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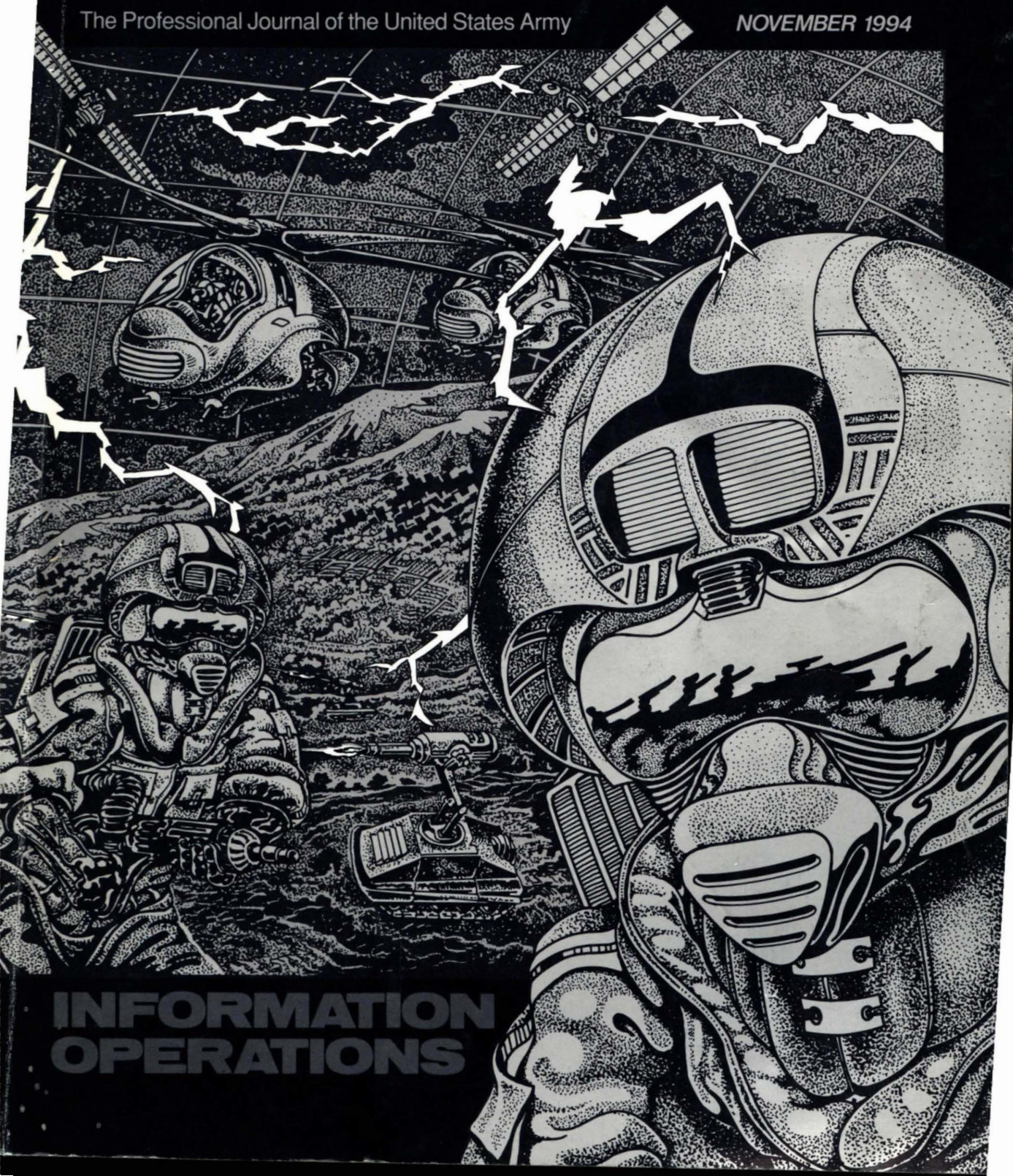


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INFORMATION OPERATIONS

Battle Command: A Force XXI Imperative

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Our military service is based on values—those standards that American military experience has proved to be the bedrock of combat success. . . . First and always is integrity. . . . Competence is at the center of our relationship with the American people and cements the mutual cohesion between leader and follower. Our fellow citizens expect that we are competent in every aspect of warfare; those we lead into battle deserve no less. . . . Since warfare began, physical courage has defined warriors. . . . Moral courage is also essential in military operations.

