

Appendix 6A

Some Thoughts on Orders

Verbal orders, whether in combat, during training or on peacekeeping should be kept short and simple. Whether a section leader or brigade commander, there is often little time to develop bulky orders and even less time to brief one's subordinates. When that time is taken, it is taken from subordinates who need every second that can be spared to properly prepare for the mission. Orders are important to ensuring military success, but so is preparation. When they compete for time, the latter tends to lose out to the former. The result is usually a bungle – abbreviated rehearsals and rushed logistics arrangement result in mission failure – and the possible death of the troops concerned.

There are a number of ways to free up time other than using time management techniques. They include:

- Drills
- SOPs
- Mission orders
- Decision point tactics

Drills

Drills, the manuals say, are a means of automating aspects of lesser tactics. Applicable at most levels and in many contexts, they are particularly relevant to platoons and sections, where the general inexperience of leaders, the absence of planning staffs, the intimacy and the immediacy of combat all combine to rob participants of the time to conduct a proper military decision-making process (MDMP).

Decision making is knowing *if* to decide, then *when* and *what* to decide. It includes understanding the consequence of decisions. Decisions are the means by which the commander translates his vision of the end state into action. Decision making is both science and art. Many aspects of military operations—movement rates, fuel consumption, weapons effects—are quantifiable and, therefore, part of the *science* of war. Other aspects—the impact of leadership, complexity of operations, and uncertainty regarding enemy intentions—belong to the *art* of war.

The military decision-making process (MDMP) is a single, established, and proven analytical process. The MDMP is an adaptation of the Army's analytical approach to problem solving. The MDMP is a tool that assists the commander and staff in developing estimates and a plan. While the formal problem-solving process described in this chapter may start with the receipt of a mission, and has as its goal the production of an order, the analytical aspects of the MDMP continue at all levels during operations. The MDMP helps the commander and his staff examine a battlefield situation and reach logical decisions.

The process helps them apply thoroughness, clarity, sound judgment, logic, and professional knowledge to reach a decision. The full MDMP is a detailed, deliberate, sequential, and time-consuming process used when adequate planning time and sufficient staff support are available to thoroughly examine numerous friendly and enemy courses of action (COAs). This typically occurs when developing the commander's estimate and operation plans, when planning for an entirely new mission, during extended operations, and during staff training designed specifically to teach the

MDMP. The MDMP is the foundation on which planning in a time-constrained environment is based. The products created during the full MDMP can and should be used during subsequent planning sessions when time may not be available for a thorough re-look, but where existing METT-T factors have not changed substantially.

The *advantages* of using the complete MDMP instead of abbreviating the process are that—

- It analyzes and compares multiple friendly and enemy COAs in an attempt to identify the best possible friendly COA.
- It produces the greatest integration, coordination, and synchronization for an operation and minimizes the risk of overlooking a critical aspect of the operation.
- It results in a detailed operation order or operation plan.

The *disadvantage* of using the complete MDMP is that it is a time-consuming process.

