

Mission Command: The Need for Disciplined Initiative

A Monograph

by

MAJ Ryan P. Alexander
US Army



School of Advanced Military Studies
US Army Command and General Staff College
Fort Leavenworth, KS

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Name of Candidate: MAJ Ryan P. Alexander

Monograph Title: Mission Command: The Need for Disciplined Initiative

Approved by:

_____, Monograph Director
Eric R. Price, ABD

_____, Seminar Leader
Gregory J. Hirschey, COL

_____, Director, School of Advanced Military Studies
Brian A. Payne, COL

Accepted this 21st day of May 2020 by:

_____, Acting Director, Office of Degree Programs
Prisco R. Hernandez, PhD

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Abstract

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United States' adversaries seek to achieve their strategic aims through the use of layered standoff by leveraging all instruments of national power to separate the United States from its partners. To counter this threat, TRADOC PAM 525-3-1, *The US Army in Multi-Domain Operations (MDO) 2028*, states, "the Army must evolve the force around calibrated force posture, multi-domain formations, and convergence. Underpinning these tenets are mission command." Mission command, however, is identified as an Army Warfighting Challenge and, therefore, must be addressed. Army leaders do not have a shared understanding on the mission command concept and often misconstrue it with "good leadership." To address this confusion, TRADOC recently refined ADP 6-0 Mission Command doctrine. Mission command is not just "good leadership" and to succeed in *MDO 2028*, the Army needs to refocus leader development, education, and training. The Army requires agile, adaptive, independent thinking leaders that apply all seven principles of mission command. The time is now to exercise disciplined initiative and prioritize the education, training, assessment, and validation of its leaders on the newly revised mission command doctrine at every echelon if they are to win. Winning requires "good leaders" who effectively use mission command in their formations.

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Abbreviations

ABN	Airborne
ADP	Army Doctrine Publication
ADRP	Army Doctrine Reference Publication
AR	Armored Regiment
AWFC	Army Warfighting Challenges
BCT	Brigade Combat Team
C2	Command and Control
COIN	Counterinsurgency
DOTMLPF-P	Doctrine, Organization, Training, Materiel, Leader development and Education, Personnel, Facilities, and Policy
FM	Field Manual
FSR	Field Service Regulation
JCIDS	Joint Capabilities Integration and Development System
JP	Joint Publication
LSCO	Large Scale Combat Operations
MET	Mission Essential Task
OBJ	Objective
ROE	Rules of Engagement
SRM	Sustainable Readiness Model
TF	Task Force
TRADOC	Training and Doctrine Command
US	United States

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Introduction

At the end of the day, our approach to mission command is just good leadership.

—General Stephen J. Townsend, *Reinvigorating the Army's Approach to Mission Command*

Background of the Study

On December 6, 2018, the US Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) published TRADOC Pamphlet 525-3-1, *The US Army in Multi-Domain Operations (MDO) 2028*. This document provides an azimuth for the Army to educate, train, and prepare the force to deter future conflict, but if necessary, fight and win.¹ Most importantly, the document states, “In a new era of great power competition, United States’ adversaries seek to achieve their strategic aims, short of conflict, by the use of layered standoff in the political, military, and economic realms to separate the United States from its partners.”² In response, *The US Army in MDO 2028* proposes three options to counter the challenges that layered standoff presents. To achieve this end, “the US Army must evolve the force and its operations around three core tenets: calibrated force posture, multi-domain formations, and convergence. Underpinning these tenets are mission command and disciplined initiative at all warfighting echelons.”³ “The evolution of this concept into doctrine and practice will inform the way the Army recruits, trains, educates, operates, and

¹ US Department of the Army, Army Training and Doctrine Command Pamphlet (TRADOC PAM) 525-3-1, *The US Army in Multi-Domain Operations 2028* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2018), iv.

² US Army, TRADOC PAM 525-3-1, iii.

³ US Army, TRADOC PAM 525-3-1, iii; GL-2; GL-7. According to TRADOC PAM 525-3-1, calibrated force posture is “the combination of position and the ability to maneuver across strategic distances. It includes, but is not limited to, basing and facilities, formations and equipment readiness, the distribution of capabilities across components, strategic transport availability, interoperability, access, and authorities,” multi-domain formations are “Army organizations possessing the combination of capacity, capability, and endurance necessary to operate across multiple domains in contested spaces against a near-peer adversary,” and convergence is “the rapid and continuous integration of capabilities in all domains, the electromagnetic spectrum, and information environment that optimizes effects to overmatch the enemy through cross-domain synergy and multiple forms of attack all enabled by mission command and disciplined initiative.”

drives constant improvement and change to ensure the Army can deter, fight, and win on any battlefield, against any adversary, now, and into the future.”⁴

Research Problem

As *The US Army in MDO 2028* clearly articulates, mission command and disciplined initiative are the binding links intended to bolster the three tenets of calibrated force posture, multi-domain formations, and convergence identified to solve the problem of layered standoff. On June 8, 2018, the US Army’s Futures and Concepts Center released the current list of Army Warfighting Challenges (AWFC).⁵ Number 19 on that list is Exercise Mission Command, “How to understand, visualize, describe, and direct operations consistent with the philosophy of mission command to seize the initiative over the enemy and accomplish the mission across the range of military operations.”⁶ Yet one wonders how the Army solves the problem of layered standoff by integrating mission command into the three central MDO tenets when mission command itself remains a gap yet to be resolved.

The Army is currently facing a serious problem regarding its mission command philosophy. In April 2019, General Stephen Townsend, former TRADOC Commanding General, stated in his article, “Reinvigorating the Army’s Approach to Mission Command,” that “The mission command philosophy is the US Army’s approach to command and control (C2). It empowers subordinate decision-making and decentralized execution, using mission orders to

⁴ US Army, TRADOC PAM 525-3-1, iv.

⁵ Army Capabilities Integration Center (Forward) and Training and Doctrine Command, “Army Warfighting Challenges,” US Army, May 12, 2010, accessed November 6, 2019, https://www.army.mil/article/38972/army_warfighting_challenges. AWFCs are a list of “current and mid-term military problems and gaps that help define capabilities needed for current and future force combat effectiveness.”

⁶ Army Futures and Concepts Center, “Army Warfighting Challenges,” last updated June 8, 2018, accessed November 6, 2019, <http://arcic-sem.azurewebsites.us/Initiatives/ArmyWarfightingChallenges>.

enable disciplined initiative in accomplishment of the commander's intent.”⁷ He acknowledges that many Army leaders find mission command to be both confusing and insincere.⁸ To mitigate confusion, Townsend sought to create a sense of urgency and to correct the Army's approach to mission command. He wants to utilize the inter-war period to rewrite doctrine, adapt the leader development program, and refine and modernize training.⁹ Townsend is correct in his identification of a problem and goes on to discuss his plan to correct the Army's approach; however, in his concluding paragraph, he states, “At the end of the day, our approach to mission command is just good leadership.”¹⁰ This statement undermines his argument and validates the Army's problem with mission command, further emphasizing the importance of correcting it now. Subsequent articles demonstrate that Townsend understands that mission command is more than just “good leadership;” however, they do not accurately reflect the confusion across the force.¹¹

The actual problem with mission command is that “good leadership” is not just mission command and mission command is not just “good leadership.” The two concepts are not synonymous. Assuming the newly revised Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 6-0, dated July

⁷ Stephen Townsend, Douglas Crissman, and Kelly McCoy, “Reinvigorating the Army's Approach to Mission Command: It's Okay to Run with Scissors (Part 1),” *Military Review* (May-June 2019): 4, <https://www.armyupress.army.mil/Journals/Military-Review/English-Edition-Archives/May-June-2019/Townsend-Mission-Command/>.

⁸ Townsend, Crissman, and McCoy, “Reinvigorating the Army's Approach” (Part 1): 4.

⁹ Townsend, Crissman, and McCoy, “Reinvigorating the Army's Approach” (Part 1): 4.

¹⁰ Townsend, Crissman, and McCoy, “Reinvigorating the Army's Approach” (Part 1): 8.

¹¹ Doug Orsi and Bobby Mundell, “Will New Doctrine Fix Mission Command?” October 9, 2019, accessed March 20, 2020, <https://warroom.armywarcollege.edu/articles/new-doctrine-mission-command/>; Townsend, Crissman, and McCoy, “Reinvigorating the Army's Approach (Part 1); Stephen Townsend, Gary Brito, Douglas Crissman, and Kelly McCoy, “Reinvigorating the Army's Approach to Mission Command: Leading by Mission Command (Part 2),” *Military Review* (May 2019), accessed February 25, 2020, <https://www.armyupress.army.mil/Journals/Military-Review/Online-Exclusive/2019-OLE/May/Reinvigorating-pt2/>; Stephen J. Townsend, Douglas C. Crissman, Jason C. Slider, and Keith Nightingale, “Reinvigorating the Army's Approach to Command and Control Training for Mission Command (Part 3),” *Military Review* (July 2019), accessed October 10, 2019, <https://www.armyupress.army.mil/Journals/Military-Review/Online-Exclusive/2019-OLE/July/Townsend-Reinvigorating/>. These sources all discuss the confusion surrounding mission command that runs rampant amongst leaders within the Army.

2019, is the doctrinal solution to mission command, the purpose of this monograph is to answer the question of why mission command is not just “good leadership,” and provide a recommendation to resolve the problem with mission command. By defining what mission command and leadership are, articulating that mission command is not just “good leadership,” and by demonstrating a need to refocus efforts on educating, training, assessing, and validating the force on mission command, the Army can reinvigorate its approach towards mission command and prevail moving forward.

Thesis

Mission command is not just “good leadership.” To succeed in *MDO 2028*, the US Army must focus leader development on education and training in the new doctrine, followed by assessment and validation programs designed to ensure mission command is internalized amongst leaders. By prioritizing the resolution of this warfighting challenge, the Army ensures every service member understands what mission command is and how to apply it as intended. As the force prepares for large scale combat operations (LSCO) in a multi-domain operating environment (MDOE), mission command and disciplined initiative will prove to be essential in achieving the core tenets of MDO to combat the layered standoff threat that United States’ adversaries seek to achieve.¹²

Leaders cannot always be present; therefore, through the application of mission command, commanders must convey their intent and expect subordinates to meet it with minimal guidance. Commanders and their staffs do not have the time nor luxury to tell subordinates “how”

¹² US Department of the Army, Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 3-0, *Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2019), GL-6. LSCO “are extensive joint combat operations in terms of scope and size of forces committed, in sustained combat operations involving multiple corps and divisions conducted as a campaign aimed at achieving operational and strategic objectives.” US Army, TRADOC PAM 525-3-1, GL-7. Multi-domain operations are “operations conducted across multiple domains and contested spaces to overcome an adversary’s (or enemy’s) strengths by presenting them with several operational and/or tactical dilemmas through the combined application of calibrated force posture; employment of multi-domain formations; and convergence of capabilities across domains, environments, and functions in time and spaces to achieve operational and tactical objectives.”

to do things; instead, they direct “what” must be done. It is up to subordinate commanders to figure out the method, or the “how” for accomplishing their higher headquarters’ or commander’s intent.¹³

The mission command philosophy is not new to the US Army; however, it has evolved drastically since its inception. Since 2003, Field Manual (FM) 6-0 has been rewritten five times, ADP 6-0 rewritten four times, and Army Doctrine Reference Publication (ADRP) 6-0 rewritten three times. Due to constant modification to the mission command philosophy and concept, confusion on its application and employment exists throughout the force. On July 31, 2019, TRADOC unveiled the newly revised ADP 6-0, *Mission Command: Command and Control of Army Forces*. ADP 6-0 defines mission command as “the army’s approach towards command and control, which enables subordinates to make rapid decisions and execute in decentralized complex environments.”¹⁴ Joint Publication (JP) 1-0 defines C2 as “the exercise of authority and direction by a properly designated commander over assigned and attached forces in the accomplishment of the mission.”¹⁵ Continuous change and modification is not always what is best for the organization and can often lead to confusion, or even worse, failure.¹⁶

Based on this constant change, it is understandable why the philosophy of mission command might confuse the force. The Army does not even have a shared understanding (one of the seven principles of mission command) on what mission command is. If the Army cannot create a shared understanding of what mission command is, how can leaders create shared

¹³ US Department of the Army, Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 6-0, *Mission Command: Command and Control of Army Forces* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2019), 1-6.