— Joint Publication (Pub) 1,
Joint Warfare of the US Armed Forces

IN CONTRAST to the values outlined in Joint Pub 1, Lieutenant General Bernard Trainor, US Marine Corps, Retired, paints a grim picture of the Army's leader development and command selection:

"The U.S. Army tries to predict greatness. Every crop of newly commissioned officers is carefully watched during their fledgling years. Those who show promise are given assignments of greater responsibility. In time, those with the greatest potential enter the fast track of prestigious but demanding assignments. Institutional Army then stands back and watches the 'golden boys' compete with one another on the racetrack to success. Along the way, the competitors usually acquire unofficial sponsors to help them—normally senior generals whom the officers have served well. An officer's 'rabbi' can hustle a bright career along quite well.

"The route to success is clearly marked through command and staff assignments at

every level, war college, and assignments outside the Army fold—to see if outsiders think an officer is as good as the Army thinks. It is a cut-throat competition for accomplishment, reputation and visibility. During their careers, some of the contenders fall by the wayside, victims of mistakes or just bad luck. Most make colonel. A few of each graduating class make star rank; fewer still make it to four-star general; and an infinitesimal number get to the top jobs in the Army or to command a unified command."

The general's description casts special doubts on the selection, development and fitness of those given the grave responsibility of commanding soldiers in battle. Emphasis on early prediction, politics, cutthroat competition and selfish rather than selfless service runs counter to the ideal meritocracy where the commander is selected and promoted based on achievement, competence and demonstrated potential. Battle command, a combat function introduced in US Army Field Manual (FM) 100-5, *Operations*, may help us understand what the competencies, achievements and potentials should be for the commander entrusted with the most important of all assignments: command of soldiers in battle.

The commander is not grown overnight nor does rank necessarily correlate with fitness to command. Understanding and putting battle command skills to practical use is a long road, but it does follow the professional officer career development path. The officer must strive at each level of his career to achieve the highest level of proficiency he is capable of achieving. One way to measure achievement is through job

To accomplish the ultimate goal of command at battalion and higher, the future commander must learn skills, develop competencies and ingrain his craft into everything he does. There are no breaks. Self-development and study are key. . . . Should he not spend at least as much time training and developing [his mind] as he does his body?

performance and evaluation of the type job that provides specific feedback directed at skill improvement and not the person. To accomplish the ultimate goal of command at battalion and higher, the future commander must learn skills, develop competencies and ingrain his craft into everything he does. There are no breaks. Self-development and study are key. Granted, this requires spending personal energy and resources. One of the most powerful assets the commander brings to the fight is his mind. Should he not spend at least as much time training and developing it as he does his body?

The purpose of this article is to explore the concept of battle command with the aim of stimulating further thought and discussion. The study of the art of command is as ancient as warfare itself; however, battle command, as a new concept in our doctrine, is not well developed. The challenge is to synthesize what is known and can be learned about the art of command in battle to drive changes in doctrine, training, leader development, organizations and technology as the Force XXI Army enters the information age.

What is Battle Command?

FM 100-5 describes battle command as "The art of battle decisionmaking, leading and motivating soldiers and their organizations into action to accomplish the mission at the least cost to soldiers." Author Thomas P. Coakley in *Command and Control for War and Peace*, stresses the importance of command and control (C²), but

highlights the different orientations various groups of people bring to the table. "Because C² has come to mean many different things to many intelligent, well-meaning people, discussions of this important topic can be very confusing and even aggravating. An engineer or contractor . . . thinks of C² in terms of technology . . . behavioral scientists who see C² as a matter of information processing may be dismayed when debates concern budget issues. . . . Military people and members of Congress . . . are likely to fix their attention on still other aspects of C², such as strategies or vulnerabilities. Yet C² comprises all of these things, as well as others."

Two Vital Components: Leading and Deciding

FM 100-5 introduced battle command as a fundamental tenet of Army operations. Categorized as a combat function, it does not package old notions about the C² battlefield operating system (BOS) under a new label, but distinguishes the essence of command from its implementing systems. Focus is clearly on what the commander must be able to do throughout the full cycle of force-projection operations and not on the system composed of people, technology, organization, procedure and subsystems that exist to support the commander during the fight. The shift in emphasis is from the older C² concept with its command post fixations, large tactical staffs, process-oriented control and high-budget procurement programs to an information age orientation where the commander visualizes his battlespace and is supported by lean, agile battle command support teams equipped with digitized technology. A *system* is a collection of things working together to produce something greater.¹ The something greater produced by C² BOS is battle command—at its heart is the commander.

The shift in focus from systems and things to the commander and his effectiveness is evolutionary, not revolutionary. It is required to adjust to the significant global changes we are all familiar with. The effect of these changes is the formation of a very complex construct within



Throughout the depth and altitude of the battlespace (Continental United States to forward-deployed units), the commander must simultaneously execute, mount and recover from operations ranging from war to humanitarian assistance in environments that are increasingly hostile, uncertain, confusing and ambiguous. He must synchronize all of his operating systems.

