

Mission Command

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1. INFO:

MC Definition: JP 3-0. The conduct of military operations through decentralized execution based on mission-type orders.

References:

- CJCS published white paper on mission command in April 2012. Key source for guidance.
- Additionally, JTB (Mike Findlay) has developed a mission command seminar for JPME. On Intelink page.
- Mission command is also addressed in JP 3-31 (C2 for Joint Land Operations) which specifically brings out the decentralized nature of land operations)

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Mission Command

Definition The conduct of military operations through decentralized execution based on mission-type orders. - JP 3-0	Attributes ✓ Understanding ✓ Intent ✓ Trust
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"Mission Command White Paper" (Extracts)
- GEN Dempsey, 3 Apr 2012

- "The commander is the central figure in mission command"
- "Commanders exercise mission command by understanding the military problem, envision the end state, and visualize the nature and design of the operation"
- "Basic principles of mission command – commander's intent, mission type orders, and decentralized execution"

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Key focus areas on exercises:

- Gaining and maintaining Trust and personal relationships (relationships between commanders are more important than command relationships") among commanders and staff)
- Shared understanding (How to gain and share understanding). Key to subsequent empowerment.
- Empowerment as appropriate both between hqs and within staff. (Look at support command relationships in terms of relationships and cross talk)

This directly assists in cross domain synergy. See chart.

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Cross Domain Synergy

Common Challenge

- Gaining synergy in all domains to accomplish mission
- between geographically-oriented forces (BSO) and functional units (cyber, SOF) at JTF and CGMD level
- within assigned boundaries (e.g., BSOs coordination with functional TFs)
- across boundaries (e.g., across AORs and with cyber)

Insights

- Physical battlespace control measures* still useful in coordination, integration, and deconfliction of action
- Need to account for and leverage significance of other domains
- Supported/ Supporting command relationships coupled with shared situational awareness can help mitigate seams and enable agility
- Establishing Authority is key to success

* While battlespace geometry is not a doctrinal term, we use it here to share and describe its broad usage by operational commanders

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Still valid data and slide:

CJCS Quotes (as CG TRADOC, Jan 2011 Army Magazine):

- To combat a decentralized enemy, we must decentralize capabilities and distribute operations
- Wars are human endeavors requiring interaction with broad range of actors and partners
- Technology provides enablers, but cannot lift the friction and fog of war.

Derived Attributes (multiple sources):

- Centrality of the Commander
- A cultivated leadership ethos
- Disciplined initiative within Cdr's intent
- Embraces calculated risk
- Imperative of trust and collaboration
- "Command by influence," (i.e., not command by plan or direction)

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Mission Command

Definition: The conduct of military operations through decentralized execution based on mission-type orders. JP 3-0	Benefits <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Cultivates a bias for action (both speed and agility)✓ Leverages enhanced awareness at lower level✓ Advantage in complex and uncertain environments✓ Establishes foundation for synergy and harmony✓ Increases C2 resiliency (not as reliant on comms)
Attributes <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Centrality of the Commander✓ A cultivated leadership ethos✓ Disciplined initiative within Cdr's intent✓ Embraces calculated risk✓ Imperative of trust and collaboration✓ "Command by influence," (i.e., not command by plan or direction)	Challenges <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Counter to a "control" & "technology-centric" culture✓ Acceptance of Risk (in terms of control)✓ Continuously evolving guidance / national direction✓ Shared understanding (co-creation of context)✓ Horizontal coordination at subordinate level Risks <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Potential to outpace strategic policy direction✓ Potential for unsynchronized / nonaligned action✓ Strategic corporal ramifications
Observations <ul style="list-style-type: none">• To combat a decentralized enemy, we must decentralize capabilities and distribute operations• Wars are human endeavors requiring interaction with broad range of actors and partners• Technology provides enablers, but cannot lift the friction and fog of war <p style="text-align: right;">- GEN Dempsey AUSA Jan 2011</p>	

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Benefits of Mission Command (multiple sources):

- Cultivates a bias for action (both speed and agility)
- Leverages enhanced awareness at lower level
- Advantage in complex and uncertain environments
- Establishes foundation for synergy and harmony
- Increases C2 resiliency (in other words, not reliant on comms. Can execute in absence of orders)

Challenges (observed):

- Counter to a "control" & "technology-centric" culture
- Acceptance of Risk by the HHQ (in terms of 'losing' control - this could be argued...)
- Continuously evolving guidance / national direction can result in continuously changing guidance
- Shared understanding (co-creation of context). Very time intensive in terms of sharing understanding
- Horizontal coordination at subordinate level to operate within Higher's intent (crosstalk rqmt).

