

Insights and Best Practices

Focus Paper



Mission Command

Second Edition

**Deployable Training Division
Joint Staff J7**

January 2020

Approved for public release

This is the Second Edition of the Insights and Best Practices Focus Paper on “*Mission Command*.” It is written by the Deployable Training Division (DTD) of the Joint Staff J7 and released by the J7 Deputy Director for Joint Training.

Second Edition: January 2020

First Edition: March 2013

Scope:

- This paper shares the benefits, challenges, and insights on mission command.
- It incorporates additional experiences of senior leaders in the practice of mission command.
- The paper recognizes the importance of all-domain synergy and addresses it within the scope of mission command and command relationships.

Table of Contents:

1.0 Executive Summary	1
2.0 Trust and Relationships.....	2
3.0 Gain and Share Understanding	3
4.0 Guidance and Intent	4
5.0 Empowerment	5
6.0 Implications on the Decision Cycle	6
7.0 Command Relationships	7
Glossary	GL-1

POC: js.dsc.j7.mbx.joint-training@mail.mil

Deployable Training Division, Joint Staff J7, Joint Training
116 Lake View Parkway, Suffolk, VA 23435-2697

Accessibility: Access this and other insight and best practice papers on the internet at the Joint Electronic Library site: http://www.jcs.mil/Doctrine/focus_papers.aspx.

Disclaimer: The views in this paper are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of the Joint Staff, the Department of Defense (DOD), or the United States Government (USG).

Releasability: Approved for public release.

PREFACE

This paper discusses insights and best practices related to mission command. Mission command is a key component of the command and control joint function – “The exercise of authority and direction by a properly designated commander over assigned and attached forces in the accomplishment of the mission.”

This paper may be beneficial to three main audiences:

- Commanders, as they adapt to increased levels of authority and responsibility, and work with joint partners, other USG agencies, and our allies and partners.
- Staffs, as they build and maintain trust and relationships to operate effectively.
- Subordinates, as they understand how to work with each other within a construct of harmony and synergy.

Considerations:

- Trust and relationships remain the basis for speed and agility. Building and maintaining a command climate of trust, development of deep interpersonal relationships, and open dialogue are key attributes of successful commanders and headquarters.
- Commanders inculcate a bias for action and share operational context and their intent to successfully empower subordinates to exercise disciplined initiative.
- Commanders drive a commander-centric mentality to operations centered on providing upfront guidance and intent to prevent staff churn and increase agility. Commanders must be able to recognize what is routine and what is not, and when and how to engage to gain and retain the initiative, direct their staff, and support their subordinates.
- Mission command applies across all domains. Trust, shared understanding, and horizontal coordination at echelon enable complementary employment of capabilities across domains to achieve overmatching power.

This and other focus papers share observations and insights gained by the Joint Staff J7 Deployable Training Division. The DTD gains insights on operational matters through regular contact and dialogue with CCMD and Operational level commanders and staffs as they plan, prepare for, and conduct operations and exercises. The DTD incorporates these insights in functional focus papers, refines the papers through senior officer feedback, and shares them with the operational force and joint lessons learned and doctrine communities. We have shared senior flag officer insights in yellow text boxes throughout the paper.

Please send your thoughts and best practices to DTD’s POC, Mr. Mike Findlay. URL and email contact information is on the inside front cover.



ERIC E. AUSTIN

Brigadier General, U.S. Marine Corps
Deputy Director, Joint Training
Joint Staff J7

This page intentionally left blank

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.

Mission command is a philosophy centered on the *art of command*. The art of command is the creative and skillful use of authority, instincts, intuition, and experience in decision-making and leadership to enhance operational effectiveness. The art of command is supported by the *science of control*, the systems

and procedures that improve a commander's understanding and support the execution of missions. Effective joint commanders leverage both art and science; it is not one or the other.

Commanders exercise mission command for a myriad of reasons: complexity and uncertainty of the environment, the tempo of operations, and the recognition that those closest to the problem often have the best comprehension in how to solve it. While we leverage technology to advance our *science of control*, that aspect may not always be robust (e.g., in contested environments) and may be vulnerable to attack. This further reinforces the need to understand and practice mission command.

Mission command provides the means through commander's intent, mission type orders, and decentralized execution to operate at the speed of the problem. It permits the horizontal coordination at echelon with mission partners to achieve complementary, versus merely additive, employment of capabilities.

