

**Comprehension or Confusion:
Commander's Intent in the AirLand Battle**

**A Monograph
by
Major John C. Coleman
United States Marine Corps**



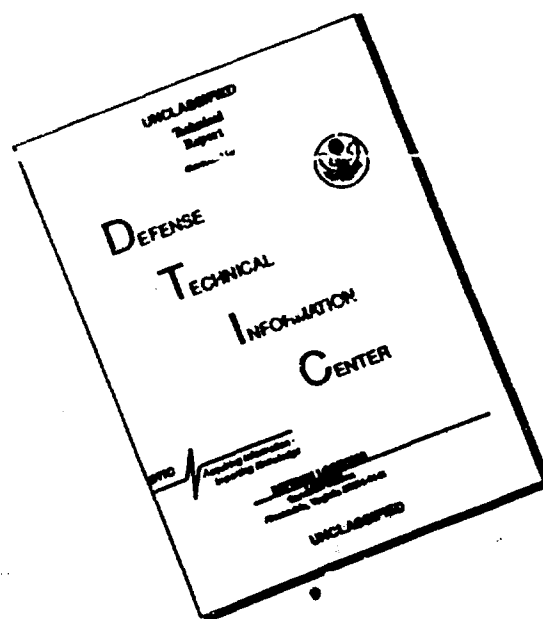
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13. ABSTRACT (Maximum 200 words) This monograph seeks to determine if the concept of commander's intent is adequately addressed in the doctrine of AirLand Battle. The study commences with a review of the theory of decentralized command. This discussion highlights the significance of commander's intent and provides three essential requirements which theory suggests are necessary to successfully implement an effective decentralized system of command. The study next reviews the historical precedent, Auftragstaktik, which U.S. Army doctrine writers adapted to the doctrine of AirLand Battle. This overview provides a complete contextual appreciation of this German system of command and action providing a model against which current U.S. Army doctrine can be compared. Having established a theoretical basis and historical precedent for commander's intent the study next presents a detailed survey of current doctrinal literature highlighting numerous inconsistencies among various publications concerning the concept. This survey also displays important variations of the current Army doctrine concerning the concept from the established historical precedent and theoretical model. The impact of these inconsistencies is followed through both the Army schoolhouses and operating forces. The monograph concludes that the concept of commander's intent is inadequately addressed in the doctrine of AirLand Battle.

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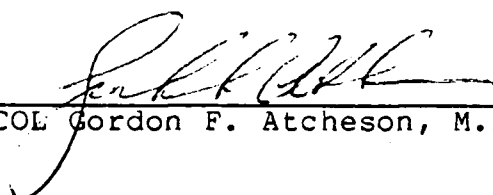
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ABSTRACT

COMPREHENSION OR CONFUSION: COMMANDER'S INTENT IN THE AIRLAND BATTLE by Major John C. Coleman, U.S. Marine Corps, 66 pages.

Historically, fog and friction have exacerbated the best laid battle plans of even the most intuitive wartime commanders. To mitigate these ever-present elements, the U.S. Army emphasizes the decentralized execution of AirLand Battle. Paramount to the successful execution of this decentralized philosophy of command is the concept of commander's intent. Yet, there currently exists much debate concerning this concept's definition and method(s) of expression. This apparent debate provides the basis for this monograph, which seeks to determine if the concept of commander's intent is adequately addressed in the doctrine of AirLand Battle.

The study commences with a review of the theory of decentralized command. This discussion highlights the significance of commander's intent and provides three essential requirements which theory suggests are necessary to successfully implement an effective decentralized system of command. The study next reviews the historical precedent, Auftragstaktik, which U.S. Army doctrine writers adapted to the doctrine of AirLand Battle. This overview provides a complete contextual appreciation of this German system of command and action providing a model against which current U.S. Army doctrine can be compared.

Having established a theoretical basis and historical precedent for commander's intent, the study next presents a detailed survey of current doctrinal literature highlighting numerous inconsistencies among various publications concerning the concept. This survey also displays important variations of the current Army doctrine concerning the concept from the established historical precedent and theoretical model. The impact of these inconsistencies is followed through both the Army schoolhouses and operating forces.