Perceived Risks (observed):

- Potential to outpace strategic policy direction. (By totally empowering lower cdrs, your guidance and intent may necessarily be a bit in front of what national level decisionmakers have arrived at)
 - Potential for unsynchronized / nonaligned action if subordinates are not able to 'self-synchronize' due to limited assets and unclear prioritization.
 - Strategic corporal ramifications
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Joint training considerations:

- Emphasize commander-centric nature of operations driving design, planning, execution, and assessment. We emphasize the commander's decision cycle and commander's guidance and intent, and degree of risk acceptance in guiding subordinates and the staff, and the staff role in supporting commander decision-making.
- Reinforce "speed of trust" (supports the phrase "speed of war") in terms of instilling trust and confidence, empowerment of subordinates, decentralization, mission approval levels and battlefield circulation. We emphasize that this empowerment and decentralization increases C2 resilience as the force reduces its requirement on detailed control by the HHQ.
- Shared understanding (co-creation of context) in order to empower (all need same understanding). Major emphasis as this is a significant challenge, particularly in a fast moving crisis, an uncertain environment, and lack of developed personal relationships (with the associated increase in trust and confidence).
 - Continuously evolving guidance / national direction. Address the limitations of full mission command (and associated decentralization) when higher level guidance does not allow for sufficient situation understanding / co-creation of context in which to independently operate.
 - Address need to understand the complex Operational Environment. Instill complexity in the OE to promote collaboration, federation, and inclusion with the many stakeholders resulting in a co-creation of context. Emphasize role of intel and intel-ops fusion to understand and visualize the complex OE.
- Horizontal coordination at subordinate level. Another key focus area in terms of how empowered subordinates work together to derive solutions rather than being restricted to acting only upon orders from above.
- Delineation of decision approval levels – both within the HQ and with subordinate HQ/CDRs.
- Emphasize the unified action concepts of C5 (collaboration, coordination, communication, command, and control) in achieving unity of effort with our stakeholders.
- Counter to a "control" & "technology-centric" culture. We address in particular how a platform-centric service (e.g., USAF) needs to retain certain centralized functions in recognition of its unique capabilities) and how the joint force commander needs to clearly prioritize support by those assets.
- Acceptance of Risk (in terms of control). Address the balance in acceptance of risk for unsynchronized / nonaligned action by a subordinate

2. Current Trend Analysis

See slide.

Focus on negative trends:

- distributed operations:
- enabler prioritization:
- information environment:
- HN sovereignty:
- Inadequate capacity for horizontal collaboration:
- HHQ collaboration rqmts inundating / overtaxing lower HQ's planning capacity.

Added – delineation of decision / mission approval levels upfront.

Mission Command

As of Nov 2011

- Positive / Reinforced trends
 - Recognition of the reality of unified action and unity of effort
 - Recognition of the value of:
 - Centrality of commander
 - Relationships
 - Trust and confidence, and disciplined initiative
 - Battlefield circulation and co-creation of context
 - Empowerment and decentralization to gain agility (the bias for action)(IL)
 - Realization of risk considerations (risk to mission and risk to force)
- Negative trends / Challenges & emerging insights
 - Impact of distributed operations, requirement for enabler prioritization / tasking, ubiquitous information environment, and HN sovereignty on the degree of centralization, control, and approval level
 - Inadequate capacity for horizontal coordination at subordinate level
 - Capacity and amount of HHQ collaboration with subordinates is inundating their internal planning capacity
- Focus Paper
 - MC is discussed in the Jan 2011 Joint Insights paper. Needs update.
 - JS J7 working on MC paper. Have offered support. No update.

3. Checklist:

- Command atmosphere focused on personal relationship, trust, and confidence.
- Emphasis on guidance and intent with clear delineation of acceptable risk
- Commander-centric operations (vs staff-centric). Exhibited by early cdr guidance to staff, cdr-to-cdr discussions in forums like BUAs, decision briefs, confirmation briefs, and rehearsals, and command emphasis on battlefield circulation.
- Decentralized mission approval levels (both within HQ and with subordinates). Use of a matrix which lays out action and approval authority level.
- Use of support command relationship together with clear establishing authority direction and its understanding
- Emphasis on output over process, and people over technology.
- Co-creation of context – thru deliberately planned battlefield circulation schedules, deep dives, and incorporation of subordinate analysis together with HHQ sharing of perceptions.
- Recognition of importance of information sharing – and determination of appropriate networks, classification level, ease of portal use, FDO, and a need to share mentality.
- Sensitivity on part of HHQ staff to not inundate subordinates with reporting rqmts, excessive collaboration, and RFIs. Likewise, understanding on the part of subordinates to share perspectives and CCIR to support the concept of ‘co-creation’ of context.

