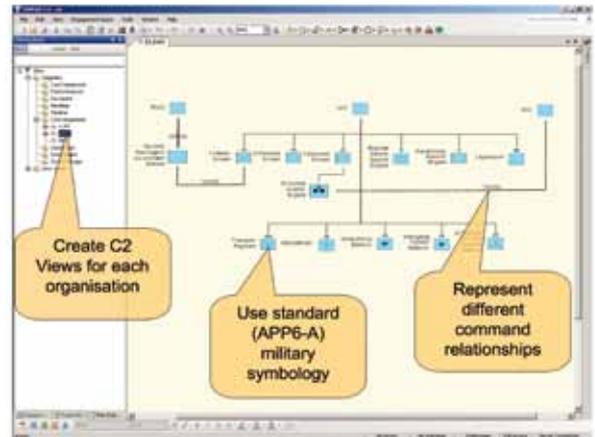
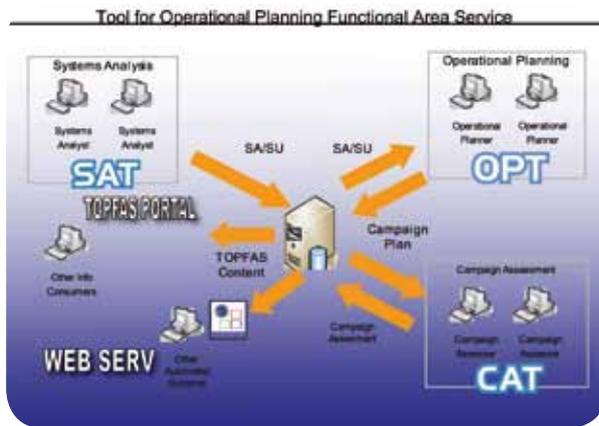


TOPFAS

Tools for Operational Planning Functional Area Service: what is this?

■ by LTC (ITA A) Sergio TAMAI

A short history and a small explanation on this software that G5 and the Operational Planning Group (OPG) at HQ NRDC-ITA will implement and start to use next year.



What is TOPFAS

TOPFAS is an acronym that stands for “Tools for Operational Planning Functional Area Service”, and those are the data and planning support tools for NATO operational planning.

The objective of the TOPFAS is to provide NATO operations planners with software tools to support their operations planning and assessment activities.

These tools will provide the capabilities required to support the preparation and evaluation of planning products and to conduct concurrent collaborative and distributed operations planning by multiple HQs and staffs from different functional areas.

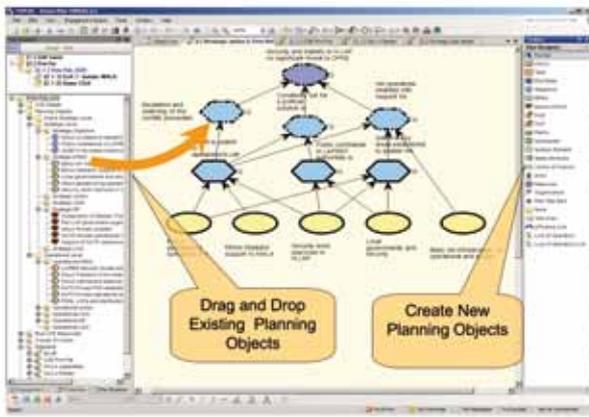
The overall intent is to enhance information sharing; improve the availability, quality and timeliness of information exchange; and to achieve a common situational awareness and a better planning synergy and synchronization (abstract

from SHAPE SHJ5PLANS/7750-73/09 – 207589 dated 23 September 2009 concerning TOPFAS implementation).

Short history of TOPFAS

The concept to provide NATO with a computer based functionality for a tool to support the NATO Operational Planning Process started in 1998 as part of the SHAPE Scientific Program of Work and continued until 2003 when the program passed to ACT that continued the development of the software through NC3A, to arrive to this year when the so called “industrialization” started after several field test conducted during various exercises (STRONG RESOLVE and ARRCAD E FUSION), NATO experiments and on real operations (ISAF).

Now, according to a SHAPE Directive, TOPFAS will be implemented through the NATO HQs and became a fundamen-



tal support and package of tools for the operational level planning and not only.

What can TOPFAS provide us

TOPFAS provide us an integrated system analysis, planning and assessment capability where via a Web based information sharing all information created by analysts, planners and assessors can be made available to those who need it.

One of the TOPFAS capabilities is then to have this information available and to easily transform them into briefings (MS PowerPoint) and formatted documents (MS Word) in order to let planners, analysts and assessors to concentrate on the substance.

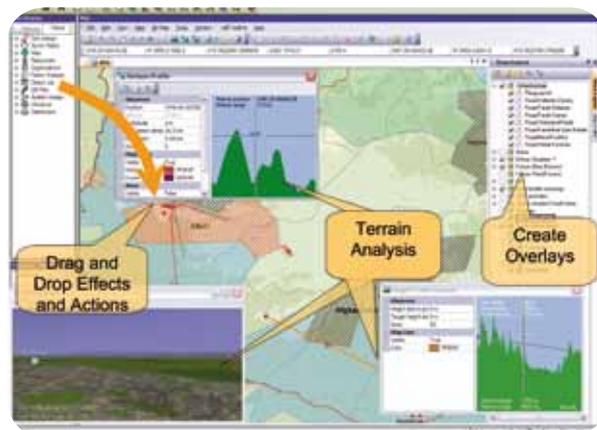
A short digression

As we learned during the last NATO Operational Planning Course organized by G5 at HQ NRDC-ITA from a Mobile Team of the NATO School from Oberammergau, to plan an operation, we follow the “Guidelines for Operational Planning” also known as GOP.