The monograph concludes that the concept of commander's intent is inadequately addressed in the doctrine of AirLand Battle. Additionally, a distillation of recommendations from a number of recent studies is provided which may assist in strengthening the doctrine's highlighted deficiencies.

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I. INTRODUCTION

With the revision of Field Manual (FM) 100-5, Operations, published in August 1982, the United States Army embraced the operational concept of AirLand Battle.¹ This publication and its follow-on refinement of 1986 represented a watershed in Army tactical and operational thought. In a bold stroke, the Army revalidated the primacy of combined arms, maneuver-styled, offensive warfare and revolutionized the battlefield focus of ground and tactical air forces in time, space, and resource.

More subtly, yet no less significant, the new doctrine incorporated an adaptation of the German principles of command and action commonly framed Auftragstaktik and somewhat erroneously translated as "mission-type control."² The doctrine's contributing authors perceived that the extended battlefield of the future would be characterized by greater complexity, uncertainty, and chaos making "centralized control of subordinates difficult if not sometimes impossible."³

To provide the necessary flexibility required to meet this challenge, they decided it was "essential to decentralize decision authority to the lowest level."⁴ At the very foundation of this imperative for decentralized command, the 1986 FM 100-5 continually extolled the concept of commander's

intent. Armed with a complete understanding of his commander's intent, a committed maneuver unit commander would conduct operations "confidently, anticipate events, and act freely and boldly without further orders" particularly when confronted with "unanticipated situations."⁵ Thus, commander's intent was to serve as a guidepost to the will of the commander for all battlefield participants in the absence of his direct intervention. This would provide focus, unity of effort, increased tempo, and promote initiative and synchronization.⁶

However, in a recent thesis entitled "Mission-Orders in the U.S. Army", Major J. D. Johnson correctly cautioned that "the incorporation of a concept in the doctrinal literature does not ensure its acceptance or practice."⁷ The principle aim of his study was to determine if the Army had clearly espoused an effective doctrine for the formulation and communication of mission orders in execution of the AirLand Battle. Yet, while he maintained that "the expression of commander's intent was integral to mission orders", he purposely limited discussion of the concept. He determined that the resolution of the "considerable ongoing debate concerning its definition and expression" was beyond the scope of his research.⁸

The problem suggested by Major Johnson provides a point of departure for further analysis. Accordingly, the focus of this study will be to examine the current debate regarding the concept of commander's intent and to investigate its scope and source. The principle goal of this research is to determine if the concept of commander's intent is adequately addressed in the doctrine of AirLand Battle at the tactical level of war.

To conduct a proper analysis of the doctrine regarding commander's intent, it is first necessary to expand the focus of discussion, reviewing in a broader context the theory of decentralized command which incorporates the concept. This analysis by necessity contrasts decentralized (mission-oriented) command with centralized (control-oriented) command philosophies. The focus of this discussion highlights the central role of commander's intent in the effective execution of decentralized command and is not intended to seek judgment on the merits of centralized or decentralized philosophies. However, this discussion does provide a suitable framework to analyze the theoretical foundation of commander's intent. This will be utilized to support a judgment as to whether or not current Army doctrine fulfills three essential requirements which theory suggest are necessary to implement an effective decentralized

system of command. These include: uniformity of thought; reliability of action; and complete confidence between subordinate and superior.

Second, many of the ideas incorporated in FM 100-5 regarding commander's intent and the encompassing decentralized command system were modeled directly from the contributing authors' appreciation and understanding of Auftragstaktik, the system of command and action employed by the World War II era German Army.⁹ For this reason, it is imperative that this analysis include a historical overview of the evolution of the concept in the German military in order to ensure an accurate contextual appreciation is represented. This overview later supports an analysis of the Army's current doctrine regarding commander's intent to ensure that it reflects an assimilation of historical study and that it is rooted in time-tested principles. In short, the analysis allows a measurement of current doctrine against a historical case which enjoyed a great deal of success.¹⁰

Having established a theoretical basis and historical precedent for commander's intent within the broader context of decentralized command, the study presents a detailed survey of current doctrinal literature which begins with the capstone manual, FM 100-5, then descends through selected subordinate

manuals. This analysis seeks to determine if inconsistencies exist among the doctrinal manuals themselves. It will also highlight possible departures of current doctrine from the historical case and theoretical model.