Considerations in checklist observations:

Benefits:

- Enhanced speed of decision or agility of action based on decentralized decision makers closer to the tactical edge where direct observation and cultivated situational awareness enhance military judgment.
- An entrepreneurial spirit focused on developing and exploiting tactical and operational opportunity.
- Greater opportunity to gain and maintain the initiative through greater speed and fidelity of action produced by more numerous decision makers generating and exploiting fleeting opportunity.
- The opportunity to gain advantage by degrading enemy cohesion through numerous rapid and unexpected actions.
- Preserving the cohesion of friendly forces through relationships strengthened by trust, professional respect and mutual understanding.
- The enhanced situational awareness of empowered small unit decision makers enabling greater fidelity in planning and dexterity in execution.
- Decentralization that enables more numerous points of engagement over a wider battlespace to control terrain and to influence and protect populations.

Operationalizing Mission Command: Operational commanders can effectively integrate Mission Command into operational art, planning and execution by:

- Cultivating a leadership climate that empowers subordinate leaders and lowers the decision-authority threshold.
- Developing cohesive and reciprocal relationships of trust and mutual understanding among subordinates.
- Promoting a culture that values calculated risk as the means to generate opportunity.
- Incorporating design methodology to promote understanding and visualization of the problem and purpose.
- Creating a command climate that values the shared assessment of subordinate, adjacent and senior commanders to enhance understanding and promote adaptation.
- Promulgating timely vision, intent and guidance.
- Enabling subordinate commanders exercise wide latitude in accomplishing mission objectives within senior commander’s purpose and intent.
- Integration of warfighting functions and synchronization (coordination) of forces to empower the lowest practical echelon with combined arms capabilities.
- Encouraging an entrepreneurial mindset focused on gaining advantage and degrading enemy cohesion.

4. References:

JP 3-0 Discussion:

The C2 function is commander-centric and network-enabled to facilitate initiative and decision making at the lowest appropriate level. Although we have grown used to communicating freely without fear of jamming or interception, natural phenomena or an adaptive enemy may rapidly negate technology advantages. This is especially true at the lower echelons. If a commander loses reliable communications, he must have subordinates who can act without instructions. **Mission command**—a key component of the C2 function described in Chapter III, “Joint Functions”—**is the conduct of military operations through decentralized execution based upon mission-type orders**. Successful mission command demands that subordinate leaders at all echelons exercise disciplined initiative and act aggressively and independently to accomplish the mission. They focus their orders on the purpose of the operation rather than on the details of how to perform assigned tasks. They delegate decisions to subordinates wherever possible, which minimizes detailed control and empowers subordinates’ initiative to make decisions based on understanding what the commander wants rather than on constant communications. Essential to mission command is the thorough understanding of the commander’s intent at every level of command.

JP 3-31 (C2 for Joint Land Operations) discussion:

"As joint land operations tend to become decentralized, mission command becomes the preferred method of command and control (C2).

“Mission command is the conduct of military operations through decentralized execution based upon mission-type orders. Successful mission command demands that subordinate leaders at all echelons exercise disciplined initiative, acting aggressively and independently to accomplish the mission. Essential to mission command is the thorough knowledge and understanding of the commander's intent at every level of command. Under mission command, commanders issue mission-type orders, use implicit communications, and delegate most decisions to subordinates wherever possible.” (JP 3-31).

US Army ATTP 5-0.1 Commander and Staff Officer Guide

Mission Command

1-1. *Mission command* is the exercise of authority and direction by the commander using mission orders to enable disciplined initiative within the commander’s intent to empower agile and adaptive leaders in the conduct of full spectrum operations. It is commander-led and blends the art of command and the science of control to integrate the warfighting functions to accomplish the mission (FM 6-0). Commanders exercise mission command throughout the conduct (plan, prepare, execute, and assessment) of operations.

1-2. Predictability in operations is rare, making centralized decisionmaking and creating an orderly process ineffective. During operations, leaders make decisions, develop plans, and direct actions under varying degrees of complexity and uncertainty. Commanders contend with thinking, adaptive enemies in areas of operations where many events occur simultaneously. Often commanders have difficulty accurately predicting how enemies will act and react, how populations will perceive or react to friendly or enemy actions, or how events will develop.

1-3. Effective mission command requires an environment of mutual trust and understanding among commanders, subordinates, and partners. In this command climate, commanders encourage subordinates to exercise disciplined initiative to seize opportunities and counter threats within the commander’s intent. Mission command helps counter the uncertainty of operations by empowering subordinates at the scene to make decisions and act quickly without constantly referring to higher headquarters.