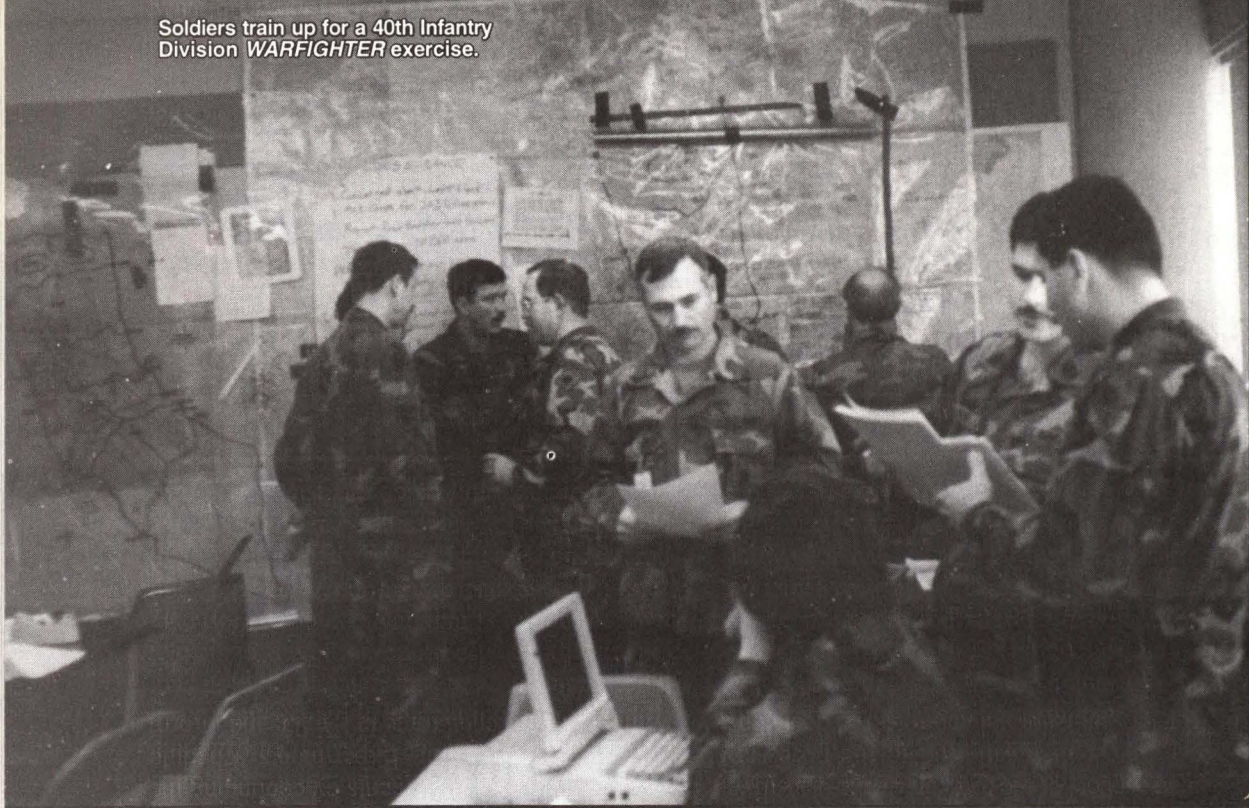
which command takes place. Throughout the depth and altitude of the battlespace (Continental United States to forward-deployed units), the commander must simultaneously execute, mount and recover from operations ranging from war to humanitarian assistance in environments that are increasingly hostile, uncertain, confusing and ambiguous. He must synchronize all of his operating systems. He must do this all very quickly while under instant public scrutiny.

Key to understanding this new battle focus and the demands these changes place on the commander is to understand the role of knowledge and the value of information. The quantum competitive advantage into the next century will derive from the quantity, quality and usability of information. This includes not only timely, accurate and relevant information delivered to the commander during force-projection opera-

tions, but also the routine flow of information delivered to the commander and aspiring commander to systematically increase their stock of knowledge on a regular basis.

Despite the changes, war remains primarily a human endeavor and commands an intensely personal experience. The human dimension—character, will, discipline, motivation and fear—must be reckoned with. Soldier skills, courage, self-sacrifice, leadership and values-based cohesion remain essential virtues as they give the Army its ultimate value. The commander's job has always been to make order of chaos; he must now do it quicker, while on the move, with practiced insight and while under the instant scrutiny of the nation.

Continuous, incremental improvements in the commander's leadership and decision-making abilities may prove to be the most cost-effective



Thorough knowledge of Army doctrine across each BOS and the combat function processes, such as intelligence preparation of the battlefield and wargaming, a strong ethical sense and understanding of enemy and friendly capabilities, form the basis of battle judgment.

way to increase our control of battle tempo, the environment and battlespace. These improvements will result from an increased understanding of what the commander needs to be, know and do. This understanding is required to synchronize developments between the art and means of command; that is, to maintain a balance between technological innovation and the human dimension. In any case, we must be prepared to win decisively with minimum casualties at the least cost to soldiers and the nation.

