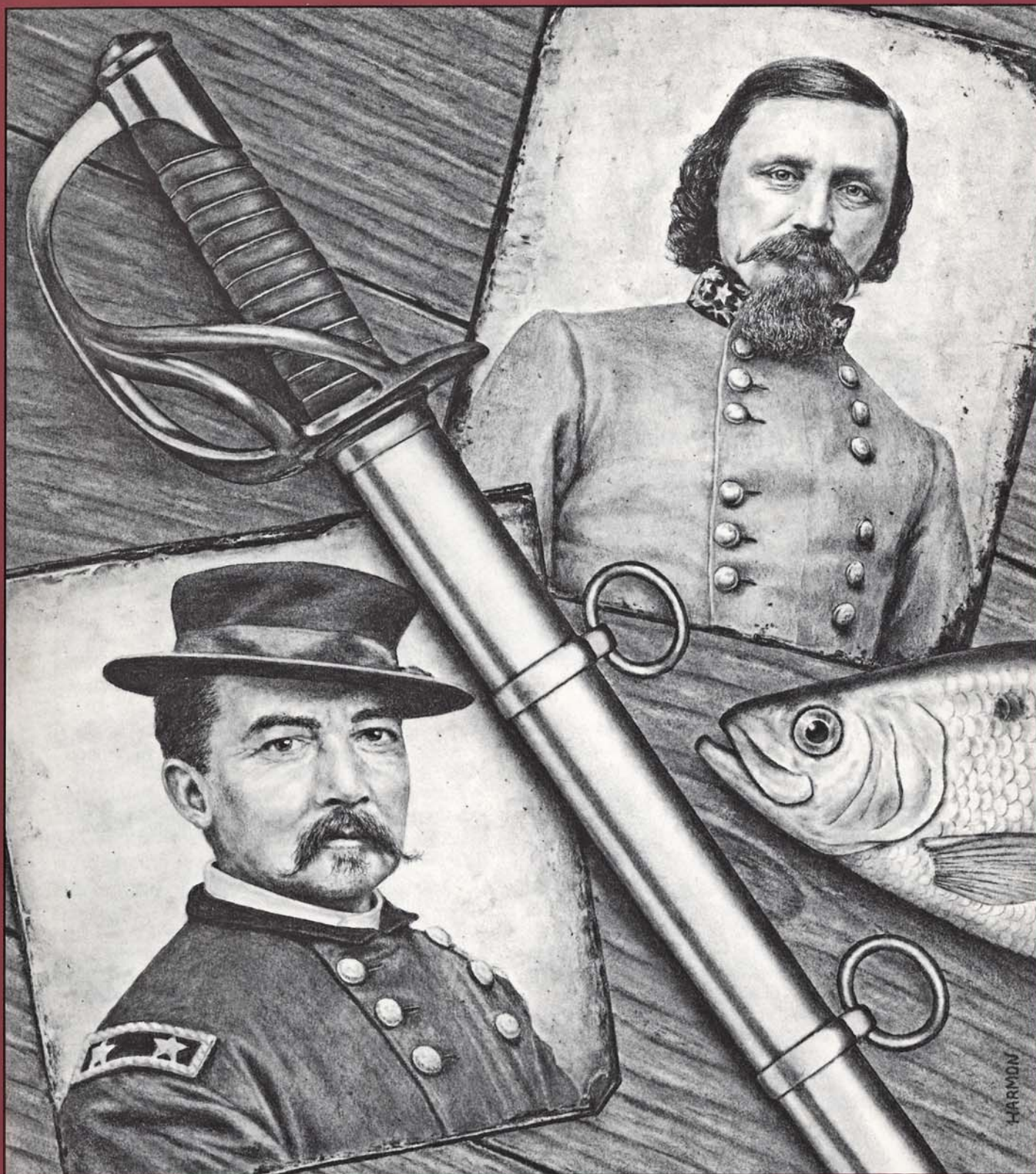


ARMOR



The Battle of Five Forks — 31 March-1 April 1865

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Commander's Guidance for Battle Command

by Lieutenant Colonel John Antal

"One who is confused in purpose cannot respond to his enemy."

