



**Leader Development in Contact**  
**Leader Observations from the National Training Center**



**By Operations Group, The National Training Center**





# Leader Development in Contact: Leader Observations from the National Training Center

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## Foreword

At the NTC, we spend time assisting units to build their understanding of doctrine, the operations process, science of control, and fundamentals our units must execute on the modern battlefield. Although critical to our success on future battlefields, some rotational units overlook leadership—the most critical element of combat power.

As I sat back a few months ago perusing *66 Stories of Battle Command*, one simple observation jumped out. When looking back on their time in the Army, our most successful leaders nearly always talk about people. They focus on the actions of the subordinate leaders with whom they served. They talk about leader development, understanding, and efforts of Soldiers on the front lines. In essence, they speak of leaders making a difference.

When the NTC was founded in the early 1980s, few understood the long-term impact it would have on our force. However, the first Operations Group commander made an astute observation when he said, “The real worth of the NTC will be clear within the early days of the next war.” Although few leaders may go to war in the position they serve during a rotation, what they learn as leaders on the NTC battlefield will influence the performance of our Army in the wars to come.

Often forgotten by many, the NTC's greatest contribution to our Army is leader development experiences carried away by those we train. We develop leaders at the NTC each month ... in contact with a fierce replicated enemy force amid the toughest operational environment the Army can provide.

In this handbook, the Operations Group examines the art of leadership, its application on the replicated NTC battlefield, and what some of our more successful rotational unit leaders do to build winning teams. If you want to become a great battlefield leader who can prepare units for the rigors of the Army's best replicated combat, start at the NTC.

As always, thank you for everything you do for our force. If there is any way Operations Group can assist you with building your team, do not hesitate to ask.

Sincerely,



Michael J. Simmering  
Outlaw 01  
Operations Group  
The National Training Center & Fort Irwin

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## CHAPTER 1

# The Power of Leadership at the Point of Contact

**By COL Michael J. Simmering,  
National Training Center Operations Group Commander**

“The real worth of the National Training Center (NTC) will be clear within the early days of the next war.”

—Outlaw 01 (#1) William Shackelford,  
Former NTC Operations Group Commander

If you are an Army professional, you have probably experienced the following scenario: You have subscribed to a litany of military social media outlets and other mediums that perpetuate a nearly constant stream of leadership-focused articles. Each time one pops up, you open it and wonder what you can learn to become a better leader. Although many are helpful and provide niche comments on ways to improve, they often miss the primary point of Army leadership, which is to inspire others to risk their lives to accomplish important U.S. missions.

Between wars, our nation expects the U.S. Army to make preparing to fight and win the next war its most important mission. Often lost among our day-to-day demands, exercises, and training schedules, developing leaders at echelon to fight and win America’s next war constitutes an essential task. Yet, for some reason, many believe leader development programs revolve around a series of leader professional developments, officer professional developments, noncommissioned officer development programs, etc. Although educating our young leaders is important, too often we fail to realize one critical component of leader development: Leaders are developed in contact, leading real Soldiers, accomplishing real missions that best replicate the true demands of modern combat. Internalized lessons from those experiences serve as the greatest developmental experiences over the course of a leader’s career. Although self-developmental and institutional learning are necessary components of leader development, operational assignments allow us to truly practice our craft.

“After 40 years and countless rotations, the simple fact remains that our best leaders continue to inspire, motivate, and provide purpose and direction under any conditions.”

The National Training Center (NTC) rose from the ashes and associated shortcomings of a hollow force in the 1970s. Beyond building immediate readiness, the true long-term value of the NTC has always been its ability to develop leaders at echelon in a demanding, competition-based environment. We develop leaders every month—in contact. We see every leader on their best day, and often, on their worst day. After 40 years and countless rotations, the simple fact remains that our best leaders continue to inspire, motivate, and provide purpose and direction under any conditions.

This handbook describes what some of the most successful leaders accomplish at the NTC. Army Doctrine Publication 6-22, *Army Leadership and the Profession*, 31 July 2019, provides a solid model regarding leader expectations. Divided into attributes (what a leader is) and competencies (what a leader does), these traits manifest themselves during every rotation. Although not a recipe for success, a leader’s failure to accomplish any one of these tasks can result in frustration, miscommunication, and an inability to accomplish a mission.

## **LEADING SOLDIERS**

Building trust starts on the first day. Whether you are a squad leader or battalion commander, more than anything, Soldiers want to know if they can trust you. Personally, they do not care about any baggage you may carry or your personal struggles. For whatever reason, you have been placed in a position to immediately influence their lives in numerous ways. They simply want to know if you are the type of leader they can trust to do what is best for them while accomplishing the mission.

We have all heard that trust goes both ways; however, the trust between Soldiers and leaders truly manifests every day on the NTC battlefield. Soldiers will do amazing things if they trust their leadership. Soldiers who do not trust their leadership simply undermine the leader’s efforts (knowingly or unknowingly), regardless of the purity of their intent. The following is an example from a trusted leader during an NTC rotation:

It was a cold, foggy, rainy night at the NTC. The brigade combat team (BCT) had been inching its way forward slowly all day, setting the conditions for the next operation—the biggest combat operation of the rotation. Several battalion commanders call you stating they believe it is too dangerous to move in the restricted terrain many of them find themselves. Nobody has been hurt, but you can hear trepidation in their voices. Some are probably worried without reason. Others, based on the density of the fog, rain, and imminent flooding in their area, have a valid concern. Regardless, you know stopping at this point risks mission failure for the entire team.

As the brigade commander, you have two choices: 1) Tell them to continue the mission. 2) Call your higher headquarters and let them know you are not going to make forward progress as planned; and the mission, as envisioned by your division commander, is at risk.

What do you do?

You call the division commander. After speaking with him, you realize you are not the only unit commander with concerns. Multiple other elements on the battlefield have raised similar concerns, but you were the first to call him directly. The division directs you to retain your current position and prepare to execute when weather permits.

Although seemingly inconsequential, this brigade commander had battalion commanders who felt they could bring him problems. They trusted the brigade commander to handle the situation. They confided in him that the mission was at risk, but Soldiers' lives would needlessly be lost if they continued on their current path. This type of trust happens every day at the NTC, and at echelon. Those leaders whom subordinates trust make better decisions, and subordinates fight harder for leaders they believe have their best interests in mind.

**Setting the example.** We have all struggled with this at some point. If you are not the type of leader who wonders every day if you are setting a good example for others, then you probably do not deserve to be leading others. If you are the type of leader who has to be told by your boss you are not setting a good example, you definitely do not need to be leading others.

We often skew the phrase “setting the example.” At the point of contact, when life becomes seemingly impossible in the fury of battle, your Soldiers do not care how many push-ups you can do. They care even less how fast you can run. In peacetime, these things inspire your Soldiers to be better. However, on the battlefield, your Soldiers simply want someone to provide purpose, direction, and motivation. They want to know that if they do things like you, their chances for survival increase. They want someone who, in the most confusing situation, can answer their most immediate question—“What do we do now?”

As the brigade proceeded forward to clear key terrain, the operation had not gone as planned. The cavalry squadron’s primary mission had been to clear the NTC’s famed Iron Triangle (an area in the NTC where most major battles occur and terrain channelizes and restricts options for forces) of three enemy antitank (AT) systems to enable the remainder of the brigade’s forward passage. One cavalry troop had already been decimated by enemy AT fire when supporting Attack Helicopter (AH)-64 Apaches failed to arrive on station as planned. A second cavalry troop had lost a platoon of combat power.

The second troop commander knew the situation had begun to deteriorate rapidly. He also knew the enemy AT systems operating in defensive positions would likely destroy his remaining forces if he attempted to move forward. Rallying his remaining forces, he dismounted with his remaining platoon and moved forward with three separate javelin teams. The troop’s remaining M3 Bradley infantry fighting vehicles remained in position providing overwatch as the dismounts maneuvered forward.

Meanwhile, the squadron informed the BCT that passing the maneuver battalions forward on schedule was not possible. The BCT commander was not pleased, but knew that without the Apache support, the operation tempo had to slow down. The success or failure of the entire BCT’s mission now rested on a decision that a subordinate troop commander had already made.

**The result.** Within 90 minutes, the dismounted cavalry scouts cleared two of the three enemy AT systems. The troop commander’s efforts to rally his remaining Soldiers, and provide them calm, deliberate instructions started to pay off. Meanwhile, the Apaches came on station and destroyed the remaining AT system. As the Bradleys continued to

provide overwatch, the remaining troops maneuvered forward to meet the dismounts on the key terrain. The squadron commander called the remainder of the BCT forward.

After the fight, one of the observer controller/trainers (OC/Ts) asked the troop commander during the after action review (AAR), “What made you think of that course of action? We have not seen a troop commander dismount like that and move that far in a long time.”

Before the troop commander could respond, one of the platoon sergeants laughed and said, “I am not so sure that anyone really thought about it. When he told us what the plan was, we simply followed him. We could not have him out there playing the hero by himself.”

Leaders who set the example personify everything we want our subordinates to be—nauseatingly proficient in their craft, willing to share hardship and risk, and capable of accurately and swiftly assessing a situation and directing everyone’s efforts to overcome adversity to save as many lives as possible while getting the job done. Someone who can do that is the type of leader we hope to be when that worst day confronts us. They are also the ones we want leading us into combat. A leader who can set the example in combat is more valuable than 10 who cannot. They are the type we would let lead our own son or daughter into combat.

**Effective communication.** In our profession, we often boil the ability to communicate down to an equipment-based solution. We constantly talk in terms of primary and alternate nets. We fret over lower and upper tactical internet. In reality, effective communication does not just revolve around equipment; it revolves around people and their ability to share thoughts, ideas, and information. Although the saying “if you cannot talk, you cannot fight” has always been true, the notion of being able to talk has never guaranteed the ability to effectively communicate.

After seven days of fighting, the brigade finally did it. The Soldiers secured the capital city of Razish after an 18-hour battle that began at 1800 hours the night prior. As the unit conducted consolidation and reorganization, the brigade intelligence officer provided an updated assessment. The lead elements of the 802nd Brigade Tactical Group (BTG) were destroyed during the initial enemy counterattack; however, multiple elements of the 802nd BTG remained throughout the sector. Unmanned aircraft systems began to detect the consolidation of two company-sized elements of the 802nd BTG massing for another counterattack. Given their current rate of movement, the S-2 assessed another enemy counterattack would take place shortly after sunset.

The brigade command net came alive with the brigade commander's voice, "Listen guys, I know you all have been fighting hard for the last 18 hours, but we are not done. The enemy is going to try to take this city back. We need to retain this city at all costs. X Battalion, you have responsibility for destroying anything that comes into the city. Y Battalion, you back him up if he needs help. Z Battalion, you need to continue to defend the area outside the city. For the cavalry squadron, I need you to tell me where he's coming from ... I just lost all my eyes and ears from higher (headquarters) ... you have got to paint a picture for the rest of us."

Two hours later, the enemy counterattack suddenly arrived. After proxy forces destroyed the battalion headquarters responsible for the interior of the city, the enemy launched a chemical attack against the brigade's main command post to degrade the blue forces' (BLUFOR's) ability to exercise command and control (C2) for the brigade. Meanwhile, a mechanized infantry company (+), reinforced with additional dismounted infantry, attacked directly into the city. With the battalion and brigade command posts rendered combat ineffective, mission failure appeared almost certain. Suddenly, the brigade command net lit up with the voices of three different company commanders from three different battalions. They understood the situation and their commander's intent. They knew help was not coming. The troop commander told the two company commanders where the opposing force (OPFOR) penetrated. Two company commanders from two different battalions rallied their forces to blunt the OPFOR counterattack. When the sun rose the next morning, the brigade still controlled Razish.



**Think of it this way.** In the heat of battle, on their worst day, when things are not going well, can you communicate with your tired, hungry Soldiers to accurately tell them what has to be done? Can you calmly and succinctly provide them intent which gives the entire organization a purpose? When they do not understand or start to move in the wrong direction, can you communicate in a manner that corrects their behavior without demeaning them? Can you provide the inflection and emphasis needed without degrading others in the heat of the battle? Effectively communicating with other human beings is an art—not an equipment-centric scientific effort.

Quality leaders effectively communicate up, down, and across the chain of command. Because they are trusted and because others look up to them, Soldiers pay attention to them. Keeping a Soldier's attention requires you to effectively communicate in a manner that continues to inspire and motivate others to accomplish the mission.

### DEVELOPING LEADERS

**A positive climate makes all the difference.** Given that you have begun to build trust within your formation, work to set a personal example, and consistently strive to effectively communicate with your subordinates. Many leaders in the heat of battle often overlook the power of a consistently positive climate.

Battlefield leaders are not cheerleaders; however, the best leaders always strive to maintain a positive tone within their formation. Regardless of the circumstances, they constantly see the positive in their organization, and reward it often. Although they combat unit shortcomings and problems head on, they do not dwell on the negative to the point it spreads like a sarcastic, excuse-riddled disease. They understand the training battlefield is simply a replicated contest of wills—where their job is to bring out the best in their organization.

At the NTC, the vast majority of rotational commanders are tactically competent. Sure, some are more advanced than others; however, most of them understand basic tactics, doctrine, and the operations process. Most have invested similar amounts of training into their formation. Yet, different BCTs perform in a different manner. Some improve exponentially in a two-week period. Others achieve marginal gains. Why?

“... one of the primary factors affecting unit performance in replicated combat is simply a positive leadership climate ...”

Having watched many different commanders in multiple venues throughout the years, I contend one of the primary factors affecting unit performance in replicated combat is simply a positive leadership climate that creates a sincere desire to get better every day with the ultimate goal of winning against a determined enemy.

We want our Soldiers to be competitive and train hard. Ultimately, we want our Soldiers conditioned to take on any challenge life can muster and claim victory. Leaders do not get that without being respected, fair, empathetic, and the type of positive role model that galvanizes others.

**Be interested in your own development.** The better leaders at the NTC are keenly interested in their own development. The great BCT commanders realize their NTC rotation might be the last opportunity they have to command their entire unit outside of a wartime setting. They sincerely desire to know where they can improve, where they are strong, and when they can accept risk.

We make many jokes about new lieutenants in the Army. Perhaps the Army would be a lot better off if more field grade officers acted like our best new lieutenants. Think about it. When you were a new lieutenant, you knew that you did not know everything your job entailed. You knew your subordinates provided valuable input. You knew that without help, you could not accomplish your job. What is different now? You might know more, but you do not know everything. You still cannot accomplish the mission without input and advice.

To be successful, you have got to be curious, interested in making yourself a better leader for the sake of your subordinates, and willing to listen to others. Leaders who flourish in battle are no different. To understand, you must first listen. To listen, you must stop talking. To stop talking, you have to understand you might not have all the answers.

**Work to create shared understanding.** As commanders, we often assume that because we say something, our subordinates will understand. The chaotic environment at the NTC demonstrates otherwise nearly every rotation. Sometimes, units walk away from a brigade-level rehearsal more confused than they were before. Often, units get orders that have little or nothing to do with their current situation.

However, the better leaders deliberately work to create shared understanding. By creating a positive climate, building trust, and communicating effectively, these leaders create venues to allow for routine collaboration, discussion, and debate. Whether it is an evening update, battlefield circulation, or simply calling a subordinate on the radio, these leaders work to ensure everything continues to move along the correct general azimuth. When the situation dictates, they centralize control. Other times, when the demands of combat take their toll, they power down decision making. Regardless, they always work to create constant discussion within their unit to create shared understanding.

### **INSTILLING DISCIPLINE TO ACHIEVE SUCCESS**

**Standards and discipline.** Let us turn this one around. How many undisciplined units incapable of enforcing standards have you seen execute successful operations? I will hazard to guess not many. Sure, there is always that one exception, but generally, disciplined units achieve a higher degree of success given shared understanding, a desire to learn, and a positive command climate.

“The truest test of discipline in a unit is what happens when nobody else is looking.”

The true test of discipline in battle is not whether or not your Soldiers flawlessly pass a precombat inspection. True discipline is not a matter of your Soldiers having a clean haircut. The truest test of discipline in a unit is what happens when nobody else is looking.

It might be on an observation post at 0200 hours. It might be in a single room of an isolated building during a night attack. It might be before dawn as the unit prepares to conduct stand to (arms).

True discipline is measured by the actions of your Soldiers and their ability to self-correct in a dynamic battlefield environment. It is the result of empowered small-unit leaders who routinely correct deficiencies.

If you want to put your unit on the path to success in battle or at the NTC, start with the discipline of your formation. You will not get far without it, and acts of indiscipline will squander valuable time leaders could spend working to ensure their Soldiers remain alive and able to accomplish the mission.