1-4. The commander is the central figure in mission command. Through mission command, commanders combine the art of command and the science of control to accomplish missions. They

take prudent risks, exercise initiative, and act decisively, even when the outcome is uncertain. All missions contain risk. Risk taking must focus on winning rather than preventing defeat, even if preventing defeat appears safer.

1-5. Commanders use mission orders to focus their orders on the purpose of the operation rather than on the details of how to perform assigned tasks. Doing this minimizes detailed control and allows subordinates the greatest possible freedom of action within the commander's intent.

1-6. Lastly, when delegating authority to subordinates, commanders do everything in their power to set the necessary conditions for success. They allocate enough resources for subordinates to accomplish assigned tasks. These resources include information, personnel, forces, materiel, and time.

ART OF COMMAND

1-7. *Command* is the authority that a commander in the armed forces lawfully exercises over subordinates by virtue of rank or assignment. Command includes the authority and responsibility for effectively using available resources and for planning the employment of, organizing, directing, coordinating, and controlling military forces for the accomplishment of assigned missions. It also includes responsibility for health, welfare, morale, and discipline of assigned personnel (JP 1). Command is personal. An individual—not an institution or group—commands. Command provides the basis for control.

1-8. The art of command is the creative and skillful exercise of authority through decisionmaking and leadership. Authority refers to the right and power to judge, act, or command. It includes responsibility, accountability, and delegation. Commanders rely on their education, experience, knowledge, and judgment in applying authority as they decide (plan how to achieve the end state) and lead (direct their forces during preparation and execution). Decisionmaking refers to selecting a course of action as the one most favorable to accomplish the mission. Commanders apply knowledge to the situation thus translating their visualization into action. Decisionmaking includes knowing whether to decide and understanding the consequences. Leadership refers to the process of influencing people by providing purpose, direction, and motivation, while operating to accomplish the mission and improve the organization. Commanders lead through a combination of personal example, persuasion, and compulsion. (FM 6-22 discusses leadership.)

1-9. The commander's presence and personal leadership drive successful mission command. The commander focuses on three tasks necessary to ensure mission accomplishment in full spectrum operations:

- Drives the operations process.
- Understand, visualize, describe, direct, lead, and assess operations.
- Develop teams among modular formations and joint, interagency, intergovernmental, and multinational partners.
- Lead inform and influence activities.

See FM 3-0 for a detailed discussion of the commander tasks in mission command.

SCIENCE OF CONTROL

1-10. While command is a personal function, control involves the entire force. *Control* is the regulation of forces and warfighting functions to accomplish the mission in accordance with the commander's intent (FM 6-0). It is fundamental to directing operations. Staffs coordinate, synchronize, and integrate actions, keep the commander informed, and exercise control for the commander.

1-11. Commanders and staffs use the science of control to overcome the physical and procedural constraints under which units operate. Control relies on objectivity, facts, empirical methods, and analysis. Hence, the control aspect of mission command is more science than art. The science of control includes the detailed systems and procedures to improve the commander's understanding. Control demands understanding those aspects of operations that can be analyzed and measured. These include the physical capabilities and limitations of friendly and enemy organizations and systems. Control also requires a realistic appreciation for time-distance factors and the time required to initiate certain actions.

MISSION COMMAND SYSTEM

1-12. Commanders cannot exercise mission command alone except in the smallest organizations, company or troop and below. Thus, commanders perform these functions through a *mission command system*—the arrangement of personnel; networks; information systems; processes and procedures; and facilities and equipment that enable commanders to conduct operations (FM 6-0). The remainder of this Army tactics, techniques, and procedures (ATTP) focuses on personnel, networks, and procedures.

THE OPERATIONS PROCESS

1-13. Commanders, assisted by their staffs, integrate numerous processes and activities within the headquarters and across the force as they exercise mission command. The Army's overarching framework to do this is the operations process. The *operations process* consists of the major mission command activities performed during operations: planning, preparing, executing, and continuously assessing the operation. The commander drives the operations process through leadership (FM 3-0).

1-14. The activities of the operations process (plan, prepare, execute, and assess) may sequentially occur at the start of an operation. Once operations begin, a headquarters often conducts parts of each activity simultaneously. Planning, to include design, is continuous. Preparing begins when a unit receives a mission. It always overlaps with planning and continues through execution for some subordinate units. Execution puts a plan into action. Assessing is continuous and influences the other three activities. Subordinate units of the same command may be in different stages of the operations process. At any time during the operations process, commanders may reframe based on a shift in their understanding or significant changes in the operational environment. This may lead to a new perspective on the problem resulting in an entirely new plan. (FM 3-0 discusses the operations process.)

