 5: Variations in Implementation

5.1 Introduction

Purpose

The purposes of this section are to:

- Provide the reasons for the implementation model decisions that have been made.
 - Explain some of the difficulties and complications associated with modifying the implementation model.
 - Give a preview of what additional changes would also be required.
-

5.2 Reasons for the Implementation Model

Five characteristics of the model

The implementation model has five defining characteristics:

- Training day length of 8-10 hours.
- Primary training audience of 16 brigade staff members.
- The physical layout with CPs at the simulation site.
- The military decision-making processes, both full and accelerated.
- The specified METT-T.

The discussion below presents a brief summary of the reasons for making the decisions that were made about these characteristics.

Training day length

The exercise calls for 8-10 hour training days, rather than 24-hour operations.

Research and experience have shown that people cannot effectively learn complicated cognitive and coordination skills when they are too tired to think. Only when the staff can coordinate all of the complex decision-making processes should they consider 24-hour operations.

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5.2 Reasons for the Implementation Model, Continued

Primary training audience

The program is designed to focus on the commander and 15 members of his primary and special staffs.

If the audience is expanded to focus on the subordinate and supporting units and staffs, there is an obligation to inspect, train, and support these others. As a result, the training value for the brigade staff will be lessened as the focus is widened to include other participants. Including battalion staff training requires attending to their coaching, observation, and feedback; this will necessarily cause the brigade staff training audience to divide their attention.

Additionally, the exercise as designed takes advantage of simulation's ability to compress time in order to maintain the focus on the brigade staff.

Adequate time will not be available for subordinate unit troop-leading procedures.

Even without participation by full staffs of subordinate and supporting units, those members who do participate as role-players will receive valuable practice opportunities and experience.

The physical configuration

The implementation model assumes that the CPs will be simulated and will be located in or near the simulation center.

If the brigade "goes tactical" with the exercise, it will complicate the skill-practicing process that the exercise is constructed to ensure. Frequently, simulation-based exercises are enriched by linking to actual field CPs, connected by tactical communications systems to the simulation center. This certainly adds a degree of realism, but it is a realism that is unconnected with the focus of this training on properly employing and coordinating the brigade's assets.

At this point of the brigade staff's development, the goal is to create the very best *learning environment*, not the most realistic tactical environment. Other features may be added in subsequent training to create other opportunities to complete the "train as you fight" dictum that certainly remains valid.

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5.2 Reasons for the Implementation Model, Continued

The decision-making process

The MTC and DATK missions both call for and allow time for the full MDMP, while the AD mission allows time enough for only the accelerated process.

The Combat Training Center experience indicates that staffs are not proficient in putting together the pieces of a brigade mission. They are still learning how to employ each of the combat, combat support, and combat service support elements, while also working out the details of coordination and synchronization of the individual pieces.

The time and place to train these skills is in the planning phase. During this phase the commander and staff determine what should occur on the battlefield, how each element is used to accomplish this, and how all the elements are linked or interact.

The real product of a planning phase is not “the order.” Rather, it is a doctrinally sound employment concept for each of the elements and identified coordination and synchronization tasks—assigned to the proper leaders and staffs. “The order” records these decisions and instructions.

Likewise, the primary focus is not the writing, the matrix, or the overlay. It is the doctrinal and situational soundness of the employment decisions, instructions, and coordination tasks represented by the written products. Once staffs know how brigades work—the individual components and how they fit together—they can put their plans into practice, change them as the battlefield changes, and develop appropriate orders and instructions when there are no plans or when there isn’t time to plan.

But until staffs understand the details of how the brigade functions, they are not likely to generate the right decisions and instructions to execute.

Consequently, the AD mission is the only one that calls for the accelerated process.

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5.2 Reasons for the Implementation Model, Continued

**The specified
METT-T**

The COBRAS Brigade Staff Exercise specifies METT-T conditions for each mission. This particular issue has practical aspects that are far reaching within the exercise.

Brigades that want to change task organization, location (i.e., terrain database), or threat will need to examine the entire TSP for effects of those changes. All of the TSP materials are linked together, and to find and alter all of those links will be a laborious, time-consuming, and complex process.

More importantly, the training focus on the integration of the brigade staff in employing the brigade can be realized in any METT-T. It is not completely METT-T dependent. The staff processes and ability to use assets can be practiced in a variety of scenarios, and the acquired skill will transfer to other scenarios. Use of this particular METT-T is not critical to the processes; it is, however, critical to the utility of the TSP.

5.3 Complications Caused by Variations

24-hour operations

Once the staff has mastered performance of the skills in a situation where time pressures are low and has matured as a team, increasing the tempo to 24-hour operations can provide a closer approximation of the battlefield environment in which the staff must perform. In that case a 24-hour schedule might be appropriate.