**The power of achieving results.** We have all heard the phrase, “success breeds success.” A quality-training program pushes individuals and units to the brink of failure—with the ultimate goal of recognizing weaknesses and improving. Well-adjusted units build on small victories to achieve amazing results in the midst of an NTC rotation. They recognize that by fixing weaknesses and building on successes, their unit improves exponentially.

Personally, I have witnessed the mood, morale, and attitude of an entire organization change because of one successful tank crew—one successful dismounted squad—one deadly friendly indirect fire mission.

Your Soldiers, in war and at the NTC, want to thrive. Nobody goes to war wanting to fail. That is not an option for the U.S. Army. During the counterinsurgency era, a small success in Tal Afar, Iraq turned into a larger success in Al Anbar Province, Iraq. Those successes led to a momentous shift in operations that stopped the bleeding of American Soldiers and provided the leaders of Iraq an opportunity. It is no different today.

Leaders that have the ability to understand the significance of small-unit successes, cross talk, and who develop plans that are more meaningful prosper at the NTC. Leaders who are willing to seize the moment, capitalize on opportunities, and make bold decisions to alter the course of the fight are more effective than those who consistently focus on everything going wrong amid the chaos of modern warfare.

## CONCLUSION

Successful units at the NTC have a particular type of leader. Not surprisingly, it is the same type leadership we expect according to our doctrine. These leaders invest in their people and start building mutual trust the day they assume command or responsibility. They are the type of person our Soldiers admire. They communicate effectively with their formation. They perform under the veil of a positive command climate that is conducive to Soldiers. They are humble enough to know that they do not know everything, but smart enough to know when to be directive, and work tirelessly to ensure there is shared understanding across the entire formation at echelon. They understand how to discipline an organization and maintain standards without becoming overbearing. Most of all, they understand that, in the end, in our profession, results matter more than anything else does.

If you want to be a quality battlefield leader, you have got to train for it. You must practice daily, and, in contact, to hone your craft. Every leader arriving at the NTC has an opportunity to excel. If you are the type of leader who wants to excel, apply the aforementioned principles and work to improve every day. Your Soldiers will thank you for it.



**Figure 1-1. Leaders who are willing to seize the moment, capitalize on opportunities, and make bold decisions to alter the course of the fight are more effective than those who consistently and exclusively focus on what is going wrong.**



## CHAPTER 2

# Leading in Crucial Moments at the National Training Center

**By LTC Andrew Steadman,  
Senior Brigade Combat Team Trainer**

During the crucible of training for large-scale combat operations (LSCO) at the National Training Center (NTC), leaders face conditions that are impossible to replicate at home station. Time, distance, the pace of operations, the desert environment, and a ruthless opposing force combine to challenge the brigade combat teams (BCTs) in unforeseen ways.

To be successful, units must respond by growing to new levels of effectiveness. With quality leadership, commanders can serve as catalysts for that unit growth. Conversely, poor leadership methods slow a unit's growth by creating friction, frustrating subordinates, stifling initiative, and producing an overall painful experience for the team.

“NTC rotations have historically shown that there tends to be common, predictable moments where the commander can make a significant difference in the unit's performance.”

NTC rotations have historically shown that there tends to be common, predictable moments where the commander can make a significant difference in the unit's performance. Fail in those moments and the rotation will be difficult for every echelon. Succeed in those moments and the unit is primed to not only grow, but also win.

The following text highlights a few of those moments at the NTC that commanders should consider, rehearse in their minds, address by developing standard operating procedures (SOPs), and harness to employ the best version of their leadership.

## THE COMMANDER'S HUDDLE

Perhaps no other discrete session can generate drastic change and mountains of friction like the commander's huddle.

**Situation.** At NTC, this often looks like a brigade commander bringing in battalion commanders to discuss (rather, alter) the upcoming operation over a map in the brigade plans tent. The BCT S-3 or executive officer (XO) are sometimes included, but are often out of earshot as the brigade commander pulls the battalion commanders in close to the map. This huddle sometimes occurs after the mission analysis brief or the brigade operations order brief, but too often occurs after the combined arms rehearsal (CAR), when units have already begun setting conditions for the operation. The leaders discuss maneuver timing, the information collection and fires plan, mission objectives and boundaries, communications plans, sustainment, and more. Sessions can surpass 90 minutes.

**Result.** The leaders engage in what amounts to a war-game session for the operation already in motion. Unfortunately, the changes to the plan will rarely go out in an order, the staff will likely not synchronize them, and there will be minimal time to properly rehearse. If a note taker were present, the staff would scramble to get the summary of changes and incorporate them before crossing the line of departure (LD). Meanwhile, battalion commanders disseminate their own version of what was discussed and decided. Multiple avenues of change propagate through the formation, creating confusion among staffs and subordinate leaders as they struggle with version control on fighting products. The resulting friction only reinforces the temptation for commanders at every echelon to dismiss staff efforts at synchronization and control the fight themselves.

**Recommendation.** Commanders must be intentional about when to invite feedback and collaborate. Impromptu war-game sessions are often counterproductive unless a crisis is approaching. Decide on acceptable windows in the operations process for making changes to the plan. If you are keen on bringing in commanders to collaborate, do it early in the military decision-making process (MDMP), such as after mission analysis or the course-of-action (COA) development brief. Keep the session within a time limit, provide a framework for input, and suggest an idea for desired output (for example, an executive summary or fragmentary order). Incorporate as many staff members as possible so they can follow developments, and understand how commanders think and what they prioritize. The commander's timely leadership during this dialogue can align commanders and staff as they plan, prepare, and execute operations.



## THE COMBINED ARMS REHEARSAL

“The rehearsal is a coordination event, not an analysis,” (CALL Handbook 19-18, *Commander and Staff Guide to Rehearsals*, July 2019, pg. 1). Commanders can derail the CAR by micromanaging the process or by turning it into a war game.

**Situation.** The brigade CAR for major operations at NTC usually occurs in the vicinity of the brigade main command post 12 to 18 hours before crossing the LD. Brigade and battalion leaders, key staff members, and attached enabler leaders drive or fly in from across the area of operations and spend hours away from their units. Some brigades require company commanders, which can push the audience to more than 100 people crowding around the routinely undersized terrain model. A well-prepared unit distributes a CAR script to guide the exercise and leaders know what the commander expects them to brief. As staff and commanders brief, however, the BCT commander senses something he does not like and stands up to clarify what is being said. His question draws a few battalion commanders into the conversation as the brigade S-3 steps forward to clarify what was in the order. Getting frustrated and wanting to take charge of the situation, the BCT commander walks onto the board and starts giving refining guidance.

**Result.** In a matter of minutes, the CAR is reduced to a war game and then digresses to a COA development session as the BCT commander walks over the crowded terrain model, issuing changes to the plan. Then, as battalion commanders point out friction points in this undeveloped plan, they draw increasingly closer on the terrain model until the CAR is reduced to 100 people standing around watching several commanders have a private conversation. At one NTC rotation, one BCT commander followed this path and, ironically, huddled the commanders around his personal Plexiglas map board instead of the full-sized terrain model on which they were standing.

**Recommendation.** Develop an SOP for the CAR. Refine and rehearse it. Stick to it. (This also applies to commanders. Do not take over the CAR. A CAR SOP should be a guide that helps keep the event moving, avoids tangents, and provides commanders with enough visualization to identify friction and risk. As a general rule, avoid using a word-for-word script or following a line-by-line execution checklist. These products tend to turn the CAR into a rote recitation instead of a synchronization exercise.

As stated in *Commander and Staff Guide to Rehearsals*, the CAR is an opportunity for leaders to confirm the synchronization of the COA the commander has already selected, making “only those changes essential to mission success and risk mitigation” (*Commander and Staff Guide to Rehearsals*, pg. 1). Commanders must be patient and avoid trying to remedy every friction point the CAR reveals. It is more effective to capture a note in the moment, staff a solution following the CAR, and issue a fragmentary order.

### CREATING AND MAINTAINING TEMPO

“Commanders build the appropriate tempo to provide the necessary momentum for successful attacks that achieve the objective... A rapid tempo allows the BCT to deliver multiple blows in-depth from numerous directions to seize, retain, and exploit the initiative. Blows from multiple directions cause a multidimensional dilemma for the enemy,” (Field Manual 3-96, *Brigade Combat Team*, 8 October 2015, pg. 6-3).

“Momentum is not a natural occurrence in military operations. The fatigue each Soldier feels is multiplied across the formation, resulting in a unit content to sit and wait for the next operation.”

**Situation.** Momentum is not a natural occurrence in military operations. The fatigue each Soldier feels is multiplied across the formation, resulting in a unit content to sit and wait for the next operation. This tendency is especially true at the NTC after a major operation such as the seizure of the urban objective of Razish. A familiar narrative involves platoons that perform well, but are exhausted and need time to recover. Similarly, units tend to view upcoming major operations as discrete fights that will occur at the “no later than” time. They fail to understand that major objectives will require conditions setting with smaller fights for key terrain—the unit must build momentum before the big fight.

**Result.** Few BCTs which rotate through NTC are able to put significant pressure on the enemy. Their application of combat power tends to surge and wane, creating tempo that feels more like a sine wave than a steady stream of effects that shape the enemy and set conditions. BCTs rarely surprise the enemy with unexpected attacks or rapid tempo. Consequently, the unhindered enemy has significant freedom to prepare defenses and attack the BCT in multiple domains.

**Recommendation.** All momentum starts with leadership. For a unit to overcome the drift toward stagnation, leaders must constantly drive the team to seize the initiative. Momentum comes from creating demands that push organizations to operate at a higher capability and pace. One successful BCT commander at NTC defended the Brown-Debnam Pass Complex in the afternoon and ordered a dismounted attack on the urban center of Ujen mere hours later. The attack occurred a full 24 hours prior to when the division directed and caught the enemy off guard. Commanders who maintain tempo at NTC visualize the fight as a constant march to seize key terrain and apply sustained pressure on the enemy. They do not let off the accelerator. They use mounted and dismounted maneuvers in tandem while aggressively collecting information and combining arms to support the deep and close fights. These commanders also recognize (and lead subordinate commanders to understand) that a major operation is a success on which to capitalize, not an excuse to consolidate and recover.

### LEADING ON THE MOVE

It is difficult to overstate the significance of commanders who practice face-to-face leadership and visit lesser-known areas of the organization.

**Situation.** As a rotation progresses at NTC, it is common to see commanders narrow their presence on the battlefield. The pace of operations quickens and they become less intentional with their time. They dart from one briefing or rehearsal to the next, with little engagement elsewhere. Then the enemy “votes” (it has options for engagement just as friendly forces do) at the most inopportune times to further derail the planned battle rhythm.

**Result.** The commander gets stuck in an engagement loop rotating from the tactical command post to main command post to higher headquarters, losing touch with important areas of the operation. During one rotation, the BCT commander intended to confirm each of battalions’ engagement areas during defense preparation. However, an enemy spoiling attack occupied him for six hours and he never got the feel of the defense he sought. At other times, without a disciplined staff to push the process, MDMP can grind to a halt as the commander is pulled elsewhere. Inevitably, issues such as maintenance failure and insurgent threats will arise in the consolidation area, which can undermine the BCT’s combat power. Commanders who become locked in the close fight tend to underappreciate these challenges, and because they rarely visit the support and engineer battalions, the never see the effects firsthand.

**Recommendation.** The commander is responsible for, and must lead all parts of the organization. Identify key areas by phase where the commander could benefit from a firsthand glimpse of the situation and build them into the battle rhythm. Visit the anticipated decisive point of the upcoming operation, then, perhaps a maintenance meeting, battalion main command post, field artillery gun line, or an information operations effort such as the civil military operations center. Additionally, assign clear roles and responsibilities for key leaders such as the BCT XO and S-3, so they can continue the fight while the commander engages other areas of the team. Build a primary, alternate, contingency, and emergency (PACE) plan for battle rhythm events so the commander can engage when not in the main command post and prevent delays in key efforts such as MDMP planning. Finally, recognize how meaningful it can be for subordinate leaders to see the commander in person, have an opportunity to give their perspective of the fight, and hear him personally reinforce guidance. The commander can make an impact for the team, too, by recognizing and motivating lower-echelon effort, then giving them the big-picture perspective.

## CONCLUSION

The U.S. Army's most important asset is its people. And, because "leadership is the activity of influencing people," (Army Doctrine Publication [ADP] 6-22, *Army Leadership and the Profession*, 31 July 2019, paragraph 1-74, pg. 1-13), it is the most decisive element in Army operations (ADP 6-22, *Army Leadership and the Profession*, 31 July 2019, pg. 1-15). Successes and failures, action and inaction, victory and defeat, are dependent on leadership quality. As commanders navigate the crucible of NTC (and eventually in LSCO), the demands of the complex fight occupy their attention and degrade their effectiveness in expected ways. The commander's huddle, the CAR, while fighting for tempo, and while circulating the battlefield are a few of those moments. Commanders must lead with intention and disciplined execution to enable their formations.



**Figure 2-1. Successes and failures, action and inaction, victory and defeat, are dependent on leadership quality.**



## CHAPTER 3

# The Importance of Relationships and Their Effects on the Battlefield

**By LTC Jonathon M. Genge,  
Cobra Team Senior Trainer**

It was a dry, hot day in August 2017 at the National Training Center (NTC). I was a squadron commander on mission in the middle of my unit's rotation. Located on the key piece of terrain known as Hill 760, the position provided a valuable perspective of the battlefield as my squadron conducted a zone reconnaissance from the Siberian Ridge, reconnoitering several avenues of approach toward Hill 780, Hill 800, and the Iron Triangle. The brigade was attacking to seize its main objective—the city of Razish. At this moment, two battalions were locked in a street-to-street, corner-to-corner fight inside the city. A crackle came over the radio with the brigade commander ordering the brigade reserve into the melee and for my Bravo Troop to assume the mission as the new brigade reserve.

At the same time, two of my cavalry squadron's troops were exploiting their success in the destruction of enemy forces located in the vicinity of the Iron Triangle and continuing their zone reconnaissance toward the infamous pass complex running from the Sawtooth in the north to Debnam Pass in the south. Both commanders saw an opportunity to extend the brigade's security area, further providing reaction time, and maneuver space regarding the certain opposing force (OPFOR) counterattack that would come. As they maneuvered across the open terrain, elements of both units were engaged by effective OPFOR direct and indirect fire, which resulted in an immediate reduction in blue force (BLUFOR) combat power by at least six M2A3 Bradley fighting vehicles. With slightly more than a troop's strength of tracked vehicles spread between two troops left in direct contact, the ability to gain control of the key terrain and position the squadron to provide early warning with eyes focused deep into the enemies' support zone was in jeopardy. I needed to commit more combat power if I wanted to maintain the momentum and accomplish the squadron's reconnaissance objective.

My tank company was not an option. In a tough fight with Blackhorse (11th Armored Cavalry Regiment)—the unit representing the OPFOR, it emerged with only two M1A2 tanks remaining and holding the Racetrack, a terrain feature in the NTC battlespace. What about my Bandit Troop?

Moments before when ordered to reconstitute the brigade reserve with Bravo Troop, I failed to provide a convincing argument to retain the troop under my control and avoid violating the fundamentals of reconnaissance principle of not keeping reconnaissance assets in reserve. My Bravo Troop commander and my observer controller/trainer counterpart saw the opportunity awaiting. My Bravo Troop commander felt he was still positioned to support his fellow troop commanders with time left to rescind the earlier order to assume the reserve mission. Seeing my earlier error and receiving the feedback from my troop commander, I quickly reengaged the brigade commander. After a brief discussion, I again was unsuccessful persuading him. Bravo Troop would hold its position and remain the reserve.

In the end, the brigade was able to seize Razish without any further combat power. Bravo Troop remained intact in the vicinity of Hill 780; though the opportunity to gain control of the pass complex was lost. Alpha and Charlie troops remained on the east side of the passes with their observation to the west blocked by the eight-kilometer-long natural barrier formed by the terrain. The remainder of Delta Company—my armor company, continued to hold the Racetrack.

How did I miss the opportunity to seize the key terrain? Did I not push hard or quickly enough to have Bravo Troop reattached to the squadron to assist? Why did the brigade commander so quickly deny my request? Could he not trust me? Was I not communicating well enough? Was my input not valued?

Among all of the tactical and doctrinal lessons that can be dissected from my experiences above, one that I feel is worth highlighting and discussing is the role relationships played in the scenario and how they could have impacted the outcome of the fight.



“Relationships among Soldiers throughout organizations at echelon can have a significant impact on their unit’s successes on the battlefield and can lead to direct mission accomplishment or failure.”