If the commander is not prepared, how can we expect anyone else to be?² How can we know if the commander is prepared if we do not know what he needs or what he is supposed to do? How can we develop and select the commander if we cannot articulate the skills and competencies required of him? How will we field systems to support him if we do not know what the requirements are?

FM 100-5 begins to answer these questions. Actions such as lead, decide, visualize, assimilate information, team build, communicate, anticipate, motivate, direct, adjust and demonstrate physical and moral presence describe what the Army expects of its commander in battle. The doctrine raises the question of command as art or science and emphasizes the requirement for the commander who has an intuition and feel that is gained from years of practice and study.

Battle command is explained as the expression of the will of the commander. It includes the commander's ability to visualize the current and future state, to formulate and articulate concepts of operations that link the two, and then through force of will and leadership, to move his command from one to the other at the least cost to soldiers and the nation. In its simplest form, the art of battle command is to the commander's

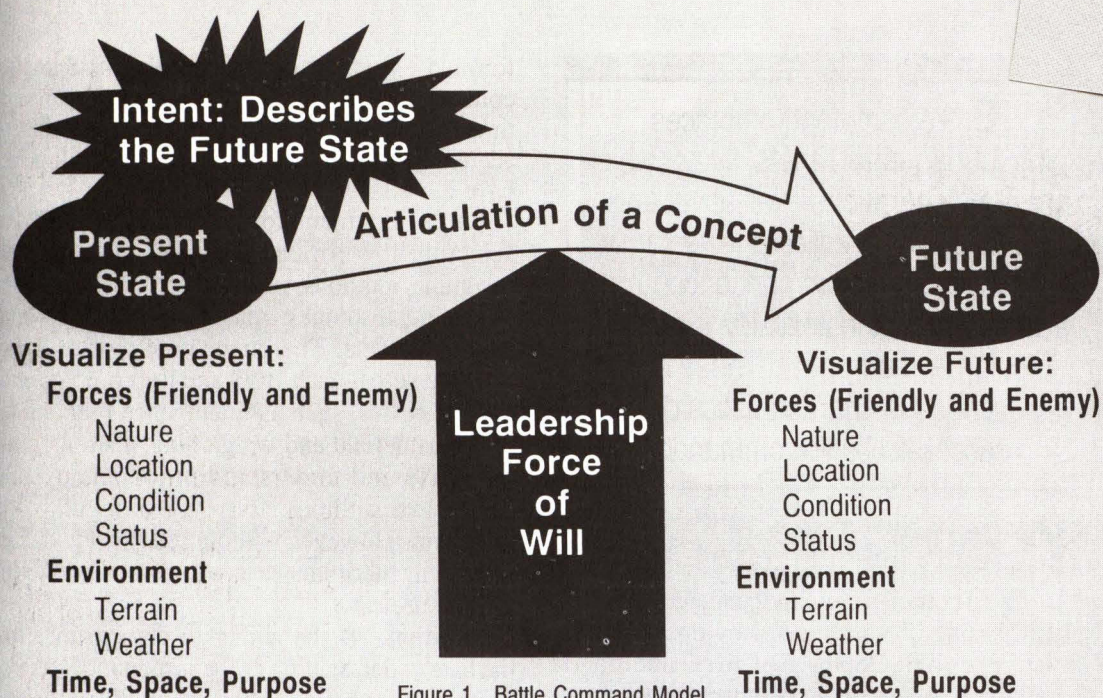


Figure 1. Battle Command Model

battle-focused leadership and battlefield judgment that begins to shape his unit upon assumption of command as illustrated in Figure 1. Its application allows the commander to set the conditions for battle, to see and understand the battlespace dynamically in all four dimensions (three of space and one of time) and to invoke the force of will to move the force to victory.

These are concepts writ large. However, the variables involved are too numerous and their interrelationships too complex to reduce them to formulae, checklists or cookie cutter approaches. There are discernible patterns whose underlying fractals can be identified, articulated and understood. These include the tenets, dynamics and fundamentals of battle command. These aspects of battle command should be considered as the doctrine and practice evolve.