¹⁴ US Army, ADP 6-0, vii. This definition differs drastically from the Army’s first definition of mission command implemented in ADP 6-0, dated 2012 which states, “mission command is the conduct of military operations through decentralized execution based upon mission-type-orders. Successful mission command demands that subordinate leaders at all echelons exercise disciplined initiative and act aggressively and independently to accomplish the mission.”

¹⁵ US Department of Defense, Joint Staff, Joint Publication (JP) 1-0, *Doctrine for the Armed Forces of the United States* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2013), GL-5.

¹⁶ Thomas P. Galvin and Charles D. Allen, *Leading Change in Military Organizations: Primer for Senior Leaders* (Carlisle, PA: US Army War College, 2019), 7; 1-11.

understanding within their own organizations to execute within the mission command framework?

Significance/Purpose

After eighteen years of fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan, the United States appears to be moving into an interwar period. Traditionally during interwar periods, nations divest their equipment and personnel, rewrite doctrine, train and educate the force, hone the fundamentals, and prepare to win the expected next fight. Technology is always evolving, enemies come and go, and no two environments can ever be replicated. One constant that must remain the bedrock of US Army history, theory, doctrine, and tactical application, is the ability of Army leaders to enable the employment of mission command through disciplined initiative. Research must be conducted on how to better educate, train, and prepare the force to fight and win the next battle. Failure to fully grasp the concept and application of mission command can potentially place soldiers and leaders at a significant disadvantage against future adversaries who have been watching, observing, and in many cases, modernizing their capabilities over the past eighteen years.

Because Army leaders think mission command and leadership are synonymous, and since the Army does not currently prioritize the training and evaluation of soldiers and leaders on the application of mission command, nor have they done so in the past, the Army will never get its desired outcome of making mission command real in the ways doctrine intends.¹⁷ Therefore, the topic of mission command is vital, given the Army's initiatives towards readiness, training, and modernization during this inter-war period.

¹⁷ Donald E. Vandergriff, "How to Develop for Mission Command: The Missing Link," Project on Government Oversight, October 16, 2017, accessed September 20, 2019, <https://www.pogo.org/analysis/2017/10/how-to-develop-for-mission-command-missing-link/>.

Organization of the Study

This monograph is comprised of five sections. The first section provides the methodology for researching, analyzing, and synthesizing doctrine and for examining mission command's evolution to aid in developing recommendations and conclusions to the stated problem. The second section provides an expanded purpose and evolution of mission command that explicitly addresses past and present research and its evolution in doctrine from inception to present day. The next section delivers an in-depth analysis of mission command as it was applied in two historical cases, one of which depicts a positive example of both leadership and mission command in action while the other illustrates the actions of a highly regarded "good leader," who poorly executed mission command. The fourth section analyzes the case studies and identifies deductions that directly correlate to the research questions. The final section presents conclusions and recommendations drawn from the entirety of this study to highlight current gaps and provides a way ahead for the Army as it educates, trains, and prepares the force in the current inter-war period to ensure future readiness.

Methodology

This monograph addresses the question of why mission command is not just “good leadership?” By defining what mission command and leadership are, and by demonstrating a need for the Army to refocus its efforts on educating, training, assessing, and validating the force on mission command, the Army can reinvigorate its approach to mission command and prevail moving forward.

Through the lens of the newly revised leadership and mission command doctrine, this monograph uses a structured focus research question approach by using ADP 6-22, *Leadership and the Profession*, and ADP 6-0, *Mission Command: Command and Control of Army Forces*, to define what leadership and mission command are.¹⁸ The doctrine distinguishes their similarities and differences, reinforcing the need for both leadership and mission command.

Using doctrine, training, and leader development and education from the existing DOTMLPF-P framework, this monograph accepts the newly revised leadership and mission command doctrine and focuses on training and leader education.¹⁹ The seven principles of mission command and the six leadership attributes and competencies are used as assessment criteria to analyze and compare two historical case studies. Colonel David Perkins, Commander of 2nd Brigade Combat Team (2BCT), 3rd Infantry Division (3ID) and his 2003 Thunder Run in Baghdad represents a positive historical application of leadership and the mission command philosophy. This case contrasts sharply with the story of Colonel Michael Steele (Commander, 3rd Brigade Combat Team (3BCT)), 101st Airborne Division (101 ABN DIV), a highly thought

¹⁸ Alexander George and Andrew Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2020), 67.

¹⁹ AcqNotes, “JCIDS Process: DOTMLPF-P Analysis,” 2020, accessed February 21, 2020, <http://acqnotes.com/acqnote/acquisitions/dotmlpf-analysis>. “Doctrine, Organization, Training, Materiel, Leader Development and Education, Personnel, Facilities and Policy (DOTMLPF-P) analysis is the first step in the Functional Solutions Analysis (FSA). It determines/recommends if a non-material approach or a materiel approach is required to fill a capability gap identified in the Force Modernization process.”

of and well-respected leader, who failed to execute mission command in Iraq after disregarding his commander's intent during Operation Iron Triangle, resulting in mission failure. This study concludes with analysis and findings based on the author's research and recommendations.

Three focused research questions drive data collection for the examination of each case study. The results are presented in the section, "Findings and Analysis." The questions to compare each case study include:

- 1). Did the actor demonstrate good leadership? If yes or no, what attributes and/or competencies did he demonstrate/not demonstrate?
- 2). Did the actor execute the principles of mission command? If yes or no, which principles did he demonstrate/not demonstrate?
- 3). Did the actors' organization, personnel, systems, training, and education enable mission command and its success or failure?

The answers to these questions will be analyzed using a structured focus comparison to arrive at conclusions that highlight trends that underscore gaps with mission command to provide recommendations for the future.²⁰ To better conceptualize mission command, one must first understand where the concept came from and why it has become such a critical part of Army doctrine.

Before examining the actions of these two leaders, however, it is important to first understand what the Army means by mission command and how the Army came to settle on this meaning. In the next section, "Expanded Background/Evolution of Mission Command," a history of the evolution of mission command and a doctrinal review provide the reader important context on the concepts of leadership and mission command in Army doctrine. The context helps the reader understand what leadership and mission command are in Army parlance, and what differences there are between the two. Readers will also better understand how the US Army is

²⁰ George and Bennett, *Case Studies*, 67.

currently educating and training mission command. This contextual analysis aids the reader in appreciating how difficult it is for the Army to solve the problem of layered standoff through the integration of mission command into the three central MDO tenets when mission command itself is a gap that has yet to be resolved.

Finally, this exploration of leadership and mission command as enduring ideas within the Army demonstrates that if the Army does not create a shared understanding of what mission command is, leaders cannot subsequently create shared understanding within their own organizations to execute within the mission command framework.

Expanded Background/Evolution of Mission Command

The mission command philosophy has been a researched and debated topic amongst historians, theorists, and leaders, yet the Army has not actualized it the way doctrine intends. Work must be done to ensure mission command is better educated, trained, and practiced in the mission command philosophy. This ensures commanders and leaders are armed with the knowledge to enable subordinates to exercise disciplined initiative. Mission command is driven by leaders enabled by people, systems, training, and organizations. This section highlights the evolution of mission command philosophy and uses the DOTMLPF-P framework to demonstrate how each component plays a critical role in the process. Analyzing mission command through history, doctrine, training, and leader development and education provides an accurate assessment of its current understanding.

History

To conceptualize the Army's mission command philosophy, one must first understand where mission command is derived. Mission command evolved from the Prussian Army dating back to mid-nineteenth-century Europe.²¹ Suffering from a defeat by France, Prussian military leaders Generals Johann David von Scharnhorst, August Graf Neidhardt von Gneisenau, and Carl von Clausewitz were faced with organizational challenges.²² In 1806, the Prussian Army struggled to adapt after their defeat by the more decentralized French at Jena and Auerstadt. Learning from this loss, the Prussian Army had to develop another way to conduct operations on the battlefield. Upon observation, it was clear that the transactional leadership structure the Prussians utilized was outdated and ineffective. Due to the small size of their military, they

²¹ James D. Sharpe Jr. and Thomas E. Creviston, "Understanding mission command," US Army, July 10, 2013, accessed September 30, 2019, https://www.army.mil/article/106872/understanding_mission_command.

²² Ivan Yardley and Andrew Kakabadse, "Understanding Mission Command: A Model for Developing Competitive Advantage in a Business Context," *Strategic Change* 16, no. 1-2 (2007): 69-78.

needed to re-organize and embrace independent thinking leaders who could make decisions rapidly and decisively. Through modernization, innovation, and change, the doctrine of *Auftragstaktik* emerged.²³

Auftragstaktik is a command philosophy focused on commander's intent, where subordinate commanders determine how to execute that intent.²⁴ Fostering this initiative teaches officers and non-commissioned officers how to think, but not necessarily what to think. This approach builds trust and disciplined initiative and enables teamwork and complex problem solving, adaptability, and timely decision making. The Prussians preferred leaders that made good decisions quickly over those that waited to make a better decision later.²⁵

What made *Auftragstaktik* successful in Prussian military doctrine and culture was the prioritization of leader development, education, training, and the environment upon which it was conducted. *Auftragstaktik* was integrated into all aspects of education and training.²⁶ Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth-centuries, advances in armaments and technology solidified the need

²³ Eitan Shamir, "The Long and Winding Road: The US Army Managerial Approach to Command and the Adoption of Mission Command (*Auftragstaktik*)," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 33, no. 5 (2010): 645-72; Donald E. Vandergriff, "How the Germans Defined *Auftragstaktik*: What Mission Command is - AND - is Not," 2020, accessed October 1, 2019, <https://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/how-germans-defined-auftragstaktik-what-mission-command-and-not>. "*Auftragstaktik* (translated to "Mission type tactics") is a Prussian cultural/command philosophy that serves as a comprehensive approach to warfighting where emphasis is placed on the commander's intent (the framework for subordinate commanders to make their own decisions in accordance with the overall plan), where the outcome of the mission is more important than the specific means of achieving it."

²⁴ US Department of Defense, Joint Staff, Joint Publication (JP) 3-0, *Joint Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Directorate, 2017), II-7. Commander's intent is "a clear and concise expression of the purpose of the operation and the desired military end state that supports mission command, provides focus to the staff, and helps subordinate and supporting commanders act to achieve the commander's desired results without further orders, even when the operation does not unfold as planned."