Relationships among Soldiers throughout organizations at echelon can have a significant impact on their unit’s successes on the battlefield and can lead to direct mission accomplishment or failure. Relationships developed among leaders and their subordinates specifically, are formed on communication, trust, and time which facilitates the mission command principles of mutual trust, disciplined initiative, and shared understanding.<sup>1</sup>

The decentralized execution of operations in combat that leads to successful missions is gained by fostering the key components of relationships and their facilitation of mission command principles. Relationships impact operations on the battlefield through the strengthening of mission command, specifically mutual trust, disciplined initiative, and shared understanding resulting in effective decentralized execution.

### **COMMUNICATION, TRUST, TIME**

“Communication and establishing trust within a relationship requires the repeated interaction between parties over time.”

Healthy and strong relationships are built on several aspects, but three foundational elements include communication, trust, and time. Leaders use numerous ways to encourage open and candid communication with the intent of learning about and developing their subordinates, which enables the growth of relationships. Initial counseling, specifying priorities, publishing command and leadership philosophies, and establishing periodic touch points with key personnel and the unit are just some of the avenues leaders use to open communication lines and build rapport with their subordinates and superiors. Ensuring team members remain informed assists in building trust, another key aspect of positive relationships.<sup>2</sup>

When someone can trust another individual, they are comfortable delegating responsibility and more latitude to accomplish their assigned tasks, thus empowering them to act. Communication and establishing trust within a relationship requires the repeated interaction between parties over time. Strong bonds among team members are not forged instantaneously. They require recurring interactions and memorable, shared experiences.

Consistent exchange of guidance and priorities from leaders to subordinates and the corresponding routine feedback from subordinates is essential in fostering relationships. These building blocks of relationships intertwine, reinforcing each other and supporting several tenets of mission command and its aspect of decentralized execution of operations.

### **MUTUAL TRUST**

The Army defines the shared confidence established between leaders and their subordinates as mutual trust,<sup>3</sup> which is essential to relationships as previously discussed. It is established over time as members of units conduct training events such as live-fire exercises and during rotational deployments and combat operations. These collective experiences and shared hardships instill confidence within each Soldier, building bonds among all, while fostering the ability for them to overcome fear and the stressors of combat. Engaged leaders will discover the strengths and weaknesses of their Soldiers. From these observations, leaders gain faith and identify whom they can trust, resulting in the leader's willingness to bestow larger amounts of responsibility on those subordinates.

### **EMPOWERING SUBORDINATES, DISCIPLINED INITIATIVE**

Subordinates, as a result, feel confident in making decisions and are empowered to seize the initiative on the battlefield. This is the embodiment of commanders empowering their subordinates and subscribing to the mission command principle of disciplined initiative. Once a leader earns their subordinate's trust, Soldiers feel encouraged to act, a critical principle in obtaining mission accomplishment on the battlefield. Soldiers who do not feel supported by their higher headquarters and leaders will hesitate to act when the situation presents itself during combat. Leaders who fail to develop an environment conducive to empowerment and disciplined initiative are destined to mire themselves in minutiae and cloud their ability to make clear decisions. Both result in slow and unreactive units certain to fail. Strong relationships, on the other hand, are key in encouraging subordinates to take calculated risks on a rapidly and ever-changing battlefield, expanding the organization's ability to set favorable conditions for friendly forces by presenting numerous situations that an enemy must react to and address.

## SHARED UNDERSTANDING

The flow and understanding of information are accelerated through relationships. In combat, staff members must establish positive relationships to collaborate efficiently. Collaboration requires the candid exchange of ideas and opinions free from reproach and criticism.

In addition to establishing mutual trust and empowering subordinates aimed at disciplined initiative, the creation and cultivation of shared understanding facilitated by relationships through open and consistent communication aids in obtaining effective decentralized execution on the battlefield. Effective leaders use the mutual trust they establish with their Soldiers as support to clearly communicate priorities and intent along the lines of creating understanding, which empowers individuals to assess ongoing operations on the battlefield, calculate risk and seize opportunities quickly, when and where possible. Subordinates can successfully assess, decide, and act rapidly when they are apprised of the current situation. The flow and understanding of information are accelerated through relationships. In combat, staff members must establish positive relationships to collaborate efficiently. Collaboration requires the candid exchange of ideas and opinions free from reproach and criticism.<sup>4</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Relationships impact battlefield operations through their facilitation of decentralized operations, a key aspect of mission command—the Army’s approach to command and control.<sup>5</sup>

Positive relationships are built on open and consistent communication, solidified trust, and nurturement over time. The events referenced in this chapter took place less than one month into my command; I assumed command two weeks prior to deploying to NTC with my unit. At that time, the development of my relationships with my brigade commander, fellow battalion commanders, and among my troop commanders and units were still in the early, infant stages. In an effort to develop shared understanding, mutual trust, and empower my subordinate leaders, I communicated my initial squadron vision, held my commander in-brief with each troop, and was still conducting initial counseling with members of my team. Despite this, my troop commanders were still not fully sure of my expectations and how I would fight. The confidence to professionally discuss dissenting views or alternate courses of action was not present or possessed by my

leaders. More time filled with at least one home-station training event or my attendance with the unit to the Leader Training Program at NTC would have assisted in strengthening our relationships. Similar to the relationship between my troop commanders and myself, I was still far from being comfortable in my position and role within the brigade, and relationship with my brigade commander. I felt I could engage my commander, but I did not fully understand how he thought and would fight in order to enable me to plan and react accordingly on the battlefield. The relationship between a commander and subordinates is critical and aids mission accomplishment.

So, what are your relationships like within your unit?



**Figure 3-1. Healthy and strong relationships are built on several aspects, but three foundational elements include communication, trust, and duration.**

### ENDNOTES

1. Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 6-0, *Mission Command: Command and Control of Army Forces*, 31 July 2019, pg. 1-3 to 1-7.
2. Field Manual (FM) 6-22, *Leader Development*, 30 June 2015, pg. 1-5.
3. ADP 6-0, *Mission Command: Command and Control of Army Forces*, 31 July 2019, pg. 1-7.
4. Ibid. pg. 1-8.
5. ADP 6-0, *Mission Command: Command and Control of Army Forces*, 31 July 2019, pg. 1-3.

## CHAPTER 4

# Failing in Order to Succeed

**By LTC Neil J. Myres,  
Light Task Force (Airborne) Senior Trainer**

In today's operating environment, we are challenging leaders with more complex scenarios that exercise the implementation of additional enablers across all warfighting functions. Bringing these enablers and internal assets to bear at a decisive point on the battlefield is the training objective, and failure is not an option. In most cases, this the first time these challenges are presented and expectations are high. Great units and leaders achieve success, and that is expected. Success breeds success, but what if we changed our thought process and implementation of lessons learned throughout our careers? What if failure breeds success and this thought process changes our perception of what makes a unit or leader great? What if failure is an option?

Units that arrive at the National Training Center (NTC) are inherently at the height of their training and readiness, and are more than capable of attacking the mission set placed before them. They have gone through countless hours of preparation for their rotation; their mission has most likely been rehearsed multiple times, and success is at the forefront of their mind. From the moment they disembark at the rotational unit bivouac area, their perception of the battle is changed, the enemy now has a vote, and success begins to take on a new meaning. Over time, operations become more decentralized and success begins to fade. In this instance, reality sets in, it is too late to change, and units adapt to simply surviving.

“The implementation of a mission command culture early in a unit’s training progression can and will have significant impact on a unit’s success.”

Leaders begin to descend on key points of friction on the battlefield to give specific guidance, and in some cases, take over completely. There is a missed opportunity to prove you are truly a learning organization, which started well before arriving at the NTC. The implementation of a mission command culture early in a unit’s training progression can and will have significant impact on a unit’s success. In this chapter, I will outline why the most successful units succeed at the NTC, and discuss the importance of practicing mission command while accepting risk and exercising disciplined initiative, which is difficult and requires commitment. The most important takeaway is you must fail in order to learn.

### **WHAT IS MISSION COMMAND?**

We are all familiar with mission command and Army Doctrine Publication 6-0, *Mission Command: Command and Control of Army Forces*, 31 July 2019. The Army recently adapted its definition of mission command, which was previously defined as “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 unified land operations,”<sup>1</sup> but has since morphed to include command and control (C2). Current doctrine defines and describes mission command as “the Army’s approach to C2 that enables unified land operations.”<sup>2</sup>

“Although the definition has changed, the key elements and principles of mission command have not.”

Although the definition has changed, the key elements and principles of mission command have not. The Army has slightly adapted the principles, but some of the favorites are still included. “Successful mission command is enabled by the principles of competence, mutual trust, shared understanding, commander’s intent, mission orders, disciplined initiative, and risk acceptance.”<sup>3</sup> In accordance with the new doctrine, mission

command now incorporates competence into the equation, amplifying the significance of a leader's ability to do something successfully. We find success through repetition in a mission command-oriented organization, and through repetition, there will be accepted failures. This is where risk acceptance becomes a focal point.

### **RISK ACCEPTANCE IN TRAINING**

A unit that accepts risk at the appropriate level is one that can grow and ultimately achieve success. Accepting risk is probably one of the hardest things I did as a commander because it placed success and failure in a balance. Underwriting the risk down to the company level was a conscious and difficult decision, but grew easier with time and experience. Allowing subordinate commanders to accomplish the mission at their own discretion as long as they met the task, and more importantly the purpose, was a perceived risk. Whether the commander was successful along the way or encountered failures was irrelevant to the growth of the organization. In fact, I would argue the commanders who failed learned the most and ultimately became the most successful. Empowering your subordinates to lead while they know you have their back is one of the most undocumented combat multipliers I have seen during command, and while covering down on multiple rotations at the NTC. It is impossible to be everywhere during training and on the battlefield, but subordinate commanders who accept risk at the lowest level see the most dividends.

I had the luxury of building on a battalion vision over the course of 18 months prior to a combat training center rotation, and the acceptance of risk I gave my subordinate commanders developed their organizations into free-thinking, purpose-driven machines, built for meeting commander intent. This luxury did not come without failures. Our brigade commander built this mission command-driven organizational vision long before we all assumed command and it carried into execution long after we took the guidons. Understanding that risk acceptance is probably the most difficult part of being a commander, I paid more attention to it than anything else.

“I have seen the level of risk acceptance remain higher than necessary at the NTC, which has ultimately led to poorer execution of mission sets and less successful operations.”

As difficult as it was to relinquish risk down to the lowest level, I believe it developed a generation of leaders that were primed to take over in my absence. I have seen the level of risk acceptance remain higher than necessary at the NTC, which has ultimately led to poorer execution of mission sets and less successful operations.

While attacking across the expansive terrain at the NTC, it is impossible for battalion commanders to be everywhere, every time. Battalions rely heavily on the actions of their subordinate leaders to change the outcomes of the battle. More often than not, units struggle at the lowest level because leaders lack the ability to conduct operations that include associated risks. We find that these units have not empowered their subordinates to lead, and in fact, the units that struggle to identify and mitigate risk at the lowest level are less successful than those that do. Some of the most successful units that recently rotated through the NTC have not only empowered their subordinate commanders and leaders, but have experienced underwritten risks associated with their actions.

Following successful units leading up to their rotation and communicating with leaders at the company level prior to their arrival, we have found that risk acceptance started early on in their training progression and built confidence in the unit’s execution. Successful battalion commanders expressed confidence in their subordinate leaders and explained the process by which they gained such confidence. They empowered their leaders to identify and mitigate risk at the lowest level, and underwrote their failures. With decentralized operations occurring more frequently at the NTC, powering down the level of risk acceptance remained a focal point for operational execution on the battlefield. To be clear, this training progression starts long before arriving at the NTC, and requires a conscious decision, deliberate plan, and most importantly, plenty of patience. It requires discipline to execute over time to build on the mission command principle.



## DISCIPLINED INITIATIVE VERSUS DISCIPLINED DISOBEDIENCE

As important as underwriting and accepting risk is at the lowest level, disciplined initiative goes hand in hand. Disciplined initiative is described as “when subordinates have the discipline to follow their orders and adhere to the plan until they realize their orders and the plan are no longer suitable for the situation in which they find themselves.”<sup>4</sup> The best way I can describe this is having mission execution flexibility. Units that struggle at the NTC lack subordinate leaders who exercise disciplined initiative.

“We find most units fail to train under this philosophy at home station, and find leaders at significant points of the battle stop short of overwhelming enemy forces simply because their latest orders and instructions did not take them to that point.”

As previously mentioned, with the frequency of decentralized operations, leaders are finding themselves farther away from the decisive point at particular phases of the battle. It is here that the subordinate leaders are trusted with to make sound decisions and implement disciplined initiative. We find most units fail to train under this philosophy at home station, and find leaders at significant points of the battle stop short of overwhelming enemy forces simply because their latest orders and instructions did not take them to that point. There is an affinity from my perspective of leaders “waiting on the word” to execute versus using disciplined initiative to go beyond the latest order to achieve success. This correlates with home-station training and the centralized execution of mission-essential task list (METL) tasks.

Units that are the most successful integrate decentralized operations into home-station training and allow their subordinate leaders to make decisions outside the scope of the set parameters of a particular training event. We have seen situational training exercise development at home station integrating decision-making exercises into the overall scenario as a way to get after this. This builds the comfort level of subordinate leaders in training to make decisions and learn from their mistakes, while earning trust from their commanders. Building on this principle at home

station gives an enormous advantage to an arriving rotational training unit. Although there are many units that rarely implement disciplined initiative, and consequently achieve only moderate success, those that commit to practicing disciplined initiative while focusing on their METL tasks, attain greater success during decentralized operations at the NTC.

“Never tell people how to do things. Tell them what to do and they will surprise you with their ingenuity.”

—GEN George S. Patton, Jr.

This relates closely with task and purpose. Which is more important? I would offer that the task is a way to achieve the purpose, making the purpose the single most important part of the mission. It may appear the best way as your staff plans a mission and may make sense at that given point in time, but taking battlefield effects into account, and then enemy reactions, operations and operational execution must remain flexible, and disciplined initiative will be required. Initiative must be disciplined, but we can account for some level of disciplined disobedience.

“We are the military, so you are supposed to say, “Obey your orders.” That is somewhat fundamental to being in the military. We want to keep doing that. But a subordinate needs to understand that they have the freedom and they are empowered to disobey a specific order, a specified task, in order to accomplish the purpose. It takes a lot of judgment.”

—GEN Mark A. Milley,  
Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff

For a unit to succeed, this judgement will be built through repetition, and along the way, through failure. To trust your subordinates to make the right call at the right time, you must test their aptitude in training and force them to make any decision, right, wrong, or indifferent, and learn what does and does not work for their formation. Other than the enemy on the battlefield at the NTC, we have observed indecisiveness as a root cause for casualties in the arena. Leaders that feel they cannot make a decision without being told exactly what to do, become detrimental to a unit’s mission accomplishment.

“The units that adapt to the ever-changing dynamics of the fight and power down their decision-making abilities to the lowest level have higher success rates during their rotation.”

We see the most successful units adapting to the situation, while leaders at the lowest level are making decisions at the critical point in the larger battle. The units that adapt to the ever-changing dynamics of the fight and power down their decision-making abilities to the lowest level have higher success rates during their rotation. It is imperative for a battalion commander to decide early on in training which decisions they are willing to power down and which to retain at their level. Once this is clear and training in this manner progresses, the disciplined initiative of an organization will thrive and initial failures will develop into future success.

### CONCLUSION

In a mission command-led organization, emphatic trust must be placed in our subordinate leaders to execute missions in a decentralized manner in future large-scale combat operations. Risk acceptance and disciplined initiative are maximized during training. Many units operate believing success breeds success, and for the most part, that is true. To arrive at these initial successes, units and leaders will fail, and risk acceptance must include the risk of failure. Leaders must accept that these failures will ultimately lead to success.

It will be an uncomfortable process for most as we rarely accept failure. Our evaluation system demands results; however, we rarely capture the process along the way that got us to the desired end state and level of success. In 20 years of service, I have rarely succeeded without failing at some point. Those failures taught me valuable lessons, and altered my approach to executing future tasks and missions.

As unit commanders plan training to support success at the NTC, consider failure as a lesson rather than a rule. More often than not, we see rotational units conduct operations with limited success against a formidable enemy. If units fail to conduct an operation to a desired level, that unit is given an additional opportunity to achieve mission success. They initially failed at some or all of the key tasks, are reintroduced to the same scenario, but then

have experience on their side. Their initial failures adapted their execution, and during secondary execution of their mission, they succeed. In these cases, failure bred success. The lessons learned from failure shape the battalion's future operations and growth during a rotation. As units fail, they learn, and along the way morph into a more cohesive fighting organization. Success eventually breeds success.