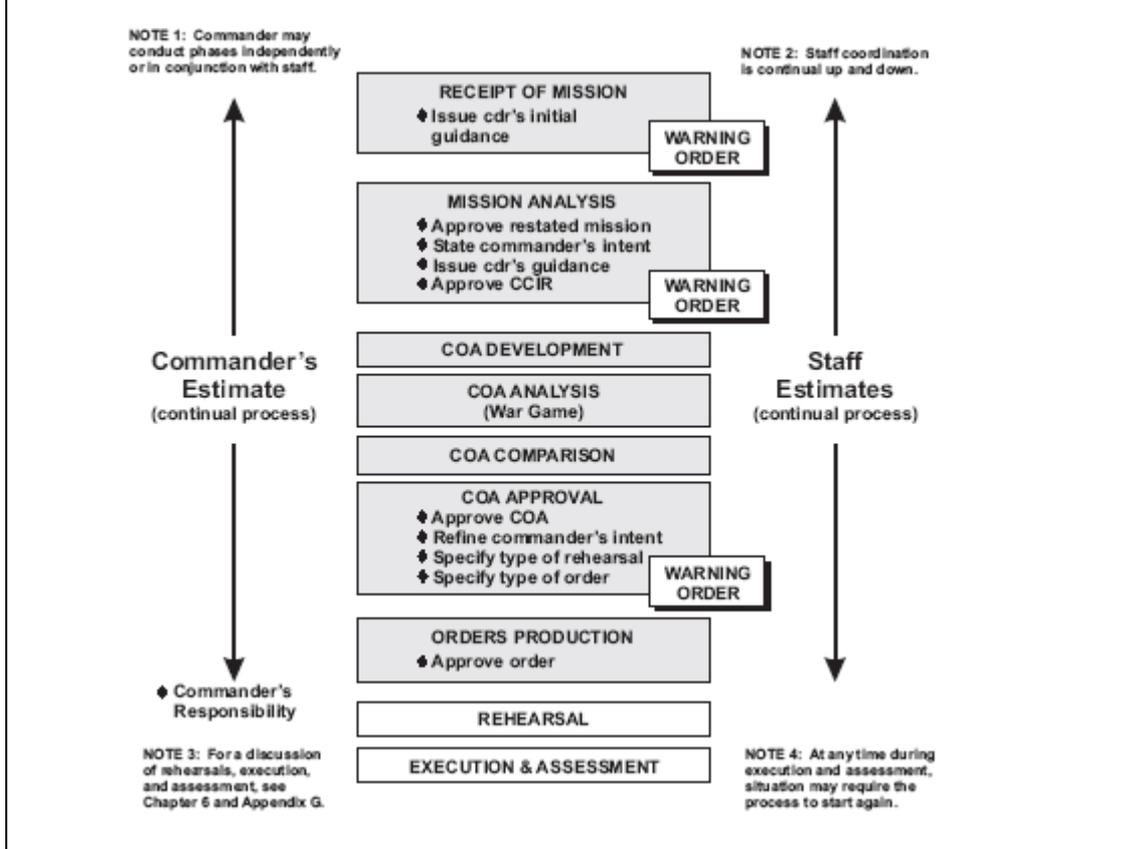


Table 6A.1: The Military Decision-making Process

Drills are only mastered by endless repetition – no matter how exhausting and boring. Only then do they become instinctive – as they need to be when they mind goes numb under the shock of enemy fire. And it does. Deployment and battle drills have been around for some time. They appear to have been introduced into Commonwealth forces after World War One and lent heavily on the best British and German tactical wisdom of 1918. One early proponent was Captain BH Liddell Hart, who rewrote the British Army's infantry tactics manual, *Infantry Training* in the early 1920s. The essence of the drill is speed measured against a checklist of tasks. In the case of deployment drills the idea is to deploy a body of troops as speedily as possible with the necessary equipment, provisions and instructions for the task at hand. In combat,

battle drills allow for hasty actions with a minimum of instructions in the face of the enemy.

Automation should never equal the elimination of thought. Drills require the application of that rare commodity, common sense, together with forethought. Combined with discretion, that better part of valour as well as whatever experience is to hand, common sense and forethought brings the incumbent to the military appreciation. The appreciation, no matter how fleeting, underlies all military planning and decision-making. When ambushed, the commander must instantaneously decide between fight or flight: Is his force strong enough to assault the ambushers in an immediate action counter-ambush drill, or is withdrawal required? Factors that must always be considered is the mission, terrain (including weather and the time of day) and the enemy. The fact that drills are standardised does not presuppose for a moment that they are either always applicable or should be implemented in the usual form in all circumstances. Once drills have been mastered through repetitive training, a thinking opposing force (OPFOR) can be introduced to build experience in the section or platoon. OPFOR's mission in such training is to confront the trainees with an abundance of for-them unexpected situations under which their leaders must choose which drills to apply – and how. Such training must also take place over varied terrain to be effective. Troops put through such training will already have much food for thought afterwards. But to this can be added some desert: instructors can declare key leaders or weapon operators incapacitated, meaning a section leader may have to replace the platoon commander in the middle of a drill, or a rifleman has to recover the section light machine gun and bring it into action again – situations that are real enough on the battlefield but seldom practiced during training. Although German efficiency, especially during World War Two, is much exaggerated, they did get certain things right in its run-up. This included an insistence that juniors had to be able to command a level, or so up. Under such a system, one can reasonably expect a section leader to replace a platoon sergeant or platoon commander, a platoon sergeant to replace the company sergeant major, a platoon leader to command a company. During the last world conflict it was by no means uncommon to find German sergeants commanding the remnants of companies and captains – or more senior lieutenants to command rump battalions: successfully. The same should apply today in the better units of the better militaries.