The final sections of this monograph consider the weight of the evidence presented to determine the adequacy of the current doctrine. The findings are summarized and presented along with several implications and recommendations drawn from consideration of the conclusion.

II. THE THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

The evolution of warfare, enhanced by dramatic advances in technology has led to high demands on mobility, agility, and decision making. How we command will be the key to our future success.... We can choose one of two paths - a strong command path or a strong control path.¹¹

The heart of the dilemma recently posed by the Commander, Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC), General John W. Foss, lies with man's eternal quest for certainty on the battlefield. As Van Creveld reflects "from Plato to NATO, the history of command in war consists essentially of an endless quest for certainty."¹² This quest has manifested itself in a vacillation somewhere between two theoretical extremes of command systems primarily distinguished with reference to their degree of centralism. Yet, as Van

Crevelld notes "centralization and decentralization are not so much opposed to each other as perversely interlocking."¹³ In essence, he is acknowledging uncertainty, Clausewitz's third element in the climate of war,¹⁴ as being ever-present on the battlefield regardless of the type command system employed. The essential difference then becomes the level in the command structure at which uncertainty is primarily resident. In Van Crevelld's own words:

Properly understood, the two ways of coping with uncertainty do not therefore consist of a diminution as opposed to acceptance, but rather of a different distribution of uncertainty among the various ranks of the hierarchy.¹⁵

If we accept Van Crevelld's "perversely interlocking" relationship between centralized and decentralized command, then it is necessary to further contrast centralization and decentralization.

In a centralized system, the tolerance for uncertainty at the top is low. Since the decision threshold is held at the highest level, all information flows upward. As the situation on the battlefield solidifies in the mind of the commander, hence uncertainty diminishes, explicit direction for action is issued downward. Thus, the centralized system is characterized as control-oriented,¹⁶ and the engine for action rests with the informed commander who decides everything.

Conversely, in a decentralized command system the commander not only accepts greater uncertainty, he has oriented his command and control process to accept it and account for it as a measured element of risk. Furthermore, the commander strives to transplant a mental impression of what he desires to accomplish on the battlefield to the minds of his subordinates. Richard Simpkin addresses this transmission of intent as the "essence" of decentralization.¹⁷ Additionally, he grants authority for action to the lowest levels so that the decision threshold is resident with those in the best position to analyze the situation. Thus, as they develop situational awareness within their sectors, subordinates act in accordance with their commander's intent. Therefore, the real engine for action in the decentralized command system is a subordinate's accurate impression of the commander's decision, both in purpose and methodology, or more simply, his intention and intentions. While the subtle distinction between intention and intentions may seem trite if not superfluous, it is in fact significant as later historical analysis will reveal.¹⁸

I would be remiss without admitting that this is indeed an over-simplification of a significantly more complex process. As Van Creveld cautions: "command, being so intimately bound up with numerous

other factors that shape war...cannot be understood in isolation."¹⁹ My only desire has been to highlight the significance of commander's intent to the success of a decentralized command system. Had it been my purpose to establish the preeminence of one command system over another, the consideration of Van Crevelde's "other factors" in this theoretical treatment would have been imperative. However, that discussion would also be irrelevant in light of the Army's current doctrine which seems to assert a principle reliance on a decentralized command system as demonstrated by the following:

The command and control system which supports the execution of AirLand Battle doctrine must facilitate freedom to operate, delegation of authority, and leadership from any critical point on the battlefield.... Initial plans establish the commander's intent...mission orders that specify what must be done without prescribing how it must be done are used in most cases.... If an unanticipated situation arises...commanders should understand the purpose of the operation well enough to act decisively, confident they are doing what their superior commander would order done were he present.²⁰

While theory can be used to describe the decentralized system of command, it can likewise be used to highlight the requirements which are essential to its effective application. In another of his works, Fighting Power, Van Crevelde clearly identifies the following three elements as mandatory for the successful implementation of decentralized command:

"uniformity of thinking, reliability of action, and complete confidence between subordinates and superiors."²¹ Consideration of the first two of these elements will be germane to our analysis of current Army doctrine. Consideration of the third element suggested by Van Creveld is deemed outside the scope of this research and is, therefore, excluded.