Sun Tzu

Planning time saved is combat time gained. Battle command is the "art of decision-making, leading, and motivating soldiers and their organizations into action to accomplish missions."¹ Battle command is executed in the dynamic environment of combat, a two-sided competition immersed in the friction and fog of war. On the modern battlefield, commanders must execute battle command in rapid pace to ensure that his tempo of battle outmatches that of his adversary. To accomplish this, the command-staff team must conduct rapid decision-making.

The first step in gaining time and conducting rapid decision-making occurs with the commander's guidance to his staff. Commanders direct their staff's planning effort through verbal or written guidance. From this guidance the staff frames, sharpens, and eventually implements the commander's decision. Unambiguous commander's guidance saves staff planning time by concentrating the staff's effort on what the commander deems critical. The commander's guidance then provides a starting point for course of action (COA) development and the issue of combat orders. Bad guidance — guidance that does not specifically assist the staff to focus the planning effort — can slow orders development and wastes staff planning time. Loss of planning time often produces tragic results on the battlefield.

Most commanders believe that they know how to issue guidance. Few commanders, however, have ever received any formal instruction on how to issue clear, concise, and effective guidance in a logical, sequenced manner. Platitudes concerning "kicking the enemy's rear" or "moving swiftly with speed and agility to destroy the enemy in zone" do not provide the detailed information required by staffs to prepare effective tactical plans. Commanders who cannot communicate clear planning guidance hobble their staffs and

degrade staff planning performance. Such degradation can increase the level of friction and cause the planning effort to fail.

"A leader must meet battle situations with timely and unequivocal decisions."² The concept of timely and unequivocal decisions is vital to effective and rapid staff operations. Nowhere is this more important than at the beginning of the planning process. Clear commander's guidance provides the foundation for effective tactical planning. Without clear guidance from the commander, time is wasted. Commanders who can issue clear and concise directions will increase the speed and efficiency of the staff's planning process. Staffs that are trained to receive commander's guidance in a sequential, systematic way are better equipped to quickly translate this guidance into effective tactical plans.

The minimum elements of commander's guidance are: a restatement of the unit's mission; an explanation of the initial concept of operation; a description of the initial scheme of maneuver; and information concerning the commander's desires concerning timings, order techniques and rehearsals. A diagram of the elements of commander's guidance is provided below:

Commander's Guidance

1. Restated Mission

- a. Commander's Intent
- b. Battlefield Framework

2. Initial Concept of the Operation

- a. Movement
- b. Objectives
- c. Responsibilities
- d. Formations/Dispositions (optional)
- e. Maneuver Options

3. Initial Scheme of Maneuver

4. Time Plan, Orders Technique, and Rehearsal Technique

Restated Mission

The first element of the commander's guidance is the restated mission. The restated mission is the commander's mission statement for **his** unit. It is his means of clearly expressing his will. The restated mission is derived from the commander's understanding of the higher commander's mission and the higher commander's intent. The restated mission must address the WHO, WHAT, WHEN, WHERE, and WHY of the assigned task. The element of WHAT is a listing of the key and ultimate essential tasks.

The communication of the restated mission is the commander's responsibility. The commander should be able to develop the restated mission on his own, without the aid of his staff. The commander deduces the content of the restated mission from his understanding of the higher commander's mission and intent. Normally, the commander has the closest and most direct access to the higher echelon commander. Often, he will receive the mission directly from the higher commander, either in person or over the radio or telephone. The commander, therefore, should have the best understanding of his higher commander's mission and intent. The staff, however, can assist the commander in developing the restated mission when time allows. If the staff develops the restated mission statement, then the commander must approve the staff's product.