Battlefield leadership is tested at the NTC, but is developed long before the battle. Every day is a lesson, and as students of our craft, we never stop learning. As most successful units have learned at the NTC, and long before they arrive, you must fail in order to learn, but you must never learn to fail.

### ENDNOTES

1. (Outdated) Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 6-0, *Mission Command*, 17 May 2012, pg. 1.
2. ADP 6-0, *Mission Command: Command and Control of Army Forces*, 31 July 2019, pg. 1-1.
3. Ibid, pg. 1-8.
4. ADP 6-0, *Mission Command: Command and Control of Army Forces*, 31 July 2019, pg. 1-12.

## CHAPTER 5

# Commander's Decisions

By LTC Jeff Barta,  
Mechanized Task Force Team Senior Trainer

Leadership, one of the eight elements of combat power, can turn the tide of the complex battles in simulated combat operations at the National Training Center (NTC). Commanders have been groomed their entire careers with the leadership attributes and competencies to enhance their unit combat effectiveness in this crucible training environment. Decision making is an important facet of a commander's leadership and paves the way to best posture the formation.

The following are three recommendations commanders can include in their personal practices observed at NTC to enable success:

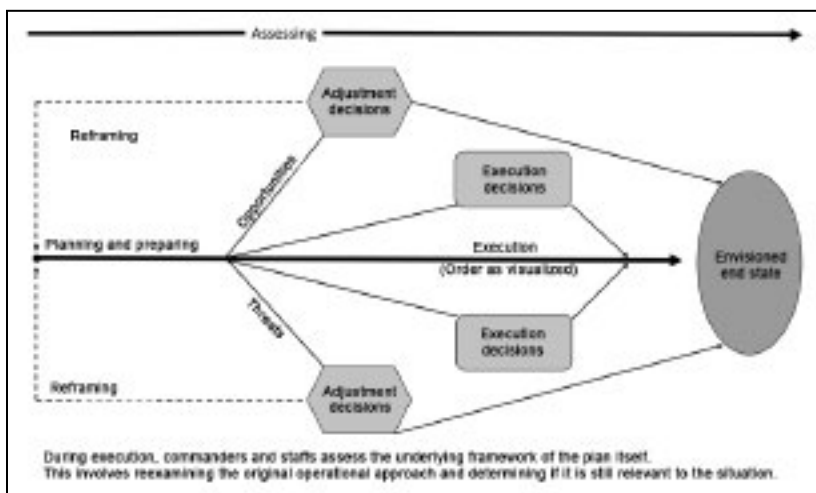
- Plan for decisions through all stages of the operations process.
- Incorporate five common decisions early in planning.
- Make the decision support template (DST) in fighting products.

### PLANNING FOR DECISIONS

“The constant contact with a thinking enemy in a host-nation environment, along with extended lines of communication compress and interfere with planning timelines.”

The large-scale combat operations (LSCO) training scenario at NTC is designed to be complex and challenging to induce friction that provides units with developmental opportunities. The constant contact with a thinking enemy in a host-nation environment, along with extended lines of communication compress and interfere with planning timelines. This challenges the battle staff and commanders to find touch points to create shared understanding of the commander's visualization of the battlefield and the staff's analysis of the mission. This produces an outcome where many commanders provide the staff with a singular-directed course of

action (COA) to save planning time and preserve staff effort for current operations (CUOPS).<sup>1</sup> The result is a singular scheme of maneuver that is not flexible enough to account for changes in the enemy or environment. Figure 5-1 depicts decisions that will occur during an operation to reach the commander’s desired end state.



**Figure 5-1. Execution and adjustment decisions help redirect the fight toward the desired end state.<sup>2</sup>**

Although adjustment decisions occur during the course of an operation due to unforeseen circumstances, execution decisions should be planned to keep the operation on track. When defining the enemy’s plan, Army doctrine discusses an evaluation of the most likely course of action (MLCOA) and most dangerous course of action (MDCOA).<sup>3</sup>

When a commander directs a singular COA against the MLCOA or MDCOA, then the formation is put at risk when the enemy conducts the opposite. This triggers a hasty adjustment decision, often while in contact, and leaves subordinates minimal time to change their actions. Developing execution decisions with potential branch plans during the planning and preparation phase will provide the flexibility necessary to achieve success.

One recommendation is to include the decisions a commander will make much earlier in the military decision-making process (MDMP). Traditionally, an output of the COA analysis war game,<sup>4</sup> potential decisions

should be included in the commander's visualization, and then described to the staff with the commander's planning guidance. Creating a decision point section on the commander's planning guidance template is a helpful method to do this. Following COA analysis, the staff may still find further decisions and refine the previously directed ones into the decision support matrix (DSM). Thinking about decisions earlier in the process will prevent them from being skipped entirely and make them more effective during the course of the operation.

### **THE FIVE COMMON DECISIONS**

Including a commander's potential decisions into the planning process prior to COA development can make the resulting scheme of maneuver much more effective, but this exposes a potential problem wherein the conditions requiring a decision may not yet be fully understood. However, the following are five common decisions<sup>5,6,7</sup> that have evolved through numerous repetitions of simulated battles and were previously included in doctrine and professional military education:

- Executing a branch or sequel
- Changing a boundary
- Altering the task organization
- Transitioning between phases
- Commitment of the reserve

Including these common decisions during the commander's visualization can help his or her view of the battle and help shape the staff's development of COAs. Many of these common decisions can be used to produce standard operating procedures (SOPs) to account for the resulting action or a playbook of branch plans with predesignated subordinate units that are trained and prepared in advance to execute the action. For example, a unit preparing for a movement to contact may develop a tactical maneuver formation with branch plan tasks, habitual task organization changes, and boundary change naming conventions in their SOP which, helps improve shared understanding of the commander's decisions in the transition following contact. Although these five common decisions may not ultimately be included in the DSM, nor occur in every operation, they can serve as a solid starting point to begin a commander and staff's integration of decisions into the plan and better develop COAs, which account for threats and opportunities on the battlefield.

## **DECISION SUPPORT TEMPLATE AS A FIGHTING PRODUCT**

The DST is “is a combined intelligence and operations graphic based on the results of war gaming that depicts decision points, timelines associated with movement of forces and the flow of the operation, and other key items of information required to execute a specific friendly COA.”<sup>8</sup> Consolidating the enemy event template, the DSM, and templating a location of the decision points into a singular fighting product is a highly effective technique to help commanders and subordinates execute the mission. Observations of task force and company team echelon leaders at the NTC show that most do not use this tool on their map boards, leaders’ books, or other visual products during the conduct of the operation.<sup>9</sup> In fact, less than 30% of sampled leaders even placed enemy graphics on their fighting products.<sup>10</sup> There is a minimal amount of red on many of the graphics. Similarly, in less than 10% of battles at the NTC, did task force level command posts display, or reference a DST, DSM, or decision points on the common operational picture used by the CUOPS staff.<sup>11</sup>

The use of a DST fighting product further enables decision point tactics (DPT), which the opposing force (OPFOR), 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment employs effectively to include multiple branch plans and sequels into a singular COA.<sup>12</sup> In practice, this technique has proved highly effective to allow the OPFOR commanders to “fight the enemy not the plan” and can be employed by all units to more effectively use the commander’s intuitive understanding of the enemy and environment to best employ his or her unit.<sup>13</sup>



**Table 5-1. Example decision support matrix for a brigade combat team attack<sup>14</sup>**

Decision Point	Priority Intelligence Requirements	Friendly Force Information Requirements	Action	Estimated Time	Decision
1. Use Axis Mars as the primary avenue of approach.	4. No significant employed obstacles in Axis Mars. - Less than two platoons of infantry identified that can influence Axis Mars.	- Cavalry on Phase Line Wesleyan on Axis Mars, securing release point for 1st Battalion.	- 1st Battalion establishes support by fire position on Dezashah. - 2nd Battalion infantry clears Dezashah. - 1st Battalion then support by fire and 2nd Battalion seizes Objective Nationals from the rear.	Hour of Operation initiation (H)+4 (02 0800 JUN)	Battalion commander
1A. Isolate Objective Nationals, Atropians seize.	6. Less than four armored vehicles (tanks or Boyevaya Mashina Pekhoty [BMPS]) – Russian-style infantry fighting vehicles) identified on Objective Nationals. 6. One platoon or less of infantry assessed on Objective Nationals.	- Axis Mars cleared. - Dezashah cleared. - One Atropian company available to seize Objective Nationals within eight hours.	- One cavalry troop isolates Objective Nationals. - 1st and 2nd Battalion attacks Objective Marines. - Pass Atropian company seizes Objective Nationals, cavalry troop supports its attack with troop mortars.	H+12 (02 1600 JUN)	Battalion commander
2. Isolate, Bypass Dezashah; Atropians seize Dezashah.	5. No armored vehicles in Dezashah. 5. Less than 30 fighters assessed in Dezashah.	- Lane proofed through obstacles on Axis Venus. - Objective Nationals seized. - Atropian company to secure Dezashah within eight hours.	- One cavalry troop isolates Dezashah. - 1st and 2nd Battalion attacks Objective Marines. - Pass Atropian company clears and secures Dezashah.	H+16 (02 2000 JUN)	Battalion commander

See more of Table 5-1 on pages 40 and 41.



Action	Estimated Time	Decision
<p>- 2nd Battalion establishes battle position on Objective Mariners oriented north. 1st Battalion reinforces with Charlie Company if necessary.</p>	<p>H+30 (03 1000 JUN)</p>	<p>Battalion commander</p>
<p>- Execute attack on Objective Spurs with only one support by fire.  - If there is a non-persistent chemical, the battalion follows immediately behind the exploitation force.  - If there is a persistent chemical, the battalion conducts decontamination operations. Inform the division commander to make decision regarding the brigade combat team attack with only two battalions.  - If pass in Phase Line Jazz or Objective Nuggets is blocked with family of scatterable mines, mass a brigade combat team attack from the other objective. If both passes are blocked, mass and breach at Objective Nuggets, continue to Objective Spurs.</p>	<p>H+48 (04 0400 JUN)</p>	<p>Battalion commander</p>
<p>- Execute plan to seize Objective Spurs.</p>	<p>H+60</p>	<p>Joint Task Force Atropian ommander</p>

Commanders should also ensure subordinate commanders and leaders possess a shared understanding of the decisions involved through mission orders and rehearsals. Reviewing subordinate fighting products for completeness and accuracy during precombat inspections (PCIs) is another method to ensure the entire unit is synchronized with the plan. This can be executed simply when subordinates are gathered at a rehearsal or while the senior commander is moving throughout their formation. Regardless of the method, the DST is an important tool to allow the commander to make timely and accurate decisions as well as keep the organization focused on the decisions its leader will make, and enable subordinates to execute disciplined initiative within the commander's intent.

Adjustment and execution decisions are doctrinally part of the operations process and necessary to gain the advantage toward winning on the battlefield. The training scenario at NTC has shown that the ability of the commander to make effective decisions, and for their formation to execute them, is often challenged with the complex facets of LSCO. However, planning for decisions through all stages of the operations process, incorporating five common decisions early in planning, and including the DST into fighting products will help a unit succeed. Deciding how to employ their unit is one of the most fundamental aspects of a leader's actions, and when applied, can amplify the effects of leadership through all the other elements of combat power.



**Figure 5-2. Developing execution decisions with potential branch plans during the planning and preparation phase provides the flexibility necessary to achieve success.**

## ENDNOTES

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## CHAPTER 6

# Considerations for Organizational Leadership

**LTC Justin D. Harper,  
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Commanders at all echelons must be experts at providing indirect leadership across their formations. They must visualize how they want to fight and instill their intent directly into their subordinate commanders and indirectly into their entire formation. Army Doctrine Publication 6-22, *Army Leadership and the Profession*, 31 July 2019, states that indirect leadership and methods are essential for organizational leaders although it does not explicitly define the term indirect leadership.<sup>1</sup> I contend many leaders are unprepared for this reality despite untold resources spent on professional military education (PME), combat training centers (CTCs), operational deployments, and self-development. We fail when we overestimate our personal ability to control our unit and inadvertently disempower our subordinate leaders.

Fortunately, we have the tools and the talent to effectively manage their organizations and keep our Army ready for war. Our Army expects commanders to lead dozens, hundreds, or thousands of Soldiers distributed over extended distances in the face of competent adversaries. The commander and his representatives cannot be everywhere at once and may be unable to recognize the decisive point of an operation no matter how detailed the plan. The same is true of every echelon; even the tank company commander with only 63 Soldiers assigned to their organization cannot direct action inside every turret. Our organizational design and philosophy requires trust from the first day.

During my 18 years of commissioned service, I learned that significant disparity exists, even among doctrinally astute leaders, regarding the terms and language commanders use to describe their visualization. Shared understanding underpins everything we do as a profession. We risk failure when we assume following the approved checklist will guarantee success or that all of our subordinates, peers, and superiors see the world in the same way.

The best leaders generate a mental picture of what is actually happening throughout their formation.<sup>2</sup> They leverage usable fighting products to ensure sufficient, but not excessive control measures are in place. The examples in this chapter are a synthesis of observations throughout my career, before and during my service as a senior task force observer controller/trainer (OC/T) at the National Training Center (NTC). They do not necessarily reflect the views of the Operations Group or the NTC.

“The Army cannot truly apply indirect leadership methods without confident leaders that display a bias for action.”

We set the conditions for effective, indirect organizational leadership by establishing common terms, defining how we fight at echelon, and instilling an expectation that our subordinate leaders are empowered to take action without specific direction from their higher headquarters. Our ability to conduct direct leadership is limited, despite access to the Army’s most advanced command and control systems. The Army cannot truly apply indirect leadership methods without confident leaders that display a bias for action.

### **INDIRECT ORGANIZATIONAL LEADERSHIP**

“It is a commander’s responsibility to build shared understanding with their staff members and other organizational leaders.”

Leaders must have a common frame of reference and shared understanding before they can be proficient in any collective action. All leaders have some familiarity with the terms referenced later in this section, but many have their own unique perspective on their true meaning for a particular organization. Army forces conduct training individually and collectively to develop military expertise.<sup>3</sup> How we think about terms such as expert, standards, and perspectives is not uniform across our profession. It is a commander’s responsibility to build shared understanding with their staff members and other organizational leaders.



**Expertise.** Leaders are experts or aspiring experts. Expertise can be a goal or a standard, depending on the context. A Soldier qualifies as expert on their assigned weapon if they hit a certain number of targets on a range. Vehicle crews can be distinguished (here, a synonym for expert) if they achieve certain requirements during crew gunnery. Units sometimes publish training guidance that explicitly states the organizational standard is expert for a given task and all leaders should be experts in their field. We lack a clear definition of expertise for areas that are not easily quantifiable.

**Standards.** Standards should be achievable, and not merely an aspiration. We are lying to ourselves if we say something is a standard that we are not resourced to accomplish.<sup>4</sup> We establish, learn, enforce, and refine standards in support of our organizational mission in the Army. Some standards are quite clear. Regulations, general orders, command policy, and sometimes unit standard operating procedures (SOPs) may clearly define what we mean by a standard. Be clear about the difference between standards and goals; they are not always the same thing.

**Doctrine and definitions.** Not everyone understands doctrinal terms. Those who do may differ in their understanding and application of terms. Just as we can easily define what constitutes an expert in rifle qualification, we can determine if a company commander efficiently complies with Army regulation governing command supply discipline. However, how do we define what constitutes an expert at leadership in large-scale combat operations (LSCO) while in command of a company, battalion, brigade or higher echelon? Given the dynamic nature of combat, agreeing on a set of common measures of success proves significantly more challenging than recording an Army Combat Fitness Test score.

**Perspective.** Although we live in a resource-constrained world, our military is among the most well-funded in history. The equipment, training resources, and personnel we have at our disposal far exceeds that of our closest adversary. Leaders at all levels hone their craft in a myriad of PME courses. Our CTCs are the envy of the world. The education level of our Soldiers is above the historical norm and we draw talent from the most physically fit portion of the U.S. population. Our glass is more than half-full when judged against any reasonable measure.<sup>5</sup>

Leaders are understandably hesitant to tell their boss that they lack expertise or have not mastered their particular career field in some way. I propose that achieving anything like Malcolm Gladwell's standard of 10,000 hours of experience in executing collective tasks proves impossible for most Soldiers and leaders.<sup>6</sup> Ask yourself if it is reasonable for the armor captain who

served in a Stryker brigade as a lieutenant to truly be an expert in tank crew gunnery given how few opportunities they will receive in 12 to 18 months of command. We need to reframe how we think of expertise.

