

**TACTICS AND TECHNIQUES  
FOR COMBINED ARMS HEAVY FORCES:  
ARMORED BRIGADE, BATTALION TASK FORCE,  
AND  
COMPANY TEAM**

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# PREFACE

**NOTE:** Users of this field manual must first read and understand the doctrinal field manuals: FM 71-3 (brigade), FM 71-2 (battalion), and FM 71-1 (company). This manual DOES NOT replace the doctrinal manuals; rather, it supplements them with tactics and techniques for heavy, combined-arms forces at brigade, battalion, and company levels. Plans call for the tactics and techniques to be incorporated into the three doctrinal manuals as they are revised.

FM 71-123 represents a departure from existing field manuals. Many current Army manuals are written in terms of execution, but FM 71-123 reflects the way we fight. Troop-leading procedures provide a thread of continuity, leading the reader chronologically through each mission. Planning, preparation, and execution are addressed in turn to reinforce the staff planning process and illustrate the interaction necessary between commanders and staff. Accordingly, planning, preparation, and execution of each mission are further described in terms of the seven battlefield operating systems (BOS). This structure gives the manual a unique combined arms perspective, encapsulating the activities of each arm and BOS as well as its relationship to the overall operation.

The manual encompasses three echelons: brigade, battalion, and company. This approach allows the reader to understand relationships among the three echelons within the context of the higher headquarters' intent. In addition, each operation is couched in terms of its corresponding threat; for example, an enemy MRP or tank platoon defense may serve as the point of departure for discussion of the company's role in a battalion deliberate attack.

**NOTE:** Terms such as "Soviet" and "Warsaw Pact," used in previous drafts of FM 71-123 in discussions of threat organization, tactics, and equipment, have been changed, predominantly to "Soviet-style," to reflect recent world events. Most of these discussions are again included in this edition, however, because many potential adversaries of the United States still base their tactics on the war-fighting doctrine of the former Soviet army.

Another purpose of FM 71-123 is to bridge the gap between doctrinal publications, which present concepts, and ARTEP MTPs, which outline training strategies and use standardized checklists to evaluate unit performance of specific tasks. Both doctrinal and MTP publications are written to address "what" rather than "how to," FM 71-123 supplements doctrine and bridges the "how to" void. It presents tactical considerations and techniques to make planning, preparation, and execution easier and describes other "tricks of the trade" that can be incorporated into the tactical plan.

Designed as a thought-provoking professional resource, FM 71-123 will be a primary reference for combined arms soldiers throughout their careers. It may, for example, serve as a point of departure for officer professional development classes one day and as a basis for unit training the next. Above all, it is a living

document, to be read and improved upon as soldiers in the field develop new and innovative techniques. Comments and suggestions are encouraged.

The proponent of this publication is HQ TRADOC. Send comments and recommendations on DA Form 2028 (Recommended Changes to Publications and Blank Forms) directly to Commandant, USAARMS, ATSB-CSC, Fort Knox, Kentucky 40121-5200.

Unless otherwise stated, masculine nouns and pronouns do not refer exclusively to men.

## CHAPTER 1

**COMMAND, CONTROL, AND COMMUNICATION**

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To be successful in battle, commanders must be able to make good decisions quickly. Staffs must be able to assist commanders in making those decisions and translating them into action faster than the enemy. Units must be able to respond quickly to changing situations. Through command and control (C2), commanders will seize the initiative from the enemy and defeat it.

To make C2 happen, it must be properly organized in functionally operating facilities. Staffs must be well trained. Commanders and staffs must practice the C2 process regularly so that the procedures are instinctive.