There are now new development in those guidelines that will be shortly implemented throughout NATO with the distribution of the new “Comprehensive Operations Planning Directive” (COPD) that will include relevant aspects of emerging concepts such as Comprehensive Operations Planning and Execution Capabilities (also known as Effects Based Approach to Operations – EBAO) and the Comprehensive Approach (CA).

In few words, in the new planning guidelines, the well known 5 stages of planning will pass to 7 and will include a “comprehensive approach” (“a means to ensure a coordinated and coherent response to crisis by all relevant actors” – where the actor is: “a person or organization, including state and non-state entities, within the international system that uses its power to influence others in pursuit of its interests and objectives”, so including also us), the study of the “Engagement Space” that encompasses the air, land, sea, space, and associated adversary, friendly, and neutral systems (political, military, economic, social, informational, infrastructure [PMESII], legal, and others), which are relevant to the crisis, Effects base planning and assessment.

The question is, TOPFAS: will this software support this new planning guidelines? The answer is yes, tools are available inside the software in order to support both, the so called “traditional” OPP and the new COPD.



What do we have inside TOPFAS

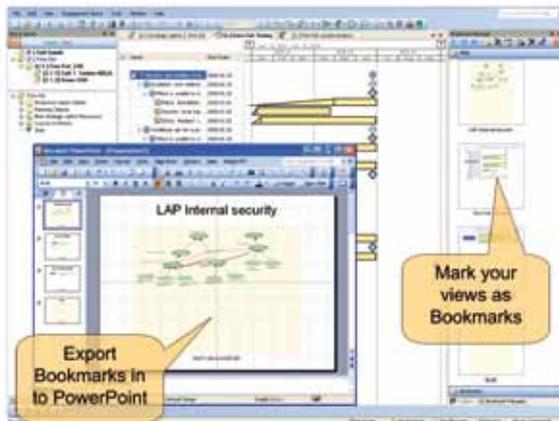
TOPFAS is divided into 3 main sets of tools:

- System Analysis Tool (SAT): it can describe the “Engagement Space” as a system with system design and influence relationship diagrams. System elements can be ranked according to their centrality using network analysis techniques.

This tool supports the initial estimate of the situation and is able to produce an accurate initial understanding and assessment of the environment (Operational Area/Joint Operational Area/Area of Interest).

- Operations Planning Tool (OPT): a campaign planning tool that helps answering, what, where, when, who in a campaign planning.

With this tool the revision of the Higher Command guidance and the process of factor/deduction/conclusion of the Factors analysis, Centres of Gravity, Military end-state etc. are simple “drag and drop” from the tool itself to create the own lists.

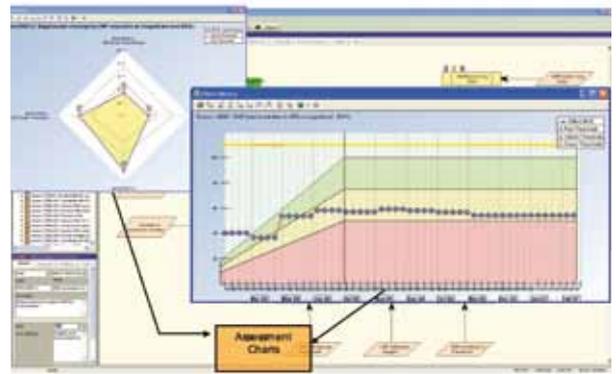


Task analysis and Mission essential tasks folders are prepared and the Operational design with its decisive Points, lines of operations and objectives are linked up in a logical sequence to each objective and finally to the desired end-state which creates the basis for the realisation of the Operational Design Timings and Synchronization Matrix (all those data are presented in MS Excel).

A database with available units is available in order to conduct the initial Force Estimate and then the units to be tasked.

Moreover, this part of the software is providing the tool for the creation of a series Courses of Action (COAs) and the tool for the comparison according to what is required from the GOP/COPD.

Finally when the selection of the COA is concluded, there is the possibility to



transform the selected COA in a plan (in MS Word).

- Campaign Analysis Tool (CAT): This tool supports the analysis of the planned end-state through the Measure of Effectiveness (MoE) and Measure of performances (MoP). It allows assessment planning, metric data collection and reporting as well as statistical data analysis including casualty and trend analysis. Those data will and can be used by Operational Analysts in order to prepare the Campaign Assessment.
- MARIA MAPS: this is a set of multilayer maps that give the possibility to the user to insert data, graphics and units on a map according to the requirements.

Conclusion

TOPFAS is a software that supporting the planning at strategic, operational and tactical level that according to the last SHAPE directive is going to be implemented throughout NATO in the very near future.

Sharing information and knowledge at all levels of command, will allow G5 and the OPG members to speed up the planning process because all needed information will be already available on the net and, if not at least the software should support to speed up the planning process allowing the user to produce from the tools directly the requested briefings and documents.

A challenge for HQ NRDC-ITA that will start next year, TOPFAS will be implemented starting March 1st 2010..... and G5 will be supporting along with OPG members this revolution. ■