Evolving Battle Command Doctrine Proposals

General George C. Marshall remarked that "The leader who would become a competent tactician must first close his mind to the alluring formulae that well-meaning people offer in the name of victory. To master his difficult art he

Battle command is . . .

the commander's ability to visualize the current and future state, to formulate and articulate concepts of operations that link the two, and then through force of will and leadership, to move his command from one to the other at the least cost to soldiers and the nation.

must learn to cut to the heart of the situation, recognize its decisive elements and base his course of action on these. The ability to do this is not god-given, nor can it be acquired overnight; it is a process of years. He must realize that training in solving problems of all types, long practice in making clear, unequivocal decisions, the habit of concentrating on the question at hand, and an elasticity of mind, are indispensable requisites for the successful practice of the art of war." His insights about leadership and the art of command are as applicable today as they were 50 years ago.

Battle command embraces nine fundamental tenets, five of which are army operations—initiative, agility, depth, synchronization and versatility, as they apply to commander behavior and actions—and flexibility, judgment, intuition and empathy. These tenets describe the characteristics of the successful battle commander.

Battle Command Tenets

A tenet is a basic truth held by an organization. Battle command embraces nine fundamental tenets, five of which are army operations—initiative, agility, depth, synchronization and versatility, as they apply to commander behavior and actions—and flexibility, judgment, intuition and empathy. These tenets describe the characteristics of the successful battle commander. The inability of a commander to operate within these principles makes success difficult and costly to achieve.

Flexibility. Allows the commander to adapt his decision-making process and leadership style to different situations. It permits the commander to exploit opportunity within higher commanders' intent based on the situation. It is the sense that tells the commander when to go by the book and when the rules no longer apply. Flexibility is encouraged by a commander who makes his intention clear but does not impose detailed tasks on his subordinates. It is also encouraged by allowing subordinates to change their orders within the scope of higher commanders' intent based on the situation. Flexibility fosters independent initiative and ingenuity allowing the commander to achieve a constructive balance between the complex and often paradoxical forces with which he is confronted.

Judgment. Is the process of forming an accurate opinion or estimate based on available information. Battle judgment is the ability to analyze a situation and make the right decision.³ No

formula exists for developing this skill in the commander. It can only be acquired through time, study and experience. Some commanders acquire it early in their careers. Some will never have it.

Battle judgment forms the foundation for selecting the critical time and place to act, assigning missions, prioritizing, assessing risk, allocating resources, making adjustments and leading soldiers. Thorough knowledge of Army doctrine across each BOS and the combat function processes, such as intelligence preparation of the battlefield and wargaming, a strong ethical sense and understanding of enemy and friendly capabilities, form the basis of battle judgment. However, without self-trust and confidence in subordinates to act, good battle judgment is useless.

Intuition. Is the ability to demonstrate immediate understanding of the important aspect of a situation without evident rational thought and inference.⁴ It is born from the range of experience and reflections upon similar occurrences by the commander in the course of his development as a leader. It is the insight that rapidly dismisses the impractical solution and moves to the feasible course of action. Even in the best of circumstances, the commander will not have perfect knowledge of the situation. The battle commander must often bridge the gap between what he knows and what he needs to know at the time a decision is required with an intuitive understanding and feel for what needs to be done.

Empathy. Is understanding, being aware of, being sensitive to and experiencing the feelings, thoughts and experiences of soldiers and their families. It is key to leading and motivating soldiers and understanding what they are capable of doing at a given time. Setting the conditions for success in battle requires a balanced, comprehensive approach to meeting soldiers' intellectual, physical, social and spiritual needs during peace.⁵ Command, particularly in battle, means being with soldiers, sharing their hardships, feeling their pride—and often their pain—yet continuing to think and act to accomplish the mission with least cost to them.

Tactical satellites enhance the 2d Infantry Division commander's ability to control battlespace and communicate his intent to subordinate maneuver elements.