The attributes of mission command apply to our interaction with partners. We operate as one team with our mission partners – joint, coalition, USG interagency, and other interorganizational players. We depend on each other to succeed in today's complex security environment. This is de facto interdependence: the dependence on *access* to each other's capabilities to succeed in assigned tasks (even when we do not *own* them). The challenges of gaining synergy and harmony with other USG agencies and multinational partners differ than those with our joint partners because there is often no clear authority directing a clear relationship with them. Commanders gain synergy with those partners through identification and pursuing common interests and goals, cultivation of personal relationships and trust, use of liaison elements, and development of mutually supporting activities and operations.

Insights and Best Practices. We share challenges, insights, and best practices centered on:

- Building and maintaining trust and relationships.
- Continuous dialogue to gain and share understanding.
- Clear guidance, intent, and empowerment.

Mission command is the conduct of military operations through decentralized execution based upon mission-type orders.

- Mission command **exploits the human element**..., emphasizing trust, force of will, initiative, judgment, and creativity.
- Successful mission command demands that subordinate leaders at all echelons **exercise disciplined initiative** and act aggressively and independently to accomplish the mission. They focus their orders on the purpose of the operation rather than on the details of how to perform assigned tasks.
- Essential to mission command is the **thorough understanding of the commander's intent** at every level of command and a command **climate of mutual trust and understanding**. - JP 1-0

"Mission Command enables speed, agility, and decisiveness at the tactical level while providing the necessary decision space at the higher level for the up and out engagements to anticipate and set conditions." - Senior Flag Officer

"One of the myths of Mission Command is that it equals less or little control. In some ways this could not be further from the truth. Mission Command is the balancing of Command and Control, and different ways to gain control. I would offer that universal understanding of Commander's Intent is a very powerful method of control." - Senior Flag Officer

2.0 TRUST AND RELATIONSHIPS. Building and maintaining trust is possibly a commander's most important action. Trust is key to a command climate, an infused culture, of mission command. Developing trust up, down, and across gains synergy with mission partners and enables mission type orders and empowerment.

"Trust must be earned, not given – at all levels. If a subordinate has not shown adequate competence and judgement in a particular area, they may have not yet earned the complete trust of their superior. There is a difference between earned trust and blind trust."
- Senior Flag Officer

Personal relationships are often more important than command relationships in today's complex interorganizational environment. These relationships must be built and continuously maintained through both dialogue and action – before, during, and after crises. This has significant implications, especially the time required to build and maintain trust and relationships with stakeholders and new mission partners. We see commanders making this their priority.

"Trust and communication with national leaders is key. We must earn their trust through our actions and words. Expecting an ad hoc collection of civilians and military, many new to their positions, and coming from starkly different experience and backgrounds to mold themselves rapidly into a cohesive team capable of processing complex information and making critical decisions - particularly in times of crisis - is a stretch. We should respect the difficulty of the tasks before them and do everything possible to support them and build cohesion..."

- Senior Flag Officer

"I think we all take building a team for granted and think we are really good at it, but the reality is that most military leaders are NOT as proficient at building teams as they think. We are too service centric and often exclude out key interagency and international partners."
- Senior Flag Officer

Observed best practices:

- Deliberately build and maintain trust.
- Time is finite so carefully consider where to invest in critical relationships. Identify the organizations the commander and staff will be most dependent on or work with as the target for early engagement and team building.

"You can't surge trust." - Senior Flag Officer

- Actively build trust through words and actions, and *continue* reinforcing it. Commanders rely on human interpersonal relationships, not the more impersonal transactional activities to build teams.

"In my judgment, key elements to building these critical relationships are frank dialogue, private conversations, understanding the host nation perspective, being able to explain U.S. policy, and being proactive with bad news. Frank dialogue and private conversations go hand-in-hand in terms of building a solid relationship with our counterparts. Culturally, public appearances and meetings tend to be ceremonial in nature where agreement and face-saving are the priorities. My experience was that real relationship building occurred in private meetings because there it was possible to be open about contentious issues without fear of embarrassment to either party."
- Senior Flag Officer

- Be inclusive with mission partners. Understand that over-classification can damage trust. Be sensitive on how you share information. Avoid overuse of US-only SIPRNET and meetings.
- Leverage opportunities for frank discussions in private meetings and public engagements with mission partners to fully share perspectives. Include mission partners in commander circulation and battle rhythm events.