²⁵ US Army, ADP 6-0, vii. "In situations where contact with the higher commander was lost, subordinates were trusted to take the most appropriate action, rather than waiting until contact could be reestablished with their higher headquarters, as long as his action supported the higher commander's intent."

²⁶ Vandergriff, "How the Germans Defined *Auftragstaktik*."

for decentralized leadership and the requirement that organizations practice what would become the tenets of “mission command.”²⁷

Although *Auftragstaktik* was a Prussian cultural philosophy that the US Army adopted, cultures are not a one size fits all. *Auftragstaktik* did not stress C2 doctrine and C2 systems. It did not emphasize technology as the US Army does.²⁸ Therefore, the Prussian *Auftragstaktik* does not equate to the United States philosophy of mission command, although they share similarities.

Some aspects of mission command have long been part of US Army culture, even predating the United States and *Auftragstaktik*. “Successful US Army commanders have employed elements of mission command since the eighteenth-century.”²⁹ The Army’s approach to mission command first emerged (although no training or doctrine existed at the time) in practice through General George Washington’s clear order and risk acceptance in crossing the Delaware River on Christmas day 1776. Washington ordered his field commanders to cross the river in four separate movements at the same time to attack Trenton, NJ, before dawn the following morning. His intent was to isolate Hessian and British forces inside Trenton and use the hours of limited visibility coupled with inclement weather to mask their movement to surprise their enemy.³⁰ Although the execution of Washington’s attack fell behind the designated timeline, clear mission orders, commander’s intent, risk acceptance, and disciplined initiative led to a victory in Trenton, giving the Continental Army the momentum needed to fight and win the Revolutionary War.

²⁷ Vandergriff, “How the Germans Defined Auftragstaktik,” US Army, ADP 6-0, vii. “*Auftragstaktik* demanded a bias for action within the commander’s intent, and it required leaders to adapt to the situation as it changed, even if their decisions violated previous guidance or directives. To operate effectively under this style of command requires a common approach to operations and subordinates who are competent in their profession and trained in independent decision making.”

²⁸ Vandergriff, “How the Germans Defined Auftragstaktik.”

²⁹ US Army, ADP 6-0, vii.

³⁰ David Hackett Fischer, *Washington’s Crossing* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 208-210.

Another example of modern-day mission command (although not codified into US Army doctrine at the time) applied appropriately in a historical context can be seen in Lieutenant General Ulysses S. Grant's guidance to Major General William T. Sherman as part of the 1864 Overland Campaign to destroy Confederate General Joseph E. Johnston's forces in Georgia. Grant tasked Sherman to move his army against Johnston, who was heavily entrenched in a defensive position in Dalton, Georgia. Grant's aim was to have Sherman prevent any of Johnston's forces from supporting General Robert E. Lee in northern Virginia.³¹ Specifically, Sherman was to "move against Johnston's army, to break it up, and to get into the interior of the enemy's country, inflicting all the damage he could against the confederates war resources."³² After Grant defined his intent, he exercised mission command, stating "I do not propose to lay down for you a plan of campaign, but simply to lay down the work it is desirable to have done and leave you free to execute it in your own way."³³

These two examples portray the use of concise mission-type orders that provide a clear commander's intent to subordinates, promoting and enabling them to exercise disciplined initiative. They should inform all levels of leadership to include the soldiers in formation to embody this approach.

Although the theory and nature of mission command is not new to US Army practice, components of the modern-day philosophy were first introduced into doctrine with Field Service Regulation (FSR) 1905. FSR 1905 states, "An order should not trespass on the province of the subordinate. It should contain everything, which is beyond the independent authority of the subordinate, but nothing more. . . . It should lay stress upon the object to be attained, and leave

³¹ William T. Sherman, *Memoirs of General William T. Sherman*, Vol. 2 (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1876), 25.

³² Sherman, *Memoirs of General William T. Sherman*, 26.

³³ Sherman, *Memoirs of General William T. Sherman*, 26-27.

open the means to be employed.”³⁴ The phrasing of this statement changed slightly over time as doctrine evolved based on the mission, enemy, environment, and evolution of technology.

On the evening of July 9, 1943, during World War II, 3,400 US paratroopers from the 82nd ABN Division were to conduct two airborne assaults ahead of 7th Army’s amphibious attack on Sicily, Italy.³⁵ However, high winds misplaced the paratroopers miles from their designated drop zones. Taking heavy casualties, these paratroopers exercised disciplined initiative in pursuit of their commander’s intent and original objectives. Rather than waiting for further guidance, they immediately attacked their adversaries, targeting communications lines and infrastructure. This led to the destruction of sixteen German pillboxes, which controlled key roads and intersections.³⁶ These actions caused profound effects to the enemy formations. With little resistance, the Germans surrendered to American forces that were a mere fraction of their size. Due to competence, disciplined initiative, shared understanding, and mutual trust in pursuit of their commander’s intent, the operation proved to be a success. This initiative enabled General George Patton to take Messina, the last major city on Sicily.³⁷

The actions of the 82nd ABN is one of many examples where leaders at the tactical level recognized operational and potentially even strategic opportunities that presented themselves on the battlefield. They did not wait for permission, but rather, seized the initiative. Because of trust, shared understanding, commander’s intent, and disciplined initiative, leaders were empowered to accomplish the task and adapt to the situation on the ground, as opposed to staying wed to the prescribed plan.

³⁴ US Department of the Army, Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 1-01, *Doctrine Primer* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2019), 3-3.

³⁵ Andrew J. Birtle, “The U.S. Army Campaigns of World War II: Sicily,” (Washington, DC: US Army Center of Military History, 2003), 9, accessed January 12, 2020, <https://history.army.mil/brochures/72-16/72-16.htm>.

³⁶ US Army, ADP 6-0, 1-13.

³⁷ US Army, ADP 6-0, 1-13.

Prior to 2003, mission command did not exist in Army doctrine; however, the tenets of C2 in earlier doctrine had parallels with present-day philosophy. In 2003, “mission command” officially entered the Army lexicon with the publication of Field Manual (FM) 6-0, *Mission Command: Command and Control of Army Forces*.³⁸ Following a revision to FM 6-0 in 2011, mission command was also incorporated into joint doctrine. In 2012, General Martin Dempsey (then Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff) published a white paper titled, “Mission Command” that stressed the significance of the philosophy and its integral role in shaping what he called “Joint Force 2020.”³⁹

Written to inform and develop Joint Force 2020, General Dempsey’s white paper stated, “Our need to pursue, instill, and foster mission command is critical to our future success in defending the nation in an increasingly complex and uncertain operating environment.”⁴⁰ The environment General Dempsey alludes to is akin to the future multi-domain operating environment described in TRADOC Pamphlet 525-3-1, *The US Army in Multi-Domain Operations 2028*. General Dempsey further states,

Joint Force 2020 will operate in a dynamic security environment that is different from today. The pace of change and the speed of operations will continue to accelerate. An increasingly competitive and interconnected world raises the potential for conflicts and crisis to escalate in multiple domains. Concurrently, the expansion and diversification of asymmetric threats will significantly challenge our ability to effectively execute military operations. The relevance of space and cyberspace to national security will grow exponentially in the magnitude of importance. Our reliance on technological superiority is a potential vulnerability that our adversaries will seek to exploit. . . . US forces will require unity of effort and prompt execution. These attributes must accrue without over-centralization, as decentralized approaches will provide us competitive adaptability and tempo advantages. . . . Decentralization will occur beyond current comfort levels and habits of practice. Resident in the central figure of the commander, the ethos of mission command, is a critical enabler of success.⁴¹

³⁸ US Department of the Army, Field Manual (FM) 6-0, *Mission Command: Command and Control of Army Forces* (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 2003), viii.

³⁹ US Department of Defense, Joint Staff, *Mission Command*, White paper (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, April 2012), 3, accessed September 9, 2019, <https://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Publications/missioncommandwhitepaper2012.pdf>.

⁴⁰ US Joint Staff, *Mission Command*, 3.

⁴¹ US Joint Staff, *Mission Command*, 3.

Since the publication of this white paper, the Army has transitioned from unified land operations to multi-domain battle. What was once an Army focused on counterinsurgency (COIN), has now evolved to LSCO in a multi-domain environment.

Inter-War/Present Day Evolution

In 2018, the Maneuver Center of Excellence Commanding General, Major General Gary Brito, published an article in the Large-Scale Combat Operations Series, entitled “Disrupted, Degraded, Denied, but Dominant: The Future Multi-Domain Operational Environment.” In his article, Brito opines that “To generate the tempo of operations desired and to best cope with the uncertainty, disorder, and fluidity of combat anticipated in a MDOE, command must be decentralized. Subordinate commanders must make decisions on their own initiative based on their understanding of their higher command’s intent rather than passing information up the chain of command and awaiting decisions.”⁴²

In *MDO 2028*, the future operating environment requires the execution of mission command to win on a contested battlefield against a near-peer adversary. “Since the enemy will disrupt friendly communications and plans, mission command must expand to enable initiative and dynamic cooperation across Service and other partner lines—at some risk—to allow the Joint Force to preserve the ability to continuously and rapidly integrate multi-domain capabilities despite disrupted communications.”⁴³ To ensure formations are equipped to act upon recognition of an opportunity that presents itself against an unsuspecting enemy in this environment, commanders must deliberately establish a climate that fosters conditions favorable to mission

⁴²Gary M. Brito and Keith T. Boring, “Disrupted, Degraded, Denied, but Dominant: The Future Multi-Domain Operational Environment,” in *Deep Maneuver: Historical Case Studies of Maneuver in Large-Scale Combat Operations*, ed. Jack D. Kem (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Army University Press, 2018), 237.

⁴³ US Army, TRADOC PAM 525-3-1, 21.

command.⁴⁴ Current Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Mark Milley said, “We need to transition from centralized to decentralized systems. We preach mission command, but we do not necessarily practice it on a day-to-day basis in everything we do.”⁴⁵ Mission command must be incorporated in everything the Army does. Every Soldier, squad, platoon, company, battalion, and brigade must embrace and practice mission command.

DOTMLPF-P

To modernize the force, the US military uses the Joint Capabilities Integration and Development System (JCIDS), a change process that resolves identified capability gaps within the force that must be fixed in order to accomplish objectives stated in the National Security Strategy by specifically looking at the areas of doctrine, organization, training, materiel, leadership and education, personnel, facilities, and policy (DOTMLPF-P).⁴⁶ For this monograph, the areas of doctrine, training, and leadership and education are used as a framework to assess mission command.

Doctrine

“Doctrine is the fundamental principle by which the military force guides their actions in support of national objectives.”⁴⁷ It is a tool for soldiers and leaders to reference when planning and conducting operations. “An army’s doctrine is also a body of ideas and concepts designed to avoid the errors of the last war in anticipation of potential circumstances a military organization

⁴⁴ US Army, TRADOC PAM 525-3-1, 21.

⁴⁵ David Barno and Nora Bensahel, “Three Things the Army Chief of Staff Wants You to /Know, War on the Rocks,” May 23, 2017, accessed November 14, 2019, <https://warontherocks.com/2017/05/three-things-the-army-chief-of-staff-wants-you-to-know/>.