Sample Battle Drills

Section battle drills

- Drill 1: Preparing for battle
- Drill 2: Conduct under effective enemy fire
- Drill 3: Determining the enemy's position
- Drill 4: Dominating the fire fight
- Drill 5: The hasty attack
- Drill 6: Re-organisation

Platoon battle drills

- Drill 1: Preparing for battle
- Drill 2: Conduct when forward section comes under effective enemy fire
- Drill 3: The hasty attack
- Drill 4: Re-organisation

Table 6A.1: Sample battle drills.

SOPs

Standing or standard operating (or operational) procedures (SOPs) are to companies, battalions and higher echelons what drills are to lower tactical units. Units develop SOPs to save time. Wherever there is a task or routine that is carried out in the same manner over an extended period of time, there is a SOP crying for promulgation. The manuals say SOPs cover those tasks or operational aspects that can be carried out using standardised procedures without compromising their effectiveness. Such tasks include the layout of headquarters, the composition of forces for certain tasks and marrying-up drills, between, for example, infantry and armour.

SOPs can also be used for tactical tasks on the battlefield, and to achieve them may set out battle drills. Writing in *Armor*¹, Lt Col Tim Reese and Majors Matt Waring and Curt Lapham wrote that battalion task force, like sections and platoons, also face time constraints. “Though planning time is greater than at the platoon level, it is never enough.” In their experience, units routinely use too much of their available time on the MDMP and too little preparing for battle and rehearsing the plan. “The task force OPOD (operations order) is often a collection of good ideas cobbled together by the staff to satisfy a ... checklist. It is too long and disjointed to serve as a unifying and synchronising device for the commander and his subordinate units.” The trio saw three potential advantages to drafting Tactical SOPs (TACSOPs). “First, they would save the commander and staff valuable time in the DMP. Less time would be required to issue warning orders, to develop the TF (task force) execution matrix and to synchronise the OPOD. Second, TACSOPs would also save the TF planning time and allow subordinate units to begin preparing for the mission before the OPOD was issued. Subordinate leaders could then begin their own planning; units could begin moving and rehearsing their own battle drills; CSS (combat service support) assets could begin their actions, etc. Finally, we expected TACSOPs to payoff during mission execution as key leaders of the TF, familiar with the (procedures), could quickly execute their part of the mission while staying within the commander’s intent.”

The proof of the pudding was indeed in the eating. “More than once, key leaders were killed, yet the TACSOPs worked as subordinate leaders took charge and operated within the commander’s intent. Attached units were also smoothly integrated and performed their tasks well... OPODs were easier and faster to produce. They were also easier to understand as commanders were already familiar with the concepts underlying the plan. The TACSOP concept also helped focus TF rehearsals on critical events instead of every detail of the operation.”

Mission Orders

¹ Lt Col Tim Reese and Majors Matt Waring and Curt Lapham, *Task Force Battle Drills*, *Armor*, Fort Knox, Kentucky, 1999.

Mission orders, or *auftragstaktik* in German, is a command technique that requires commanders to set their subordinates a task, give them the necessary parameters and then get out of their way. As already seen above, the subordinate is then expected to carry out that task within the commander's intent and the parameters set.