One may reasonably question the relevance of the elements suggested by Van Creveld in the context of a discussion intended to establish the adequacy of the doctrine concerning commander's intent. Yet, it has already been demonstrated that the concept of commander's intent is the linchpin of decentralized command. By default, if the doctrinal explanation of commander's intent is to be measured as adequate, then the doctrine defining the decentralized command philosophy at large must likewise ensure the achievement of the requirements identified by Van Creveld. But before we can analyze the adequacy of the current doctrine regarding decentralized command, it will be necessary to gain a clear understanding of the historical precedent from which it was adapted.

III. THE HISTORICAL PRECEDENT

The operational concept for AirLand Battle was formally published by General Donn A. Starry, Commander, Training and Doctrine Command, on 25 March

1981.²² With General Starry's concept, the doctrine writers at Fort Leavenworth began to draft the new manual. These writers foresaw a battlefield of immense complexity characterized by friction, chaos, and uncertainty among the many challenges of warfare in the future. In their mind, centralized control of subordinates would be impractical "if not sometimes impossible" establishing the need for a command system emphasizing greater decentralization.²³

As John Romjue revealed in his monograph "From Active Defense to AirLand Battle", many officers from the Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC), Combined Arms Center (CAC), and Forces Command (FORSCOM) were impressed with the World War II German Army's system of decentralized command and action, Auftragstaktik.²⁴ Foremost among these was the FORSCOM Commander, General Robert M. Shoemaker. In April 1981, he held a commander's conference attended by General Starry and Lieutenant General William R. Richardson, TRADOC Deputy Commander, where it was decided that an adaptation of this German concept would be included in the new doctrine.²⁵ Thus, to determine the adequacy of current Army doctrine regarding commander's intent and its encompassing system of decentralized command, its historical precedent, Auftragstaktik, must be more closely examined.

Auftragstaktik, as recognized by many, is an anachronous term applied to the greater German approach to war in general.²⁶ The term has been commonly, yet unfortunately translated "mission-type control."²⁷ While this represents an attempt to translate a concept for which there is no specific English language equivalent, it risks oversimplification. In the extreme, if attempting to adapt its practice to another country's army a half-century later, reliance on this simplistic translation promotes misapplication, if not abject failure through lack of a complete contextual appreciation. As Simpkin wisely cautions regarding translation from Germanic to English and the Romance languages "one has to dissect the underlying thought and express it in a radically different way."²⁸

In an attempt to provide greater clarity to the true meaning of the term, Generalmajor Carl Waegener, Chief of Staff, 5th Panzer Army offered that "from a narrow point of view, Auftragstaktik was the heart of German orders and operations.... [However, it was] more than a method of arriving at orders, actually more akin to a habit of thoughts."²⁹ Among many other numerous attempts to explain the true nature of Auftragstaktik, John T. Nelson II probably comes closest to the mark with the following:

One must be wary of focusing on any single aspect in isolation; what is now termed

Auftragstaktik formed part of a seamless fabric in the German Army's warfighting philosophy. Virtually all notions were interrelated in some fashion. They were not grafted piecemeal onto this philosophy, but evolved organically over a period of at least eighty years. Thus, the concept of Auftragstaktik is a useful analytical tool - the more so as one bears in mind its limitations and views it in its proper historical setting.³⁰

Thus, far beyond mere "mission-type control," Auftragstaktik represented a mental approach to warfare at large, a warfighting philosophy whose "interrelated notions" merit further "dissection" and "radically different" expression.

Some have traced the genesis of the German concept of decentralized command, and its subordinate concept of commander's intent, as far back as the Hessian troops returning from the American Revolutionary War.³¹ Certainly, by the time of Graf Von Moltke (The Elder) one can see the emergence of the conceptual foundation. With the advent of the railroad, he authored "a new form of scattered deployment" labeled "deployment on external lines" in direct contrast to Jomini's "favored movements on internal lines" of communication.³² While this method greatly expanded the speed of movement and breadth of operations for military forces, it also significantly stressed traditional methods of command and control.