⁴⁶ US Army War College, Department of Command, Leadership, and Management, *How the Army Runs: A Senior Leader Reference Handbook, 2015-2016* (Carlisle, PA: US Army War College, August 28, 2015), para. 10-4.

⁴⁷ US Department of Defense, Joint Staff, Joint Publication (JP) 1-02, *Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2010), 71.

might encounter in the future next war.”⁴⁸ As the Army enters an inter-war period, doctrine writers are consolidating and condensing ADPs and ADRPs to ensure the force can train and prepare for potential threats based on the emerging operating environment that *MDO 2028* anticipates. The Combined Arms Doctrine Directorate (CADD) manages the Army’s doctrine program to facilitate learning and the execution of operations.⁴⁹ In July 2019, CADD released the most current versions of ADP 6-22 and ADP 6-0. This monograph uses this doctrine to define what leadership and mission command are today, distinguish their similarities and differences, and finally reinforce the need for both leadership and mission command.

Leadership Doctrine

Leadership is the backbone of the Army. It is inherent in everything the organization does and is essential to mission accomplishment. The revised 2019 ADP 6-22 defines an Army leader as “one who inspires and influences people by providing purpose, direction, and motivation to accomplish the mission and improve the organization.”⁵⁰ “To accomplish a mission, leaders must prioritize tasks, assign responsibility, supervise, and ensure subordinates perform to standard.”⁵¹ To do so, leaders must ensure a shared understanding amongst subordinates, enabling them to demonstrate disciplined initiative within commander’s intent. In essence, leaders must employ mission command to accomplish their mission.

⁴⁸ Richard M. Swain, “Filling the Void: The Operational Art and the U.S. Army,” in *Operational Art: Developments in the Theory of War*, ed. B. J. B. McKercher and Michael Hennessey (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1996), 147.

⁴⁹ US Department of the Army, US Army Combined Arms Center, *Combined Arms Doctrine Directorate* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: US Army Combined Arms Center, 2016), accessed March 3, 2020, <https://usacac.army.mil/organizations/mccoe/cadd>. CADD ensures that all Army doctrine is “relevant and as current as possible through proactive integration of most recent lessons learned, results of validated concepts, emerging technology, force design, and current joint, multinational multi-service doctrine.”

⁵⁰ US Department of the Army, Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 6-22, *Army Leadership and the Profession*. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2019, 1-3.

⁵¹ US Army, ADP 6-22, 1-4.

The leadership requirements model (Figure 1) provides a common framework and serves as a tool to recruit, select, develop, and evaluate Army leaders.⁵² The model identifies core competencies, attributes, and expectations of Army leaders regardless of rank.⁵³ The model's components consist of attributes (what a leader is) and competencies (what a leader does). The three categories of core attributes are character, presence, and intellect.⁵⁴ The core leader competencies are leads, develops, and achieves.⁵⁵

Leadership is a combat power unifier and multiplier. It enables the exercise of command, supports control through guidance, and establishes a framework for development. Effective leadership is essential to winning in LSCO against peer threats in contested environments. However, leaders cannot do it alone. Mission command compliments leadership, and if the Army can prioritize the education and training of leadership and mission command during this inter-war period, then the Army can deter, fight, and win on any battlefield.

⁵² US Army, ADP 6-22, v.

⁵³ US Army, ADP 6-22, 1-6.

⁵⁴ US Army, ADP 6-22, 1-7. ADP 6-22 states, “Attributes are characteristics internal to a leader. The three categories of core attributes are: Character (the moral and ethical qualities of the leader). Presence (characteristics open to display by the leader and open to viewing by others). Intellect (the mental and social abilities the leader applies while leading).”

⁵⁵ US Army, ADP 6-22, 1-7. Competencies provide “an enduring, clear, and consistent way of conveying expectations for Army leaders. Army leader core competency categories are: leads (provides purpose, direction, and motivation; builds trust; provides an example; communicates), develops (develops themselves, creates a positive climate, develops subordinates, and stewards the profession), and achieves (executes, adjusts, and gets results to accomplish tasks and missions on time and to standard).”

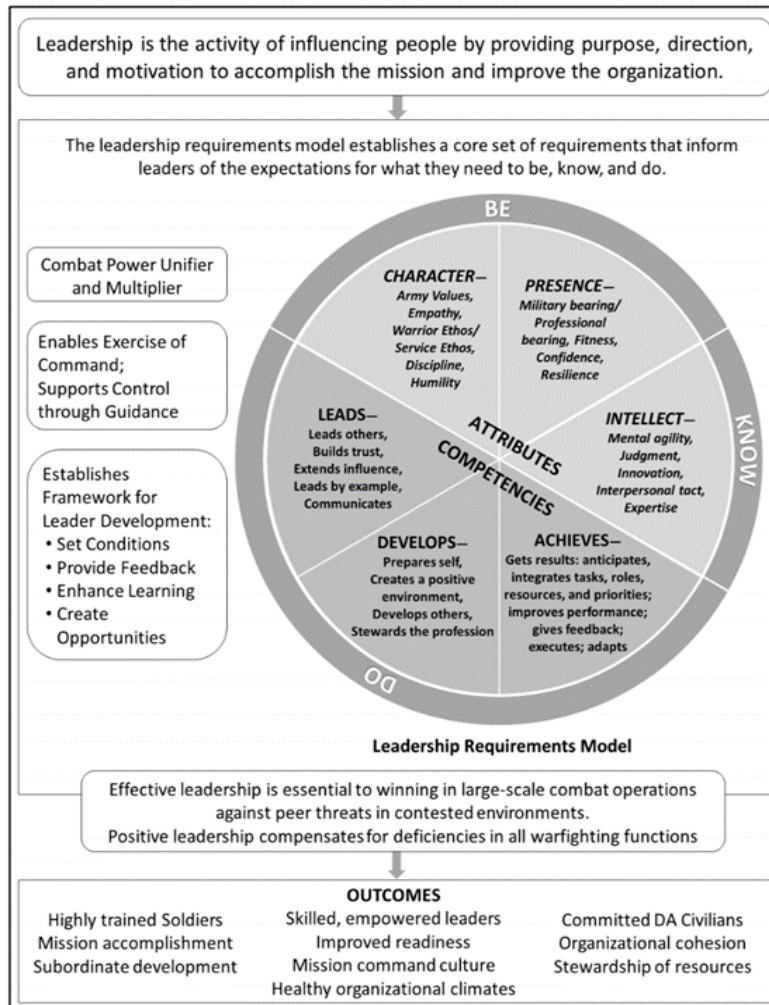


Figure 1. Leadership Logic Map. US Department of the Army, Army Doctrine Publication 6-22, *Army Leadership, and the Profession* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2019), vii.

Mission Command Doctrine

The concept of mission command was confusing as it not only served as a command philosophy but also as its own warfighting function.⁵⁶ To clear the ambiguity, CADD rewrote

⁵⁶ US Army, ADP 3-0, GL-9. ADP 3-0 states that “warfighting functions are a group of tasks and systems united by a common purpose that commanders use to accomplish missions and training objectives.” Mission command not only served as a command philosophy, but it also served as its own warfighting function that integrated automation and communication systems to synchronize all warfighting functions on the battlefield. Mission command was removed as a warfighting function and replaced with command and control so that the force can better understand what the mission command philosophy is and how it is intended to be applied.

ADP 6-0, removing mission command as a warfighting function.⁵⁷ Today, mission command is one part of the Army's approach to C2 and can be applied by empowering subordinate decision making and decentralized execution most appropriate to the situation they face.⁵⁸ According to the newly revised 2019 ADP 6-0, mission command is comprised of seven principles: competence, mutual trust, shared understanding, commander's intent, mission orders, disciplined initiative, and risk acceptance.⁵⁹

Developing competence, establishing mutual trust, and learning to operate with a shared understanding must begin in the schoolhouse and continue in garrison.⁶⁰ The chain of command and unit leadership are charged with developing subordinates to exemplify these principles in everything the organization does. These three principles must then be tested and refined in the field by conducting operations based off mission orders that have acceptable risk to both the force and the mission. Through the exercise of disciplined initiative, leaders and subordinates execute their assigned mission with the objective of training, assessing, and validating the force to ensure readiness.⁶¹

The Mission Command Logic Map (Figure 2) pictorially articulates the newly revised mission command doctrine. The Army's operational concept is enabled by both leadership and the seven principles of mission command. Armed with the principles of mission command and the elements of C2, leaders are able to synchronize and converge all elements of combat power through each of the warfighting functions. The principles of mission command comprise a system of systems driven by leaders, made up of people and equipment, underscored by training, and organized to interoperate in pursuit of operational objectives. Leaders drive the process, but

⁵⁷ Christopher L'Heureux, "Evolutions of Mission Command," *The Field Grade Leader*, February 29, 2020, accessed March 1, 2020, <http://fieldgradeleader.themilitaryleader.com/evolutions/#more-2085>.

⁵⁸ US Army, ADP 6-0, ii.

⁵⁹ US Army, ADP 6-0, 1-7.

⁶⁰ Townsend et al., "Reinvigorating the Army's Approach to Mission Command" (Part 2): 2-7.

⁶¹ Townsend et al., "Reinvigorating the Army's Approach to Mission Command," (Part 2): 2-7.

mission command is enabled by people, systems, training, and organizations. With this understanding, the US Army can refocus leader development on educating, training, and finally assessing and validating commanders and leaders now, during the inter-war period, to make mission command a reality.

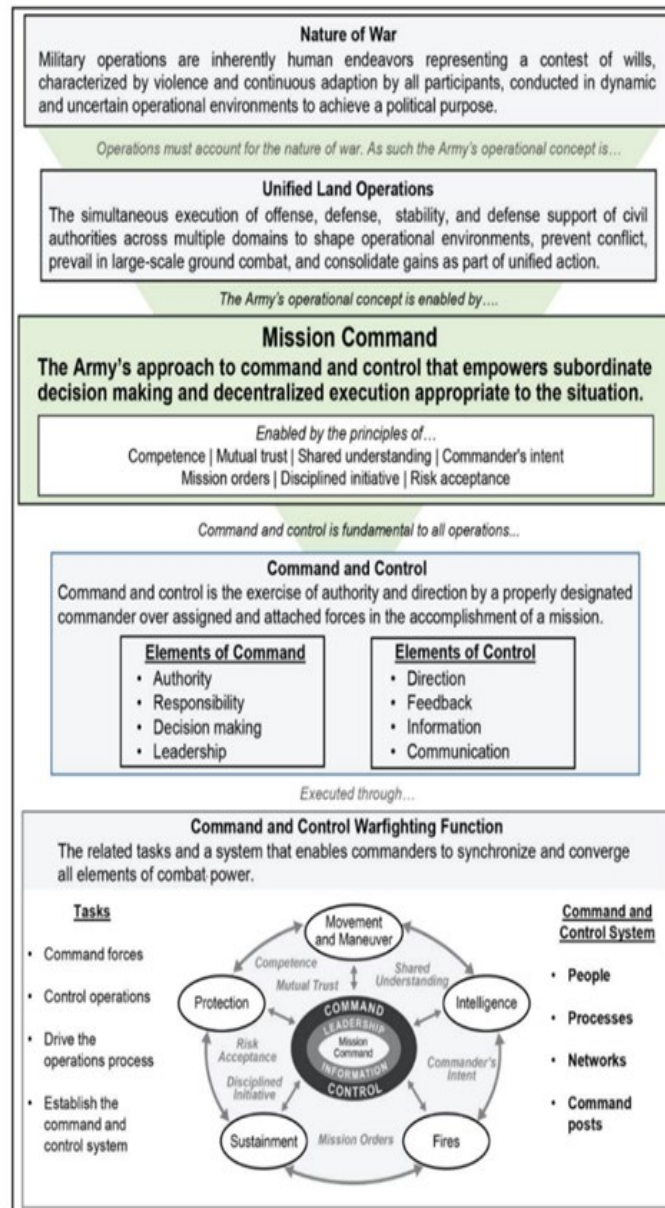


Figure 2. Mission Command Logic Map. US Department of the Army, Army Doctrine Publication 6-0, *Mission Command: Command and Control of Army Forces* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2019), x.