Forests have been felled to provide paper for the literature on this topic. US Lt Col John L Silva² described mission orientated command as a “decentralized leadership and command philosophy that demands decisions and action at the lowest level of command where there is an intimate knowledge of the situation and the commander's intention in beginning an operation. The mission order is merely a technique that is used to implement and execute mission-orientated command.” Silva added that mission orientated command is based in the ability of an individual's creative action to solve a problem without recourse to higher authority; “the mission order is only a small component of mission-orientated command that we see in the field. But there are other components of mission-oriented command that must also work before an army takes to the field:

- Mutual trust among leaders based on each leader's intimate personal knowledge of the capabilities of the others.
- Training and organisation in everything the army does to reinforce the primacy of the judgment of the man on the scene (decentralization).
- A willingness to act on the part of all the leaders and those who aspire to be leaders.
- Simple, commonly accepted and understood operations concepts.

Mission-oriented command, as practiced by the German Army, accepted a lack of absolute control on the battlefield, Silva wrote. The Germans believed that it was better to know that each man would act on his own to contribute something than to have him wait for orders to do the “right thing”. They accepted that battle is marked by confusion and ambiguity and consciously traded an assurance of control for an assurance of self-induced action on the part of subordinates. “They apparently embraced the confusion of battle as an unending source of potential opportunity and built a command and control philosophy in which that potential could be realised through decentralised decision making.” The basic concept was simple: manoeuvre to shock the enemy in order to destroy him. If a junior NCO or officer acted in some way to do this, he was always “right”.

Now-retired Lt Col Paul-Bolko Mertz³ in an article in the June 1988 edition of the *African Armed Forces Journal* said the mission is “sacred” to the subordinate – however it is expected from him to develop a variety of solutions to the problem – irrespective of his command level to choose the best course of action and to supervise the execution. “This freedom includes the responsibility to change his chosen course of action drastically, adapting it to changing battlefield circumstances, or in the light of new information of operational significance”, Mertz argued. He also observed, however, that the entire scheme would collapse when leaders refused to accept responsibility or when commanders lost faith in their subordinates – and vice versa. In

² John L Silva, *Auftragstaktik, Its Origins and Development*, Infantry, Fort Benning, Georgia, September-October 1989; reprinted in the *African Armed Forces Journal*, Johannesburg, April 1990.

³ Lt Col Paul-Bolko Mertz, *Auftragstaktik – Mission Orientated Command*, *African Armed Forces Journal*, Johannesburg, June 1988.

that observation is the explanation for the failure of mission-orientated command to take root in South Africa.

Decision Point Tactics: Branches, Sequels and Reconnaissance Pull

Decision point tactics (DPT) is essentially contingency planning in a mission orders environment. As is the case with mission-orientated command, decision point tactics (DPT) is long beyond the buzzword stage in the US armed services. DPT and mission orders were shown to good effect during the 2003 Iraq invasion and it is constantly on display -- for all to see -- at various US training centres and in their manuals and journals.

DPT is contingency planning with a twist. It is turning a certain enemy action – or inaction -- into a trigger for a specific pre-planned response – often the result of reconnaissance pull. In American parlance a "branch" is a more than a conventional "what-if" contingency plan, more than a mere a variation of the main plan. The main plan itself branches into separate options to fit the situation -- rather than the expectation. A "sequel," the second aspect of DPT, follows on; it answers the question of what the dog must do when it catches the bus. Lt Col Peter J Palmer⁴ described OPFOR's definition of DPT in *Infantry* as “the art and science of employing available means a specific point in space and/or time where the commander anticipates making a decision concerning a specific friendly course of action (COA). This decision is directly associated with threat force activity (action/reaction) and/or the battlefield environment.”