Increasing to 24-hour operations has significant implications for many aspects of the program:

- Staffing will need to be increased in all participant groups of the exercise -- training audience (brigade staff), observers, role-players, interactors, and exercise management.
- Recall that the training takes advantage of the simulation's capability to compress time. In several places, the "slow" times where the brigade staff might reasonably expect it to be safe to be away from the CPs have already been compressed out of existence. The pace of operations is carefully designed to stay at a moderate to high level most of the time. Thus the brigade staff will have to work closely with the COBRAS Coordinator to find times for the shift changes.
- Note that times cannot simply be "decompressed" by allowing the simulation to run through the compressed times. Because of the way BBS handles CSS functions, certain workarounds that are built into the initialization files allow replenishment and maintenance to appear to be happening in a realistic way. However, if BBS runs, those times will be both virtual and actual, with a net effect of *increasing* available time and *decreasing* time requirements for repair and resupply. This will artificially improve the brigade's readiness levels.
- Because the COBRAS exercise is not designed for 24-hour operations, the task lists contain no training objectives for a shift change. This is a key event in brigade CP operations, and if trained, it should be done according to set procedures and standards, which are not included in the task lists.

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5.3 Complications Caused by Variations, Continued

Expanding the training audience

In the basic model for the COBRAS Brigade Staff Exercise, soldiers role-playing the task forces are at the BBS workstations in the simulation room. Although it is not required, these soldiers will normally be the actual commander or S3, S2, S1 or S4, and FSO of those task forces.

Soldiers role-playing the other supporting elements (e.g., cavalry troops, FSB) are also either from the actual units or of the experience levels that should be found in those units. The brigade may want to widen the training audience focus to include these workstation staffs. Because workstation staffs will usually be the actual personnel, it is logical to want to provide training to them.

However, while the expanded focus is possible and may have advantages in terms of training value, there are also disadvantages having to do with training focus and training resources.

- As the training audience expands, observation and feedback systems for those individuals should also be added to the exercise. This will usually cause the chain of command to divide its time between the staff and subordinate units. As a result, the focus on the 16-person primary audience will be reduced. Additionally, the TSP does not include tasks or observation guides for participants other than the commander and the 15 brigade staff members.
- Expanding the training audience will result in additional costs in personnel and equipment. The COBRAS-recommended staffing represents the minimum requirements necessary to support effective training for the designated audience.
- There will also be costs in time. In the COBRAS scenario, time is compressed (that is, skipped over) to reduce those periods when the brigade staff is not active in tasks which are best trained in a simulation environment. This occurs primarily during the time which on the battlefield would be allocated to subordinate unit planning and preparation. If subordinate units are fully staffed and manned and become a part of the primary training audience, they must be given the time for planning and preparation that they would reasonably expect from the mission timelines.

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5.3 Complications Caused by Variations, Continued

Going tactical

The exercise was designed for a setting where the brigade staff operates from simulated CPs which are no more than rooms in the simulations center linked by voice communications to the simulation workstation rooms. Everyone is located in the same area, so no time is lost in getting different groups together for important discussions.

As with all other modifications to the basic model, there are costs associated with use of field CPs as opposed to accessible simulated CPs.

- Tactically dispersed CPs require additional observers and exercise control communications and radios. In general, observers are assigned to follow the performance of more than one member of the training audience. When those individuals work in different locations (TAC, MAIN, and/or REAR), the observer will have difficulty in closely monitoring the functions and the training audience performing them.
- The dispersion also makes it more difficult, particularly for the Exercise Director and COBRAS Coordinator, to monitor the activities in the brigade staff and to synchronize the activities of the OPFOR. A second communications system (separate from the tactical system) will be required to facilitate information exchange.

Accelerating the decision-making processes

The exercise requires units to use the full MDMP in two missions and a modified, time-constrained process in one mission. All of the scenario events and prepared messages from the division are designed to provide sufficient planning time for the unit.

A unit that is proficient in the fundamental planning processes could modify the COBRAS exercise for the MTC and DATK and reduce the planning time available to the brigade. That is, they could shorten the scenario time between the division order and the line of departure (LD) time.

However, this modification will require a review of the entire TSP in which materials are linked to the basic scenario. Every item in the TSP must be reviewed to determine its applicability in a new time structure and to assess what changes must be made to the content and time to make it logical.

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5.3 Complications Caused by Variations, Continued

The scenario

Because this is a structured exercise, the focus is on specific objectives. The METT-T is designed to support the structure. Brigades may attempt to modify the scenario so that it better matches their own mission or situation. These changes have implications for how the TSP can be used.