Training

Training is “the instruction of personnel to increase their capacity to perform specific military functions and associated individual and collective tasks.”⁶² Training is how the Army prepares to fight and is instrumental in developing and demonstrating competence and readiness. Recently, the US Army transitioned to Sustainable Readiness as its model to ensure unit readiness. The Army’s Sustainable Readiness Model (SRM) is comprised of three descriptive modules: mission, ready, and prepare.⁶³ AR 220-1, *Unit Status Reporting*, states that Army units are designated specific Mission Essential Tasks (MET) that correspond to the mission they are assigned. “Commanders are responsible for reporting their training status based on the percentage of METs trained to standard. While commanders are also required to determine and report additional training data (for example, required training days, squad/crew/team manning, and qualification status, etc.) the training level is determined solely based on the results of the MET proficiency assessments associated with the unit’s core functions/designed capabilities.”⁶⁴

Mission command is not a MET. For each MET, there are supporting collective tasks; currently, one of those supporting tasks is mission command. If mission command is essential to fighting and winning in *MDO 2028*, then is mission command and exercising disciplined initiative getting the priority and attention it deserves? Table 1 presents a graphical representation of how METs are arrayed within an Infantry Brigade Combat Team. Mission command is depicted as a subtask in every MET the unit is required to train in order to be considered ready.

⁶² US Department of the Army, Army Regulation (AR) 5-22, *The Army Force Modernization Proponent System* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2015), 14, accessed February 23, 2020, https://armypubs.army.mil/epubs/DR_pubs/DR_a/pdf/web/r5_22.pdf.

⁶³ Andrew Feickert, “The Army’s Sustainable Readiness Model (SRM),” Federation of American Scientists, 2, accessed March 4, 2020, <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/natsec/IN10679.pdf>. “The Mission Module consists of units assigned to an ordered mission. In this module, each unit gets validated, fully resourced, and immediately ready to conduct Decisive Action (DA) operations. In the Ready Module, units work to achieve or sustain a baseline level of DA proficiency and the ability to respond to contingencies if required. The Prepare Module is for units not assigned a mission and consists of units regenerating readiness.”

⁶⁴ US Department of the Army, Army Regulation (AR) 220-1, *Unit Status Reporting* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2010), 12.

Unfortunately, the mission command subtask is listed as the last or next to last subtask within each MET, which conveys its lack of prioritization in training. If the Army expects to counter the challenges that layered standoff presents, then the execution of mission command and disciplined initiative must be prioritized in training and potentially even become a designated MET itself.

Table 1. Infantry Brigade Combat Team (IBCT) DA Standardized METL

77200K000 : INFANTRY BRIGADE COMBAT TEAM (IBCT) DA Standardized METL					
Mission Essential Task (MET)		Supporting Collective Tasks		Task Set	
#	Title	#	Title	#	Title
07-BDE-1072	Conduct a Movement to Contact - IBCT	07-BDE-1252	Conduct a Combined Arms Breach of an Obstacle - IBCT	07-TS-6205	Conduct a Movement to Contact - IBCT
		17-BDE-1007	Conduct Reconnaissance Activities - Brigade		
		63-BDE-4021	Provide Internal Sustainment (Brigade)		
		01-BDE-0436	Coordinate Air-Ground Operations when Providing Attack Aviation Support		
		06-BDE-5066	Employ Fires		
07-BDE-1092	Conduct an Attack - IBCT	71-BDE-5100	Conduct the Mission Command Operations Process for Brigades	07-TS-6206	Conduct an Attack - IBCT
		07-BDE-6082	Conduct Mobility Activities - BCT		
		07-BDE-1252	Conduct a Combined Arms Breach of an Obstacle - IBCT		
		17-BDE-1007	Conduct Reconnaissance Activities - Brigade		
		63-BDE-4021	Provide Internal Sustainment (Brigade)		
07-BDE-1028	Conduct an Area Defense - IBCT	01-BDE-0436	Coordinate Air-Ground Operations when Providing Attack Aviation Support	07-TS-6209	Conduct an Area Defense - IBCT
		06-BDE-5066	Employ Fires		
		71-BDE-5100	Conduct the Mission Command Operations Process for Brigades		
		07-BDE-6082	Conduct Mobility Activities - BCT		
		17-BDE-1007	Conduct Reconnaissance Activities - Brigade		
07-BDE-1262	Conduct an Air Assault - Stryker/Infantry BCT	63-BDE-4021	Provide Internal Sustainment (Brigade)	07-TS-6207	Conduct an Air Assault - BCT
		01-BDE-0436	Coordinate Air-Ground Operations when Providing Attack Aviation Support		
		06-BDE-5066	Employ Fires		
		07-BDE-1012	Establish Lodgment - BCT		
		17-BDE-1007	Conduct Reconnaissance Activities - Brigade		
07-BDE-1272	Conduct Area Security - BCT	71-BDE-5100	Conduct the Mission Command Operations Process for Brigades	07-TS-6211	Conduct Area Security - BCT
		07-BDE-6082	Conduct Mobility Activities - BCT		
		17-BDE-1007	Conduct Reconnaissance Activities - Brigade		
		17-BDE-9225	Conduct a Screen - Brigade		
		01-BDE-0436	Coordinate Air-Ground Operations when Providing Attack Aviation Support		
55-BDE-4800	Conduct Expeditionary Deployment Operations at the Brigade Level	06-BDE-5066	Employ Fires	71-TS-6220	Conduct Expeditionary Deployment Operations - BCT
		71-BDE-5100	Conduct the Mission Command Operations Process for Brigades		
		71-BDE-8600	Establish Civil Security for Brigades		
		07-BDE-6084	Conduct Survivability Activities - BCT		
		55-EAC-4804	Conduct Deployment Activities at Echelon Above Corps		
		55-EAC-4801	Conduct Actions Associated with Force Projection at Echelon Above Corps		
		12-BDE-0004	Prepare Personnel for Deployment (Brigade)		
		71-BDE-5100	Conduct the Mission Command Operations Process for Brigades		

Source: Army Training Network, Combined Arms Training Strategy, “Infantry Brigade Combat Team (IBCT): DA Standardized METL,” 2020, accessed February 28, 2020, <https://atn.army.mil/ATNPortalUI/METL>.

After reviewing the 2019 Combat Training Center Trends published by the Center for Army Lessons Learned in December 2019 as well as the 2019 Trends and Observations from the Joint Readiness Training Center, it is more than apparent that mission command is not prioritized in unit training. CALL reported that “mission command has more subtasks than any other unit training task does, and there were more significant observations from the combat training centers

on mission command than on any other warfighting function.” One hundred and twenty observations, to be exact.⁶⁵ The first trend observed is that unit commanders frequently miss opportunities to support their mission command operations process. “Commanders generally understand they drive the operations process but miss opportunities to provide regular touchpoints with their staffs which directly impacts planning in the sense that the staff operates without the commander’s guidance and also costs the commander opportunities to develop their junior staff officers.”⁶⁶

Additionally, the majority of the trends observed focus on mission command as a warfighting function, not mission command as a philosophy. Feedback and after-action reviews are centered more on C2 systems than on a commander’s ability to employ the principles of mission command. Since the mission command philosophy is not stressed in CTC observations, it could be implied that mission command is not viewed as essential to unit readiness. Based upon CTC observations, combined with the fact that mission command is not viewed as a MET in the Army’ SRM, there appears to be a gap in the prioritization and the need to educate, train, assess, and validate mission command to ensure unit level readiness.

Leadership and Education

Leader development is “the product of a learning continuum that comprises training, experience, formal education, and continual self-improvement.”⁶⁷ Education and higher learning is the foundation for Army leaders. To actualize mission command, leaders in echelon need to be educated and, in many instances, re-educated on the newly revised ADP 6-0 doctrine during the inter-war period.

⁶⁵ US Department of the Army, Center for Army Lessons Learned, *Combat Training Center Fiscal Year 2019* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2019), ix-xi.

⁶⁶ US Army, *Combat Training Center Fiscal Year 2019*, 2.

⁶⁷ US Army, AR 5-22, 13.

Two senior leaders that successfully capitalized on reinvigorating the Army during inter-war periods are Brigadier General Arthur Wagner and former TRADOC Commanding General, General Donn Starry. Wagner served as an influential military theorist, educator, and doctrinal reformer in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. He is most notably remembered for reorganizing the institutional Army following the American Civil War.⁶⁸ By implementing the study of military history, combined arms doctrine, and tabletop exercises into leader development and education programs, Wagner's efforts have had lasting effects on the development and education of Army leaders.⁶⁹

Following the conclusion of the Vietnam War, the Army was in a bad state. Equipment and doctrine were outdated, discipline had to be restored, and adversaries across the globe were modernizing and seeking to exploit any opportunity that presented itself. Army leadership determined that the Soviet Union presented the most significant threat to national security.⁷⁰ In an effort to modernize the Army, General Starry observed that TRADOC had four primary functions: doctrine, organization, equipping, and in training and educating the force.⁷¹ Drawing from recent feedback on the 1973 Yom Kippur War as well as his experience in commanding V Corps, General Starry led an initiative to rewrite doctrine, train and equip the force, and prioritize the education of its leaders. He revised the outdated FM 100-5 *Operations*, developed a new Operating Concept "AirLand Battle," implemented a rigorous training and evaluation program that culminated with the development of the National Training Center, equipped the force with

⁶⁸ Timothy K. Nenninger. *The Leavenworth Schools and the Old Army: Education, Professionalism, and the Officer Corps of the United States Army, 1881-1918* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1978), 40-41.

⁶⁹ T. R. Brereton, *Educating the U.S. Army: Arthur L. Wagner and Reform, 1875-1905* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2000), 34-36, 100-116; Walter E. Kretchik, *U.S. Army Doctrine: from the American Revolution to the War on Terror*. Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2011, 109-110.

⁷⁰ Swain, "Filling the Void," 149.

⁷¹ Swain, "Filling the Void," 149.

what later became known as the ‘Big Five,’ and prioritized the education of officers.⁷² Starry’s efforts not only prepared the Army for modern war but set the framework for the force that is still fighting today in Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom.

Generals Wagner and Starry are two leaders that drew from history and their experience to restructure the way the Army educated and developed its leaders during inter-war periods to prepare and modernize the force for future threats. The US Army is currently in an inter-war period and must make similar modifications to leader development and education to best prepare the Army for future conflict.