To complete a restated mission statement the commander must understand and use precise terms. A mission is defined as "the task, together with the purpose, that clearly indicates the action to be taken and the reason for taking it."³ A task is a "clearly defined and measurable activity accomplished by individuals or units. It is a specific activity that contributes to the accomplishment of the mission."⁴ Missions must be explained as specific **tasks** that translate into specific actions that can be executed by the unit to a recognizable standard. Explaining the **reason** for the action helps to explain the standard.

An example is the mission to “clear in zone.” This mission requires that the commander “destroy or force the withdrawal of all enemy forces in his zone of operations and reduce obstacles that may interfere with subsequent operations.”⁵ The task is to **destroy or force the withdrawal** of enemy forces, and **reduce obstacles** that impede future operations. The mission has two tasks; 1) destroy or force the withdrawal of enemy forces in zone and, 2) reduce obstacles in zone that impede future operations.

The first part of the first task requires that the friendly force destroy enemy forces. The definition of destroy is clear: “to physically disable or capture an enemy force.

⁶ The second part of the first task is to “force the withdrawal of the enemy,” if he cannot be destroyed. Importantly, if the accomplishment of this mission is to secure the higher commander’s intent, the enemy must be forced to withdraw in the “right” direction. The direction that the enemy is forced to withdraw is a central piece of information in developing a successful course of action.

The second task is to reduce obstacles that impede future operations. A clear understanding of the higher commander’s mission and intent is required to determine which obstacles, and how many obstacles (if any), must be reduced in the zone of attack. A clearly defined task, coupled with an explanation of why the action is being conducted, can make the difference between a successful mission and a lot of wasted effort. Tasks (clear, delay, destroy, deny, isolate, retain, and seize, for example) that confer precise conditions and standards enhance synchronization. A list of tactical missions and their definitions appears at right.

Concept of the Operation

The second step in the commander’s guidance is to explain the concept of the operation. The concept of the operation consists of the statement of commander’s intent and addressing the battlefield by the elements of the battlefield framework.

Commander’s Intent - The commander’s intent is defined as “the commander’s stated vision of the battle which defines the purpose, the end state with respect to the relationship among the force, the enemy and the

terrain and how the end state will be achieved by the force as a whole.”⁷

The concept of commander’s intent is critical to successful tactical operations. “Communications will be interrupted by enemy action at critical times and units will frequently have to fight while out of contact with higher headquarters and adjacent units. Subordinate leaders will be expected to act on their own initiative within the framework of the commander’s intent.”⁸ **Commander’s intent, therefore, cannot simply be a restatement of the scheme of maneuver.** It must explain much more than one way to accomplish the assigned mission.

The acid test of commander’s intent is the ability of a subordinate to act “correctly” when the situation has

changed, the initial order is no longer valid, and the subordinate cannot receive instructions in time to get a decision on a new course of action. The subordinate must either act or wait for instructions and run the risk of being defeated. If the subordinate’s initiative is guided by a well-thought-out and clearly communicated commander’s intent, then the chances of acting “correctly” will increase.

The commander’s intent, therefore, must express what is expected of subordinate commanders and troops in order to secure the overall mission. It must explain a “way to act” for all situations. The intent must define the final end state and relate this end-state with the goals of the friendly force as a whole.

DEFINITIONS: TACTICAL MISSIONS

Attrition (Attrit) - The reduction of the effectiveness of a force caused by the loss of personnel or material. (JCS PUB-1)

Block - Deny the enemy access to a given area or prevent enemy advance in a given direction. It may be for a specified time. Units may have to retain terrain and accept decisive engagement. (FM 101-5-1)

Breach (ing) - The employment of any means to secure a passage through an enemy minefield or fortification. (JCS PUB-1)

Canalize - To restrict operations to a narrow zone by use of existing or reinforcing obstacles which may interfere with subsequent operations. (Tactics Div, Infantry School, Ft. Benning 18 April 90)

Clear - To destroy or force the withdrawal of all enemy forces and reduce any obstacles which may interfere with subsequent operations. (Tactics Div, Infantry School, Ft. Benning 18 April 90)

Contain - To stop, hold or surround the forces of the enemy or to cause the enemy to center activity on a given front and to prevent his withdrawing any part of his forces for use elsewhere. (JCS PUB-1).