"Intelligence sharing is an important foundation for building trust. Rather than ask "what can I share", perhaps a better question for a commander is "what can I not share." Once determined, the commander would be well served to flood mission partners with shareable data and intelligence."
- Senior Flag Officer

3.0 GAIN AND SHARE UNDERSTANDING.

Gaining and maintaining a *common* understanding of the situation, context, problem, and intent is hard.

Sharing understanding deepens trust, clarifies

authorities for action, assists problem framing as part of design, and enriches guidance and intent to release the disciplined initiative of subordinates.

Shared understanding help higher HQs, mission partners, the staff, and subordinates visualize what *right* looks like. National leadership may have different geopolitical perspectives than field commanders. A theater-strategic commander might also have a different perspective on the environment and problem than an individual at the tactical level. This is why continuous dialogue is important.

Observed best practices:

- Inform and be informed by dialogue with higher HQ and mission partners. Understand their perspectives while also informing them of your perspectives, potential risks, opportunities, and feasible options. This enhances trust and permits subsequent delegation of authorities and standing permissions.
- Over-communicate. Warn and alert. Don't make higher, adjacent, or lower HQs guess.
- Shared understanding is a "trust" contract for subsequent *disciplined initiative* on the part of the subordinates. The word *disciplined* is key here, signifying recognition (and agreement) on both parties that the actions taken will be consistent with higher intent and the shared context.
- Emphasize use of commander conferences (both physical and virtual). Direct staff-level interaction and sharing as well. Assess this interaction and emphasize as required.
- Conduct regular commander circulation (and include key staff) sharing perspectives (up, down, and across). Schedule them to prevent *circulation fratricide* due to multiple visits overwhelming the same subordinate – all possibly with different messages. Provide feedback to the staff from commander circulation; they do not have the benefit of the understanding gained through this circulation and discourse.
- Develop Commander's Critical Information Requirements (CCIR) and use instincts and judgment in determining "what do I know, who needs to know it, and how do I share it" to support a "*command and feedback*" approach to C2 that cuts through the challenge of overwhelming information and supports mission command. Consider how artificial intelligence can support gaining the key information.
- Develop a communications infrastructure that allows for information sharing and collaboration with mission partners (e.g., DOD, USG Interagency, and Coalition).

"Sharing a common understanding equips decision makers at all levels with the insight and foresight to make effective decisions."
- Senior Flag Officer

"Commanders and staffs **will do one of three things** with **overwhelming information**: *wait* for perfect information (which they will never have), be overwhelmed and *disregard* the information, or *find the key information* to help make a decision in a timely manner. Getting there, where information is empowering instead of paralyzing or disheartening, is the work of training. This means practicing and getting familiar with the kinds of information they can expect on the battlefield."
- Senior Flag Officer

"The pool of shared meaning is the birthplace of synergy. Make it safe to talk" - *Crucial Conversations*

"Commanders must consider and anticipate possible changes in the geopolitical dynamic. This is not a staff function, but rather is confined to the command group so it does not detract from the business of the day. This is where strategic "thinking time" is well spent."
- Senior Flag Officer

"**Command and feedback** is a fundamentally different approach than imposing command and *control*. Critical to this approach is a bias toward information sharing and decentralization."
- Senior Flag Officer

4.0 GUIDANCE AND INTENT. We have seen how commander's intent focused on the *what* and *why* versus the *how* enables the disciplined

"Quality guidance and intent enables mission command" - Senior Flag Officer

initiative in the subordinates to gain agility and effectiveness. Quality guidance and intent, coupled with risk guidance, enables mission command. This starts with dialogue and translation to inform and be informed by national and international leadership.

Providing guidance on risk is an important aspect of mission command. It helps to share intent *and* share understanding by communicating the commander's perspective of his perceived impediments (or hazards) to the mission and force, together with respective decision approval authorities (often through some form of decision approval matrix). Provide risk guidance as part of empowering subordinates.