⁷² Swain, “Filling the Void,” 148-157; Kari Hawkins, “AMC-developed weapons remain vital to Army,” US Army, September 6, 2012, accessed March 10, 2020, https://www.army.mil/article/86839/AMC_developed_weapons_remain_vital_to_Army/vital_to_army. The ‘Big Five’ include the AH-64 Apache helicopter, the UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter, the M1 Abrams Tank, the M2 Bradley Fighting Vehicle, and the MIM-104 Patriot Missile system.

Case Studies

American military history witnessed the successful practice and execution of mission command well before the term was coined in Army doctrine. Colonels David Perkins and Michael Steele are two well-known and highly regarded leaders who played instrumental roles in Operation Iraqi Freedom. Using ADP 6-0's mission command principles and ADP 6-22's leadership attributes and competencies as a lens within the framework of doctrine, training, and leader development and education, from the DOTMLPF-P construct, focus now shifts towards two case studies. The first case study highlights textbook examples of both "good leadership" and the successful application of mission command. The second case study portrays the actions of a "good leader," yet one who failed to apply the principles of mission command. Each case study conveys where and how mission command was or was not applied, but also demonstrates that leadership and mission command are not synonymous. They show that both philosophies and approaches are necessary. This monograph uses three focused research questions as the methodology to drive data collection. The answers to these questions are analyzed using a structured focus comparison and are presented in the next section, "Findings and Analysis."

Thunder Run: The Battle of Baghdad, Iraq 2003

Between April 4 and 8, 2003, Colonel Perkins, Commander of 2BCT, 3ID, successfully applied the principles of mission command in order to accomplish his commander's intent of "attacking into Baghdad to test Saddam Hussein's urban defense, collect intelligence about the paramilitary and military units, and maintain pressure on the Iraqi regime."⁷³ In the conduct of two Thunder Run missions, there are examples of "good leadership" and mission command that

⁷³ Anthony E. Carlson, "Thunder Run in Baghdad," in *16 Cases of Mission Command*, ed. Donald P. Wright (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute Press, US Army Combined Arms Center, 2013), 117.

led not only to mission success but also to the seizure of a foothold for coalition forces within Iraq's capital city.⁷⁴

By April 4, 2003, in just sixteen days, 3ID completed the fastest ground combat movement in United States military history, a 704-kilometer ground march from Kuwait to the outskirts of Baghdad.⁷⁵ With 1BCT seizing Baghdad International Airport (OBJ Lions) to the west of the city, 3BCT isolating Baghdad from the northwest (OBJ Titans), and 2BCT blocking the city from the south (OBJ Saints), 3ID Commanding General, Major General Buford Blount was faced with a decision on whether to cordon off the city of Baghdad or to continue to seize the initiative and punch into the capital city.⁷⁶ To test the enemy's defenses and collect intelligence, Blount ordered Perkins to send an armored reconnaissance task force (TF) into Baghdad and link up with 1BCT.⁷⁷

Perkins assigned this mission to TF 1-64 Armored Regiment (AR).⁷⁸ At 0630 on the morning of April 5, 2003, TF 1-64 AR crossed the line of departure en route to Baghdad and linked up with 1BCT at OBJ Lions. The Thunder Run mission caught Iraqi forces off guard.⁷⁹ Its success can be attributed to the exercise of "good leadership" and mission command on behalf of Perkins and his subordinates.

The next day, Perkins received orders to conduct a second Thunder Run. He proposed a bold course of action that centered on attacking Baghdad's government district.⁸⁰ Perkins

⁷⁴ Carlson, "Thunder Run in Baghdad," 115.

⁷⁵ David Zuchino, *Thunder Run: The Armored Strike to Capture Baghdad* (New York: Grove Press, 2004), 2.

⁷⁶ Zuchino, *Thunder Run*, 2-3. Gregory Fontenot, E. J. Degen, and David Tohn, *On Point: The United States Army in Operation Iraqi Freedom Through 01 May 2003* (Washington, DC: Office of the Chief of Staff, US Army, 2004), 246-248, 258.

⁷⁷ Fontenot, Degen, and Tohn, *On Point*, 341.

⁷⁸ Fontenot, Degen, and Tohn, *On Point*, 342.

⁷⁹ Carlson, "Thunder Run in Baghdad," 107-108.

⁸⁰ Carlson, "Thunder Run in Baghdad," 108.

believed this area to be the enemy's center of gravity, and if seized, the regime would lose control of its capital.⁸¹ Although this course of action inherited more risk, Perkins believed he could better accomplish his commander's intent as opposed to replicating Thunder Run one for a second time. Initially, this approach was denied over concerns that Perkins may overextend his lines of communication.⁸²

Perkins generated a second plan, one with branches to take if certain conditions were met. These conditions were: "if 2BCT could fight into downtown without becoming fixed, seize defensible key terrain, open and maintain a ground line of communication, and establish logistical conditions that supported remaining overnight."⁸³ On April 6, Perkins briefed his order and intent to his battalion commanders, directing the mission be conducted with two armored formations to attack downtown Baghdad.⁸⁴ On the morning of April 7, 2BCT crossed the line of departure meeting little resistance. Perkins determined that his four preconditions could be met and received approval to continue and further develop the situation.⁸⁵ This resulted in 2BCT seizing all established objectives and meeting both the V Corps and 3ID commanders' intent.⁸⁶

Analysis

Enabled by people, systems, training, and organization, Perkins demonstrated exemplary leadership competencies and attributes, as defined by the Army's leadership doctrine, as well as application of the principles of mission command, contributing to an overwhelming success. Thus, the first of our focused research questions is answered in the affirmative.

⁸¹ Carlson, "Thunder Run in Baghdad," 108.

⁸² Carlson, "Thunder Run in Baghdad," 109.

⁸³ Carlson, "Thunder Run in Baghdad," 109.

⁸⁴ Carlson, "Thunder Run in Baghdad," 110.

⁸⁵ Carlson, "Thunder Run in Baghdad," 110-112.

⁸⁶ Carlson, "Thunder Run in Baghdad," 111.

Through his actions, Perkins demonstrated the core leadership attributes of character, presence, and intellect and the leadership competencies of leads, develops, and achieves in 2BCT's train up for their deployment to and in Kuwait as well as in both Thunder Run missions. Perkins was a leader who led from the front and by example. He was physically present for the training and development of his BCT leading up to and during his deployment to Kuwait and, subsequently, Baghdad, Iraq. To prepare his force, Perkins focused the development of his leaders on being experts in their vehicle platforms and assigned weapon systems. He emphasized the study and understanding of the mission variables of mission, enemy terrain, troops, time, civil considerations so that everyone was situationally aware.⁸⁷ Because of these factors, Perkins and 2BCT were able to achieve success in the conduct of both missions that led to the fall of Baghdad and the transfer of authority from the Iraqi Army to US-led coalition forces.

When considering the second focused research question, the evidence clearly demonstrates that though mission command was not a part of Army doctrine prior to the events of the Thunder Run, Perkins and his staff did execute all seven principles of modern-day mission command in both missions. 2BCT demonstrated competence in echelon during their train up for deployment during a six-month tour in the Kuwaiti desert where they conducted gunnery, maneuver, and prepared for every possible contingency, and while they executed both Thunder Run missions on April 5 and 8, 2003.⁸⁸ The leaders, their subordinates, and the collective BCT proved to be competent in their profession, and the systems they used to accomplish the mission.

⁸⁷ US Department of the Army, Field Manual 3-21.10, *The Infantry Rifle Company* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2006), 2-11. FM 3-21.10 states, "leaders conduct mission analysis by evaluating the mission variables. The mission variable include Mission, Enemy, Troops, Terrain, Time, and Civil considerations."

⁸⁸ US Army, ADP 6-0, 1-7. Competence is achieved through training, education experience, and professional development.

Out of the competence that is developed through training, education, experience, and shared hardships, mutual trust developed.⁸⁹ Perkins said in an interview with the Combat Studies Institute at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, “The bedrock of mission command is trust, and to embrace mission command, you must have well-trained units, disciplined, competent and committed leaders, and trust that goes up, as well as down.”⁹⁰ Trust in equipment and systems, trust in the organization, trust in the people that embody that organization, and trust in the chain of command are all contributors to the success of the 2003 Thunder Run. Trust was demonstrated throughout the chain of command, as was exemplified in the actions of the V Corps and 3ID commanders, Perkins, and his subordinate commanders.

To develop a shared understanding, 2BCT deployed to Kuwait in September of 2002, and for six months, Perkins relentlessly trained on combined arms maneuver and live fire exercises that incorporated every soldier, system, platform, weapon, and capability to ensure unit preparedness upon receipt of orders to attack into Iraq. Even more importantly, Perkins and his staff focused their efforts and training on understanding the terrain, enemy, environment, and problem set they faced in order to visualize how they would fight and win. The combination of these initiatives created a shared understanding throughout 2BCT.⁹¹

Perkins provided clear and concise commander’s intent, enabling the exercise of disciplined initiative to accomplish the mission. Specifically, for the first Thunder Run, Perkins’ intent was to “attack and create as much confusion as he could inside the city because he knew that his formations could react to chaos much better than the enemy could.”⁹² Similarly, Perkins’ intent for his second Thunder Run was “attack as fast as you can and push through the center of

⁸⁹ US Army, ADP 6-0, 1-7.

⁹⁰ Kelvin Crow and Dr. Tony Carlson, *Interview with LTG David Perkins*, Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute, May 6, 2013, 4.

⁹¹ Crow and Carlson, *Interview with LTG David Perkins*, 4-5.

⁹² Carlson, “Thunder Run in Baghdad,” 117.

Baghdad. If a vehicle becomes disabled due to enemy fire, immediately remove the crew, put them on another platform, and continue the attack.”⁹³

Through mission orders, Perkins provided clear intent and a task and purpose for each battalion to accomplish. For the first Thunder Run, Perkins ordered TF 1-64 AR to attack and collect intelligence on the composition and disposition of the enemy. For the second Thunder Run, he directed the mission be conducted with two armored formations to attack downtown Baghdad supported by a third TF tasked to keep a line of communication open by securing three critical bridge overpass intersections. Critical to this mission was momentum and tempo enabled by bypassing large formations and disabled vehicles to avoid getting bogged down in direct contact.⁹⁴

The entire BCT exercised disciplined initiative on many instances during both Thunder Run missions. Specifically, on Thunder Run 2, Perkins had an opportunity for his formation to exploit gaps in the Iraqi defenses and seize Saddam Hussein’s palaces within the government district. Although not part of his higher headquarters’ plan, by doing so, he could not only accomplish his commander’s intent but also defeat his enemy’s center of gravity and collapse the Iraqi regime.⁹⁵

Prudent risk acceptance played a critical factor in the accomplishment of Colonel Perkins’ mission. He accepted a significant amount of risk by penetrating Iraqi defenses and punching straight into the center of Baghdad to seize Saddam’s palaces and hold them. He mitigated that risk based on the four conditions he identified based on his deductions from Thunder Run one.⁹⁶ Through risk acceptance and the establishment of preconditions, Perkins was

⁹³ Carlson, “Thunder Run in Baghdad,” 117.

⁹⁴ Carlson, “Thunder Run in Baghdad,” 105; 110.