The Army ultimately relies on the sum total of operational, institutional, and self-development models to provide the leader with sufficient time.<sup>7</sup> In the previous example, the armor captain closes the gap in his knowledge by the totality of these experiences across all three training domains. We should recognize his expertise not in terms of the number of gunneries he completed, but against what he may be asked to execute as a combined arms leader in combat. They must be empowered to lead and train their formation—to command with the implicit assumption that their experiences give them the ability to lead in the most dynamic and high-pressure scenarios available.

The following underpins our thinking for the future:

- You cannot be everywhere at once and must rely on your subordinates to conduct their duties with minimal supervision.
- A commander's presence at the decisive point depends on the commander correctly identifying what the decisive point will be and is not a foregone conclusion.
- The commander might place himself at the correct decisive point and still be unable to prevent failure.
- The commander's presence might inadvertently have a negative effect by causing subordinate leaders to focus on the higher commander rather than executing the task at hand.

The Army will fight the next war under uncertain conditions with an imperfect level of training. We must be mentally prepared to fight LSCO regardless of when our most recent CTC rotation occurred, how proficient our leaders might be at their assigned tasks, or who attended the last collective training event. Opting out will not be an option.

## RISK AND FAILURE

Years ago, one of my platoon sergeants relayed to me his experience as a young non-commissioned officer deployed to Bosnia. During his deployment, breaking a mirror on a high mobility multipurpose wheel vehicle (HMMWV) driving through a narrow village street was enough to merit a field grade article 15 from the battalion commander. Think of the message this punishment sent to every leader in the formation. Minor mistakes can have career-ending consequences. If this sounds like your unit, know that you are not building trust, nor preparing junior leaders to lead with confidence in combat.

Imagine yourself as a junior leader executing a rotation at the NTC. Now, imagine yourself doing the same thing without the benefit of the Operations Group and the standard CTC control measures present at every rotation. In both cases, we make mistakes, even when we have conducted a doctrinally sound training progression and implemented robust risk reduction measures. We cannot fully eliminate risk and we increase risk over time when we do not trust our subordinates to act without direct supervision.<sup>8</sup>

“Failure and recovery are an inherent part of our business. Human mistakes come with the territory at every echelon.”

Imagine yourself conducting operations in LSCO. You could do everything right, follow every step of the troop-leading procedures, check every box in the applicable training and evaluation outline and still face catastrophic failure. After this failure, you must instantly recover and continue to make life-or-death decisions. Failure and recovery are an inherent part of our business. Human mistakes come with the territory at every echelon

## MAKE MORE TIME FOR YOUR ORGANIZATION

The most effective division, brigade, battalion, and company commanders create time for their subordinates and superiors alike. By defining how they want to fight from the outset, they do not keep their subordinates or superiors guessing. I credit retired COL Tim Ryan for introducing me to the “good idea cutoff time.”<sup>9</sup> In practice, you issue the minimal essential elements of your order with fighting products and give time back to your subordinates. Do not waste time making the perfect plan; you are just preventing your subordinates from rehearsing, inspecting, and preparing their formations.

“You cannot control as much as you think you can. Provide the minimum essential fighting products as quickly as possible and then move out.”

I once heard someone say, “The NTC fight is not multiple battalion fights; it is a brigade fight ... the brigade has to set the conditions.” Although this is true, a major caveat warrants discussion—a perfect product that is not issued in a timely manner, or executable with the talent and resources at hand, only hinders your subordinates. You cannot control as much as you think you can. Provide the minimum essential fighting products as quickly as possible and then move out.

What are the minimum essential fighting products you ask? Although opinions vary, I start with a formally published task organization. Orders, synchronization matrices, situation templates, target-list worksheets, and digital and analog common operational pictures are all critical. However, they are of minimal use if commanders do not know who works for them and first sergeants do not know whom to feed. Units should be able to deliver the mail based on the task organization, and yet we often fail this basic requirement.

Why do we fail if task organization is an inherent part of the military decision-making process and something we do all the time in almost every unit in the Army? One reason is we are wedded to our unit and are unwilling to formally hand responsibility for our Soldiers and equipment to someone else. We let emotions cloud common sense and Army requirements. We have to trust that the leadership in the other brigade, battalion, or company will do their duty. Our sister units are inherently members of our circle of trust based on their membership in the profession of arms.

“You lack the authority and time to retrain everyone until you are satisfied with your colleagues’ competence. Commanders will be called to act with imperfect knowledge and without the benefit of an optimal solution.”

Ronald Reagan said, “Trust, but verify.”<sup>10</sup> Yes, but the reality of our situation is we have to trust that the sum total of operational, institutional and self-development experiences of our subordinates, peers, and superiors make them trustworthy leaders that are competent to carry out their duties. You lack the authority and time to retrain everyone until you are satisfied with your colleagues’ competence. Commanders will be called to act with imperfect knowledge and without the benefit of an optimal solution.

Army doctrine suggests the span of control is situation dependent, but generally recognized as three to five subordinate elements.<sup>11</sup> A brilliant commander might be able to manage more, but do not assume you are that genius. Every action that requires us to drill down multiple levels and directly intervene in our subordinate units comes at the cost of doing our job. Our doctrine says we train one level down and certify two levels down.<sup>12</sup> Commanders who reach too far down on a routine basis, disempower their subordinates, and are likely not doing something inherent to their particular echelon.

A commander is responsible for everything his unit does or fails to do. I am not advocating a change to Army command policy. I am suggesting senior leader interventions be exceptional. The norm should involve ensuring the right leader, at the right echelon, is formally designated with responsibility for their unit and is empowered to execute. Commanders must be empowered to command or they are nothing more than glorified hand-receipt holders.

Help your higher headquarters by looking at the problem from their perspective. Units and leaders can solve problems for their higher headquarters. Anticipate the higher-level requirements and then meet them without being asked. If time allows and you have a concept that will work, provide it to the higher-unit staff and save them time. I am not proposing a new concept; watch the movie “Patton” and see how the Third Army’s commanding general solved a problem for his higher headquarters and thus saved the day.<sup>13</sup>

Your division, brigade, or battalion headquarters will not deliver perfection. If you pay attention, you will see they are all likely doing their job for the first time and do not have all the answers. Your complaints are more likely to build adversarial relationships, waste time, and ultimately decrease the unit's effectiveness.

Your higher headquarters is not incompetent, nor ill of motive. That said, you should not try to fully assume the duties of your higher staff counterpart. You can help by sharing honest feedback, useful concepts, or helpful products but if you step in and perform others' duties on a routine basis, you have set the conditions for a nonfunctioning organization. Be a valuable subordinate (and peer) and you will help every echelon of the organization.

Use precise and clear language so everyone understands your intent. I can offer countless examples of organizations where leaders thought they were in a contest to see who could speak the longest in an update, or who could add the most slides to a briefing. You are stealing your commander's time and hampering unit performance. Make your words count and keep your updates succinct.

### SETTING CONDITIONS

Setting the conditions starts when you arrive at the unit. If you have not thought about how you will lead your particular type of unit and how you intend to fight, then you are behind the power curve. You must also have a mental model of how you would command or lead the next-higher organization. If you doubt this, then ask yourself why we publish the succession of command in an operations order. Leaders must be instantly ready to assume command with confidence and without hesitation.

**Define how your organization fights.** The best units provide not just a training focus, but discuss how they will fight at the appropriate echelon well before they arrive at a CTC rotation. Publishing a tactical SOP and conducting leader professional development (LPD) sessions are insufficient. Commanders have to know how they are going to fight and need to reinforce this in a constant series of formal and informal touch points with their subordinates. Commander's dialogue takes many forms, but it is imperative to achieve trust and shared understanding.

**Build a doctrinal template for your organization.** All leaders, including those centrally selected, possess their own unique experiences. Although these experiences prepare them for their position, they are not universal and inevitably cannot cover every possible contingency. Start with your unit's modified table of organization and equipment (MTOE).<sup>14</sup> It is surprising how many leaders do not know the assets organic to their unit.

**Formally issue your standard operating procedures.** Many units have well-developed, highly detailed SOPs. Few units formally issue their SOPs in the form of an order to ensure dissemination occurs prior to execution. Almost every unit arrives at the NTC with a solid SOP of some sort; however, few leaders are actually familiar with the document. Ask yourself how many actions we say are executed according to SOPs, and then consider how your unit SOPs were issued. Have you read all parts of your unit SOPs for maintenance, drivers training, command supply discipline, planning, or main command post operations? Even if you have read them, it is likely some of your subordinates have not.

**Execution.** You will execute in time- and resource-constrained environments without the benefit of battlefield systems and contracted support. Your subordinates will not have time to ask permission. If they are trained to ask "mother may I?,"<sup>15</sup> then you have not trained them and are playing not to lose. This is the leader development equivalent of deferring risk to the future. We will lose the first fight of the next war if we are afraid to act without Operations Group as a security blanket.

**Command and control.** No commanders are in total control of their unit. However, every commander can clearly define roles and responsibilities associated with the organization of their unit. Assigning commanders to mission sets and giving them the required resources is how we control the fight. We set ourselves up for total failure when we cannot explain who and what they have to work with to our subordinates.

Although no magic bullet guarantees success in every environment, commanders and leaders who know their task organization and understand how their higher commander intends to fight, possess a decided advantage on their competition. They can act decisively with minimal orders in a way consistent with how their higher headquarters wants to fight. They are ready for war.

## CONCLUSIONS

Commanders and other leaders can be successful if they use their imagination and recognize what they can control, and what they can merely influence. Commanders who can visualize not only how their unit fights, but also sees their own personal limitations, is immensely powerful. Commanders that do not waste time trying to exercise total control over their subordinates can focus on doing the things only a commander can do at the appropriate echelon. The following is a review of key points.

**Experts.** We have an incredibly well-resourced system for education and training—one of the best ever devised for a military force. The time and money spent educating and training us are likely to decrease. If we cannot trust our current system to develop experts, given our resource level, then we should jettison our leader development model and mission command as a philosophy.

**Standards.** We set the standards for our formation. Making perfection the standard is impossible and enables us to lie to ourselves. Set and enforce realistic standards, Army standards, and make allowances for the inevitable human failure that occurs in every organization.

**Definitions.** Use doctrinal terms and clear language everyone understands. Many of your subordinates do not understand the analogy when you use a reference from sports, hunting, or your favorite hobby. Some of your leaders will be afraid to ask for clarification and will blunder toward execution with an incomplete understanding of your intent.

**Perspective.** You will not get more resources. Do not ask unless it is something your higher headquarters can realistically provide. Instead, consider articulating the risk associated with that shortfall so your commander can make an informed decision. We are more capable, even in a degraded state, than we realize.

**Limitations.** Commanders cannot be everywhere and must rely on their subordinates; they must trust subordinate leaders no matter where the unit may be in the training cycle. A unit-training plan that perfectly conforms to the integrated weapons training strategy and other applicable doctrine and regulations does not guarantee success, and only partially mitigates the risk of failure. We must be mentally prepared to fight our organization without the benefit of a standard unit training progression that culminates in a CTC rotation.



**The way forward.** Leaders of all echelons must define how they want to fight and explain it to their subordinates, in detail, well before they receive a particular mission. This holds true in a CTC rotation, home-station training, or combat. The amount of time spent preparing orders at a higher headquarters has diminishing returns that can significantly impact subordinate units' understanding and execution. Get the plan out quickly and rehearse early; you cannot have common understanding if you have not at least issued a verbal order.

Our profession demands we be ready to operate in unfamiliar environments with imperfect knowledge of friendly and enemy forces. Mission command is the philosophy that supports the command and control warfighting function for a reason. It is the only viable way we can operate against a peer-level adversary and have any chance of success. Ask yourself how well your subordinates understand how the organization fights, and what steps you plan to take to improve your position.



**Figure 6-1. Leaders must be instantly ready to assume command with confidence.**

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## CHAPTER 7

# Leadership of the Brigade Combat Team Joint Fires Enterprise

**COL Thomas A. Caldwell, Senior Fire Support Trainer**

One can confidently assume all organizational leaders at some point, especially during a combat training center rotation, have experienced and observed the frustrations of deliberate or accidental selective compliance on noncompliance of actions and orders by individuals or groups. Numerous times at the National Training Center (NTC), I have witnessed organizational leaders, specifically the brigade combat team (BCT) fire support coordinator (FSCOORD) in frustration state, “I told them to do that; we discussed or talked about that; I do not understand why it did not happen; why did they not report that?; I do not understand why that happened, again.”

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a fire support leader’s testament to the application of the tenets of mission command (competence, mutual trust, shared understanding, commander’s intent, disciplined initiative, and risk acceptance) within a BCT’s joint fires enterprise. The content is themed on circumstantially employing mission command principles, and elements of command (authority, responsibility, decision making, and leadership) and control (direction, feedback, information, communication) at echelon to achieve or exceed the commander’s intent. As a former direct support field artillery battalion commander (DS FA BN CDR)/armored brigade combat team (ABCT) FSCOORD, and NTC senior fire support trainer, I have experienced and observed the challenge within the fires community leaders at all echelons face with understanding how to appropriately communicate capabilities, limitations, constraints, and achievable options with their formations within their respective areas of operation and collective BCT operational environments.

## **FIRE SUPPORT COORDINATOR REFLECTIONS**

Reflection on my time as a DS FA BN CDR and ABCT FSCOORD brings to mind my unique relationship with my maneuver brigade commander. I distinctly remember his guidance during my initial counseling just one week after I assumed battalion command and approximately 10 days prior to us deploying to our decisive-action NTC rotation. He completely understood I was only in command for one week and that I did not have the context of my organization from their home-station training to transition to our NTC rotation. With a basic mutual understanding of my reality and the mission at hand, he simply ended my counseling saying, “You are my FSCOORD and fires is a hard and complicated endeavor that I do not completely understand, but I know it is your job to make it work and I trust you to do your job to meet my intent.” In retrospect, that is all I needed to hear from my BCT commander because saying the word “trust” charged and empowered me to control the BCT joint fires enterprise narrative and employment with confidence. I was empowered to generate relevant dialogue with him and fellow commanders in the proper employment of fires at echelon (for example, organic mortars to FA cannon to echelon-above-brigade rockets) to meet the commander’s desired end state.

During my time as the NTC senior fire support trainer, I summarized this endeavor into the following problem statement that identifies effective fires as a holistic brigade team problem:

How do BCTs establish, maintain, and transition a permissive joint fires environment at echelon within a decisive action training environment in support to shape the BCT deep fight and mass effects in the close fights in support of tactical and operational objectives?

**FIRE SUPPORT COORDINATOR REFLECTIONS**

“The role of the field artillery is to suppress, neutralize, or destroy the enemy by cannon, rocket, and missile fire and to integrate and synchronize all fire support assets into operations.”

—Field Manual 3-09,  
*Fire Support and Field Artillery Operations*,  
30 April 2020, pg. 1-3

One of the first principles a fire supporter is taught at the Fires Center of Excellence, Fort Sill, OK, is the role of the FA on the battlefield. The fundamental principles of achieving our role are executed through the science and art of fire support. The delivery of indirect fires via cannon, rocket, and missile fire in accordance with the five requirements for accurate predictive fires (FRAPF) equates to the science aspect. Fire support in the aspects of fires planning, targeting process (decide, detect, deliver, assess [D3A]), observer-post planning, and sensor integration/employment at echelon is considered the art. After observing more than 20 NTC U.S. Army active duty and National Guard units, I am confident we have the ability to consistently execute the science needed to conduct effective fire support. This assurance comes through the disciplined execution of crew drills and mandated regimen of section, platoon, battery, and battalion gunnery table certifications. The art of fire support and discipline required to effectively perform the science is paired with a leader’s ability to effectively guide and influence their organizations at echelon.

## FIRE SUPPORT EXPECTATIONS

“The speed, accuracy, and devastating power of American artillery won confidence and admiration from the troops it supported and inspired fear and respect in their enemy.”

—GEN Dwight D. Eisenhower,  
Supreme Allied Commander during WWII

Since the inception of modularization, the FA battalion has become a direct support asset to the BCT with the expectations of—

- Providing responsive preplanned and dynamic fire support within the BCT area of operations with effects beyond the coordinated fire line (CFL), specifically in support of the cavalry squadron’s reconnaissance objectives and designated unit with priority of fires.
- Processing of fire missions sensor to shooter via digital fires network (including frequency modulation (FM) and/or upper tactical internet).
- Providing timely and accurate delivery of conventional killer munitions (for example, high explosive- and Dual-purpose improved conventional munitions [DPICM] in accordance with the defined high-payoff target list [HPTL]).
- Providing responsive organic and echelons above brigade (EAB) counterfires.
- Providing timely and accurate delivery special munition fires (for example obscuration, screening smoke, and family of scatterable mines [FASCAM]).
- Providing timely and accurate delivery of precision-guided munitions.
- Providing suppressing of enemy air defenses systems.
- Maintaining the FRAPF.