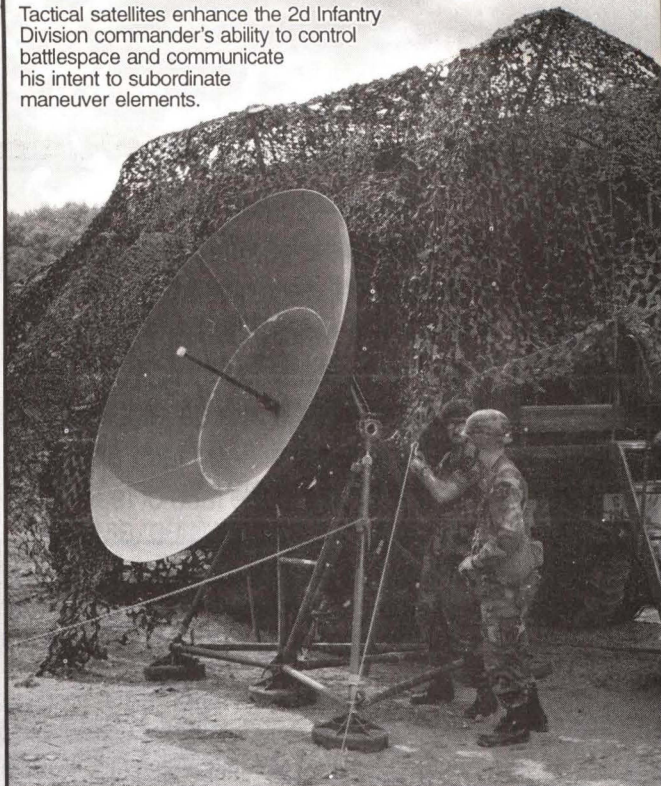
Battle Command Dynamics

Six primary elements—leadership, decision making, information assimilation, visualization, conceptualization and communication—are all balanced by the commander. As with the tenets of battle command, the commander must balance these complex, dynamic forces, sometimes in paradoxical juxtaposition. The classic example of this balancing act is achieving balance between mission accomplishment (decision making) and men (leadership). As Arleigh Burke remarked in *Battle Report*, "Without the stress and the strain and the limit on time, nobody can actually duplicate the strain that a commander is under in making a decision."

Leadership. Is described as the most essential dynamic of combat power in FM 100-5. It allows the commander to execute maneuver, build firepower and protect his force. Battle-focused leadership holds the commander's actions to a litmus test of preparing his soldiers and unit to be victorious in the next battle and is based on the values of integrity, courage, candor, competence and commitment.

Battle-focused leadership derives from the commander's technical competence, discipline and motivation.⁶ *Technical competence* is the product of knowledge derived through training, a positive attitude and development of habits that result in automatic, appropriate action in the face of fear. The *discipline* that underpins battle-focused leadership is not merely unhesitating obedience to orders. More important is self-control that leads to doing the right thing in the absence of clear direction. *Motivation* drives the commander to apply technical competence and to remain disciplined. It is the belief in his soldiers and in the nation that derives from self-esteem and self-respect.

Decision making. Is knowing if a decision is required, then when and how to make it. The best intelligence and friendly force information are worthless unless the commander knows when to act and is willing to act. No matter how well automated, no matter what level of technological sophistication of the processes and procedures built into command and control hard-



[Communication] is the bridge that links information to decisions and decision to action. The commander must be able to receive and transmit information from a variety of sources over a variety of media. A climate conducive to open and honest communication eliminates some of the noise created by human reactions to the stress of battle, and it fosters implicit communications . . . [which] are faster and more effective than detailed explicit communications.

ware and software, systems do not make decisions; commanders do.

The hardest decisions that the commander has to make are not technical or tactical. They are *people* decisions, such as deciding who will not be able to cut it and what to do about it; deciding where capable subordinates can best serve; and deciding subordinates' relative strengths and weaknesses. Intellectual honesty is important.

Battle-focused leadership derives from the commander's technical competence, discipline and motivation. Technical competence is the product of knowledge derived through training, a positive attitude and development of habits that result in automatic, appropriate action in the face of fear.

The hardest decision a commander may ever have to make is to relieve a subordinate. Ultimately, the most difficult decisions concern people.

Information assimilation. Is the ability to take available information into the mind and thoroughly comprehend that which is important. Assimilation is the first step toward analyzing information fragments and synthesizing them to form a mental vision of the situation. It is facilitated by information management and allows the commander to separate that which is critical to mission accomplishment from that which is merely urgent or time sensitive. There is a confounding effect that occurs when the commander is overloaded with a large number of accurate information fragments, some of which may be relevant and some which may not. Staffs exist to organize and manage information for the commander to minimize this confounding effect. The commander, however, must determine the priority of, and reaction to, the information he receives. He does this personally or through explicit delegation.

The commander must ensure that the organization is tailored to provide the depth of information and support to the decision-making process he requires, especially during combat operations. Battle command systems must be flexible, robust and tailored to provide the critical information that allows him to lead and decide.

Over time, in battle, especially fast-tempo battle, the number of people who are helpful to

the commander in solving problems diminishes rapidly because not all can keep up with rapidly changing information.⁷ The commander is able to position himself to gain access to the most critical and most current information while the majority of his staff remains in the command post. During fast-tempo battle where the commander is moving about the battlefield, his information may be more current than his staff's. The commander may then be faced with the dilemma of either operating without his staff or slowing down to let them catch up. Running estimates require running information and dynamic thinking.

Visualization. Is the act of forming a mental picture of the current and future state based on higher commanders' intent, available information and an intuitive feel of the battlefield. Seeing enemy and friendly forces and terrain in terms of time, space and purpose forms the basis of the commander's estimate. While a portion of the desired future state may be dictated by a higher level commanders' intent, the battle commander must possess the ability to envision his organization's future state within its assigned battlespace.