⁹⁵ Carlson, “Thunder Run in Baghdad,” 108; 118.

⁹⁶ Carlson, “Thunder Run in Baghdad,” 107.

able to mitigate the risk he identified; therefore, justifying his decision to strike into the city center and seize Saddam's government complexes.

When considering whether Perkins' organization, personnel, systems, training, and education enabled mission command, the answer is clearly, yes. His brigade, as an organization, had a well-defined construct in the form of its doctrinal structure. This structure had maneuver and supporting battalions, their respective staffs, and other supporting elements from 3ID. When task organized for a specific mission, the BCT represents a system of systems whether as the entire brigade itself, a battalion TF, or company teams subordinate to a higher headquarters. In each instance, the organizational system had supporting systems where soldiers, equipment, and supporting systems such as communications and blue force trackers were brought together through individual and collective training and the professional development education every soldier is afforded. While leaders exercise command and control, their ability to apply the principles of mission command is enabled by this system of systems.

As previously stated, Perkins' BCT conducted both individual and collective training, not only at Fort Stewart but while deployed in Kuwait prior to combat operations in Iraq. An armored formation is nothing more than ill-equipped light infantry if the equipment and its weapon systems are not properly operated and maintained. His direction that all leaders become proficient on their weapons systems and platforms extended to proficiency on all enabling systems. Perkins' own education and experience enabled his ability to exercise mission command. As an Armor Captain, he attended the Infantry Officer Advanced Course, an experience he would later draw from as an Armor Battalion Commander occupying an old Soviet airbase on the border of Macedonia and Serbia in the late 1980s/early 1990s. This mission was unique because they had no tanks and operated more as an Infantry formation.⁹⁷

⁹⁷ Todd South, "The Army general who redefined warfighting for soldiers retires after four decades in uniform," *The Army Times*, March 12, 2018, accessed March 28, 2020, <https://www.armytimes.com/news/your-army/2018/03/12/the-army-general-who-redefined-warfighting-for-soldiers-retires-after-four-decades-in-uniform/>.

During the second Thunder Run mission, Perkins' task organized with two formations entering Baghdad and a third formation focused on securing lines of communication. His soldiers were well trained, their equipment mission capable, and their leaders proficient on the principles of mission command, enabling the dispersed formation to meet the commander's intent and ultimately establish a strong foothold in the heart of Baghdad. Both Thunder Run operations were successful, with success attributable to Perkins' application of mission command, his subordinate leader's own competence in exercising these principles, and the exercise of disciplined initiative across all echelons of 2BCT as collectively, the entire organization and every soldier assigned trained precisely as they would subsequently fight.

Enabled by his staff and subordinates, the systems established, the mutual trust shared through training and organization, and the leadership demonstrated by Perkins, both he and 2BCT successfully demonstrated all seven principles of mission command. This led to their success and the eventual seizure of Baghdad in April 2003. Perkins proved his effectiveness as a "good leader" and leveraged his leadership ability to drive the mission command process.

Operation Iron Triangle

On May 9, 2006, Colonel Steele failed to apply the principles of mission command and did not accomplish his commander's intent of "reducing violence through civilian outreach, not skirmishes."⁹⁸ Steele, Commander of 3BCT, 101 ABN DIV, planned Operation Iron Triangle, a coalition raid on a known insurgent training camp located on an island south of Samarra, off the coast of Lake Tharthar. His intent was to kill or capture known insurgents that worked for the Iraqi Al Qaeda leader Abu Musab al-Zarqawi.⁹⁹ The results of the operation led to the detention

⁹⁸ Raffi Khatchadourian, "The Kill Company: Did a Colonel's Fiery Rhetoric Set the Conditions for a Massacre?" *The New Yorker*, July 6, 2009, 44, accessed November 20, 2019, <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2009/07/06/the-kill-company>.

⁹⁹ Khatchadourian, "The Kill Company," 49.

of 200 suspected terrorists and the confiscation of weapons and propaganda materials.¹⁰⁰

Additionally, the operation resulted in eight deaths, three of which were considered murder. An investigation ensued, leading to the trial and sentencing of three soldiers under Steele's command.¹⁰¹

In 2006, Lieutenant General Peter Chiarelli, the Multi-National Corps commander in Iraq, argued that the American military's violent and aggressive nature was doing more harm than good. To limit Iraqi males from joining the insurgency and to gain favor from the local population, Chiarelli instructed soldiers and leaders to prioritize reconstruction efforts towards the restoration of essential services over targeting the enemy. His intent was to get the Iraqi people "to regard the Army as a just institution responsible for serving their interests."¹⁰² Steele disregarded Chiarelli's explicit guidance and "cut funding for anything that did not relate to security."¹⁰³ His focus was on killing potential Al Qaeda insurgents and returning home with his force intact.

As part of a multinational TF, Steele assigned the mission to C Company, 3-187 IN. They, along with their Iraqi counterparts, were to conduct a clearance of the island to include Objective (OBJ) Murray, two huts located west of the Al Muthanna chemical-weapons complex.¹⁰⁴ Early morning on May 9, seventy members of C CO, 3-187 IN, along with Steele, departed their base near Tikrit by helicopter for the small island complex and OBJ Murray. By 0500, the helicopters touched down, and the raid began. Assaulting by fire, C Company swept

¹⁰⁰ Global Security, "Operation Iron Triangle," May 9-11, 2006, accessed December 19, 2019, <https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/ops/oif-iron-triangle.htm>.

¹⁰¹ Stjepan Meštrović, *Rules of Engagement? A Social Anatomy of an American War Crime Operation Iron Triangle, Iraq* (New York: Algora Publishing, 2008), 1.

¹⁰² Khatchadourian, "The Kill Company," 44.

¹⁰³ Khatchadourian, "The Kill Company," 45.

¹⁰⁴ Stjepan Meštrović, *The "Good Soldier" on Trial: A Sociological Study of Misconduct by the US Military Pertaining to Operation Iron Triangle, Iraq* (New York: Algora Publishing, 2009), 73, accessed March 25, 2020, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/carl-ebooks/detail.action?docID=471031>.

through the objective, but no enemy appeared to be present.¹⁰⁵ As the TF continued to clear the OBJ, three Iraqi military aged males were seen fleeing by boat down the canal. An Apache helicopter above was given the order to shoot, and the three men were executed. Steele and his staff later looked for their bodies, but they never were found.¹⁰⁶

Steele returned to his headquarters, and the TF continued to sweep the remainder of the island. What later ensued was the death and murder of innocent Iraqi civilians. At the conclusion of the operation, Steele ordered an investigation.¹⁰⁷ The investigation found that there was confusion across 3BCT on the rules of engagement (ROE). The ROE for Operation Iron Triangle, issued by Steele, was “to kill all military age males on the island.”¹⁰⁸ He was later officially reprimanded by Chiarelli, which subsequently led to his retirement.¹⁰⁹

Analysis

Through an examination of the research questions, Steele demonstrated good leadership leading up to and during the conduct of Operation Iron Triangle; however, his inability to apply the principles of mission command ultimately led to both his and several of his subordinates’ detriment.

Steele exhibited the attributes we want from Army leaders. He was a decisive, aggressive, and highly revered leader. Known for preparing his troops through intense training, Steele was always present both in garrison and in the field.¹¹⁰ Lieutenant General William Boykin, tactical-operations commander for Operation Gothic Serpent in Mogadishu, stated: “Somalia left Mike Steele determined that he would never go into combat with soldiers without making sure that they

¹⁰⁵ Khatchadourian, “The Kill Company,” 53.

¹⁰⁶ Khatchadourian, “The Kill Company,” 54.

¹⁰⁷ Meštrović, *The “Good Soldier” on Trial*, 49.

¹⁰⁸ Meštrović, *The “Good Soldier” on Trial*, 28.

¹⁰⁹ Khatchadourian, “The Kill Company,” 58-59.

¹¹⁰ Khatchadourian, “The Kill Company,” 43.

were fully prepared.”¹¹¹ Steele was a leader through presence, who developed his subordinates and achieved results. MAJ Adam Lackey, a company commander that served under Steele during Operation Iron Triangle, stated in an interview, “My respect for Colonel Steele as a senior tactical commander is immense. I was honored to serve under his leadership...his focus was on winning and, in doing so, bringing his men and women home safely.”¹¹² Steele trained and prepared his formation leading up to and during their deployment to Iraq. Lieutenant Colonel Richard Root, a battalion commander under Steele, stated, “soldiers and leaders are extremely loyal to Colonel Steele, he could do no wrong. He had a bravado around him, but that was to lead soldiers, and they love him. They would follow him into combat again.”¹¹³

Though Steele was admired for his leadership of soldiers, he was uneven in his execution of the principles of mission command. From the moment 3BCT received deployment orders, Steele trained his soldiers for battle. His approach to combat was aggressive, violent, and decisive. His aim was to harden every soldier in his formation in an effort to desensitize them about killing.¹¹⁴ “Believing soldiers should not witness severe injury or death for the first time in battle; Steele implemented a program he called “Psychological Inoculation of Combat.””¹¹⁵ This entailed ordering officers to visit morgues and medics riding in first response ambulances.” Additionally, “3BCT became known for its cultivated pugnacity.”¹¹⁶

Although Steele exercised disciplined initiative through mission orders, he did not create a shared understanding with his commanders and subordinates. Because he failed to create shared understanding, Steele failed to demonstrate personal competence and mutual trust throughout his

¹¹¹ Khatchadourian, “The Kill Company,” 43.

¹¹² Jenna Fike, *Interview with MAJ Adam Lackey* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute, May 3, 2011), 3-4.

¹¹³ Khatchadourian, “The Kill Company,” 59.

¹¹⁴ Meštrović, *The “Good Soldier” on Trial*, 28.

¹¹⁵ Khatchadourian, “The Kill Company,” 43.

¹¹⁶ Khatchadourian, “The Kill Company,” 43.

organization. This is evident in the confusion seen within his BCT regarding his ROE, which led to the murder of innocent civilians and the trial and sentencing of his subordinates. Based on his many years of combat experience, Steele should have known that his subordinates would take his controversial ROE at face value. He failed to accept any risk by issuing such a stringent ROE. More importantly, however, Steele's ROE was inconsistent with his higher commander's intent. Instead, Steele continued to conduct offensive operations and the application of deadly force by pursuing high value targets and focused little on reconstruction and restoration.

Many elements contributed to the BCT's mission command failure. Although Steele had the best intentions by training his force to fight and kill any enemy that presented itself, his approach created a mentality inconsistent with the mission and their senior commander's intent. 3BCT adopted the motto "we give the enemy the maximum opportunity to give his life for his country."¹¹⁷ Steele gave a pre-deployment speech to his brigade that was documented on video. In his speech, Steele said, "Anytime you fight, you always kill the other sonofabitch. Do not let him live today so that he will fight you tomorrow."¹¹⁸ Had his orders to his organization been clear, the events that unfolded on May 9, 2006 would not have occurred.¹¹⁹ Steele's inability to create a shared understanding through mission orders prevented his organization, personnel, systems, training, and education from enabling mission command, which led to their downfall.

Although a proven and effective leader, Steele failed to accomplish his higher commander's intent. He failed to communicate through clear mission orders his specified ROE, and he failed to create a shared understanding across his formation. By not following the principles of mission command, both he and his soldiers were made to suffer dire consequences.