## FIRE SUPPORT COORDINATOR CHALLENGE

As the BCT's defined chief of fires and an organizational leader, I faced the challenge of trying to figure out how to—

- Address the aforementioned joint fires problem statement via the science and art of fire support.
- Achieve the aforementioned expectations for fires maintaining the FRAPP.
- Convey the same trusting sentiment I received throughout the BCT joint fires enterprise based on my defined span of control.

## SPAN OF CONTROL

“The average human brain finds its effective scope in handling three to six other brains.”

—General Sir Ian Hamilton,  
British Forces Commander at Gallipoli in WWI

“Organizations should ensure reasonable span of control, which refers to the number of subordinates or activities under the control of a single commander. A commander's span of control should not exceed that commander's capability to command effectively. The optimal number of subordinates is situation-dependent. The more fluid and fast-changing the situation, the fewer subordinate elements a commander can supervise closely. Within this situation-dependent range, a greater number of subordinates allows greater flexibility, and increases options and combinations. However, as the number increases, commanders, at some point, lose the ability to consider each unit individually and begin to think of the units as a single, inflexible mass. At this point, the only way to reintroduce flexibility is to group elements into a smaller number of parts, creating another echelon of command.”

—ADP 6-0, *Mission Command: Command and Control of Army Forces*, 31 July 2019, paragraph 4-83, pg. 4-14

I had to balance and maintain my two roles as the BCT direct support FA battalion commander and BCT FSCOORD. These two roles found me with a defined and necessitated span of control of about 27 leaders networked and woven into the BCT, with some easily assessable and others not so assessable due to extended lines of communications.

**Note.** The number of leaders could have increased based on points of friction and levels of competency.

In my role as the BCT direct support FA battalion commander, I defined my minimal span of control as the following eight leaders:

- Battalion command sergeants major
- Battalion executive officer (XO)
- Battalion operations officer (S-3)
- Headquarters and headquarters battery commander
- Alpha battery commander
- Bravo battery commander
- Charlie battery commander
- Forward support company commander

In my role as the BCT FSCOORD, I defined my minimal span of control as the following 12 leaders:

- BCT fire support officer (FSO)
- Brigade aviation officer (BAO)
- Brigade air defense officer (air defense airspace management [ADAM] cell)
- Brigade aviation liaison officer (ALO)



- BCT lethal targeting officer
- BCT nonlethal targeting officer
- FA intelligence officer
- Cavalry squadron FSO
- Maneuver Task Force 1 FSO
- Maneuver Task Force 2 FSO
- Maneuver Task Force 3 FSO
- Combat aviation battalion FSO

As the BCT FSCOORD, I also have a responsibility to influence the BCT staff fundamentally due to the required attendees for the BCT targeting working group requisite of the following seven leaders:

- BCT XO (BCT chief of staff)
- BCT operations officer (S-3)
- BCT intelligence officer (S-2)
- BCT information collection manager
- BCT electronic warfare officer
- BCT staff judge advocate (lawyer)
- BCT signal officer (S-6)

Because it is doctrinal that a lower headquarters should know and understand the mission of the higher headquarters two levels up, I deemed it necessary to consistently maintain access, dialogue, and shared understanding at least two levels down.

## ORGANIZATIONAL LEADERSHIP

“Organizational leaders exercise leadership through subordinate leaders responsible for leading the various organizations that make up the larger organization. Organizational leaders establish a climate that supports their subordinate leaders. Subordinate units and organizations do not depend on daily guidance from their higher-level leaders to be successful. Organizational leaders, particularly commanders, are responsible for communicating intent two echelons down and understanding intent two echelons up. Organizational leaders operate within commanders’ intent and communicate that intent to subordinates as a means of providing room for subordinate initiative and decreasing the number of decisions they must personally make to keep the organization operating effectively. Organizational leadership includes responsibility over multiple functions, such as leading and synchronizing combined arms operations.

Organizational leaders regularly and personally interact with their subordinates. They make time to verify that reports and briefings match their own perceptions of the organization’s progress toward mission accomplishment. Organizational leaders use personal observation and visits by designated personnel to assess how well subordinates understand the commander’s intent and to determine if they need to reinforce or reassess the organization’s priorities.”

—ADP 6-22, *Army Leadership and the Profession*,  
31 July 2019, paragraph 1-128-29, pg. 1-23

I also demanded my subordinate commanders and leaders do the same with the intent every fire support-related Soldier was properly informed to execute and react appropriately. I expected all the aforementioned 27 leaders, along with their noncommissioned officer (NCO) counterparts, and FA battalion staff to include special staff, platoon leaders, and platoon sergeants to fully understand my and the BCT commander’s intent. I authored my own commander’s intent for every mission and demanded it be translated into a direct leadership scope with a task and purpose for every section chief and 10-level Soldier. When conducting battlefield circulation, I engaged leaders and 10-level Soldiers and gauged their understanding of my intent and the mission. Any ignorance, lack of understanding, or situational awareness immediately triggered me to engage their supervisors.

## DIRECT LEADERSHIP

The culture of your organization matters and starts with its leaders. We needed to collectively create a culture in FA battalions and the BCT joint fires enterprise that relentless motivation was going to help us achieve the success we desired as a team. I strongly believe stakeholders in a mutual goal are gained through empowerment of how every member of the team fully understands how they play a part in the big picture of our success and failure. The simple failure to perform a 10-level task(s) to standard can bring a BCT to a halt or commit it to undesired actions in response.

1-124. Direct leadership is face-to-face or first-line leadership that generally occurs in organizations where subordinates see their leaders all the time such as teams, squads, sections, platoons, departments, companies, batteries, and troops. The direct leader's span of influence may range from a few to dozens of people. The leader's day-to-day involvement is important for successful unit performance. Direct-level leadership covers the same type of functions, such as those performed by an infantry squad or a graves registration unit.

1-125. Direct leaders develop others through coaching, counseling, mentoring, and setting the example. For instance, company-grade officers and NCOs are close enough to Soldiers to exert direct influence when observing training or interacting with subordinates during other functions.

1-126. Direct leaders generally experience more certainty and less complexity than organizational and strategic leaders because of their close physical proximity to their subordinates. They direct actions, assign tasks, teach, coach, encourage, give guidance, and ensure successful completion of tasks or missions. They must be close enough to the action to determine or address problems. Examples of direct leadership tasks are vehicle maintenance, supervision of creating of fighting positions, and performance counseling.

1-127. Direct leaders understand the mission of their higher headquarters two levels up, and when applicable, the tasks assigned one level down. This provides them with the context in which they perform their duties.

—ADP 6-22, *Army Leadership and the Profession*,  
31 July 2019, paragraph 1-124-27

I wanted identification, accountability, critical thinking, problem solving, and achievable options to be generated from the lowest level at the point(s) of friction. I wanted every Soldier to feel a sense of disappointment when they were not able to perform their defined task and purpose with the quantifiable results and feedback that are vital to improvement. I also wanted leaders who took their example from me and, understood the following:

- You have to earn respect and confidence every day you wear the uniform and fulfill your assigned duties.
- The privilege to rest in any capacity is earned as well.
- Decisions are informed and not made based on your emotional state, convenience, or comfort. There is nothing wrong with making informed decisions within your scope.
- Make the BCT's problems your problems or the higher headquarters' problems your problems.
- Do not walk away from a problem or situation for which you cannot offer any assistance or accountability.
- Do not hesitate to act, speak, and report honestly out of fear for displeasing others.
- Soldiers at all levels will respect you in the end for pushing them to do better and fulfill their potential.
- Each teammate needs to know they matter.

### **GETTING AFTER IT**

In the fires community (sensor to shooter), we are challenged to operationalize the following requirements at echelon to maintain a factual or advisory stance in order to be properly employed by the higher headquarters:

- Targeting process (D3A)
- Target number, trigger, location, observer, delivery system, attack guidance, communication (TTLODAC)

- The FRAPFs are—
  - Target location
  - Firing unit location
  - Ammunition data
  - Metrological data
  - Computational procedures

I found myself challenged as a DS FA BN CDR and FSCOORD to provide real-time options to the BCT commander—options that equate to decisions outside the prescribed decision support matrix that could capitalize on a permissive tempo that gives the enemy multiple dilemmas and exploit advantages. I approached this challenge from a science perspective with the belief that there are not many real-time options an FA battalion can provide to a BCT commander that are outside of an expected stance of being in the right place, at the right time, with the right ammunition, with the right optics, and being able to communicate via FM voice and digital channels. I wanted to ensure we maintained the best deliberate stance on line of departure and transition to another deliberate stance when triggers were met.

In pursuit of this stance, my teammates and I had to answer the following questions about our organization's culture to influence the realms of executing the art of fire support and the discipline (organizational and direct leadership) required to execute the science. The answers to these questions constantly changed in accordance with mission, enemy, terrain and weather, troops and support available, time available, and civilian considerations (METT-TC) at a minimum.

- When and where should the FSCOORD be positioned on the battlefield to influence fires?
- When and where should the task force (TF), company, and troop FSOs be positioned on the battlefield?
- How is each respective fires support element incorporated into the BCT and TF tactical operations centers (TOCs) and tactical command posts (TACs)?
- How are the joint terminal attack controllers (JTACs) incorporated into the BCT and TF TOC and TACs?

- Who facilitates the fires/intelligence collection rehearsal, fires technical rehearsals, and targeting working groups?
- Who attends the fires/intelligence collection rehearsal? Why? Are they invested in the process and see it as a complement to the military decision-making process (MDMP) and six TOC functions?
- Does our organization set conditions to ensure the quality of every rehearsal and working group?
- How does our organization define quality and who ensures it?
- Who has release authority for precision strikes and re-tasking echelons above brigade (EAB) assets?
- How germane is the traffic on the fires voice network? How do we gauge collaboration quality? How often do the TF FSOs communicate with the FSCoord?
- Do TF, company, and troop FSOs have a positive rapport with their maneuver commanders and field-grade officers? Do they feel empowered to communicate issues to the FSCoord that deal with unachievable expectations or opportunities?
- How do fire direction officers, platoon leaders, and battery and company commanders make decisions and do they provide options to the higher-echelon leaders?
- Has our organization defined pacing items at echelon with the joint fires enterprise beyond howitzers and the Bradley Fire Support Team (BFIST) (including radios, Advanced Field Artillery Tactical Data Systems [AFATDSs], TacLink®, antennas, optics, and data cables)?
- Does our team understand reporting expectations of designated or unidentified commander's critical information requirements (CCIR), specifically friendly force information requirements (FFIR)? Does our team understand when information is not properly processed through the six TOC functions, it cannot be effectively incorporated into deliberate or situational decision making in accordance with command and control of warfighting functions. This FFIR should be expanded to our ability to maintain the aforementioned observed expectations of fire support by those within the BCT, specifically a seamless fires network primary, alternate, contingency, and emergency (PACE) plan (digital and voice) and the FRAPP.

The DS FA BN CDR/BCT FSCOORD can and should do the following:

- Advise the BCT commander regarding their intent for fires. The BCT commander's intent for fires sets the tone, sets expectations, and enables the entire BCT joint fires enterprise.
- Speak candidly and advise the BCT commander and fellow TF commanders on the capabilities, limitations, and constraints of the BCT joint fires enterprise to include employing TF-level sensors and delivery systems (mortars).
- Write your own commander's intent. Define which risks you are willing to assume and which you are not.
- Adamantly define the decision that only you can and want to make.
- Direct your staff, battery/company commanders, and TF FSO to provide you with options.
- Ensure the quality of every rehearsal fires/information collection, fires technical, and FA tactical.
  - **Example.** Ensure all attendees are present and prepared with the proper fighting products, and the rehearsals begin and end on time and provide relevant injects that identify and fill plan gaps.
- Empower the BCT FSO in order to be credible and respected by the BCT staff (current operations and future operations). Also, ensure the fires plan is fought to expectations in accordance with the HTPL, target selection standards, and attack guidance matrix.
- Instill confidence in the BCT joint fires enterprise community by owning and engaging every fires venue at least two levels down.
- Conduct in-person inspections of fires in support of defensive operations engagement area (EA) development. Visit each EA and have the respective TF FSO brief their fire support plan to you.
- Define and enforce mandated rehearsals, precombat checks (PCCs), and precombat check inspections (PCIs) based on previous shortcomings, and define risks to the force and mission.

## CONCLUSION

Enterprise is defined as a project or undertaking, typically one that is difficult or requires effort. The BCT joint fires enterprise is no exception to this definition and the level of shared understanding of how to accomplish a deliberate lethal stance must be constantly communicated properly for appropriate application. Necessary tasks within the joint fires enterprise do not solely get accomplished because we have identified, planned, tasked, and ordered accordingly. The BCT joint fires enterprise must establish and maintain the confidence of the BCT. Confidence is easily lost if we cannot perform the expected functions of fires and if we create a perception that every lack of capability is rooted in excuses, inability to properly manage expectations, and missed complement opportunities. We must establish and foster a culture throughout the enterprise from the highest echelons to the lowest. The DS FA BN CDR/BCT FSCOORD sets the tone and is responsible for visualizing, describing, and directing the efforts required to achieve success in the difficult and meticulous pursuit of fires. Perfection in any endeavor of warfighting is unachievable. Instead, an organization should strive to be uniformly self-aware and purposeful.



**Figure 7-1. Soldiers must earn respect and confidence every day and fulfill assigned duties.**



## CHAPTER 8

# Where on the Battlefield Can the Aviation Task Force Commander Best Support the Fight?

**LTC Timothy Jaeger, Aviation Task Force Trainer**

During the continuous operations an aviation task force will encounter at the National Training Center (NTC), many task force commanders struggle with where on the battlefield they can most effectively support the fight. The Eagle Team observer controller/trainers (OC/Ts) see commanders at echelon ask themselves the same following questions during NTC rotations:

- How well have I trained my subordinates to handle the pace of operations and multitude of tasks required of my unit?
- Where on the battlefield can I be the most effective commander right now?

These two questions are only a fraction of what aviation commanders must think about as they prepare to execute operations in a decisive action-training environment and their unit for large-scale combat operations. Similar to many complex questions, answers are often just as complex, or potentially, lead to additional questions. Aviation company/troop and task force commanders need to identify the pros and cons of where on the battlefield he or she chooses to fight. Specifically, when an aviation task force commander makes that decision, they have the following three options: (1) an aircraft, (2) tactical command post (TAC), or (3) main command post (CP). All are viable and come with separate variables to consider when deciding where on the battlefield can an aviation task force best support the fight and execute command and control (C2).

The aviation task force commander must clearly communicate how he or she envisions their formation executing an achievable and progressive training strategy at echelon. A commander's dialogue, in the planning process with senior leaders and company/troop commanders is paramount in deciding the optimal location to support the fight. The vision of the commander should take their formation from individual through collective training at the battalion or task force level. Air mission commanders and

pilots in command must be developed and trained. Platoon leaders need the repetitions and sets to maneuver their platoons and company commanders need to maneuver companies under load and stress, culminating with the aviation task force commander maneuvering multiple companies. All these repetitions need to be supported with the appropriate maintenance and sustainment enablers. Multi-echelon training repetitions at each leadership level from squad leader to company commander allows the required staff training opportunities and repetitions, which affords task force level commanders the opportunity to identify where to fight from during the various missions their forces will encounter at the NTC.

The aviation task force commander must continually assess his or her leaders throughout their training glide path, identify company commander strengths and weaknesses regarding maneuvering their formations, and direct retraining when required. The commander must also determine if the forward support company commander can execute multiple forward arming and refueling points (FARPs) simultaneously. If your home-station training plan does not include attachments, is your distribution platoon trained and prepared to establish multi-mission design-series FARPs? Which training events afforded the operations officer the repetitions necessary to identify the correct members of the staff to move forward in a TAC? Has the staff executed C2 iterations from the TAC and main CP at pace? Does the executive officer (XO) have the repetitions in the main CP when the S-3 is absent at the TAC?

The trust built within the team during multiple training repetitions at home station and the team's ability to gain shared understanding of the commander's intent through multiple iterations allows commanders to navigate the battlefield, and trust that their subordinates will act and make decisions in accordance with their guidance. Clear commander's intent and guidance and well-thought-out commander's critical information requirements (CCIR) that defines when and how to notify the command of pending decisions are critical to freeing up commanders to focus on the various briefs and mission rehearsals they will encounter or be required to attend. If the CCIR or commander's guidance is too verbose, unclear, or restrictive, the task force commander will spend just as much time directing the next action as they will leading their formation. Conversely, too much guidance or too many key tasks stymies initiative. When subordinate commanders and leaders are trained and understand intent, their ability to lead their formations affords aviation task force commanders with options to lead their formation.

