



Lesson 3.5f

Course of Action Analysis and Comparison



Steps of the UN MDMP

Analysis of the Operational Environment

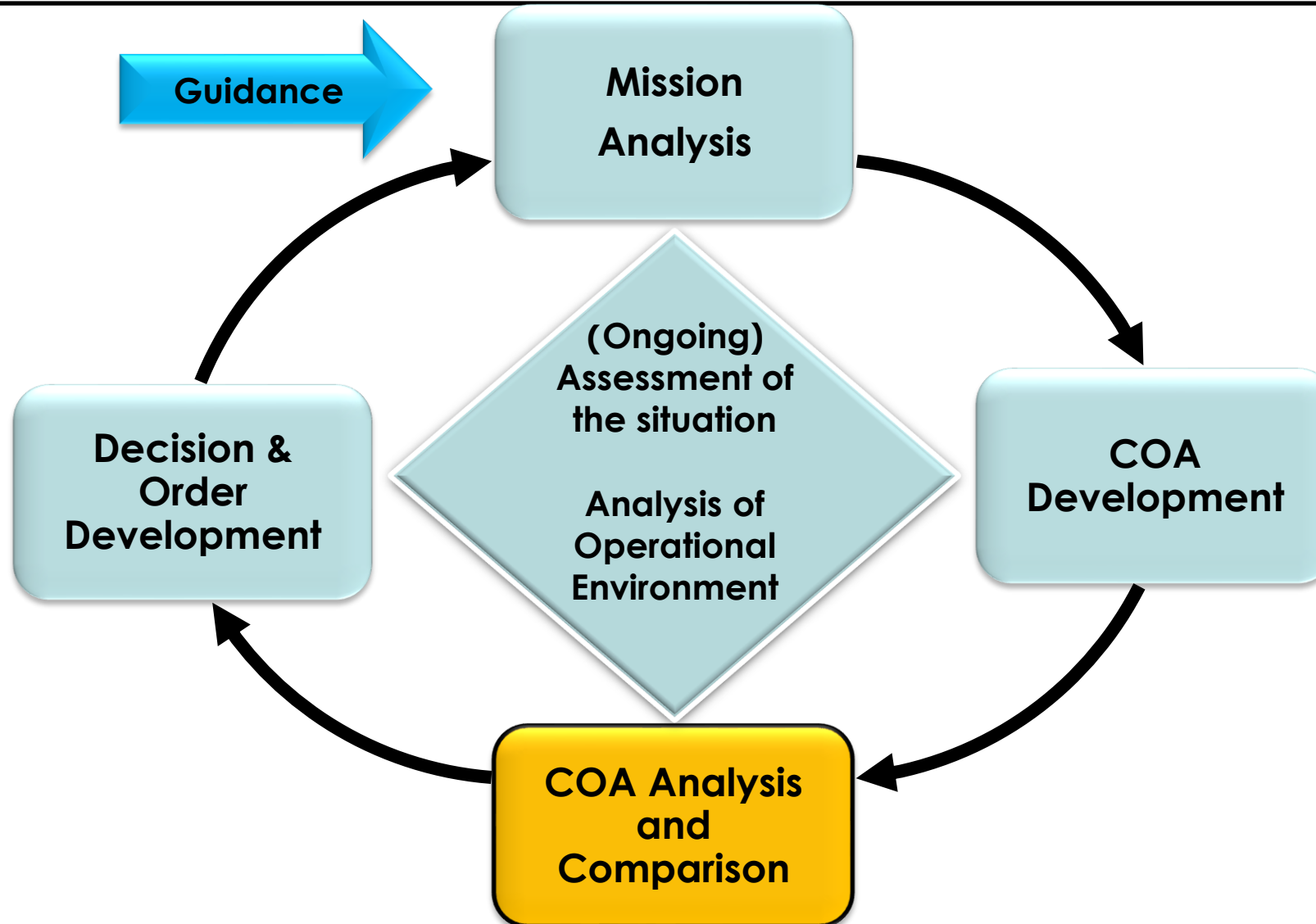
Mission Analysis

Course of Action Development

COA Analysis and Comparison

Decision and Order Development

UN Military Decision-Making Process



Purpose of the COA Analysis and Comparison



To determine the most suitable COA, through an analysis of each identified COA individually followed by a COA comparison using approved criteria

Framework & Criteria of COA

Analysis and Comparison



- **Framework/tools:** May be used, like SWOT analysis or a list of Advantages/Disadvantages