1-15. Design permeates the operations process (see FM 5-0). *Design* is not a process or a checklist—it is a methodology for applying critical and creative thinking to understand, visualize, and describe complex, illstructured problems and develop approaches to solve them. Design assists commanders and staffs with the conceptual aspects of planning to include developing an operational approach that guides the force during preparation and execution. A key aspect of design is reframing the problem as the force learns through action. While continuously assessing changes in the operational environment and the progress of operations, design assists commanders and staffs in determining if reframing is required, leading to a new operational approach.

1-16. At the center of the operations process is the commander. The commander's activities of understanding, visualizing, describing, directing, leading, and assessing guide the staff and subordinates throughout the conduct of operations. The commander's role in the operations process takes on different emphasis during planning, preparing, executing, and assessing. For example, during planning commanders focus their activities on understanding, visualizing, and describing while directing, leading, and assessing. During execution, commanders often focus on directing, leading, and assessing while improving their understanding and modifying their visualization.

1-17. Where commanders focus on the major aspects of operations, staffs assist commanders in the exercise of mission command throughout the operations process by—

- Providing relevant information and analysis.
- Maintaining running estimates and making recommendations.
- Preparing plans and orders.
- Monitoring operations.
- Controlling operations.
- Assessing the progress of operations.

See FM 5-0 for a detailed discussion of how commanders drive the operations process.

Marine Corps Operating Concepts - Third Edition Chapter 2

Mission Command

Introduction

Among the many 'enhancements' included in Enhanced MAGTF Operations (EMO) are continuing improvements to our leader development process that incorporate emerging ideas to adapt to current or anticipated operational demands. MCDP-1 *Warfighting*, widely recognized as the foundation of the Marine Corps' philosophy of maneuver warfare is steeped in the ethos of mission command and provides a solid doctrinal base for integrating this leadership methodology into all aspects of our training, garrison and combat activities.

Purpose

Mission Command builds on the foundational wisdom of MCPD-1 *Warfighting* and MCDP-6 *Command and Control* to provide insight and guidance to institutional and operational leaders on combat leadership development and application. While the Marine Corps can take justifiable pride in the application of mission orders and the decentralization of command in current operations, it is widely recognized that there remains significant room for improvement in the application of our command philosophy in both garrison and combat.

Mission Command is designed to provide a more explicit narrative of the virtues and value of command by influence, with the expectation that it will inform Marines of the continuous duty to establish a leadership climate of trust, mutual understanding and professional respect that enhances combat effectiveness. Based on leader character, Mission Command offers no checklist for success, but instead challenges our Corps to cultivate a bias for action in subordinate leaders and accentuate the senior leadership virtues of trust, moral courage and restraint. A Marine Corps that boldly incorporates the tenets of Mission Command into our institutional ethos will be better able to adapt and achieve advantage in complex and uncertain operational environments.

Defining Mission Command

MCDP-1 *Warfighting* describes the Marine Corps philosophy of command. Key ideas include: decentralized decision making to accelerate tempo and gain initiative, mission tactics, a human approach centered on exploiting "human traits such as boldness, initiative, personality, strength of will and imagination," implicit communications through mutual understanding, shared philosophy and experience, commanders forward—especially at the point of decision, shared danger and privation, professional trust, familiar relationships and the ability to thrive in an environment of chaos, uncertainty and friction. The term Mission Command is meant to encompass this broad description, but ultimately we will be pressed for a definition that succinctly captures the essential purpose of mission command, even if in being concise it omits a more holistic description.

Incorporating new ideas from the emerging field of operational design, the evolving Army definition of Mission Command reflects the emphasis the Army Capstone Concept places on decentralized operations and adaptability. "The art and science of integrating the warfighting functions and synchronizing forces to understand, visualize, design, describe, lead, assess, and adapt decentralized operations to accomplish the mission within the broad purpose of higher commanders' intent. Mission Command includes empowering the lowest possible echelon with the combined arms capabilities,

competency, and authority to seize, retain, and exploit the initiative.” Attempting to more closely integrate Mission Command philosophy into service ethos, stress the predatory nature of entrepreneurship in combat and identify the importance of cohesion, the evolving Marine Corps definition of Mission Command is crafted in accord with maneuverist thought.

Mission Command is the leadership philosophy that complements and supports the maneuver warfare philosophy of the Marine Corps. Rooted in service culture and fundamental to our warrior spirit, Mission Command is a cultivated leadership ethos that empowers decentralized leaders with decision authority and guides the character development of Marines in garrison and combat. Mission Command promotes an entrepreneurial mindset and enables the strong relationships of trust and mutual understanding necessary for decentralized decision making and the tempo of operations required to seize the initiative, degrade enemy cohesion and strengthen our own cohesive relationships in the crucible of combat. These definitions all illuminate the evolving idea of Mission Command and contribute to a growing joint understanding of how command philosophy influences decision makers to achieve advantage and accomplish mission objectives.