At the NTC, the Eagle Team has seen battalion task force commanders choose several different locations from which to fight, each with their own list of advantages and disadvantages. Commanders often send the S-3 forward to fight from a TAC co-located with a jump-forward arming and refueling point (J-FARP) while the commander flies and fights in support of the current operation.

Fighting from an aircraft allows commanders to rapidly gain situational awareness, communicate with higher and adjacent units, and be present on the battlefield, enabling them to make timely decisions. During planning, staff members should ensure the pace of operations, terrain flight, and potentially long distances between the mission area and other command nodes does not limit the commander's ability to communicate. Aircraft positioning is vital in determining if the commander will fight from the air. Options for positioning the commander's aircraft include, but are not limited to—

- In a holding area where line of sight, digital, or over-the-horizon communication is possible
- In the vicinity of a higher or adjacent headquarters or main CP or TAC, to ease communications between organizations
- Between company commanders forward in an air assault or attack by fire position with communication to the operations officer in the TAC—serving as the vital link between the intelligence triggers for aviation employment

This scenario allows the commander to more clearly understand which tactical decisions are being made at forward locations, continue communication with the vital staff warfighting functions (WfFs) in the TAC, and make informed decisions regarding fires, intelligence, etc. Fighting from an aircraft may be the most advantageous allocation of battalion task force leadership for larger company- (augmented for additional capability or manpower [+]) or battalion-level missions. However, having the commander fight from an aircraft, the operations officer dislocated from the main CP, and the XO running the main CP stretches an organization thin and could be considered the sprint of C2. At some point, the unit has to consolidate and continue to plan for future operations.

When task force commanders choose to fight from the main CP, they need to identify which types of missions require immediate decisions. Commanders most likely do not need to be on established resupply missions or platoon-level attack or reconnaissance missions. The commander's time may be better spent providing planning guidance and intent for larger company (augmented for additional capability or manpower [+]) or battalion missions in the ensuing 24 to 72 hours. By allowing trusted company commanders, the operations officer, or senior battle captain to exercise C2 over ongoing operations, the battalion senior leaders can properly focus on future operations. If fighting from the main CP is determined feasible, it often creates advantages such as availability of redundant communications (for example, there are other radios available in the main command post that task force commanders could use if theirs becomes inoperable). It may also free up commanders to be surrounded by subject matter experts. Clearly defined roles and responsibilities within the C2 nodes also provides commanders access to immediate intelligence updates, sustainment operations, etc.

A less-exercised course of action is for the task force commander to fight from the aviation TAC. Separate from spending time co-located with the TAC in an aircraft waiting for refuel, the commander's time can be better spent in the main CP or forward in an aircraft. This is not to say there is not a time when commanders may have to be at the TAC. Perhaps the TAC is serving as a control node for a holding area and the commander can use the resources available in the TAC to monitor a battle and time the launch for an air assault or deliberate attack without exposing aircraft to the enemy by managing the aircraft readiness condition (REDCON) status.

The ability for aviation commanders to navigate the battlefield means there may be specific locations for specific phases of the operation for the commander to operate and influence the fight. It is not a one-size-fits-all scenario. There is no single or simple formula to dictate where the commander should fight. An organization's repetitions and sets gained during home-station training allow for shared understanding of commander's intent at echelon, which frees up leaders to decide where on the battlefield is best to support the fight. A commander in the correct location, with the appropriate primary, alternate, contingency, and emergency (PACE) plan, enables communication and decision making throughout the formation and decreases risk to the force and mission.

## CHAPTER 9

# A Lesson in Incorporating Enablers

**U.S. Air Force Master Sgt. Aaron S. Cass,  
U.S. Air Force 57 Operational Group  
Tactical Air Control Party Senior Trainer**

The joint fires enterprise, and joint environment as a whole, recognizes the tactical air control party's (TACP's) skillsets. The rank structure (rightfully instituted) can be a limiting factor, especially for the subject matter experts (SMEs). E-4 and E-5 TACP members often think outside the box to combat typical maneuver warfare and war game an optimal plan to attack enemy forces. In my experience, which includes nine deployments, I have witnessed a general dismissal of an enlisted member as a potential SME due in large part to a cultural mindset that differs in each Service. As an enabler, the TACP has a wide-ranging capability that suits conventional and special operations. Quite a few senior enlisted Service members have spent time on both sides (conventional and special operations units) and possess a unique view on the wars we have been a part of for more than 20 years. We have garnered valuable lessons learned that have been glossed over by our Army brethren.

For military units to be joint in their efforts, staffs must recognize TACP enlisted members are just as knowledgeable as our officer counterparts in the TACP community are. Our officers go through TACP schooling with enlisted members and train to the same degree moving from the schoolhouse to supporting the operational units assigned to the brigade combat teams. To best facilitate the staff, a mechanism should be in place that recognizes you will not always know the enabler with whom you are working, but you will understand they are there for a purpose. In the past, I have imparted on my staff members that to best affect the battlefield, each individual within the construct of the military should be seen as multi-capable.

The ground force commander (GFC) should be able to take the advice from each member of a targeting working group, intelligence collection working group, etc., and see that individual as a valued member in a joint environment. When in a joint environment, it is crucial that the GFC does not view a member as Army or Air Force. View them based on their skillsets. I often observe cultural differences between Services. I believe the joint concept is its own culture and see it as an advantage. I encourage leaders to have an open mind about everything.

My best combat training center (CTC) rotation showcased what can happen when personnel are allowed to think freely and work among the warfighting functions (WfFs) as a team. I made it clear that a TACP should be taken seriously and that a joint terminal attack controller (JTAC) is qualified, certified, and recognized within the Department of Defense (DOD) as someone who is able to perform all aspects of kinetic and nonkinetic activities. The GFC should know that the TACP member's first priority is to advise the commander and act as a liaison between Army and Air Force assets. GFCs should use the information they receive from TACP members to assist ground forces staff members in the planning process. This can provide a clear path to success.

## CHAPTER 10

# Making Your Command and Control Enterprise Facilitate Your Leadership

**LTC Rett B. Burroughs, Senior Signal Trainer**

What should commanders prioritize regarding command and control (C2) systems the S-6 section should be closely supervising and managing for the commander? We often see commanders ignore C2 systems and then arrive at the National Training Center (NTC) without directly understanding their full communication capabilities. Once a team is on the ground at NTC, it is too late for commanders to pay attention to what the S-6 has or has not been doing in garrison, and unfortunately, many units arrive handicapped from a C2 perspective.

How should commanders address this potential issue at home station prior to arriving at the NTC? What should commanders expect of the S-6 to ensure communications platforms function properly and that operators know how to use them? The trends we see at the NTC are across a broad spectrum from commanders who say their signal officer does not know what they are doing to those that say they know how to use their systems and are ready to roll. How should commanders prepare to ensure success? What steps should commanders take to properly lead and mentor an S-6 through the home-station training experience to ensure the team's readiness prior to arriving at the NTC? The following are five different areas commanders should prioritize while directing the S-6 to educate the S-3, executive officer, and commander:

- Retransmission (RETRANS)
- Equipment status reports (ESR) and maintenance
- Precombat checks and precombat inspections (PCC) and (PCI)
- Priority of work
- Communicating with higher headquarters and subordinate units

“There is a divide between signaleers and combat arms leaders when it comes to defining FMC.”

Before we delve into each area, let us define fully mission-capable (FMC). There is a divide between signaleers and combat arms leaders when it comes to defining FMC. A signaleer may believe FMC is achieved when they are able to get a connection between nodes and tell the commander that a communications check is complete without ever proving actual connectivity between nodes. This does not account for end-user equipment and the validation an individual at one node can successfully talk to another on the other side of the line. This is where we must be clear on our definition of FMC. Commanders can further validate FMC by directing the S-3 to conduct mission command validation, ensuring all operators know how to use their assigned systems, and can successfully perform required missions.

**Retransmission.** Frequency modulation retransmission (FM RETRANS) is the most common platform used by units rotating through the NTC. Although most units come with FMC radios in their vehicles, they often fail to anticipate the tyranny of distance and not prepare RETRANS teams for the rotation. Constant training and validation of RETRANS is vital. Commanders should expect the S-6 to establish the RETRANS teams every week during motor-stable Mondays—verifying all equipment is present, FMC, and the team knows how to deploy the entire system from the generator to the equipment needed for at least three channels. Can your teams move at night? Failure to train RETRANS teams in garrison continues to have a negative impact during rotations. Most importantly, commanders should empower the S-6 by providing and protecting the time, resources, and personnel from other distractors that often consume the S-6 at home station.



**Equipment status reports and maintenance.** Understanding ESR and maintenance are seen as shortfalls within the signal community. The S-6 does not know how to acquire parts for signal systems or bench stock for the myriad systems in a brigade combat team. Poor maintenance and failure to validate systems at home station is evident when signal systems arrive at the NTC, typically in poor condition. Have the S-6 track and brief all signal systems, from the joint capabilities release (JCR) slant to pacing items (for example, the command post node, satellite transportable terminal, high-capacity line-of-sight [HCLOS], etc.) and their status on the ESR. Is the JCR slant reflected on the ESR? Does the S-6 attend the maintenance meetings? They must be present to ensure proper representation of the systems requiring assistance. The S-6 should be expected to turn on all signal systems weekly. Protecting the S-6 team from spending its time doing 10-level operator tasks such as turning on JCRs or filling communications security (COMSEC) into radios allows it to conduct proper maintenance on its systems, and ensures operators are capable of maintaining their own systems when the S-6 is not there to do it for them.

**Precombat checks/precombat inspections.** PCCs/PCIs continue to hurt units at NTC. Commanders should not assume the S-6 knows how to properly conduct PCCs, nor that the communications chief understands PCIs. Layouts are no longer inherent in our culture and units pay the price each rotation, usually by leaving equipment at home station. Have the S-6 explain how layouts are done and how PCC/PCIs are completed and followed through to complete sets. Have the S-6 show you a layout of your RETRANS team and provide your feedback. Although this may seem petty, taking these steps could increase mission success at NTC as you attempt to communicate with your unit at a distance.

**Priority of work.** Protect your S-6 shop from 10-level tasks and expect your S-6 to show you how it establishes priority of work. What is important to the commander is important to the S-6. We often see signaleers conducting basic operator-level tasks due to lack of training and command influence. Most units come to the NTC and never achieve higher than 50% FMC on their JCR platforms. The average is below 30%. And, although the S-6 spends all of reception, staging, onward movement, and integration (RSOI) filling and validating JCRs and radios, it neglects its signal 20- and 30-level tasks that you rely on heavily in an austere environment.

**Communicating with higher headquarters and subordinate units.**

How often is the S-6 talking to higher and lower? Is the S-6 conducting a weekly or bimonthly S-6 synchronization that is strictly enforced and aligned with your staff battle rhythm? Have the S-6 demonstrate to you what they are doing and who they are talking to when leveraging assets outside of the organization. If this is not accomplished at home station, it will not happen at NTC.

Commanders who involve the S-6 in their small-group huddles, planning sessions, and day-to-day discussions will have better success when under the pressures that come with an NTC rotation. Commanders who focus on these five areas will have a better-prepared organization when it is their turn. Your S-6 should be able to explain to you where all of your communications equipment is located in the formation, each platform's status, and what is being done to get equipment to FMC and signaleers trained and ready to fight. They cannot do that if you do not enable them through command influence down to the subordinate commanders. Having your S-6 explain their understanding of the five areas covered at the NTC on a regular basis allows you to provide continuous guidance with minimal time or effort required on your part, ensures you will understand the capabilities and restrictions of your communications systems, and allows your S-6 to adjust to your priorities. If you provide the purpose, direction, and motivation, your S-6 will have the organization ready to communicate at the NTC.

## CHAPTER 11

# The Intelligence Warfighting Function: Battlefield Leadership of a Team of Teams

**LTC Brendon K. Dever, Senior Intelligence Trainer**

At some point, almost every intelligence warfighting function (IWfF) leader asks about the keys to success for an S-2 (or other IWfF leader) during a combat training center (CTC) rotation. Collectively as an Army, we have the experience of hundreds of rotations over the 40-year history of the National Training Center (NTC) (and the other CTCs); countless lessons shared from experienced leaders through leader professional development (LPD) sessions, articles, and even social media engagements. The question generates many responses: a well-established intelligence architecture, thoroughly rehearsed processes and standard operating procedures (SOPs), integrated teams, effective transitions, etc. These are among many topics intelligence leaders desiring to be successful should consider. This chapter will not delve into staff processes, effective architecture, or SOPs. Its purpose is to tackle a topic that is on its surface much simpler, but in practice requires a much greater up-front investment to master—effective battlefield leadership.

If it is true (and it generally is) we consider an S-2 or other intelligence leader effective because they were successful during an NTC rotation, we are acknowledging a couple of important points. The first point is a CTC rotation is as close as we can get to the crucible of combat. The complexity of the operational environment (OE), competitive peer or near-peer enemy, and demanding conditions create challenges unequaled by any other training event. Hopefully, the 14 days at NTC will be the most challenging an S-2 will ever face. Consequently, the second point is we validate effective IWfF leaders based on their ability to excel in contact under these conditions. In other words, if you can succeed here, you can probably succeed anywhere.

## **LARGE-SCALE COMBAT OPERATIONS**

Large-scale ground combat operations are characterized by complexity, chaos, fear, violence, fatigue, and uncertainty. Brigade combat teams (BCTs), specifically IWfF leaders, face challenges greater than ever regarding friction and stress. The threat forces on the battlefield today and tomorrow can effectively use integrated air defense systems, long-range fires, counterreconnaissance, cyberspace and electronic warfare (EW) operations, camouflage and concealment, and deception.<sup>1</sup> The concept of fighting for intelligence has never been tougher, yet it is more critical than ever to enable a commander's decision making.

The OE in a rotation at the NTC presents all those challenges and more. From day one, BCTs will be in contact with a threat that employs cyber and electronic warfare (EW), enemy proxy forces mixed with the civilian populace, micro unmanned aircraft systems, division tactical group reconnaissance elements, etc. As rotations progress, S-2s quickly realize an enemy force mastered the concept of using the effects of the terrain to its advantage. It effectively uses every available form of contact (including direct; indirect; nonhostile; obstacles; chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear [CBRN]); air; visual; and EW) to mass combat power, usually at the decisive point of the fight. Despite detailed threat models, a well-executed mission analysis (including all four steps of the intelligence preparation of the battlefield [IPB]), and a solid collection plan, it is difficult for a BCT to apply adequate predictive analysis to stay ahead of an enemy force.

### **SOLUTION REQUIRES TEAMWORK**

IWfF leaders in a BCT understand the challenges and complexity of trying to oversee the entirety of the intelligence process—plan and direct, collect and process, produce, and disseminate—and a constant turn of analyzing and assessing. It would be challenging enough if every Soldier and platform that has a role in this process was located in the same command post, and working for a single person who had no other responsibility than to run it. However, that is not the reality. Structure and the nature of collection and analytical requirements necessitate a federated approach to the intelligence process. Collection platforms, reconnaissance elements and battalion intelligence sections all work for someone else and often have different (including competing) requirements.

The preceding scenario only describes what is organic to a BCT. Large-scale combat operations are always multi-domain and a BCT is part of a much larger enterprise in fighting opposing forces. This is particularly true when it comes to the vast intelligence enterprise. Many of the capabilities required to compete in a multi-domain fight (including at the BCT level) are not Army capabilities. An inherently joint, interagency “national to tactical” approach to intelligence is an absolute requirement for success on the current and future battlefield.

So where does that leave your S-2? You have disparate formations and organizations, within and outside the BCT, all with some role in your BCT’s intelligence process. The S-2 does not work for you (in some cases they do not even work for your commander). Yet ultimately, it is your job to lead this intelligence effort. Yes, commanders own the intelligence effort—they are responsible for everything within an organization. However, because commanders carry an abundance of responsibility, intelligence leaders at every echelon must step up and take ownership of every aspect of the intelligence process. Intelligence leaders must pull it all together to provide relevant, timely, predictive intelligence to your commander to enable effective decision making and mission success.

### **WHERE IS THE SHADOW?**

Despite possessing organic assets that are completely dedicated to the BCT’s information collection efforts, executing the intelligence process is challenging. Imagine you are several days into a rotation and preparing for a significant operation (for example, an attack to seize Razish). You have some critical intelligence gaps, so success during this operation will hinge on the BCT’s reconnaissance and collection efforts over the ensuing 12 to 24 hours. You walk in to speak with the current operations (CUOPS) team to get an update on the named area of interest (NAI) where you expect the Shadow (Unmanned Aerial Vehicle AAI RQ-7) to be actively scanning, only to discover that CUOPS has no idea where the Shadow is located. After 30 minutes, you discover the Shadow platoon broke down the launch and recovery site about an hour ago and are preparing to jump to a new location. It will be at least 18 hours before it are ready to begin operations again.