In order to realize the fullest potential made possible by rail deployments, Moltke was forced to seek an alternative method to guide his subordinates "toward accomplishment of the common objective"³³ while outside the purview of his positive control. The essence of this new philosophy of command which he labeled the method of "General Directives"³⁴ is best described in his own words.

The advantage which a commander thinks he can attain through continual personal intervention is largely illusory. By engaging in it he assumes a task which really belongs to others, whose effectiveness he thus destroys. He also multiplies his own tasks to a point where he can no longer fill the whole of them.³⁵

More significant to the analysis at hand, Moltke determined that a clear expression of commander's intent should serve as the basis for decisions and actions by his subordinates in his absence. Further, he professed that in unanticipated situations, commander's intent should predominate even if this required his subordinates to act differently than envisioned in the original plan. The following quotes unequivocally illustrate his thoughts in this regard:

It is absolutely necessary that subordinate headquarters perceive the object of what has been ordered to enable them to obtain that objective even when conditions make it necessary to act differently than laid down in that order.³⁶

Commanders of Army corps and divisions must perceive the situation for themselves and must know how to act independently in consonance with the general intention.³⁷

Each subordinate command should be informed of so much of the intentions of the higher headquarters as is necessary for the attainment of the object...because unforeseen events can change the course of things as necessary.³⁸

It is useful here to refer to Webster's New World Dictionary which defines "object" as "what is aimed at; purpose; end; goal."³⁹ Thus, Moltke's use of "object" or "general intention" might be described in English as simply "purpose." Additionally, we notice Moltke's distinctive use of "intentions" for each subordinate command while "general intention" seems to apply to all. As mentioned earlier, this becomes significant in describing the German concept of commander's intent as later discussions will demonstrate.

Moltke's method of "General Directives" highlighted above provided the foundation for the German development of an effective decentralized command philosophy. To institutionalize this philosophy, he incorporated it into the instruction at the Kriegsakademie, the War College of the General Staff.⁴⁰ This ensured all officers destined for higher service to the Army were not only imbued with a "common body of military doctrine", but with a philosophy of command which exhibited initiative by

ensuring the "moral freedom of the individual" while extracting a "tradition of subordinate's responsibility."⁴¹ Thus, we can see from its inception, the German model of decentralized command began on a foundation which would eventually ensure the attainment of Van Creveld's three criteria for a successful decentralized system of command.

Refinement of the framework established by Von Moltke and its continued incorporation into the mind of the German Army progressed through the turn of the century. Selective quotes from an article written for a professional journal in 1907 by Colonel Von Spohn of the Imperial Army is descriptive of the embodiment of the philosophy. Regarding the manner in which orders are developed, Colonel Von Spohn wrote:

An order should contain all that the subordinate must know in order to act on his own responsibility for attainment of the object in view, and no more.... Orders, during the transmission of which the situation may become changed, or those which may have to be carried out under circumstances which cannot be foreseen, must abstain especially from details.... These must indicate the object in view, but must leave the method of attaining the object alone.⁴²

In view of the natural tendency within the military for commanders to seek direct control of everything (centralization) Von Spohn continued:

A serious drawback in the mania for giving orders (whether it arises from a spirit of domineering, or is only the result of that anxious care which conceives that nothing goes without an order), is that all independence,

all initiative, all love of responsibility on the part of the subordinate is killed.⁴³

Von Spohn summarized the essence of the German philosophy of decentralized command as follows:

This much is certain, that we can only bring up and train subordinate leaders to have independence, initiative, and fondness of responsibility if we do not crib, cabin, and confine them, but rather give them the freedom of action within their allotted space...to deprive the subordinate commander of the independence to which he is entitled, means robbing him of the pleasure of service and the pleasure of action, and, at the very least, diminishes his interest in his work and with it the germ of all active endeavor...untimely interference, repeated orders, and such like, produces instead of trustworthiness, independence, and initiative which should be our aim, a feeling of insecurity and uncertainty which destroys any willingness to accept responsibility...the superior officers who give their subordinates - in action and everywhere else where it is possible - the independence which is their due, and even demand such power of initiative from them, will never be left in the lurch. They will find their troops, down to the smallest detachment, always in the right place throughout the battle and after its conclusion.⁴⁴

These lengthy excerpts from the writings of Colonel Von Spohn highlight some significant fundamentals which are the bedrock of Auftragstaktik and are essential to a complete contextual appreciation of the concept. A review of Von Spohn's writings establishes the following fundamentals:

- The subordinate is entitled to freedom of action.
- All orders constrain a subordinate's freedom of action and therefore must only be issued when necessary and should include only those specific details which ensure mutual

cooperation toward accomplishment of the stated intent.