Experience in sensing the battle, knowing the enemy and knowing how long it takes to get things done allows the commander to picture the battle in his mind. Often this picture is formed from the radio reports he receives. In these cases, the commander "sees" with his ears. Memorization of the terrain and associated graphic control measures and familiarity with his unit's disposition permits the commander to "see" information he gets over the radio as it applies to the situation. The commander must be able to picture the situation for himself to be able to communicate his orders to subordinates. He must translate, then transmit his vision into terms soldiers understand and can execute. He must not only form the picture of the current and end states, together with the bridge of action that will link the two in his own mind; he must also be able to form this picture in his soldiers' minds.

Conceptualization. Is the mental wargaming done by the commander to arrive at the best

course of action to link the current state to the desired end state. It is a dynamic process based on running estimates, visualization of the changing battlespace and the commander's experience that allows him to establish connectivity between current operations and the future plan. It is not based solely on deliberate, doctrinally correct processes, but also on cognitive processes that we are just beginning to understand. It begins with the commander's intent and results in adjustments to the plan as the commander anticipates changes and innovatively reacts to them. Conceptualization includes the problem analysis done by the commander when things go wrong. That analysis begins with him at the center and moves outward into the organization. Conceptualization also allows the commander to optimize the risks inherent in a given operation as opposed to the deliberate decision-making process that tends to minimize risk taking by the unit.

Communication. This is the bridge that links information to decisions and decision to action. The commander must be able to receive and transmit information from a variety of sources over a variety of media. A climate conducive to open and honest communication eliminates some of the noise created by human reactions to the stress of battle, and it fosters implicit communications.

Implicit communications—the ability to communicate through mutual understanding, using a minimum of key, well-understood phrases or even anticipating each other's thoughts—are faster and more effective than detailed explicit communications. The ability to communicate implicitly is developed through familiarity and trust, which are based on shared values and experiences.

Explicit communications—the ability to communicate through precise, crystalline written or oral instructions—are equally important. They are required to ensure important information is understood. The ability to communicate explicitly results from a clear vision of what must be accomplished, a mastery of the use of language, consistent use of doctrinally correct

In battle, the commander must . . . be able to visualize the current state and the future state of his unit within higher commanders' expectations, and he must be able to accurately assess his own and his unit's capabilities. In peace, however, the commander must not only strike a balance in the dynamic tension created by these requirements; he must also balance the requirements for battle-focused training with stewardship of available resources.

terms and use of the most effective media available.

The quality, quantity and direction of communication flow within a unit are indicators of unit performance. The commander sets the pattern.

Battle Command Fundamentals

Noted battlefield general and strategist Sun Tzu stated that, "If you know the enemy and know yourself, you need not fear the result of a hundred battles. If you know yourself, but not the enemy, for every victory gained you will also suffer a defeat. If you know neither the enemy or yourself, you will succumb in every battle." Joint Pub 1 purports that Sun Tzu's advice is still cogent after 2,500 years. "Knowledge of self is required for effective joint operations. The first priority is to have a full and frank appreciation for the capabilities and limitations of all friendly forces. . . . Knowledge of the enemy is a preeminent but difficult responsibility. Traditionally, emphasis has been on understanding enemy capabilities; but knowledge of enemy intentions can be equally or even more important, to the extent that it sheds light on enemy plans and allows us to take timely and effective action to blunt them. . . . Knowing oneself and the enemy allows employment of friendly strength against the enemy's weaknesses and avoids exposing friendly