Delay - To trade space for time, inflict maximum damage on the enemy force and preserve the force within the limits established by the issuing commander. (Tactics Div, Infantry School, Ft. Benning 18 April 90)

Destroy - To physically disable or capture an enemy force. (Tactics Div, Infantry School, Ft. Benning 18 April 90).

Fix - Actions taken to prevent the enemy from moving any part of his forces from a specific location and/or a specific period of time by holding or surrounding them to prevent their withdrawal for use elsewhere. (FM 101-5-1)

Interdict - To prevent or hinder by any means the enemy’s use of any area or route. (JCS PUB-1)

Neutralize - To render ineffective or unusable. (JCS PUB-1)

Retain - To occupy and hold a terrain feature to ensure it is free of enemy occupation or use. (Tactics Div, Infantry School, Ft. Benning 18 April 90)

Secure - To gain possession of a position or terrain feature with or without force, and to deploy in such a manner which prevents its destruction or loss to enemy action. (FM 101-5-1)

Seize - To gain physical possession of a terrain feature from an enemy force. (Tactics Div, Infantry School, Ft. Benning 18 April 90)

Support Force - Those forces charged with providing intense direct overwatching fires to the assault force. (FM 101-5-1)

Withdrawal - A retrograde operation in which a force in contact with the enemy frees itself for a new mission. (FM 101-5-1)

Restated Mission (WHO, WHAT, WHEN, WHERE, AND WHY)
Concept of the Operation: Commander's Intent: Purpose (The purpose of the action.)
Method (The end state with respect of the relationship among the friendly force, the enemy and the terrain.)
Endstate (How the end state will be achieved by the force as a whole and how far to go in terms of combat power to achieve that end)
Battlefield Framework: (Offensive: Main Atk, Res, Recon & Sec, Deep, and Rear) (Defense: Sec, MBA, Res, Deep, and Rear)

Scheme of Maneuver		
Outline of Movement:		
Identify Objectives:		
Assign Responsibilities for Zones, Sectors, or Areas:		
Prescribe Formations (optional):		
Identify Maneuver Options:		
Time	Light Data	Actions
ORDERS TECHNIQUE: ORAL OVERLAY MATRIX FILL-IN-THE-BLANK WRITTEN REHEARSAL TECHNIQUE: RADIO MAP SKETCH TERRAIN KEY LEADER FULL MODEL		

This definition of commander's intent is enhanced by an explanation of the definition of command climate found in ST 100-9, *The Tactical Decision-making Process* (July 1993). This text translates the commander's intent as the PURPOSE, METHOD AND END STATE. This is a handy memory aid to assist commanders and staff officers in writing the commander's intent.

- **PURPOSE** (The reason for the operation with respect to the mission of the next higher unit. The purpose explains within the context of the mission of the higher unit [WHY the operation is occurring.]);

- **METHOD** (The end state with respect to the relationship among the force, the enemy and the terrain and the HOW in doctrinally concise terminology, explains the offensive form of maneuver, the alternative defensive pattern, or the retrograde operations to be used by the unit. Details as to specific sub-units are not discussed.);

- **END STATE** (How the end state will be achieved by the force as a whole and how far to go to achieve that end state in terms of combat power).

PURPOSE, METHOD, and END-STATE act as memory aids for the commander to write clear and effective intent. The commander should train himself to ask focused questions to en-

sure that his intent is clear. What is the purpose of my mission? What is the method that my superiors will use to secure the end state? How does this action accomplish the end state with respect to the relationship among the force, the enemy and the terrain? What is the importance of this end state and how will the end state be achieved by the force as a whole? What is success, and how much combat power can I risk losing to secure success?