- **Measured criteria:** Useful to measure the COA against a set of weighted criteria

- Surprise, flexibility, simplicity, security, force protection and POC
- To allow unbiased measure, weight each criteria approved by Comd before comparison

SWOT ANALYSIS		INTERNAL	
		Strengths List strengths	Weaknesses List weaknesses
EXTERNAL	Opportunities List opportunities	Use strengths to take advantage of opportunities	Overcome weaknesses by taking advantage of opportunities
	Threats List threats	Use strengths to avoid threats	Minimize weaknesses and avoid threats

COA Testing Guidelines



- Remaining objective and impartial
- Continuous verification of each COA's credibility
- Avoid premature conclusions
- Each COA must be tested against each threat actor's COA

Analysing each COA individually



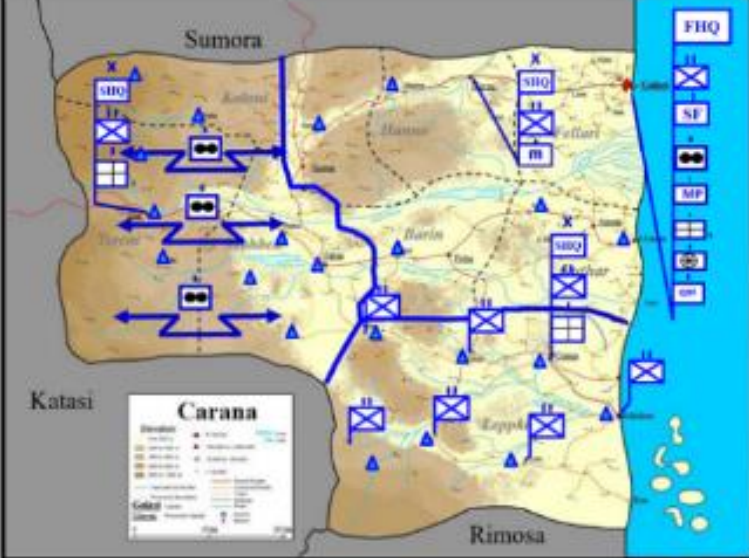
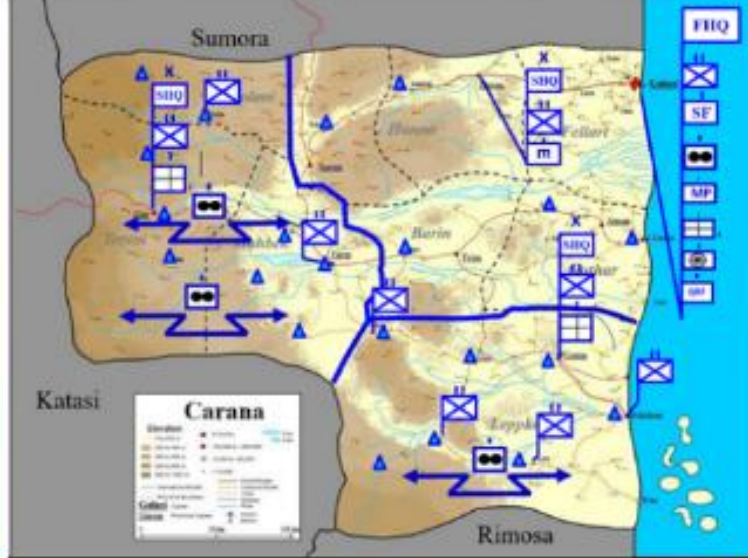
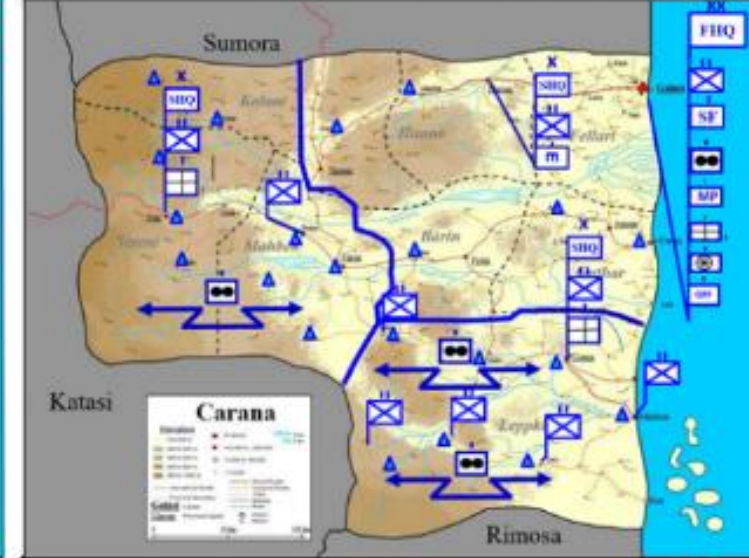
For the analysis of the individual COA, success criteria must be determined.