Observed best practices:

"Never tell people how to do things. Tell them what to do and they will surprise you with their ingenuity." - GEN George Patton

- Make the time for *dialogue* and *strategic reflection* on the problem before crafting and providing guidance and intent. Bring partners into the dialogue to discuss the environment and challenges. Attempt to see the various perspectives on the problem – the political-military aspects from the national (and international level), the regional level, and from the adversaries' perspective. We see sporadic shortfalls in understanding the adversary; falling into the trap of mirror imaging. Effective units employ red cells to understand the adversary without bias.
- Consider how the operational approach can place the adversary on the *horns of a dilemma* by exploiting their vulnerabilities and maintaining our advantage. Consider how intent enables the command and subordinates to take on an adaptive stance to be able to rapidly adapt to a thinking adversary.
- Delineate risks to the mission and the force together with risk mitigation guidance. Understand and designate who owns risk – risk to mission, risk to force, risk to strategy. Be clear where the commander is willing to accept risk and make clear *who* is allowed to take what level of risk.
- Personally craft commander's intent. We recognize this is a common dictum, but we still see planners drafting intent. These draft intents often predispose commanders' final intent and guidance documents to a staff orientation and do not reap the benefit of the commanders' personal reflections on the problem and approach.
- Develop intent with mission partners (including higher and subordinates) to gain their perspectives, understanding, and buy-in.
- Sampling interpretation of intent before issuing is often helpful. What the commander writes and what subordinates read may be very different - better to fix before sending.
- Recognize the value of continuous circulation and sharing of intent, particularly in the early stages of a crisis. Continuously share intent and context, not only in orders, but also during circulation and meetings.
- Be prepared to modify intent based on an evolving situation and reframing of the problem. Intent is not static.
- Do not abrogate the higher headquarters design and planning responsibilities as part of the concept of decentralization.

5.0 EMPOWERMENT. Commanders instill a command climate – a culture – of empowerment to act at the speed of the problem. Decentralization enables agility and speed of action (figure). Real world operations reinforce the need to decentralize and empower our subordinates *and staff*. Those who do not decentralize lose agility and initiative, and risk mission failure.

Higher commanders focus on design and planning activities, share their understanding, and provide guidance and intent to set conditions for successful empowerment of their subordinates.

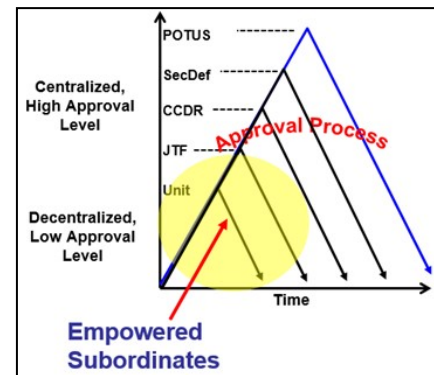
Observed best practices:

- Recognize the need not just for *intent*, but also for a *shared understanding of context* to empower disciplined initiative. Share understanding and intent, and then *decentralize to the point of being uncomfortable*.
- Develop a *bias for action culture* within your HQs and your subordinates.
- Define your fight. Discipline your organization to stay at the right level and focus on the right fight. One commander deliberately kept his headquarters *lean* to not give the staff the capacity or opportunity to take on subordinate headquarters tasks. Staying at the right level enables mission command.

“Regarding defining the fight, I recommend commanders monitor the lanes, not just to keep themselves in check, but to give their subordinates the cleanest water to move forward.” - Senior Flag Officer

- Counter the tendency of implementing more reporting, control measures, and battle rhythm events in an attempt to fully monitor, track, and control operations that can undermine the atmosphere of empowerment and decentralization.
- Develop Terms of Reference (TOR) documents laying out roles and responsibilities of deputy commanders and key staff within the HQ. (see Terms of Reference Focus Paper)
- Tailor decision approval matrices applicable to decision approval authorities both within the HQs and for subordinate headquarters. For example, J-code directors may be empowered with certain decision authorities to maintain decision agility and effectiveness within the headquarters in addition to empowering subordinate commanders.
- Align CCIR and other reporting requirements with decision approval levels. While recognizing the requirement for shared understanding, guard against establishing CCIR and other reporting requirements that may have the effect of impinging on the initiative or agility of subordinate units.
- Conduct quality in-briefs with new leaders / key personnel coupled with focused visits and circulation to assess strengths, degree of experience, and comfort in exercising initiative and accepting responsibility. Make subsequent decisions on necessary coaching and mentoring, and tailoring of degree of empowerment. (Some members of the team may be empowered more than others based on varying levels in their abilities, their propensity for initiative, and their mission set.)
- Be cognizant of the internal time demands of subordinates to plan, oversee, and assess their operations. Do not overwhelm them with collaboration or visits during high OPTEMPO periods. Consciously limit demands on subordinates for extensive briefing preparations to support higher HQ daily update briefs.