Battlefield Framework - The concept of the operation is then expressed in the terms of the battlefield framework.⁹ The offensive battlefield framework consists of addressing the **main attack, reserve, reconnaissance and security operations, deep operations, and rear operations.** The defensive framework consists of **security force operations, the main battle area, reserve, deep operations, and rear area operations.**

The battlefield framework is a logical way to describe the geometry of the joint-combined battlefield. The framework provides the commander a method to briefly describe his guidance for each critical area of the battlefield. At the battalion level and below, a commander emphasizes the close operation (main attack for the offense and main battle area in the defense) and need only tell his staff how battle in the other areas of the framework will affect

the engagement of his force. At brigade level and higher, the commander must explain how he will fight the battle in each area of the framework. In these instructions, the commander should clearly define how he expects to fight and win in each area of the framework.

Scheme Of Maneuver

The next step in commander's guidance is the explanation of an initial scheme of maneuver. This can involve a detailed analysis of the initial plan or merely a few words and graphic control measures placed on a map overlay. The scheme of maneuver is the "central expression of the commander's concept for close operations."¹⁰ The scheme of maneuver should:

- Outline movement
- Identify objectives
- Assign responsibilities for zones, sectors or areas
- Prescribe formations or dispositions (when necessary)
- Identify maneuver options

In describing his scheme of maneuver, the commander relates his "best plan" to accomplish the entire mission assigned to the command. The scheme of maneuver can be developed by the commander (in periods where time is short) or can be developed by the staff

and approved by the commander (in periods when plenty of planning time is available). Regardless of the time available, the commander must instruct his staff on each of the five elements of the scheme of maneuver, or acquiesce to the staff's best judgment. It is more effective for the commander to issue his instructions on the five elements of the scheme of maneuver early, and decisively, rather than to waste time muddling through confusion and changing courses of action later in the planning process.

Time Plan, Order Technique & Rehearsal Technique

The last step of the commander's guidance involves specific instructions on time planning, order techniques, and rehearsals. Time planning is essential to avoid wasting time. The commander should plan his available time using a reverse planning process. Critical times, such as the crossing of the line of departure, the time of the battle update briefing,¹¹ and the issue of the operations and warning order must be considered. A time plan should be included with the warning order. A warning order that contains a time plan can aid subordinate units in using their own planning and preparation time more effectively.

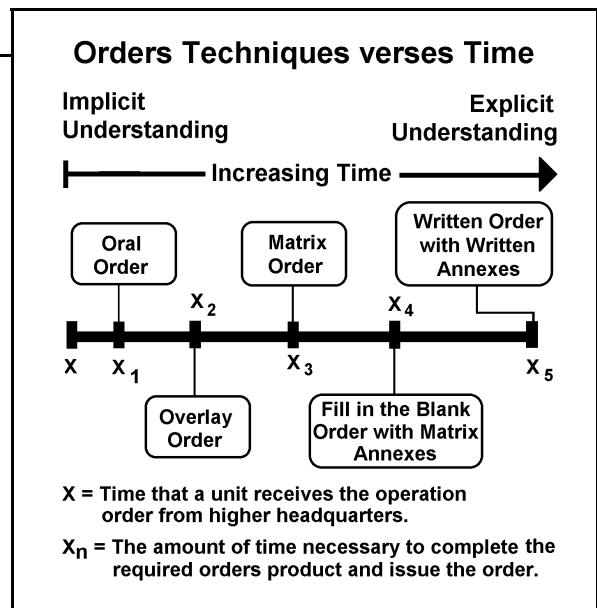
The commander must also designate what type of order he wants the staff to prepare for subordinate units. Seldom will a singular order technique fit all possible planning situations. Some situations will require fast oral orders, while other situations will allow for a more deliberate approach. Experienced commanders usually develop a "tool-box" of order techniques and train their

staffs on a variety of order options. The commander armed with a variety of techniques can then select the appropriate "tool" to fit the tactical situation. This capability increases flexibility.

There is no single "best" way to prepare operations orders. Several proven techniques are available (oral, overlay, matrix, written order with matrix annexes, or written order with written annexes).¹² Each of these techniques, based on the standard five-paragraph field order, offers a trained command-staff team a time-saving option to the written operations order.