¹¹⁷ Khatchadourian, "The Kill Company," 41.

¹¹⁸ Thomas Ricks, *The Gamble: General David Petraeus and the American Military Adventure in Iraq 2006-2008* (New York: Penguin, 2009), 35.

¹¹⁹ Meštrović, *The "Good Soldier" on Trial*, 16.

Findings and Analysis

MDO 2028 specifies mission command and the exercise of disciplined initiative as essential to achieving the tenets of calibrated force posture, multi-domain formations, and convergence that is required to defeat the layered standoff threat posed by United States' adversaries across the globe. Because mission command currently is and has been one of the Army's twenty warfighting challenges, the Army must reinvigorate its approach and correct this issue.

By knowing and understanding where mission command evolved from and its significance in MDO and LSCO, the Army must prioritize actualizing mission command in echelon across the force. The United States currently finds itself in an inter-war period. As part of the force modernization process, the next logical step is to divest personnel and equipment, train and educate the force, hone the fundamentals, modernize, and prepare to win the expected next fight.

Using doctrine, training, and leadership and education from the DOTMLPF-P construct as a framework, the doctrine has been rewritten. ADPs 6-0 and 6-22 were recently revised and published in July of 2019. The Army must now adapt its leader education and refine and modernize training. Mission command is not just "good leadership." To succeed in *MDO 2028*, the US Army must focus leader education and training on the new doctrine, followed by assessment and validation programs designed to ensure mission command is internalized amongst leaders. By prioritizing the education, training, assessment, and validation of commanders and leaders, the Army ensures every service member understands what mission command is and how to apply it as doctrine intends.

Examples of modern-day mission command have been observed throughout US military history; however, these instances are an anomaly and not the norm. To actualize mission

command as doctrine intends, it must be practiced on a routine basis in everything the soldier, the unit, and the Army does.

This monograph analyzed two historical case studies: Colonel David Perkins' Thunder Run and Colonel Michael Steele's Operation Iron Triangle. These case studies illustrate that one can be a "good leader" but fail to exercise mission command; however, essential to winning on the battlefield, both leadership and the application of the principles of mission command are imperative.

Before mission command doctrine existed, Perkins demonstrated that he was a "good leader" and that he exercised the principles of mission command through his actions during the train-up and conduct of Thunder Run. Perkins formulated his mission orders and issued them to his subordinates. He did not tell them how to seize their objectives; he gave them a task, purpose, and objectives. Perkins exhibited competence, created mutual trust, and fostered a shared understanding by communicating his intent through mission orders. He enabled his soldiers to exercise disciplined initiative based on his intent that was nested with his higher commanders. Because of these factors, Perkins and 2BCT were successful.

As a company commander in the 75th Ranger Regiment, Steele became known for his actions in Mogadishu, Somalia. He was beloved by his soldiers for his steadfast leadership, presence, and competence. Institutionally, he was promoted to the rank of colonel and selected for brigade command, demonstrating the Army thought highly of his leadership, past performance, and potential. In Operation Iron Triangle, Steele abandoned the principles he applied in the past. He received specific orders and a clear intent, but he failed to follow that intent and did not apply the principles of mission command. Instead of focusing on reconstruction and restoration, he conducted offensive operations centered on killing military aged males. Steele was not clear in his intent or mission orders and did not create a shared understanding of the specified ROE. Because of these factors, Steele failed to accomplish his mission.

Both Thunder Run and Operation Iron Triangle demonstrate that mission command requires not just “good leadership,” but also the execution of mission command’s seven principles. As previously stated, the newly revised mission command philosophy is defined by ADP 6-0 as “the army’s approach towards command and control, which enables subordinates to make rapid decisions and execute in decentralized complex environments.”¹²⁰ This is true in accordance with doctrine; however, this monograph finds that mission command encompasses more than just that. Mission Command is a system of systems made up of people and equipment underscored by training and organized to interoperate in pursuit of operational objectives. Leaders drive the process of mission command, but mission command is not just about the leader. Mission command is enabled by people, systems, training, and organizations.

¹²⁰ US Army, ADP 6-0, vii.

Conclusion/Recommendations

Mission command is a concept that appears so simple; basic leadership, most would think. Although this concept seems straightforward, the Army faces one distinct problem regarding mission command: a severe lack of prioritization in education and training since its inception. Because the fundamental principles are misunderstood, symptoms such as those identified through numerous observations at the CTCs, that mission command is not emphasized as a supporting collective task. Symptoms such as a continued reliance on centralized versus decentralized issuance and execution of assigned tasks. Symptoms such as the Army's own inability to properly define the boundary between leadership and mission command. These and a multitude of other symptoms to include micromanagement, risk-aversion, and confusion on the philosophy itself, are misidentified as core problems.

Members of the Army are confused about the concept of mission command..¹²¹ Risk-aversion among commanders and leaders is preventing the execution of disciplined initiative..¹²² Dependency on technology and real-time situational awareness enables commanders to micro-manage subordinates as opposed to empowering them to make decisions on their own in order to seize, retain, and exploit the initiative that is consistent with commander's intent..¹²³ This confusion, combined with risk-aversion and micromanagement, contributes to continuous doctrinal refinement.

Micromanagement: In theory, the mission command concept works; however, as technology has advanced, and the expectation for real-time information, mission command becomes more challenging to practice. Unmanned Aerial Vehicles, Blue Force Trackers, C2

¹²¹ Townsend, Crissman, and McCoy, "Reinvigorating the Army's Approach" (Part 1): 1.

¹²² Trent Lythgoe, "Our Risk-Averse Army: How We Got Here and How to Overcome It," Modern War Institute, 2019, accessed August 25, 2019, <https://mwi.usma.edu/risk-averse-army-got-overcome/>.

¹²³ Brito and Boring, "Disrupted, Degraded, Denied, but Dominant," 237.

platforms are all capabilities and systems developed to facilitate and enable commanders to understand and visualize the contemporary operating environment from their command post. The problem is that leaders have grown accustomed to these capabilities, maybe even dependent on them, and now use them to control subordinate actions, and constrain their initiative. “The US Army’s current misuse of systems and technology erodes the trust and confidence required to achieve the mission command philosophy. Email, full-motion video, and mission command systems allow every echelon, from battalion to corps, to see platoon action on the battlefield or in garrison. Ease of access creates a temptation to reach out to a lower echelon instead of letting the situation develop.”¹²⁴ In a sense, these technological capabilities, more often than not, lend towards micromanagement, as opposed to enabling mission command.¹²⁵

Risk-Aversion: Risk is defined as exposure to the chance of injury or loss; a hazard or dangerous chance. Risk-aversion is a strong disinclination to take risks.¹²⁶ Risk becomes a significant consideration and factor as it pertains to the application of mission command. Leaders in the Army have become risk-averse. General Milley states, “I think we’re overly centralized, overly bureaucratic, and overly risk-averse, which is the opposite of what we’re going to need in any type of warfare, but in particular, the warfare that I envision.”¹²⁷ Lack of clarity in the understanding of mission command doctrine contributes to this risk-aversion. “The Army has a problem with underwriting acceptable risk, which is evident in how the Army manages information, leverages technology, and trains and manages risk in both garrison and deployed

¹²⁴ Josh Suthoff, “What’s Really Wrong with Mission Command,” From the Green Notebook, February 11, 2019, accessed February 25, 2020, <https://fromthegreennotebook.com/2019/02/11/whats-really-wrong-with-mission-command/>.

¹²⁵ Merriam-Webster Dictionary, s.v. “Micromanagement,” accessed October 4, 2019, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/micromanage>. To manage, especially with excessive control or attention to details.

¹²⁶ Dictionary.com, s.v. “Risk-aversion,” accessed October 4, 2019, <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/risk-aversion?s=t>.

¹²⁷ Lythgoe, “Our Risk-Averse Army.”

environments.”¹²⁸ Risk-aversion needs to be addressed, and an education and training plan must be developed and implemented to transition leaders from being risk-averse to becoming risk managers, ensuring leaders and commanders are decisive when their Nation and soldiers need them the most.”¹²⁹

Confusion: When mission command doctrine is studied, it is vaguely written and contradictory, which leads to wide-ranging interpretations. Leaders across the Army adopted a variety of interpretations they believe are the practice of mission command. Consequently, leaders tend to overly constrain their subordinates with control measures or restrictive guidance, as opposed to enabling them to seize the initiative as opportunities present themselves. “While the idea of mission command has been with us for generations, the term “mission command” first officially entered Army doctrine in 2003 and underwent a significant revision in 2011. Some leaders find the new ADP 6-0 and ADRP 6-0 and the context of their implementation as sources of confusion within our Army.”¹³⁰

Lack of prioritization in education and training: There is a lack of prioritization on education and training. As the Army transitioned from COIN and security force assistance missions to decisive action and LSCO, increased demand on units to develop proficiency led to a centralized training regimen with minimal focus on education.¹³¹ Leaders have a responsibility to educate, train, and develop their subordinates to ensure mission command is actualized across their formations.”¹³²

The concept of mission command has existed since Scharnhorst, Clausewitz, and Moltke the elder. The philosophy has existed in American doctrine since 1905, although terminology and

¹²⁸ Suthoff, “What’s Really Wrong.”

¹²⁹ Joint Staff, JP 3-0, GL-15. Also called *RM*. JP 3-0 defines risk managers as “leaders who identify, assess, and control risks and make decisions that balance risk cost with mission benefits.”

¹³⁰ Townsend, Crissman, and McCoy, “Reinvigorating the Army’s Approach” (Part 1): 6.

¹³¹ Townsend, Crissman, and McCoy, “Reinvigorating the Army’s Approach” (Part 1): 6.

¹³² Townsend, Crissman, and McCoy, “Reinvigorating the Army’s Approach” (Part 1): 8.

the codification of mission command were not implemented until 2003. Previous concepts including Active Defense from 1973-1982, AirLand Battle from 1982-1995, Full Spectrum Operations from 1995-2011, Unified Land Operations from 2011-2017, and currently Multi-Domain Battle from 2017-present were taught, trained, validated, and executed across the force. Why then is today's Army not prioritizing the education and training of the force on the concept and philosophy of mission command?

The fundamental underlying issue begins with a lack of a shared understanding of the philosophy. The Army failed to create a narrative that senior leaders agree upon. Failure at the highest levels to comprehend and consistently communicate a single understanding of mission command has led to a confused force. A confused force comprised of Army leaders with different interpretations necessitates micromanagement, which drives leaders to force subordinates in line with their individual vision. Micromanagement breeds a lack of trust between leaders and subordinates, with both seeing the other as having a lack of competence. The combination of micromanagement and lack of trust lead commanders back towards a detailed control approach, which will absolutely fail in a multi-domain operating environment. Detailed control cannot keep up with the fog and friction of a decentralized multi-domain battlefield. Soldiers will die waiting for orders in a communication degraded environment as the enemy maneuvers around them. The speed required to win involves decentralized execution. The US Army needs the force to be multi-domain predators, not prey. To do so requires agile, adaptive, independent thinking leaders that apply all seven principles of mission command. This will only occur if the Army prioritizes the education, training, assessment, and validation of its leaders on the newly revised mission command doctrine at every echelon. It is about being more than “good leaders;” winning requires “good leaders” who effectively use mission command in their formations.

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