- Orders must abstain from details particularly where the situation is unclear.

- Orders must always specify the intention of the commander but must leave the specifics of how the intention is to be achieved to the subordinate's own choosing.

- Detailed orders will always stifle independence, initiative, and the desire for greater responsibility.

From the above, it is apparent that through almost fifty years in applying the precepts of Von Moltke, the German Officer Corps had come to realize a direct link between what is now referred to as the cybernetic and moral domains of war.⁴⁵ That is, they realized that a chosen system of command and control either inhibits the human qualities of "independence, initiative, and fondness of responsibility," or capitalizes on them. The evolution of the system of command and action, Auftragstaktik, was a manifestation of the German choice to eschew overly centralized command systems which inhibit the innate human qualities of subordinates. Thus, the real foundation of their approach to command in war was anchored in "the unhampered employment of human qualities to the greatest extent."⁴⁶ The German solution appears to be the only method of command and control which can provide a framework where "the competency,

decisiveness, and initiative of both junior and senior can be added together" and which recognizes "only the sum total of those qualities can produce the greatest possible results."⁴⁷

Three other significant findings regarding the German philosophy of command are essential to a complete contextual appreciation of Auftragstaktik. The first of these is related to technical advances. While there were quantum advances made in the period preceding World War II in such things as radio communications, the Germans resisted the temptation to allow these to place greater reliance on technically facilitated control. Instead, "those advances in technology were first tailored" to their philosophy of command so that they facilitated the ability of "the commander to exercise command from the critical point on the battlefield" rather than allowing greater reliance in control.⁴⁸ Thus, the "principles of radio-based command" primarily developed by Heinz Guderian and General Fritz Fellgiebel, Chief of Wermacht Signal Service, allowed the commander to command forward while maintaining communications with his staff.⁴⁹

The second of these finding regarding the German philosophy of command addresses the composition and role of the commander's staff. The Germans firmly believed that a small, highly-trained staff was a key

element to the effective implementation of their philosophy of command. Specifically, they eschewed large bureaucracies laden with "specialists."⁵⁰ The following quote from General Franz Halder typifies this belief:

A small body of highly qualified persons able to inform themselves on all points and to enforce the will of the commander is more effective and valuable than a large bureaucratic staff. The most serious menace to an intellectually unimpeded and versatile conduct of operations, is excessive centralization and its willing and exacting servant, statistics.⁵¹

The final and most significant finding centers on the German distinction between commander's intention and commander's intentions. Utilizing the 1933 German Field Service Regulations, Truppen Fuhrung, and the 1977 publication, Army Command and Control System, HDv 100/200, Major William F. Crain carefully traced the German's consistent and complementary utilization of these two terms in a monograph entitled "The Mission: The Dilemma of Specified Task and Implied Commander's Intent."⁵² Crain demonstrates that in the German context, commander's intention relates to the purpose of the task(s) for a force on whole, while commander's intentions expressed the purposes of each subelement's assigned tasks.⁵³ He highlights this consistent distinction quoting the 1933 and 1977 doctrinal publications with the following quotes:

As troops enter battle there must be no doubt in any commander's mind as to the intention of the high command.⁵⁴

...it is often best for the commander to clarify his intentions to his subordinates...⁵⁵

The major commander should inform his subordinate commanders personally and explain to them his intention.⁵⁶

The decision reflects the major commander's intentions...it contains the basic outline of the operation plan.⁵⁷