The commander's guidance should designate the order technique that fits the time constraint of the tactical situation. Time is wasted if the staff does not know the desired format to prepare. To select a technique based on time, the commander must know the capability and quality of his staff and the time requirement for his staff to prepare various types of orders.

Lastly, the commander should prescribe what type of rehearsal technique to use. Again, several techniques are available (radio rehearsal, map rehearsal, sketch map rehearsal, terrain model rehearsal, key leader rehearsal, or full rehearsal).¹³ Each of the rehearsal techniques presented above take a prescribed amount of time and effort to produce and provide a varying degree of explicit instruction. Each technique



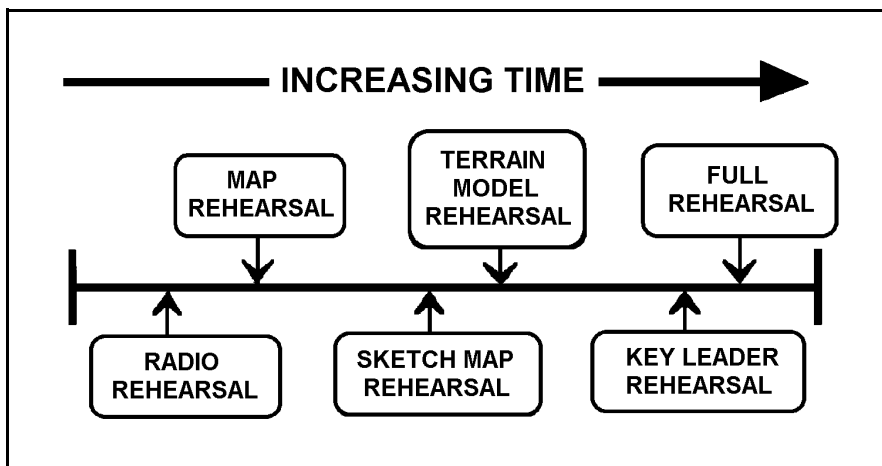
is appropriate for a specific amount of time and a specific situation.

Conclusion

In battle, success comes to the side that knows how to take decisions and to deliver strikes more rapidly. To win time is to win battle. Commander's guidance is the most significant tool that the commander has to increase the speed and the effectiveness of the planning process. Planning time saved is combat preparation time gained.

In the past, especially in staff school instruction, commander's guidance has been given too little attention. This situation has conditioned many staff officers to expect vague and incomplete guidance from commanders. Commanders are responsible for correcting this deficiency. Commander's guidance requires early decisions by the commander. The commander is uniquely suited to provide this guidance. He is, or should be, the most experienced officer in the unit. He is responsible for everything his unit does or fails to do and, in the final analysis, abrogates his decisions to his staff if he fails to issue specific guidance. When time is short, commanders must issue specific guidance.

Commanders who can issue clear and substantive guidance will improve their speed and effectiveness at battle command. Time and effort can be saved by using a standard and sequential method to issue and record commander's guidance. The format presented in this article is one way to avoid beginning the battle confused in purpose.



Notes

¹TRADOC Pamphlet 525-5, *Force XXI Operations, A Concept for the Evolution of Full-Dimensional Operations for the Strategic Army of the Early Twenty-First Century*, (Training and Doctrine Command, 1 August 1994), p. Glossary-1.

²Captain C.T. Lanham, *Infantry in Battle*, (Richmond: Garrett & Masse, 1939), p. 152.

³From Joint Publication 1-02, *The DOD Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, as found in *The Joint Staff Officer's Guide 1993*, (Norfolk: Armed Forces Staff College, U.S. Government Printing Office, 1993), p. I-27.

⁴Headquarters, Department of the Army, FM 7-20, *The Infantry Battalion*, (Washington, D.C., U.S. Government Printing Office, 6 April 1992), p. 2-6. Hereafter listed as FM 7-20. FM 101-5-1, AR 310-25 and Joint Publication 1-02 provide definitions for common military terms.