- The missions take place in the context of the division operation. If the mission is modified, the missions of adjacent and supporting units would require appropriate modifications. Prepared messages and events are based on the current mission structure and would require review and possible modification. The simulation files have been built to support the given missions, and the task lists address behaviors required for those missions. To change the mission in any way would require someone to comb through the TSP for possible fallout.
 - The enemy has been designed and sized to produce a feasible campaign objective. Its actions have been controlled in order to present events which are central to the brigade's training. The OPFOR's schemes of maneuver, actions, and reactions are significantly more controlled than are those of "a world class OPFOR" that has been given the mission of defeating the training unit. Its mission is to support training for the brigade. Making order of battle changes and introducing unprogrammed forces will also cause inconsistencies in higher headquarters intelligence summaries (INTSUMs), intelligence estimates, and prepared intelligence reports.
 - Changing the force structure requires a thorough understanding of the impact on all the potential outcomes of the fight: the force ratios, impacts on training CSS functions, and balancing of CS assets. It will also require a detailed look at the terrain and mission responsibilities assigned to the brigade to determine if the current missions remain appropriate for reduced troop assets. Changing the force structure will significantly alter the coherence and utility of the TSP.
 - The brigade has been assigned large sectors and zones consistent with the forces and missions given by the division. That terrain is linked to orders and overlays, prepared messages, intelligence reports, adjacent unit activities, and support activities. Changing the terrain requires a complete reexamination of those TSP products. Exercise boundary changes must be managed with the same intensity as a boundary change in an actual operation would be managed.
 - If changes to the other factors of METT-T are made, then their impact on time must also be considered.
-

5.4 How to Minimize Complications Caused by Variations

Modifying the scenario

The most likely modification that the brigade will want to introduce is to reduce the size of the sector or zone and reduce the number of forces available to the brigade. If the brigade wants to reduce the size of the sector, the Exercise Director will make certain other changes to:

- Maintain the alignment of terrain and brigade activities.
 - Remove one task force or regiment from the brigade's area of concern.
 - Ensure the appropriateness of messages from division.
 - Adjust the OPFOR scheme of maneuver to support the training in the new brigade sector or zone.
 - Adjust CS and CSS assets to be appropriate to the new brigade structure.
 - Reduce the staffing for the task force, fire support, and brigade FSB workstations to reflect the changes.
-

Modifying the threat

Certainly modifications to the OPFOR activities are possible and are encouraged in execution. As the brigade's plan unfolds, the need for adjustments to better support training will be identified. These modifications are described in the *OPFOR Controller Guide* and in the *Exercise Guide*.

Modifying the time available

Methods for adjusting the training time available to the brigade in order to emphasize or repeat events in the exercise, or to provide additional time to address a training need, are described in the *Exercise Guide*. Maintaining the basic scenario timeline with these methods makes it possible to maintain the validity of the structured parts of the support package.

Section 6: Implementing Actions

6.1 Introduction

Purpose This section of the guide details the events and activities required in planning and preparing for the COBRAS Brigade Staff Exercise.

This information will enable the brigade commander to determine when and how to implement the program.

Contents of this section This section discusses:

- The planning and preparation timeline.
- Commander and XO actions.
- Near-term implementation activities.

6.2 Planning and Preparation Timeline

Timeline Planning and preparation for the COBRAS Brigade Staff Exercise begins months before the exercise is to be run.

The timeline shown on the next page shows the actions leading up to conduct of the exercise. Much of the work will be the responsibility of the Exercise Director and COBRAS Coordinator. Those tasks that are, as a minimum, the responsibility of the brigade are shown in **bold print**.

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6.2 Planning and Preparation Timeline, Continued

Planning and Preparation Timeline

Timing	Activity
Per SOP	Decision is made to conduct brigade staff training using the COBRAS Brigade Staff Exercise; entered on training calendar.
Per SOP	Schedule BBS simulation site.
T-18 weeks	G3 designates the personnel to serve as Exercise Director and COBRAS Coordinator. Exercise Director and brigade commander meet to discuss roles and expectations.
T-14 weeks	Exercise Director and brigade commander select missions. Exercise Director develops preliminary exercise schedule.
T-12 weeks	COBRAS Coordinator taskings for personnel released to units. COBRAS Coordinator confirms facilities schedule.
T-4 weeks	COBRAS Coordinator issues guides and readahead materials to: Training audience (through brigade XO) EXCON G3 Role-player OPFOR Controller Observers
T-2 weeks	Issue guides and readahead materials to Blue Forces role-players. Load and try out BBS tapes. Provide orientation briefing for all participants. Brigade commander and staff study readahead materials and references and become familiar with the tactical situation described. Brigade commander and XO decide on support staffing. Brigade XO arranges for copies of the overlays to be made. S2 uses readahead materials to begin IPB.
T-1 week	BBS Site Manager trains and rehearses interactors and role-players. Role-players and training audience set up exercise area. Division role-players rehearse division order. Exercise Director conducts final readiness check of exercise support. Brigade commander and XO conduct final readiness check of brigade staff.