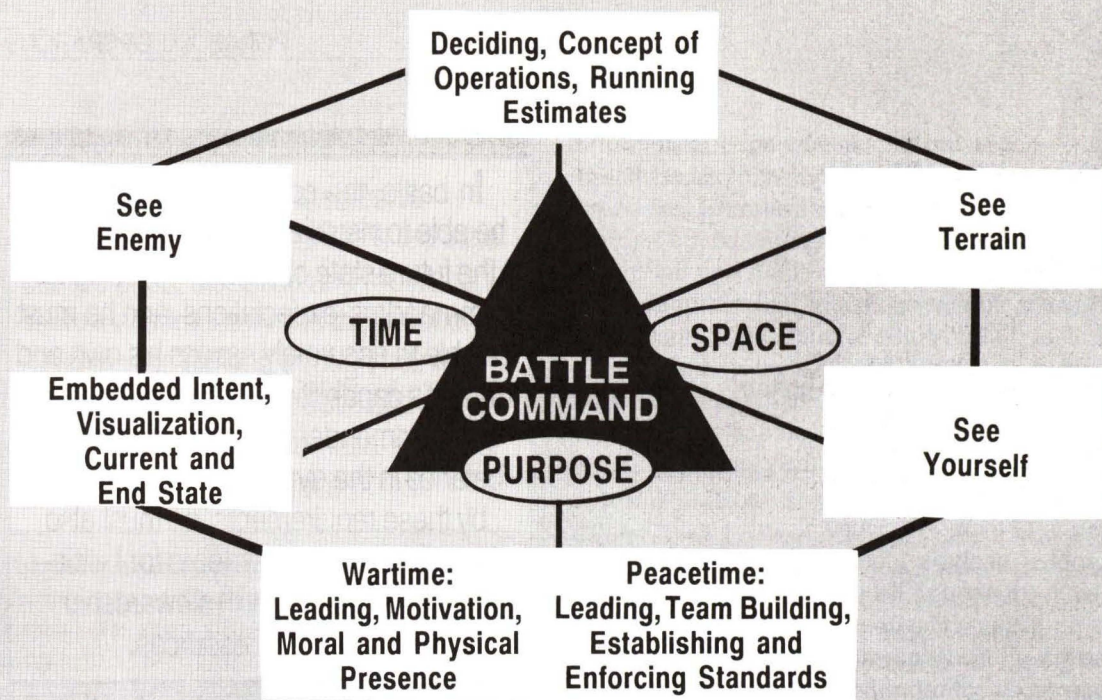


Figure 2. Battle Command Fundamentals

weaknesses to the enemy strengths.”

Two underlying fundamental patterns of forces and interrelationships are discernible with regard to application of the art of battle command. One has to do with command in battle and the other with command during peace.

In battle, the commander must balance six forces in terms of time, space and purpose. He must be able to see the terrain, see the enemy and see himself. As depicted in Figure 2, he must be able to lead, motivate and demonstrate moral and physical presence. He must be able to decide, maintain running estimates of the situation and formulate concepts of operations. He must also be able to visualize the current and desired end states within higher commanders’ intent.

In garrison, during peace, the commander must still be able to decide, maintain running estimates of the situation and formulate concepts to accomplish actions that will set the conditions for future victories. As in battle, he must be able to visualize the current state and the future state of his unit within higher commanders’ expectations, and he must be able to accurately assess his own and his unit’s capabilities. In peace, however, the commander must not only strike a balance in the dynamic tension created by these requirements; he must also balance the

requirements for battle-focused training with stewardship of available resources as well.

Teaching, Coaching and Mentoring Battle Command

The following approach to teaching, coaching and mentoring battle command was pioneered by Colonel Russel L. Honoré, senior mechanized trainer, and the *Scorpion* team at the National Training Center. It has been successfully used by senior observer controllers at the Joint Readiness Training Center, and efforts are under way to integrate this approach into leader development at the US Military Academy, the Reserve Officers’ Training Corps and other combat training centers.

It begins by developing a level of understanding of the concept of battle command as articulated in FM 100-5. These fundamentals can help establish the conditions for trainers of current or future commanders to coach, teach or mentor the art of battle command using the Socratic method. The Socratic method applied to coaching battle command is personable, private and one-on-one.

After an event that has allowed the mentor to observe the commander’s performance, the men-

tor, using one of the fundamentals of battle command asks which fundamental the commander thinks is most important to the training event just completed. The fundamental may be important because it was done particularly well or because it is an area the commander identifies as a weakness. If there is a particular point the mentor wants to make, he can also ask the observed commander about a specific fundamental.

The mentor quickly gets to the truth about what happened in the training event with regard to the selected fundamental through the use of analysis slides, graphics, notes or other aids that may have been prepared for the after-action review. The trainer then asks a series of leading questions based on cause and effect to bring the commander to some conclusions about what he did, what the results were and what he might do differently in the future.

As in any learning situation, for this approach to work, the teacher must know more about the subject than the student. This approach can be used with constructive or live simulations to provide focused feedback and self-discovery directed at improving battle command competencies.

This article has attempted to move the mark in the discussion and understanding of battle command. It has reviewed existing battle command doctrine and has proposed the addition of battle command tenets, dynamics and fundamentals. An approach for teaching, coaching and mentoring battle command was suggested. While this article is not a definitive treatment of the art of battle command, it will hopefully stimulate the thought and actions required to crystallize

Assimilation is the first step toward analyzing information fragments and synthesizing them to form a mental vision of the situation. It is facilitated by information management and allows the commander to separate that which is critical to mission accomplishment from that which is merely urgent or time sensitive.

the Army's concept of battle command as it applies to changes in doctrine, training, leader development, materiel and soldiers. Such a concept is required to provide the continuity that will allow us to leverage change in our world as the Army moves into the next century. It is also required to pull the right information age technologies through our Enhanced Concept Based Requirements System for use on the Force XXI digitized battlefield. Most important, a clear concept of the art of battle command will help us prepare, support and select Force XXI commanders. **MR**

NOTES

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