In essence, Crain establishes that what we refer to today as commander's intent was, in the German context, actually two separate elements. That is, commander's intention expressed the purpose of the mission or, as some current Army doctrinal publications would indicate, the "why" of the mission statement.⁵⁸ On the other hand, intentions, in the German context, was the commander's conceptualization of the tasks with associated purposes assigned among subordinate elements specifically defining their relation to the designated focus of effort. Intentions in today's terminology is, therefore, most closely aligned with the concept of the operation. The review of the German doctrinal publications from the 1933 Truppen Ffuhrung to the 1977 HDv 100/200 strongly supports this contention. Even more convincing, we have already traced this distinction all the way back to Von Moltke, the progenitor of the German philosophy of decentralized command. Crain

finally asserts that "these subtle differences between intention and intentions are not only significant, but essential to effective execution" of the German concept of decentralized command and action, Auftragstaktik.⁵⁹

While all of the foregoing provides a more complete understanding of Auftragstaktik, it does little to demonstrate its effectiveness. FM 100-5 states "the ultimate measure of command and control effectiveness is whether the force functions more effectively and more quickly than the enemy."⁶⁰ To gain insight into the effectiveness of Auftragstaktik as measured against the criteria suggested by FM 100-5, a brief look at German tactical performance during World War II is sufficient. Summarizing his analysis of the World War II German Army, Trevor N. Dupuy offered the following:

The record shows that the Germans consistently outfought the far more numerous Allied armies that eventually defeated them.... On a man for man basis the German soldiers consistently inflicted casualties at about a fifty-percent higher rate than they incurred from the opposing British and American troops under all circumstances. This was true when they were attacking and when they were defending, when they had local superiority and when, as usually was the case, they were outnumbered, when they had air superiority and when they did not, when they won and when they lost.⁶¹

Ultimate defeat aside, much of the credit for this German tactical performance, particularly in cases where they were "outnumbered three, five, even

seven to one,"⁶² has been attributed to Auftragstaktik. This superior system of command and action continually produced advantage in the cycle of "observation-orientation-decision-and action."⁶³ Thus, we may state with conviction that the German model of decentralized command and control met the "ultimate test" as defined by FM 100-5. Surely Generals Cavazos, Shoemaker, Richardson, and Starry must have felt so when they agreed and directed that the doctrine writers should adapt the German method of command and control to the doctrine of AirLand Battle.⁶⁴

Armed with a sufficient contextual appreciation of the threads which were woven into the "seamless fabric"⁶⁵ of Auftragstaktik, we are provided a historical model against which we can measure the adequacy of the current doctrine. This evaluation can be used to determine if the adaptation of the German model into U.S. Army doctrine appropriately assimilates the results of a complete historical study, takes maximum advantage of the German professional experience, and has firm roots in similar time-tested principles which the German Army applied.

IV. THE DOCTRINE OF COMMAND IN THE AIRLAND BATTLE

As we consider the current doctrine regarding commander's intent, our earlier theoretical

discussions indicate we should first discern the overarching philosophy of command which establishes the doctrinal framework that incorporates the concept. Additionally, if this philosophy describes a principally decentralized system, theory further suggests that this framework must promote uniformity in thought, reliability for action, and mutual trust and confidence between superior and subordinates in order to enjoy some measure of success. With these thoughts in mind, our attention now turns to the current doctrine.

As we review the doctrine of command in AirLand Battle, it is somewhat surprising that nowhere in FM 100-5 can one find a clear, concise statement which addresses the overarching philosophy of command in the U.S. Army. What can be found after very careful and thorough analysis, however, is a model of command "sporadically embedded"⁶⁶ throughout which indicates that the Army intends to employ a decentralized method. This less than explicit intention to rely on decentralization is continually reinforced throughout by allusion to the significance of commander's intent.

Searching for the basis of the Army's philosophy of command, one is naturally guided to Chapter I "The Army and How It Fights" to a section entitled "Command and Control." Yet, as opposed to a

definitive delineation of a fundamental philosophy,
this section presents only the following:

The more fluid the battlefield, the more important and difficult it will be to identify decisive points and to focus combat power there. Under such conditions, it is imperative that the overall commander's intent and concept of operation be understood throughout the force. Communications will be interrupted by enemy action at critical times and units will frequently have to fight while out of contact with higher headquarters and adjacent units. Subordinate leaders will be expected to act on their own initiative within the framework of commander's intent.⁶³

This less than definitive statement unquestionably implies a decentralized method and highlights the significance of commander's intent, but it falls far short of a clear, unequivocal statement of command philosophy. Thus, the reader is forced to search on.