⁵FM 7-20, p. 2-6.

⁶FM 7-20, p. 2-6.

⁷General Foss, letter dated 14 September 1990. Subject: "Commander's Intent."

⁸Headquarters, Department of the Army, FM 100-5, *Operations*, (Washington, D.C., U.S. Government Printing Office, 5 May 1986), p. 4.

⁹FM 100-5, p. 106.

¹⁰FM 100-5, p. 34.

¹¹A battle update briefing (often called a BUB) is presented to the commander by his operations and intelligence staff prior to combat operations. This short briefing is designed to provide the commander with the latest intelligence information that impacts on the current

plan (base plan). As reconnaissance information is gathered, a better picture of the enemy situation emerges. In the offense, a BUB is normally held several hours before crossing the line of departure. In the defense, the BUB is held several hours before the expected time of enemy attack or before the "defend no later than" time. The intent of the BUB is to confirm the base plan or select a pre-designed branch plan that best fits the situation as it is known at

the time of the briefing. This "decision point" offers the commander a formal means to change plans if required. The decision to execute the base plan, a branch plan, or to change the plan is based on the confirmed information of the enemy situation derived from friendly reconnaissance.

¹²FM 7-20, p. 2-12.

¹³FM 7-20, p. 2-7.

Lieutenant Colonel John F. Antal is an active duty Armor officer, currently serving as commander, 2-72 Armor, 2d ID, Korea. He is a 1977 graduate of the U.S. Military Academy and 1990 graduate of CGSC, where he earned a Masters Degree in Military Science. In the past 16 years, he has served in tank and infantry units in the following positions: tank and scout platoon leader; BMO; tank company commander; asst. bde S3; battalion S3; G3 training officer; SGS for 1st Cav Division; brigade operations trainer at the NTC; XO, 1st Battalion Armor (OPFOR) where he acted as the chief of staff of the 32d Guards Motorized Rifle Regiment, NTC; XO, 1st Bde, 1st ID; and chief of plans and operations for the Office of Military Cooperation at the U.S. Embassy in Kuwait. He is the author of *Armor Attacks, the Tank Platoon*, and has authored three chapters in *The Maneuver Warfare Anthology*, which was to be published by Presidio Press in 1993. His latest book, *Infantry Combat*, will be published in early 1995. He also writes extensively for military and historical periodicals. Since 1985, he has published over 22 articles in professional journals, including *ARMY*, *Military Review*, *ARMOR*, *Infantry*, *Engineer*, *Army Trainer*, and *Military History Magazine*. In addition to writing, he has been a frequent speaker on the Arts and Entertainment Network's *Brute Force* television program, a documentary concerning weapons and men in war.

Operation DESERT HAMMER IV (continued from Page 17)

level is reached. This could lead to precision logistics, where only the supplies are delivered to the unit, instead of the standard Logistics Package (LOGPAC).

It was also suggested that digital technology could help the support platoon maintain a real-time asset inventory. This inventory could be structured to display what supplies are stored on each vehicle in the trains.

Other suggestions included software that would aid the executive officer in his doctrinal duties as a fighter and a combat service support operator. This software should assist him in these duties and make the chores easier to handle.

Conclusions

The responses indicate that current digital systems could all be improved. A number of new ways to use these

systems were discovered during this experiment, and still other uses remain undiscovered. A few of the systems were relatively mature, and the proposed changes to these systems were few. Other systems were immature and many proposed changes were suggested.

The most important changes would be the development of a seamless digital communication network across all the BOS.