Palmer writes that DPT, like any other tactical technique, still require effective troop leading procedures and proper execution. He then listed four imperatives for success:

- **Battlefield vision** meaning that the commander, his staff and his subordinate commanders must have a common understanding and perception of the Battlespace. “Besides the inherent experience factor, the primary means of gaining battlefield vision is through the use of the use of the deliberate decision making process (DDMP).” This process includes the standard US METT-T (mission, enemy, terrain, troops and time available), wargaming and rehearsals. “Wargaming is the most important step of the DDMP. Regardless of the number of battles the OPFOR fights, the next one will always be different and extensive time an effort are invested in wargaming... This enables commanders at all levels to relate battlefield events to some aspect of the wargame and understand their commander's intent for subsequent actions.” Palmer informs his readers “OFOR orders, in matrix form, are one or two pages long with a cartoon sketch. Unit SOP cover most of the other administrative and operational areas. At the command post level, the most significant piece of information is the conditions identified for executing each COA.” Palmer also says more emphasis is placed on

⁴ Lt Col Peter J Palmer, Decision Point Tactics and the Meeting Battle, Fighting the Enemy, Not the Plan, Infantry, Fort Benning, Georgia, January-February 1997.

rehearsals than on the actual order because more of the participants have derived a complete vision of battle from the wargame.

- **Successful reconnaissance and counterreconnaissance operations** are key to DPT – the former to identify enemy reactions to either own forces manoeuvre or deception operations for this is key to triggering subsequent decision point manoeuvre options. The latter is key to preventing a capable opponent from effectively employing the same tactics. Reconnaissance pull is a Russian technique widely used in World War Two and still part of their doctrine. It was added to DPT by the experience of US forces against a brigade-sized OPFOR that plays a Soviet division during force-on-force training. OPFOR had a habit of destroying opposing brigade task forces in the offence and defence by basing its plans in the attack and defence on the proper use of all its reconnaissance means to determine enemy dispositions and through that enemy intent. This would give OPFOR a good idea of flaws in the Blue Force’s thinking and planning – and give them the advantage in the fight. “Every tactical decision in war must be based on the enemy. Commanders who attempt to execute regardless of the enemy situation, open themselves up to fall in a trap”, Lt Col John F Antal⁵ wrote. “Commanders who determine their courses of action (COA) based solely on terrain, likewise set themselves up for failure.” Antal argued that prudent commanders “hedged their bets” by executing branch plans triggered by reconnaissance pull. Put in other words, reconnaissance pull allows for attacking weakness with strength.
- **Well-trained crews and platoons** are fundamental to the decentralised execution – crews and platoons must be able to react on short notice and execute appropriate battle drills. Here proper rehearsals are key.
- **Effective deception operations** gives that added tactical advantage that is often the difference between success or failure. Feints, demonstrations and related techniques are used in the offence and false positions and the like are used in the defence.

Platoons, companies, battalions and brigades following these precepts and what goes with them will be successful in war and peace. Commanders using mission orders and SOPs in an environment of mutual trust will be able to respond at short notice and put in the field well trained, briefed and rehearsed teams that know what is expected of them... and why. They will be ready to fight the enemy – not the plan.

Preliminaries

- Preliminaries include notifying subordinate commanders of groupings, etc., through warning orders.

Orders

- Situation (Gives subordinate commanders a common understanding of the current situation. It also explains the higher commands’ intent for the battle.)
 - Enemy

⁵ Lt Col John F Antal, It’s Not the Speed of the Computer that Counts!, The Case for Rapid Battlefield Decision-making, Armor, Fort Knox, Kentucky, May-June 1998.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Own forces ○ Attachments and detachments ○ Population ○ Air situation ○ Neutrals <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Mission (A mission is a clear statement of what a unit is to do, usually defined in terms of the expected results or outcome). ● Execution (This paragraph must specify the conduct of a unit's battle in sufficient detail to allow subordinates to act within a framework of mission command). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Design for battle <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Intention ▪ General outline ▪ Detail per phase ○ Missions to subordinate commanders ○ Coordinating instructions ● Administration and logistics (Informs subordinates of the support they will receive prior to, and during, the battle.) ● Command and signals (Explains how command is to be exercised and control will be maintained.) <p>Activities after order group</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Questions to commander ● Questions by commander to ensure his intent is understood ● Synchronise watches ● Simulation/final rehearsal
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Table 6A.2: Model orders