Describing Mission Command

Mission Command is a command and control philosophy based on the principle of “command by influence.” In *Command in War* Martin Van Creveld identifies three principle genres of command philosophies: Command by Direction, Command by Plan and Command by Influence. Of the three, Command by Influence is the most complex, but also the most counter-intuitive. Most military forces incorporate some elements of command by influence into their command and control philosophy, but to what degree does Mission Command influence the organizational ethos and resulting capability of the force.

The primary characteristic of command by influence is ***decentralization of command with empowered subordinates exercising initiative in accord with the superior commander’s intent.*** We will augment this core characteristic with other aspects of decentralized combat decision making. It is important to note that Mission Command evolved in tandem with maneuverist philosophy. Maneuver warfare seeks not only to capture militarily significant objectives and destroy the enemy force and material, but to simultaneously “*shatter the enemy’s cohesion through a variety of rapid, focused, and unexpected actions which create a turbulent and rapidly deteriorating situation with which the enemy cannot cope.*” The maneuverist strives to *take the initiative in both the physical and cognitive domains* and asserts the critical importance of tempo and surprise to gain the initiative and compromise enemy cohesion.

Leadership

The wisdom and ethos of Mission Command should define our leadership and inspire our Corps in all endeavors. As leaders, we must understand that the quality of our leadership is rooted in character not method. The moral qualities necessary for establishing the relationships that sustain a climate conducive to mission command place great demands on the courage and character of leaders. Personal fortitude is the foundation underpinning the relationships that promote unit cohesion and combat effectiveness. Mission Command is more than a leadership philosophy; it is about relationships founded in fortitude and nurtured in trust that enable Marines to thrive where others would flounder.

Through mission command we can prevail over men bounded by lesser mutual expectation and weaker service ethos. Fundamentally, mission command is dependent upon leaders with the spirit to risk and the moral courage to trust. Mission Command thrives where mutual understanding and trust outweigh the sum of all fears. Mission Command is founded on the human qualities of trust and mutual understanding that inspire individual and small unit initiative. Professional expectation and dutiful initiative energize subordinates and allow them to take action to accomplish assigned missions (tasks) in accord with commander's intent (purpose). As a method of operational level command and control, Mission Command is dependent on the individual character and reciprocal relationships developed between leaders. The salient features and benefits of the Mission Command philosophy are:

- Enhanced speed of decision or agility of action based on decentralized decision makers closer to the tactical edge where direct observation and cultivated situational awareness enhance military judgment.
- An entrepreneurial spirit focused on developing and exploiting tactical and operational opportunity.
- Greater opportunity to gain and maintain the initiative through greater speed and fidelity of action produced by more numerous decision makers generating and exploiting fleeting opportunity.
- The opportunity to gain advantage by degrading enemy cohesion through numerous rapid and unexpected actions.
- Preserving the cohesion of friendly forces through relationships strengthened by trust, professional respect and mutual understanding.
- The enhanced situational awareness of empowered small unit decision makers enabling greater fidelity in planning and dexterity in execution.
- Decentralization that enables more numerous points of engagement over a wider battlespace to control terrain and to influence and protect populations.

Like any effective command and control philosophy, Mission Command must be in accord with the nature of war and human nature, reflect our warfighting philosophy, contribute to resolving current or future operational problems and leverage to advantage unique qualities of the people it serves.

Mission Command leverages the unique nature of the American people. Americans are entrepreneurs. Our culture values and rewards calculated risk takers who expend great initiative to develop and exploit opportunity. Could an emphasis on decentralization, empowerment of subordinates and exploitation of opportunity generate a disproportionate increase in combat power? Historic contrast between mission command guided forces and more centralized C2 structures indicates we have much untapped potential within our grasp.

Entrepreneurial spirit is supported by a Mission Command philosophy that is focused on developing and exploiting tactical and operational opportunity. The role of vision, personal will, dynamic creativity, initiative, intuition, risk acceptance and pragmatism as enabling leadership competencies are essential as we move forward. Mission Command accounts for the nature of war by acknowledging uncertainty as a fundamental characteristic. To resolve this inherent uncertainty we distribute empowered decision makers to the point of action in order to discern the situation, gain better awareness, and act.

