

Now Is the Time For A Force Field Artillery Proficiency Test

By: MAJ Frederick J. Carr, COL Bryan L. Babich and MG (R) Richard Longo

It is the first day of a future Mission Command Training Program (MCTP) Warfighter Exercise. The Division Artillery (DIVARTY) Commander is receiving his first Battle Update Brief. During final comments the Commander asks the following questions....

CDR: S2, how are we feeding the G2, ACE, and FAIO our counter-fire analysis and predictive Battle Damage Assessment based on decay time and fire order?

S2: Sir, Division will provide us with those estimates from what is identified from collection assets, and additionally, we have to wait for the 35T to get DCIGS talking to AFATDS.

CDR: Battle Captain, is the battlespace-owning BCT Commander providing an adequately-sized operation area to enable the survivability moves of our HIMARS battalion?

Battle Captain: I'm not tracking which BCT's battlespace we're operating in and not sure whether the OPAREA is adequate because I am more of a "cannon-guy."

CDR: S4, is our ammo count listed as pods or rockets and what is the Controlled Supply Rate for our long-range munitions?

S4: Sir, I don't know, the division order did not say and I asked division to give me our Required Supply Rate.

CDR: S6, is our AFATDS talking to adjacent units, JAGIC, and Division Fires?

S6: Sir, we're up with Division and JAGIC. I'll work with the AFATDS FSR on which adjacent units we need to communicate with.

With the reintroduction of DIVARTYs across the active Army, there has been continuous and evolutionary improvement in performance as lessons are learned and shared from one training event or unit to the next. However, the principle challenge that DIVARTYs face is a lack of experience of the NCOs and Officers in the Command Post. This is compounded by the fact that the majority of these leaders primarily come from a cannon artillery background and lack a basic understanding of how to fight MLRS and

HIMARS, which are the predominant weapon systems available to our DIVARTYS. In most cases, assignment at DIVARTY will be an individual's first time operating at the brigade level, let alone within a DIVARTY or Force Field Artillery (FFA) headquarters. Sometimes there will be an Operations Sergeant Major or a Fire Control Noncommissioned Officer with experience, but everyone else will be new to DIVARTY, and just as importantly, division operations.

The primary training opportunity for a DIVARTY and staff is in the preparation for, and execution of, a MCTP Warfighter exercise. The current model is for MCTP to provide a week of "academics" in a sterile classroom environment where they coach the seemingly always new members of the team on the fundamentals and doctrine of DIVARTY operations, as well as the best practices of previously observed units. This is followed by a series of division-led Command Post Exercises (CPX), culminating in the Warfighter exercise. Usually, there are three of these CPXs, generally progressing from crawl to walk to run.



The sun rises as the 101st DIVARTY TOC continues operations through the TOC Jump. Photo by MAJ Ian Kent, US Army

DIVARTYs have a multitude of competing time demands including the certification and qualification of all artillery batteries and battalions in the division. The very best DIVARTYs use these training and readiness oversight events as training opportunities for their own command posts. However, the training value is limited as there is not the external stimulus necessary to prepare them fully for the intensity of a WFX. The reality of the situation is that DIVARTYs are two headed organizations. One is focused down and in on certifications, and the other is focused up and out to operate as a Force Field Artillery Headquarters (FFAHQ). Most view DIVARTY as the former rather than the latter, and almost all Red Books serve as proof; as they are built around certifications, rather than fighting as a FFAHQ.

What is missing from this sequential progression of training readiness is an understanding of exactly what fundamental knowledge is necessary of every member of the command post in order to get the most benefit from the collective training event, and ultimately to be prepared to fight as the division's FFAHQ.

In our field artillery battalions, we begin to build training readiness with an Artillery Skills Proficiency Test (ASPT). We execute this evaluation prior to progressing through our artillery tables as we build collective readiness. This test serves as a verification that the individual has the foundational knowledge required prior to building further individual and collective skills.

Our recommendation is that we use a similar model for DIVARTYs to ensure the foundational knowledge exists at the individual level. Just as these proficiency tests are the first gate in our collective training strategy in artillery battalions, a similar, fundamentals-based proficiency test will enable building collective readiness at the DIVARTY level.

We should state at the beginning that what we are recommending here would apply just as well to Field Artillery Brigades serving in a FFAHQ role.

Division Artillery Skills Proficiency Test (DASPT).

As mentioned earlier, this is the first time operating at this level for most involved. We recommend that every staff primary and alternate officer, and noncommissioned officer, to include the fire control and counter-fire sections, in the DIVARTY headquarters be required to demonstrate mastery of the necessary fundamentals in the form of a certification. This will be achieved by passing a two part test. The first part is MOS-immaterial and focused on MLRS and HIMARS knowledge, as well as doctrinal requirements and duty descriptions for a FFAHQ. Each leader, regardless of MOS, will be required to demonstrate an understanding of basic system capabilities, ammunition nomenclature, ranges, effects and firing reload times. The second part of the DASPT would focus on cross-educating the same audience on how to "artillerize" specific warfighting functions. The purpose of this part is to create a common language across the DIVARTY command post and an appreciation for how their work interconnects and enables the entire staff.

The following paragraphs provide recommended learning objectives that can serve as a basic framework for our proposed DASPT.