These can be:

- To what extent does a COA produce the desired impacts/outcome?
- What are the implications/risks for each COA?
- What resources (troops, budget, sustainability, etc.) are required?
- What are possible negative/positive influences on other actors?

Analysing each COA individually



COA 1	COA 2	COA 3
		
<p>Advantages:</p> <p>Disadvantages:</p> <p>Risks:</p>	<p>Advantages:</p> <p>Disadvantages:</p> <p>Risks:</p>	<p>Advantages:</p> <p>Disadvantages:</p> <p>Risks:</p>



Comparison of COAs



- Approved criteria
- Scale for measurement
- Weighting factors

Tools for Comparison of COAs



- Advantages and disadvantages
- Gaming
- Simulation
- Factors
- Risk

COA Comparison

Advantages and Disadvantages



Example 1:

COA	Advantages	Disadvantages
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Surprise • Less employment of threat's robust capabilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential loss of domestic and international support • May compromise interagency cooperation
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Affords flexibility • Provides Initiative • Strengthens moral authority of UN forces 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lacks Long-term sustainability • Vulnerability of forward deployed forces • Highly dependent on Host Nation Support
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong moral authority and international acceptance • Domestically popular 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loses military initiative • Potential for attrition

COA Comparison

Matrix and Scale for Measurement



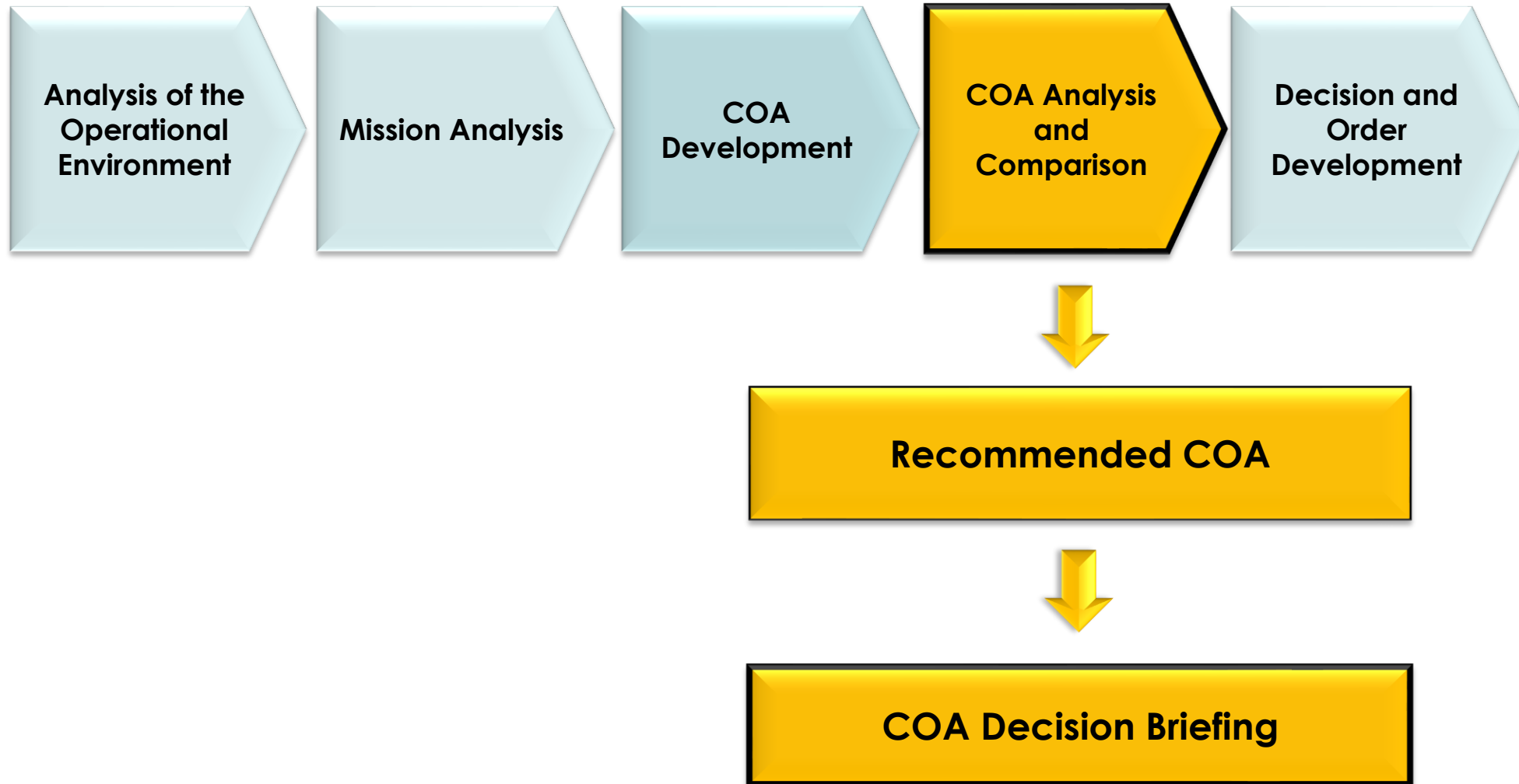
Example 2:

Criteria for comparison (examples)	Weighting Factor*	COA 1	COA 2	COA 3
Established security situation to protect civilians	3	2	1	3
Established security situation, which allows the return of all IDPs	2	3	3	2
Protected UN-Personnel and UN-Installations	1	2	3	1
Established security situation, which allows the HUM Actors to operate	1	2	1	1
Ensured support for substantial mission components to operate	1	2	1	2
Budget/Mission support implication	1	2	1	3
Availability of key resources	1	2	1	3
Support by the Host Nation	1	2	1	3
etc.				
Total		24	17	26

Scale for measurement	
1	Minimum met (~50%)
2	Partial met (~70%)
3	Fully met (~100%)

* Depending on the importance of the criteria

Outputs of Step 4 – COA Analysis and Comparison



COA Decision Briefing Tasks



Briefer	Subject
Chief of Staff	Higher Comd's Intent, situation, HOMC Guidance, conclusion
U2	AOE (Relevant aspects)
Chief of Ops / U3	Re-stated Mission and Status of own forces
Staff branches - U1, 4, 5, 6, 9	Own situation
Chief of Plans / U5	COA Comparison (Including risks and control measures)
Commander	Decision
Chief of Staff	Apportion tasks to staff areas; plan for the further development of the selected COA

Example: COA Decision Briefing



1. Introduction

- Military greeting
- Statement of the type, classification, and purpose of the briefing
- A brief statement of the problem to be resolved
- The recommendation

2. Body

- Key facts bearing upon the problem
- Pertinent facts that might influence the decision
- An objective presentation of both positive and negative facts
- Necessary assumptions made to bridge any gaps in factual data
- **Courses of Action**
 - A discussion of the various options that can solve the problem
- **Analysis**
 - The criteria by which the briefer will evaluate how to solve the problem (screening and evaluation)
 - A discussion of each course of action's relative advantages and disadvantages
- **Comparison**
 - Show how the courses of action rate against the evaluation criteria

3. Conclusion

- Describe why the selected solution is best

4. Questions

5. Restatement of the Recommendation so that it only needs approval/disapproval

6. Request a decision

Learning Activity 4: COA Analysis and Comparison



Type: Syndicate Group

Suggested Time: 90 mins (preparation) + 45 min (presentation – all groups)

Activity: COA Analysis and Comparison. COA Decision briefing

Learning Activity 4: COA Analysis and Comparison



SCENARIO

The Chief of Staff (COS) was pleased with the results of our COA development briefing, but still had quite a few comments following our brief.

The COS wants all MSOs to work together and conduct the COA analysis and comparison of the three (03) developed COAs and suggest the most suitable COA to the FC in the next formal briefing.

The COS remind us to analyse each COA individually and compare them against each other, based on the analysis of their individual “advantages and disadvantages”.

Learning Activity 4: COA Analysis and Comparison



Requirement

Based on the situation presented above, as a staff officer in the FHQ, conduct the COA analysis and comparison of the three (03) developed COAs, and prepare a formal COA Decision Brief.

Time of the COA Decision Briefing: **DD MM YYYY, HH MM** hours (maximum 15 minutes)

Obs.: The decision briefing should include an agenda, address the key aspects of the COA analysis and comparison, and recommend the most suitable COA for the FC approval.