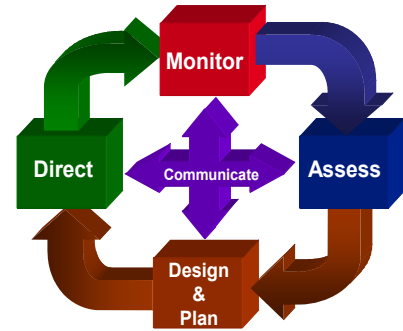
“Don’t micromanage, but be prepared to micro-engage to overcome challenges and retain the initiative.” - Senior Flag Officer



6.0 IMPLICATIONS ON THE DECISION CYCLE. The philosophy of Mission Command affects how commanders tailor their organization, and use their staff and decision cycle.

Inclusivity: We have observed numerous best practices across the decision cycle (figure) in inclusiveness with our interagency and multinational partners – our mission partners:

- ✓ Inclusiveness in understanding the complex environment and the problem. The environment is more than a military battlefield; it's a human-based network that is beyond a military-only ability to fully understand, visualize, and influence. We need to understand and consider the many perspectives of external stakeholders to perform well in this environment.
- ✓ Inclusiveness in design, planning, and execution. The best plans and operations are those fully integrated with the other elements of national and international power – from the beginning of design.
- ✓ Inclusiveness in monitoring and assessment. External stakeholders have unique perspectives and expertise and together they help build a more enriched overall assessment. Include their perspectives and equities from the beginning in assessment, estimates, and planning for a more complete understanding of the nature of the problem and how to possibly solve it.



Role of the staff in supporting commanders' decision making, support to subordinates, and sharing information with higher HQs, stakeholders, and mission partners. Insights:

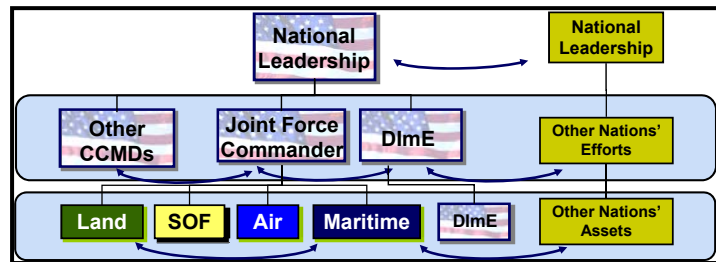
- ✓ HQ form follows function. Review both HQ organization and staff processes to enhance their support to the commander's decision-making. The Chief of Staff must drive and discipline both the HQ organization and processes.
- ✓ The staff supports subordinates as well as their Commander. They support and enable subordinates, and are an important information conduit to higher HQs and mission partners. Commanders and Chiefs of Staff must emphasize this, lest the staffs become singularly focused on the Commander, and forget their responsibilities to the larger team.
- ✓ Too much organizational, personnel, and process structure in a headquarters can impede information sharing and the initiative of subordinates. Lean headquarters tend to be more agile, have a bias for action, stay in their lane at the tactical, operational, or strategic level, and avoid the bureaucracy that can slow decisions and action.

Battle Rhythm. The battle rhythm provides the structure for managing the HQ's most important internal resource – the time of the commander and staff personnel – and integrates commander decision making with mission partners. The HQ's battle rhythm must not only support decisions across the three event horizons (current operations, future operations, future plans), but also account for the battle rhythms of higher and adjacent partners, while enabling timely direction and guidance to subordinates.

- ✓ Identify the commander's decision-making preferences and touch point requirements to underpin the staff battle rhythm. Nest the battle rhythm with other HQs – both higher headquarters (HHQ) and adjacent HQ, while best accommodating the needs of subordinates. Key "anchor points" such as a SecDef VTC drive the battle rhythm.
- ✓ Preserve white space for thinking/reflection, rest, exercise, crisis, and circulation.

7.0 COMMAND RELATIONSHIPS.

A mission command philosophy combined with effective command relationships enables synergy and harmony of action. We have observed joint commanders working much more closely with their *horizontal* mission partners instead of relying solely on a *vertical* orientation receiving and unilaterally accomplishing tasks directed by the higher commander (figure).