Fires:

The test must demand understanding of Fire Support Coordination Measures, the targeting process, and the capabilities and limitations of the fires systems assigned, or likely to be made available, to the division. In addition, a basic comprehension on how the so-called "Deep Fight" is delineated between Corps and Division using the Fire Support Coordination Line (FSCL) and Coordinated Firing Line (CFL) or other control measures. Other emphasis areas should include how a DIVARTY coordinates with the Division's Fire Support Element (FSE) and Joint Air-Ground Integration Cell (JAGIC), validates a No Strike List, airspace management planning factors, and tactical employment of all enablers provided from outside the division.

Command and Control:

The staff should demonstrate understanding of Command and Support Relationships and how or with whom a DIVARTY coordinates to ensure synchronized movement and survivability throughout the Division's battlespace. The staff should also understand the various communication systems and how they provide access to the upper and lower tactical internets. In addition to Command and Control requirements, the members of a



*A Platoon Leader races to conduct Big 3 checks during an emplacement.
Phot by CPT Rance Blake, US Army*



*A M777A3 from C BTRY, 3-320th (Red Knights) is carried into battle during Platoon Qualifications.
Photo by CPT Rance Blake, US Army*

DIVARTY staff require a basic understanding of the fires kill chain architecture with AFATDS, JADOCs, DCIGS and TAIS as just a few examples.

Sustainment:

The DASPT should focus on foundational artillery sustainment knowledge to include definitions of a required supply rate (RSR) and controlled supply rate (CSR), the concept of area support, and the capabilities and limitations of the logistics assets available to the DIVARTY. Other areas of sustainment emphasis include the management of PODS versus individual rockets or missiles, the requisition process, how the loss of a launcher effects ammunition, and how to enable the movement of supplies through Brigade Combat Team's battle space. Specific to personnel, it is crucial that this warfighting function, and those that feed it information, can

demonstrate the understanding of a critical Military Occupational Specialties within the artillery community as they translate to operational crews. Ultimately, this will enable reporting and requisition to ensure that replacements, and their timely arrival to a firing unit, creates combat power synchronized with operational pacing items. The replacement of a launcher is useless if a unit does not have the Soldiers with the right MOS to put it in action.

Protection:

The test must demand understanding of DIVARTY critical assets and placement on the Prioritized Protection List (PPL), the self-secure capability of the command post and subordinate units, and active and passive protection measures. The DIVARTY staff should understand how to communicate with the Division's Protection Cell and ensure appropriate enablers such as

Avengers, Military Police escorts, and Engineers are synchronized with the movement of firing units.

Maneuver:

Every member of the DIVARTY staff should demonstrate basic comprehension of maneuver graphics with a focus on ground and air-space control measures. The staff must understand how to coordinate with battle space owning maneuver units to ensure movement is synchronized in time and space, and informed by the enemy situation at the ground level. This would include understanding the capability and limitations of the division Combat Aviation Brigade (CAB) for supporting the suppression of enemy air defense, and de-conflicting Position Areas for Artillery (PAAs) and position area hazards (PAHs) with friendly air corridors to enable responsive fires. Also, for planning purposes, the staff must be proficient in the tactical considerations for movement of HIMARS, MLRS, and Radars throughout the battlespace to avoid threats and minefields to include what informs decisions for survivability move criteria and movement to alternate PAA's.

Intelligence:

Most critical to the foundation of a proficient DIVARTY staff is the understanding of how to synchronize and integrate the Fires and Intelligence Warfighting functions. The staff must understand both friendly and enemy radar capabilities and zones, capabilities of other friendly and enemy collection and weapons systems, and be able to articulate the associated risks to the commander. The staff should understand the Battle Damage Assessment (BDA) and the impacts of target decay time, enemy displacement times, and effects achieved by each specific friendly munition. In addition, the staff must understand how this Intelligence drives DIVARTY's Counterfire Analysis, the Division's Targeting Process and the greater Intelligence enterprise. Intelligence drives all warfighting functions within the DIVARTY HQs and its emphasis within the DASPT should be commensurate.

Platoon Leaders brief their plan during C BTRY, 3-320th (Red Knights) Table XII exercise at FT Campbell, KY. Photo by CPT Rance Blake, US Army



Way Forward:

This article provides a recommendation for a DIVARTY Artillery Skills Proficiency Test and a Warfighting Function framework for its development. As with the established Field Artillery Skills Proficiency Test, a similar doctrinal addition that provides common core requirements for all DIVARTYs would be optimal for implementation and assurance this initiative would endure. Divisions and DIVARTYs would have the latitude to enhance, or add-to, based on their unique mission requirements.

The DIVARTY Artillery Skills Proficiency Test is a “First Step” in the Staff’s training progression. DIVARTY’s should consider incorporating this test into their reception plan for new Staff officers and NCO’s with a study guide and appropriate amount of time to prepare for the exam. Within a typical DIVARTY Warfighter Exercise training glide path, the target audience should complete this requirement prior to attending the Mission Command Training Program’s (MCTP) Academic Week. With a basic understanding of systems, processes, and functions of a DIVARTY Staff, the DASPT will provide a solid intellectual framework to get the most out of these collective training opportunities.

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Leaders from DIVARTY supervise the CAR during 1-320th (Top Guns) Table XVIII Division Artillery Readiness Test (DART). Photo by MAJ Justin Hunter, US Army