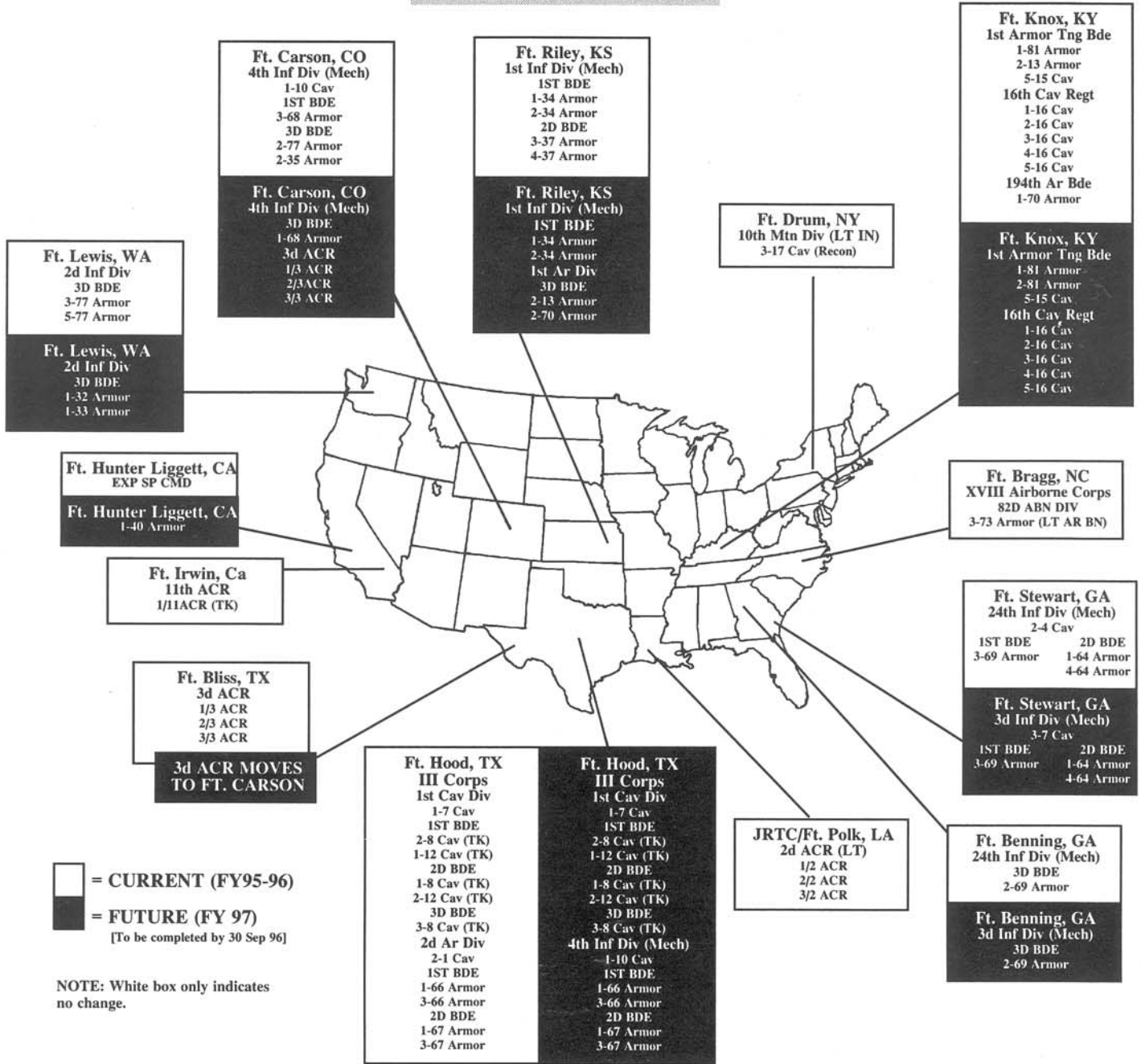
The development of a user-friendly interface for this network is imperative. This interface must be easy to use in a combat environment under all conditions. This is absolutely critical as the soldiers must use these systems to derive any benefit from them. The ability to rapidly and accurately log onto the network is imperative. The network requires a reliable, energy-efficient power source. The network must contain routing or addressing flexibility to handle

the many task organizations the Army uses in a combined arms force. The architecture of the network should provide a built-in redundancy and degrade gracefully.

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Active Armor/Cavalry Force Locations

CONUS Units



OCONUS Units