**Figure 11-1. Trust is not earned or given overnight, but can be established by demonstrating a consistent ability to perform assigned duties effectively over an extended period.**

Some variation of this scenario happens far more frequently than you might imagine. What do we blame? Failure to properly plan? Lack of communication? Competing priorities and natural friction? The answer is most likely yes to all. Somewhere between the plans personnel, collection management element, military intelligence company (MICO) commander, Shadow platoon leader, CUOPS team, brigade engineer battalion S-3, or any number of others who have responsibility for the planning and execution of the Shadow collection effort, things fell apart. It is quite possible the Shadow platoon had a valid reason to jump at that time. Possible reasons could include upcoming weather, an increased threat to the current location, extended lines of communication, etc. However, through something completely avoidable, we ultimately failed as a team to provide essential information collection at a critical time in the fight.

This is one example of many that occur across the BCT during a typical rotation. The cavalry squadron does not receive an updated Annex L and begins movement to collect on NAIs that are not synchronized with the BCT's information collection plan. As a result, human intelligence, or signals collection teams end up in the wrong locations or attached to the wrong battalions. The Shadow is scanning NAIs from a two-day-old collection plan and is consequently behind the forward line of own troops (FLOT).

## LEADERSHIP COMPETENCIES

We can generally point to no single issue to when these types of breakdowns occur. There are a lot of hardworking Soldiers and leaders trying to do the right things. There is rarely a lack of effort. However, the effort is generally uncoordinated, which at its core, is a leadership issue.

IWf leaders who are effective in the fight understand the importance of all leadership attributes and competencies as explained in Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 6-22, *Army Leadership and the Profession*, 31 July 2019, page ix, Introductory figure 1. They master the “be, know, and do” model, and apply who they are (attributes) in what they do (competencies). Each is as important as any of the others, but the remainder of this chapter will highlight three competencies of particular relevancy to leading the IWf in the fight—building trust, extending influence, and communicating.

Building trust starts long before the time arriving at the NTC. For an S-2, this means working on building trust within the section, across the staff, and with your commander. It also means building a similar trust with the MICO commander and their team, the battalion S-2s, and many others. Successful units find a way to build genuine trust between all IWf stakeholders. Units with a culture where trust exists up, down, and laterally will almost inevitably be successful. Although intangible, trust can be observed from day one of a rotation. An S-2 who has a lack of trust in their subordinate leaders or other members of the team often tries to do all the work themselves and is almost always less effective. When asked, S-2s sometimes admit they lack confidence and trust in subordinates and decide it is easier to work alone. Junior officers, noncommissioned officers, and Soldiers in organizations that lack trust often feel marginalized and fear taking initiative. In most cases, it is not a lack of competence, but a lack of effort in empowering subordinates, building trust over time. As Ernest Hemmingway said, “The best way to find out if you can trust somebody is to trust them.” Trust is not earned or given overnight, so start early.

Even an IWf leader who has established trust with superiors, subordinates, and peers must also master the competency of extending influence beyond the chain of command. As noted earlier in this chapter, almost every member of the IWf enterprise in and outside the BCT works for different bosses. Achieving success requires unified action, which means creating a shared purpose. Ultimately, meeting the BCT commander’s intent guides and directs the purpose, but there is a lot of legwork required to help the entire IWf teamwork toward the purpose. Taskings, orders,

task-organization changes, etc., are all ways to formalize requirements and are necessary; however, an S-2 and IWfF team who rely solely on those methods to get the team moving in the same direction will fail almost every time. An S-2 who learns to lead a team of teams is far more effective—maybe in one instance, a coalition of the cavalry squadron, field artillery, and aviation battalion S-2s, elements of the MICO, an attached civil affairs team, and a special operations forces liaison officer. Without formal authority over any of these entities, the S-2 could potentially lead an effort capable of providing a truly common intelligence picture that would provide the BCT commander the best available information and intelligence to enable decision making.

Finally, the communication leadership competency is paramount. As evidenced in the Shadow platoon jump example, a breakdown in communication can lead to mission failure. We often blame our technical ability to communicate (for example, not everyone is operating on the upper tactical internet, or has access to the joint battle command-platform (JBC-P), joint capabilities release [JCR], etc.). Certainly, these challenges make effective communication difficult. Nevertheless, more often than not, we find a way to get messages to and from those who need it. Unfortunately, the message we thought we sent and the message received are not always the same. ADP 6-22, *Army Leadership and the Profession*, pg. 5-14, reminds us, “Communication as a competency ensures more than the simple transmission of information. Communication generates shared understanding and situational awareness. In other words, like trust, communication is a two-way street and requires clear messaging and active listening.”

## CONCLUSION

S-2 and IWfF teams can achieve success in various ways at NTC. Successful teams are generally cohesive and provide effective, timely predictive intelligence support to enable the commander’s decision making. Teams that flourish at NTC inevitably feature leaders with an ability to build trust, extend influence, and communicate.

## ENDNOTE

1. ADP 2-0, *Intelligence*, 31 July 2019, pg. vii.



## CHAPTER 12

## A Training Relationship: How Sustainment Leaders and Units are Developed

**LTC Fenicia L. Jackson, Senior Sustainment Trainer**

Although combat arms battalion commanders and company commanders maneuver their units to accomplish battalion-level objectives, brigade support battalion (BSB) commanders and their company commanders must maneuver their units to enable the breadth and depth of the entire brigade combat team's (BCT's) operation. The BCT's maneuver battalions fight to achieve BCT tactical objectives and the fires battalion and engineer battalion shape (set conditions by restricting movement and attriting the enemy) for the maneuver battalions. Only the BSB, however, continually supports all seven organic battalions within a BCT.



**Figure 12-1. Brigade support battalion conducts displacement operations at the National Training Center.**

The employment of an armored brigade combat team's sustainment units stems from the necessity to ensure an unbroken chain of supply across time and space. The BSB and forward support companies (FSC) must keep pace with their supported units in austere environments and over difficult terrain.

Sustainment units must accomplish this with vehicles and equipment that require a vast amount of space to employ and emplace. During large-scale combat operations (LSCO), this will require the BSB and FSCs to integrate and synchronize simultaneous sustainment operations over significant distances while protecting themselves from the enemy.

For BSB commanders and company commanders, to include the FSCs, to find success during LSCO, they must begin by synchronizing and integrating their training plans at home station. To be successful, BSB commanders must have the trust and confidence of the maneuver commanders to allow them the latitude to do so.

### **TRUST AND RELATIONSHIPS**

The first time the FSCs and BSB participate in combined training is often during a brigade-level home-station exercise, and occasionally, at a combat training center (CTC) rotation. At this late stage, working together can create resistance; even with total buy-in, it is incredibly difficult to integrate the teams. FSCs must participate in BSB training early in the training process. From there, relationships form and sustainers at all echelons gain proficiencies that guarantee success in LSCO. This approach requires emphasis from brigade command team leadership and buy-in from maneuver battalion commanders. Trust in home-station training leads to trust on the battlefield.

Successful units demonstrate the following when it comes to executing sustainment operations on the battlefield:

- The brigade commander exhibits trust in the BSB commander to execute the senior logistician role within the brigade.
- The relationship between the BSB senior enlisted leader and senior enlisted leaders across the brigade encourages noncommissioned officer (NCO) leadership during sustainment execution on the battlefield.
- The BSB command team and supported battalion command teams exhibit shared understanding of the requirements to train and develop the FSCs.

These relationships enable decisions to be made at the speed of war and allow maneuver commanders to shift focus to their tactical tasks, while having the confidence in their sustainers to have the right stuff, at the right place, at the right time.

## SENIOR LOGISTICIAN

The BSB commander is the BCT's senior logistician. The BSB commander is responsible for sustainment synchronization and execution across the BCT's area of operation (Army Techniques Publication [ATP] 4-90, *Brigade Support Battalion*, 18 June 2020, paragraph 1-35, pg. 1-6). BSB commanders should be viewed as the BCT's lead sustainment coordinator in the same manner as the field artillery battalion commander serves as the fire support team coordinator. In both cases, these battalion commanders serve as the BCT's subject matter experts for their warfighting function (WfF), and exercise oversight over the Soldiers who execute it.

Within the BCT, BSB commanders uniquely have the resident knowledge to direct technical and tactical training, as well as manage the talent of sustainers throughout the BCT. BSB commanders see the BCT's entire sustainment WfF holistically. Therefore, he or she is best suited to task-organize, technically develop, and provide recommendations on the training plan for sustainers across the brigade. Successful BSB commanders spend more than half of their time focusing efforts at the brigade level to ensure systems are working and sustainers remain at their maximum state of readiness. LSCO and its speed of operations across vast distances will demand this degree of focus to sustain the brigade while in contact with a near-peer enemy.

The BSB commander must understand the supported commander's plan and then execute support so the supported brigade maintains freedom of action and maneuver. Synchronizing current and future support requirements with the supported brigade are the hallmarks of successful support (ATP 4-90, *Brigade Support Battalion*, 18 June 2020, paragraph 1-35, pg. 1-6).

Interviews with rotational units at the CTCs suggest the training plan for sustainers is often neglected due to competing requirements at home station. Once arriving at the CTC, many BSB commanders are held accountable for sustainers who lack any training and development of across the brigade. As the senior logistician, it is the BSB commander's responsibility to ensure all sustainment units within the BCT conduct the required training and professional development. BSB commanders must put forth the same amount of time and effort to develop FSC leaders as they would with the base companies. This undertaking applies to unit-level training and professional development programs at home station, and includes ensuring sustainment systems are established and enforced across the BCT.



**Figure 12-2. A commander conducts a tactical movement brief in preparation for displacement operations.**

BSB commanders cannot accomplish these tasks alone. Successful support battalion commanders put forth substantial effort to establish a relationship with their peers built on trust. To completely ensure the BSB commander's success as the sustainment coordinator, the brigade commander must provide command emphasis on sustainment readiness and sustainment talent management, and empower the BSB commander to oversee and execute them.

Without the BSB commander assuming the responsibility of sustainment operations on the battlefield, the burden of sustainment falls directly on the FSC commanders. Observations at the NTC show FSC commanders simply do not have the requisite knowledge and experience to execute BCT sustainment on their own. They have difficulty anticipating all requirements, and do not have the experience or perspective to visualize operations. FSC commanders who lack the benefit of BSB coordination, integration, and synchronization often see the culmination of their supported battalions, and potentially the brigade.

### **SENIOR ENLISTED LEADER RELATIONSHIPS**

The importance of the sustainment NCO corps cannot be understated. The key to establishing sound senior enlisted leader relationships within a BCT starts with the relationship between the BSB Command Sergeant Major (CSM) and the BCT CSM. This relationship is the foundation on which all other battalion CSMs will build their relationships with the BSB CSM.

Trust established between the BCT CSM and the BSB CSM allows for successful sustainment manning management. The BSB CSM managing FSC manning is key to successful sustainment for the brigade. Successfully executing this process ensures key personnel are placed in the proper positions and distributed appropriately across the battalions. If the highest echelons of the brigade place emphasis and support to the manning process, NCO leaders will form positive relationships because senior enlisted leaders demand it.

The BSB CSM has the added responsibility of building a command relationship with the FSC, which work directly for their supported battalions, and fall under the leadership and oversight of their supported battalion CSMs. Interactions between all battalion CSMs must be established early and formed on mutual respect. Poor and unprofessional relationships among these senior NCOs potentially places the entire battalion and brigade support structure at risk. BSB and supported battalion leaders must establish common ground to ensure the FSC command team receives clear guidance. Business practices and lines of responsibility should be spelled out in a written memorandum of agreement or standard operating procedure (SOP). FSCs, the BSB, and supported battalions need to establish home-station training and relationships so the sustainment trains can be successful in combat.



**Figure 12-3. Brigade support battalion command sergeant major gives a safety briefing prior to a tactical road march.**

Strong CSM relationships within a BCT also increase the level of shared understanding. Possessing an understanding of which challenges the other battalions face and a general knowledge of their WfFs is vital to anticipating what is needed on the battlefield. Being able to anticipate each other's needs and the common issues seen during combat leads to the ability to solve issues before they escalate. For example, knowing there are heavy maintenance issues within a particular maneuver battalion allows the BSB CSM to emphasize placing the appropriate mechanic talent within that battalion to ensure the maintenance program is properly managed from the beginning.

The BSB command team will also be able to work with supported command teams to make sure the optimal combination of officer and NCO talent is spread to each of the supported battalions, ensuring each battalion is manned appropriately. These actions help form trust among the CSMs and other senior leaders.

**FORWARD SUPPORT COMPANY TRAINING, DEVELOPMENT**

**Figure 12-4. A forward support company conducts tactical convoy operations in support of its maneuver battalion.**

FSCs are considered the link from the BSB to the supported battalions/squadrons, and are the organizations that offer the BCT the most flexibility for providing logistics support. For FSCs to survive on the battlefield, it is imperative they are allotted time to train on their sustainment, tactical, and warrior tasks; and battle drills as much as their supported units.

Sustainment training takes place at echelon. As examples, fuelers must know the standard for grounding their vehicles; distribution platoons must understand how to execute the BCT's standard for a logistics release point (LRP); and FSCs must be accustomed to drawing supplies from the BSB's companies. Much of this training can, and should take place within the course of sustaining supported battalions. BSBs must provide standards and expertise to the FSCs and ensure sustainment execution realistically matches the BCT's SOPs for distribution and maintenance, which includes the role of the FSC commander as the battalion or squadron senior logistician. Supported units which allow FSC commanders to administer and train their units, but consider and treat battalion sustainment in garrison as primarily the responsibility of their executive officer and S-4 are units who lose the opportunity to train tactical systems.

Tactical tasks include fulfilling significant training requirements such as weapons qualification and proficiency, mounted machine gun gunnery, convoy situational training exercise lanes, LRP/logistics package (LOGPAC) operations, and participation in a brigade support area live-fire exercise. These training events should not be minimized to ease supported unit maneuver training. Supported maneuver units which understand their FSCs must be trained as proficiently as their combat arms Soldiers at employing their weapons and reacting to contact, will ensure their FSCs can survive and sustain in LSCO.

The training and professional development of FSC leadership is a shared responsibility between BSB leaders and the supported battalion's leaders. The most successful combat arms units prioritize their FSCs' professional development and treat them the same as their organic companies, batteries, and troops, ensuring FSCs understand and can support how their supported battalion fights. BSB command teams provide technical guidance and mentorship within sustainment career branches, and help the FSC understand and manage talent internally in a technical manner that a maneuver battalion commander cannot.

In many cases, BSB commanders are reluctant to provide guidance and direction to FSC commanders because they do not want to create unnecessary friction with their peers. Even in the most tightly integrated BCTs, BSB commanders may lack visibility on the FSC's day-to-day activity because of the geographic separation unique to BSBs and FSCs, which means FSC commanders have to take the initiative and seek professional growth from their BSB commanders.

In successful units, supported battalion commanders encourage the relationship between the BSB and their supporting FSCs without hesitation. Supported battalion commanders should not fear that the BSB commander is trying to assume control of their FSC, and BSB commanders should give them no reason to think otherwise. Effective commanders of all branches understand their need for solid working relationships.



Maneuver commanders must ask themselves the following questions:

- What does tactical readiness mean for the sustainers?
- Who is responsible for training and developing the sustainers across the brigade?
- How do I define sustainment readiness within the BCT?
- Who is responsible for tactical sustainment readiness at echelon within the BCT?
- Am I setting the same training expectations for my sustainment crews as my maneuver crews?

Routine observations from the NTC include units neglecting the training requirements of the sustainment organizations to focus attention on sustaining maneuver training at home station. Many individuals have a role in the training and professional development of their sustainers; however, BSB commanders must be given the latitude to train sustainers and provide them with professional development in the BCT. This latitude starts with empowerment from the brigade commander and ends with the professional and trusting relationship between all battalion commanders across the BCT.

Leaders at the tactical level must understand the readiness of their personnel and equipment, including their supporting organization. Sustainers must be able to adequately support and execute their warrior tasks and battle drills. They must be proficient with their weapons systems and on their sustainment platforms. Finally, they must have a general understanding of the tactical tasks and end state dictated to their supported unit. Without this understanding, they will be unable to nest their sustainment plan with the scheme of maneuver. Sustainment plans that synchronize with the scheme of maneuver ensure tactical organizations can survive and succeed in LSCO.



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**NO. 21-04  
February 2021**

**Approved For Public Release  
Distribution Unlimited**