“In this age, I don’t care how tactically or operationally brilliant you are, if you cannot create harmony – even vicious harmony – on the battlefield based on trust across service lines, across coalition and national lines, and across civilian/military lines, you really need to go home, because your leadership in today’s age is obsolete. We have got to have officers who can create harmony across all those lines.” - Senior Flag Officer

The Armed Forces operate as part of a team of joint, interagency, and multinational partners – and depend on access to each other’s capabilities to succeed. The directed combination of military and interorganizational capabilities beyond those dedicated to one domain (e.g., land, sea, air, cyber, or space) or area of responsibility can produce effects beyond just in that single domain or AOR to enhance the effectiveness and compensate for the vulnerabilities of other domains. Synergy is about using every advantage we have to achieve overmatching power. We find this synergy can apply to more than across domains; it also applies within domains, such as across combatant command AOR boundaries within the land domain.

Examples of all-domain and transregional synergy:

- Theater air support to a ground commander. Implemented through a support command relationship, exchange of liaison, and provision of robust integration elements capable of harmonizing air power at the operational and tactical echelons.
- Homeland ballistic missile defense. Implemented through support command relationships between combatant commands, prioritization, and detailed authorities, including ROE, and responsibilities across mission partners.
- Leveraging space and cyber in achieving objectives at a Geographic Combatant Command.

Synergy is *commander-driven*; it is instilled in the command climate, *directed* in guidance and intent, and implemented in orders. It is much more than “HANDCON,” an often-quoted term expressing the decision on the part of subordinates to voluntarily work together absent direction by their higher commander. Commanders deliberately craft a command environment by shaping the task organization and command relationships enabling (and even driving) components to work together, supporting each other in an atmosphere of trust and confidence to accomplish the mission.

Challenges: There are challenges in achieving synergy.

- **Recognizing the reality and need for interdependence.** There remains a sub-culture believing that you must *own* a capability to use it. We have never had the luxury of owning everything we need nor will we in the future. We are interdependent on others; any other view is counter to the lessons learned from operations, the idea of unified action, whole-of-government approaches, jointness, and the ability to accomplish strategic objectives. We

don't have to own a capability to use or gain benefit from it; *however*, we need *assurance* of its availability within the overall priorities of the higher commander.

- **Gaining synergy and harmony outside the joint force.** Gaining synergy and harmony with other USG agencies and multinational partners is more challenging than with our joint partners because there may be no clear authority directing a clear relationship with them to mitigate risks of interdependence. We often find that just because you are talking to an interagency partner does not mean there is understanding or agreement; the phrase *silence is consent* does not always apply. We see commanders mitigating these challenges and risks through development of personal relationships and trust, use of liaison elements, and conscious decisions on the degree of reliance upon those mission partners for critical tasks.
- **Limited understanding of other domain mission partners'** authorities, competencies, and capabilities (such as SOF, cyber, or space). This lack of knowledge may result in a "supported commander" not knowing what to ask for or how to best leverage it. We see this challenge frequently. A staff, and sometimes even the commander, may not be aware of what another mission partner can provide and therefore does not incorporate that capability into the plan. This results in less than optimal solution sets, and may cause mission failure. Partners must be advocates for their competencies and capabilities. They need to professionally advocate for their capabilities where they can best serve the mission.
- **The complexity of operating globally across combatant command boundaries** and with functional combatant commands. Despite our leadership embracing the benefits of cross-combatant command activities, we have not yet fully come to grips with all of the challenges in cross-Combatant Command coordination and specifically the OSD *establishing authority responsibility* (and necessary Joint Staff (JS) support) to define supported and supporting authorities and prioritize across the joint force. Think about the planning and rapid prioritization efforts necessary at OSD and JS level for things like reallocation of critical munitions, intelligence support, strategic lift assets, and cyber support.
- **Interoperability of networks and C2 architecture.** We continually see challenges in the networks' ability to support reporting, analysis, fusion and dissemination of information, intelligence, and operational orders to enable all-domain synergy. Commanders require C2 processes and networks that enable required coordination across domains.

Insights:

- **Interdependence.** As discussed earlier, we need to recognize *de facto* interdependence in the interorganizational environment, defined as the *necessary dependence on access to each other's capabilities in order to succeed*. Interdependence requires trust in mission partners. It is commander-driven, instilled through an inclusive command climate, and directed in guidance, intent, and orders. Demand an interdependence mindset to your organization, and implement this mindset through development of trust, clear support command relationships, and exchange of liaison. Be inclusive and reach out to mission partners; don't only focus on what you control. At the same time, we find that one must recognize potential risks in relying on access to limited capabilities and develop appropriate risk mitigation efforts.