Decentralized organizations are inherently more resilient and capable of timely adaptation than those with more hierarchical and centralized decision processes. Decision makers close to the tactical edge will be able to more rapidly develop or exploit opportunity and if given appropriate authority, can take timely and effective action. Dexterity and fidelity of action are also enhanced by decentralization, so commanders are more likely to not only do the right thing, but to do things right. The unclear nature of the future operational environment disallows for any degree of certainty in preparing for future conflict—but investment in developing a culture and command climate of mission command will better enable appropriate adaptation to any operational challenge. Mission Command accounts for human nature by acknowledging *human will as the deciding factor in battle* and identifying ‘cohesion’ as the critical vulnerability to our success. Human will and cohesion are common to all collective human endeavors conducted amid the risk, danger, violence and uncertainty of war. Our object is to “shatter enemy cohesion” through surprise, speed and violence, and strengthen and insulate our own cohesion from enemy action by emphasizing the trust and mutual understanding between commanders that doubly bond unity of command. Our understanding of C2 is fundamentally about intent and relationships, vice hierarchical control and technological means. Consequently, commanders who lose communications and are physically isolated are expected to continue to act with confidence in accordance with commander’s intent. For this reason we assert that *Mission Command is the sword and shield of cohesion*.

Institutionalizing Mission Command

Institutional changes that promote Mission Command include:

- Adopting and formalizing the traits of Trust, Moral Courage and Restraint that inspire, enable and reinforce a bias for action in subordinates.
- Establishing a training environment that allows for ‘white space’ in the schedule for subordinates to develop unit cohesion and compels them to exercise judgment and creativity in training.
- Leadership development that challenges initiative to the point of failure as a way to evaluate character, fortitude and resiliency of personality in conditions of adversity.

Operationalizing Mission Command

Operational commanders can effectively integrate Mission Command into operational art, planning and execution by:

- Cultivating a leadership climate that empowers subordinate leaders and lowers the decision-authority threshold.
- Developing cohesive and reciprocal relationships of trust and mutual understanding among subordinates.
- Promoting a service culture that values calculated risk as the means to generate opportunity.
- Incorporating design methodology to promote understanding and visualization of the problem and purpose.
- Creating a command climate that values the shared assessment of subordinate, adjacent and senior commanders to enhance understanding and promote adaptation.
- Promulgating timely vision, intent and guidance.

- Enabling subordinate commanders exercise wide latitude in accomplishing mission objectives within senior commander's purpose and intent.
- Integration of warfighting functions and synchronization (coordination) of forces to empower the lowest practical echelon with combined arms capabilities.
- Encouraging an entrepreneurial mindset focused on gaining advantage and degrading enemy cohesion.

Achieving Operational Advantage

By decentralizing tactical decision authority the operational commander gains many advantages, among them are:

- **Gaining the Initiative.** Many decision makers making more timely and dexterous decisions closer to the point of action generates more opportunities for exploitation. The rapidity of decisions that Mission Command and decentralization enables can overwhelm a centralized adversary's ability to react. Not only does decentralization enable speed of decision, but it also enhances decision detail and enables greater agility in action. When speed is of lesser importance, as may be the case in counter-insurgency (COIN) operations, trading speed for enhanced precision can also produce advantage. Rarely can a superbly trained and more experienced senior make more timely and apt decisions from remote locations than many adequate subordinates who have refined situational awareness at the point of action. The *primacy of proximity* guides mission command.

- **Generating Feedback Loops.** By decentralizing command decisions the operational commander unleashes tactical commanders to pressure the enemy or influence the situation at more points of tactical action in accord with his intent. The distributed units also serve as 'observers' who gain situational awareness and report on commander's critical information requirements (CCIR) and other actionable information. After the mission-directed action is taken by a subordinate, he reports back to the senior not only the action taken, but on any unforeseen, unintended or 'emergent' results. Attentive subordinates constantly providing detailed situational awareness (SA) across the operational area, provide the operational commander the opportunity to more quickly discern enemy patterns, better understand the nature of the problem and provide more effective planning and operational guidance at each step of the design and planning process. This understanding of command relationships places great emphasis on the '*reciprocal relationship*' that bonds commanders rather than hierarchical chains that might shackle them. It recognizes the need for the senior to be attentive to the information, ideas and insights coming from the tactical edge.

- **Decision Advantage.** Mission Command is not predicated on more brilliant commanders or troops and does not presume an intellectual or innate cognitive superiority over adversaries.