6.3 Commander and XO Actions

Commander decisions

After reading the remainder of this *Brigade Orientation Guide*, the brigade commander or his designated representative should:

- Discuss training expectations, process, and methods with Exercise Director.
 - Select the training options (mission or missions to train).
 - Identify the external (division or installation) command and control structure to support the exercise.
 - Set suspense dates for progress backbriefs, information updates, and identification of problem areas.
 - Establish a timeline for exercise planning and preparation.
-

XO actions

After reading the remainder of this *Brigade Orientation Guide*, the brigade XO should follow the commander's guidance to:

- Coordinate with Exercise Director or COBRAS Coordinator for staff and subordinate unit participation and responsibilities.
 - Prescribe the brigade CP staffing to support the exercise for those positions not identified as primary training audience.
 - Task the signal officer to develop a communications wiring diagram architecture and requirements request for the supporting BBS facility.
 - Determine reporting formats and intervals per TACSOP.
 - Receive training audience materials from the COBRAS Coordinator and distribute them to the staff.
 - Determine schedule to conduct commander's briefback of initial situation, tactical products, and key events that define the situational posture of the brigade relative to the mission.
 - Conduct a tactical briefing for the commander and staff to ensure a common situational awareness of brigade's posture. Pay particular attention to the chronology of the INTSUMs and WARNOs provided in the materials.
 - Have the S2 conduct that part of the IPB that is routinely completed before receipt of the mission. Insure he has an accurate understanding of the chronology of events and products leading up to beginning the exercise.
 - Task the staff to develop and reproduce the tactical overlays provided.
-

6.4 Near Term Implementation Activities

Activities

Once the decision is made, even tentatively, to implement the COBRAS Brigade Staff Exercise, there are three important next steps:

- The exercise is placed on the brigade's long-term training calendar. The time available in the calendar and the mission(s) selected will be interdependent. The appropriate timing for the training must be selected in consideration of the brigade's other training objectives and activities for the year.
 - Division or installation support for the planned training period must be secured.
 - **It is critical that the TSP box that contains all of the COBRAS Brigade Staff Exercise materials be secured. It should be given to the Exercise Director before anyone else has access to it, in order to maintain the integrity of the materials.**
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APPENDIX

ACRONYMS and ABBREVIATIONS

AAR	After Action Review
AD	Area Defense
ADA	Air Defense Artillery
ADAO	Air Defense Artillery Officer
ADC	Assistant Division Commander
ADCOORD	Air Defense Coordinator
AFRU	Armored Forces Research Unit
AGMB	Advance Guard Main Body
ARI	Army Research Institute
AVN	Aviation
BBS	Brigade/Battalion Battle Simulation
BCT	Brigade Combat Team
BOS	Battlefield Operating System
COA	Course of Action
COBRAS	Combined Arms Operations at Brigade Level, Realistically Achieved through Simulation
CP	Command Post
CPX	Command Post Exercise
CS	Combat Support
CSS	Combat Service Support
DATK	Deliberate Attack
DS	Direct Support
ENGR	Engineer
EXCON	Exercise Control
FSB	Forward Support Battalion
FSCoord	Fire Support Coordinator
FSO	Fire Support Officer
FTX	Field Training Exercise
G2	Assistant Chief of Staff, Intelligence
G3	Assistant Chief of Staff, Operations
G4	Assistant Chief of Staff, Logistics
ID(M)	Infantry Division (Mechanized)
IEW	Intelligence Electronic Warfare
INTSUM	Intelligence Summary
IPB	Intelligence Preparation of the Battlefield
ISP	Initial Situation Package
LD	Line of Departure
LNO	Liaison Officer
LTP	Leader Training Program
MDMP	Military Decision-Making Process
METT-T	Mission, Enemy, Troops, Terrain, Time

MI	Military Intelligence
MP	Military Police
MTC	Movement to Contact
NCO	Noncommissioned Officer
NTC	National Training Center
OPFOR	Opposing Force
OPS	Operations
R&D	Research and Development
RPOL	Rearward Passage of Lines
RTO	Radio Telephone Operator
S1	Adjutant
S2	Intelligence Officer
S3	Operations and Training Officer
S4	Supply Officer
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
TAC	Tactical Command Post
TACSOP	Tactical Standing Operating Procedure
TSP	Training Support Package
WARNO	Warning Order
XO	Executive Officer