Observed best practices:

- ✓ Continue emphasis on building and maintaining trust and relationships.
- ✓ Instill a commander-driven command environment of a one-team mentality.

- Continue inclusion and crosstalk even under stress.
- Use and leverage the support command relationship.
- Think through the necessary communications, networks, and classification levels to enable interdependence.
- Unity of effort.** Unity of effort is directly related to the above concept of interdependence. While unity of command is still important and a principle of war, commanders at the theater-strategic and operational level often must orient toward unity of effort to leverage every possible capability. This does not negate the goal of unity of command; use it where feasible to keep the command relationships and interaction simple.

Understand and leverage others' capabilities across domains, echelons, physical boundaries, and organizations (think cyber and space support to GCCs). Recognize interdependencies and develop appropriate command relationships, particularly the *support command relationship*. Supported and supporting command relationships coupled with shared situational awareness help mitigate seams and create synergy. We see more delineation of supported and supporting command authorities and responsibilities and clearer prioritization by the establishing authorities in OPORDs, FRAGOs, and battle rhythm events.

Acknowledge the benefits and unique aspects of the coalition and the sensitivities of contributing nations' national command lines, prerogatives, and caveats in coalition operations.

The Combatant Command HQs value OSD-level involvement (and supporting JS actions) as the establishing authority to assess risk, prioritize, and allocate resources across combatant commands – acting at the speed of the problem.

Observed best practices:

- ✓ Identify and work with the *key relevant* interorganizational decision makers such as U.S. Ambassadors, FEMA, UN, NATO, and NGOs and PVOs. Find the common ground that can be exploited, the non-negotiable areas, and the middle ground that can be worked to achieve unity of effort. This will take significant commander time, and must be prioritized and managed to be effective.
- ✓ Emphasize use of the *Support Command* relationship as a command authority at the joint force level and the similar *lead federal agency* terminology across USG agencies.
- ✓ Gain establishing authority direction on resource allocation and prioritization including preparedness to step in and referee disagreements between subordinates *when* they cannot come to agreement. We see higher commanders emphasizing the requirement to have

subordinates work horizontally with one another to directly solve problems between them where possible (what one commander called *self-regulation*).

- ✓ Identify supported commanders to ensure common direction of effort. Ensure supported commanders fully understand both their authority and their responsibility to provide general direction to the supporting commanders. They often require additional liaison and planning assistance from supporting commanders to understand their capabilities and incorporate their assistance. Likewise, ensure supporting commanders are proactive in ascertaining supported commander requirements.
- ✓ Direct (drive) cross talk between supported and supporting commanders without the continuing presence of the higher commander (*allowing them to self-regulate*) within overarching prioritization and risk guidance.
- ✓ Direct exchange of liaison officers – at a minimum from supporting to supported commanders. This assists in sharing understanding and leveraging capabilities.
- ✓ Develop matrices identifying authorities and responsibilities in a coalition environment to share understanding of authorities and responsibilities.

Glossary

Abbreviations and Acronyms

AOR – Area of Responsibility
B2C2WG – Boards, Bureaus, Centers,
Cells, and Working Groups
CCDR – Combatant Commander
CCIR – Commander’s Critical
Information Requirement(s)
CCMD – Combatant Command
CJCS – Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of
Staff
COS – Chief of Staff
CSEL – Command Senior Enlisted Leader
DIME – Diplomatic, Information,
Military, and Economic (analytical
construct)
DOD – Department of Defense
DOS – Department of State
DTD – Deployable Training Division
FEMA – Federal Emergency Management
Agency
FRAGORD/FRAGO – Fragmentary Order
GCC – Geographic Combatant Command
GIO – Globally Integrated Operations
HHQ – Higher Headquarters
HN – Host Nation
HQ – Headquarters
JP – Joint Publication
JTF – Joint Task Force
KLE – Key Leader Engagement
MOE – Measures of Effectiveness
MOP – Measures of Performance
OE – Operational Environment
OPORD – Operations Order
OPR – Office of Primary Responsibility
OPT – Operational Planning Team
OSD – Office of Secretary of Defense
PMESII – Political, Military, Economic,
Social, Information, and Infrastructure
(analytical construct)
USAID – United States Agency for
International Development



**The Joint Staff J7
116 Lake View Parkway
Suffolk, VA 23435-2697**

Approved for public release