Superiority is *achieved* by exploiting subordinate initiative to control tempo, dictate terms of engagement and realize *incremental advantage* across a wide array of activities and functions that *cumulatively* lead to a deteriorating enemy situation and cause loss of coherence and cohesion that can lead to disproportionate result. The MAGTF commander and his staff establish the **context and command philosophy** that enables information flow, pattern recognition, speed of decision, and effectiveness of action in a decentralized environment. By their every action, question and

requirement they convey the expectation and intent that encourages the creativeness required to exploit opportunity and thrive in complex operations. Decision advantage is achieved by establishing conditions that enable cohesive relationships that are resilient in conditions of adversity, austerity, danger and the inherent uncertainty and chaos of combat.

Characteristics of Mission Command

- ***War Compels Adaptive Learning.*** The inherent uncertainty of war, combined with our adversary's reaction to our initiative and simultaneous actions to disguise his capabilities and intentions, make war risky, unpredictable and highly susceptible to chance. While calculated risk can mitigate chance, even the most skilled decision maker operating under the time competitive pressures of combat will make mistakes. Therefore there is a need to develop and select leaders who know how to learn, are used to making mistakes and are capable of generating new opportunities amid setbacks. (Grant at Shiloh vs. Hooker at Chancellorsville) Because mistakes are inevitable amid the high risk and uncertainty of combat, commanders must be capable of discerning the patterns that led to mistakes and avoid them in the future. To the degree practical, shared experience—especially lessons hard earned—should be promulgated laterally as quickly as possible so that the learning curve of the entire organization is elevated by the creativity or misfortune of individual units.
- ***Continuous Training.*** Operational commanders should expect that deployed units will be trained and ready. However, it is the commander's responsibility to generate the opportunities necessary for task organized units to become a cohesive expeditionary force. Training and discussions about tactics invite senior leaders to develop professional expectation and a sense of personal commitment by subordinates entrusted with exercising their operational vision. History buffs will identify Admiral Lord Nelson's dinners with his fleet captains aboard his flagship while at sea as important contributors to the "Nelson Touch." Different, but similar efforts to develop personal relationships of trust and professional respect are essential to success in combat operations. Professional development should educate leaders on the need for continuous professional engagement and shared educational experiences among commanders and subordinates at every level, even during the conduct of combat operations.

Senior Leadership Traits

Mission Command asserts new senior leadership traits of *TRUST*, *MORAL COURAGE* and *RESTRAINT* to complement the classic leadership traits and principles. These senior leadership traits are designed to promote those qualities of character in senior leaders that enable initiative, innovation and a bias for action to thrive among subordinates. The trust and mutual understanding developed in training allows dutiful subordinates to know what is expected of them and how their actions integrate into the wider purpose of the commander's vision. Once confident that subordinates know how to innovate an appropriate action based on commonly discussed principles, *commanders must display the moral courage and exercise the restraint that unleashes the innovative potential of subordinates conditioned by a creative spirit*, to strive for advantage and wrest the initiative from a determined foe, or take effective action in chaotic and complex situations. Moral courage conveys the moral strength, emotional resiliency and predatory calculation that steels resolve and tempers impatience. It is the

ability to absorb great pressure and to master emotion with composed judgment. Moral courage is a quality of character that enables other leadership traits to thrive amid danger and violence under the weight of command. It steadies leader confidence and distinguishes those self-assured enough to invite criticism, listen to subordinates, learn from all, while avoiding arrogance.

Just as Mission Command must permeate our culture in both garrison and combat, so too the moral qualities of mission command must be exercised and exemplified in both peace and war. In garrison and training leader's moral courage combines with *restraint* to unleash subordinates to train to failure, make mistakes and develop their decision-making skills. Moral courage embraces risk, vice merely tolerating it.

Risk as Military Virtue

Embracing risk is a military virtue. "He who dares not risk cannot win" and "victory belongs to the bold" capture the spirit of moral courage that must animate the character of joint leaders. Calculated risk is not reckless, it is the recognition that in war nothing is assured and that friction and chance can radically influence events; yet advantage can be gained through relentless efforts to generate, recognize and exploit opportunity in a timely manner. Risk calculation and acceptance is a complex problem that confronts commanders in both the intellectual and moral dimensions. Risk cannot be eliminated, nor in pursuit of the utopian battlespace should we seek to do so. Risk is a component of resolve, and inherent to the entrepreneurial spirit promoted by *Mission Command embraces calculated risk to generate opportunity*.

Conclusion

Mission Command is not a panacea. Nor is the formal adoption of a "policy" of Mission Command sufficient to make a quick difference in operational capability. The leadership habits of Mission Command can not be "trained" into a force, but must be more subtly "imbued" by the words and example of confident leaders—cultivated over time. The long history of human conflict is punctuated with exceptionally capable forces sustained beyond mortal limits by leaders and warriors welded in purpose by Mission Command. Anticipating the demand for future operational effectiveness compels resolute effort toward a deepened Corps ethos of Mission Command today.