Chapter II, "Fundamentals of AirLand Battle Doctrine", presents another section entitled "Command and Control." This section reinforces the premise that the U.S. Army intends a principle reliance on decentralized command and control although nowhere does it specifically state so.⁶⁴ While it does describe some of the essential characteristics of a decentralized system, it is incomplete in this regard. Further, it never distinguishes between command and control, and the reader is left to determine which should predominate. Simply stated, a clearly articulated philosophy of command which

emphasizes command, the subjugation of control, and a primary reliance on decentralization cannot be found with specificity anywhere in the manual. Yet throughout, this is precisely what is implied. However, it is only through a most discerning and exhaustive study that one can distinguish this implication.

The lack of a clearly articulated philosophy of command complicates the analysis of commander's intent because the doctrine never clearly establishes the framework in which the concept operates. As a simple example of how an overarching philosophy of command might appear, Appendix 1 contains an extract from the U.S. Marine Corps' FM 100-5 equivalent, Fleet Marine Force Manual (FMFM) 1, entitled Warfighting. Without a similarly explicit enunciation of command philosophy in FM 100-5, the reader is left on his own to deduce its substantive elements and conceptualize how the concept of commander's intent relates to the philosophy on whole. One may surmise that this deficiency makes the attainment of uniformity in thinking extremely difficult, if not altogether impossible.

While we may find FM 100-5 deficient regarding an explicit enunciation of the Army's philosophy of command, it very clearly articulates the significance of the concept of commander's intent to command in

battle. Throughout the manual, commander's intent is woven into the fabric of the AirLand Battle operational concept and thus becomes indispensable to the successful employment of the doctrines tenets and imperatives. The following quotes highlight this significance:

Initiative requires a willingness and ability to act independently within the framework of the higher commander's intent.⁷⁰

If subordinates are to exercise initiative without endangering the overall success of the force, they must thoroughly understand the commander's intent.⁷¹

Synchronization need not depend on explicit coordination if all forces involved fully understand the intent of the commander.⁷²

Committed maneuver unit commanders should understand the purpose [intention?] of the operation well enough to act decisively, confident that they are doing what their commander would order done were he present.⁷³

The fundamental prerequisite for unity of effort...is an effective system of command which relies on leadership to provide purpose.... Leaders set the example, communicate their intent....⁷⁴

While all of the above quotations highlight the significance of commander's intent to the execution of AirLand Battle, none attempt its definition or prescribe how it is expressed. As a matter of fact, nowhere in FM 100-5 is the concept defined as to content or method(s) of expression. This glaring deficiency requires the reader to seek answers in other manuals subordinate to FM 100-5.

As we descend into the subordinate doctrinal manuals we recognize that we move from the conceptual explanation of AirLand Battle doctrine to more explicit, definitive doctrinal exposition. We further recognize that in the case of branch-specific manuals, FM 100-5 serves as the point of departure for addressing all branch-specific doctrinal issues. However, because we have found that FM 100-5 does not define commander's intent or describe how it is to be expressed, we must question how the separate branches will address the concept in the command process.

In light of the above, we expand the focus of our research effort to include selected elements of the command process (mission analysis, mission purpose, mission tasks, and concept of operations,) in an attempt to determine their relation to commander's intent since these relations are not articulated in FM 100-5. With this focus, two specific manuals merit close attention in the review of subordinate doctrinal publications. FM 101-5, Staff Organization and Operations, and FM 101-5-1, Operational Terms and Symbols.

FM 101-5 states that on receipt of a mission from higher headquarters, a commander and his staff initiate a decision making process which begins with mission analysis.⁷⁵ The FM defines mission analysis in the following terms:

The mission analysis is the means through which the commander obtains an understanding of the mission. It involves identifying the tasks that must be performed, the purpose to be achieved by accomplishing the tasks, and the constraints on unit actions.... Understanding the purpose to be achieved through accomplishing the tasks is important for two reasons. First, insight is obtained as to the intentions of the superior commander. Secondly, this understanding assists the commander in formulating courses of action by providing a means to determine their feasibility and whether or not they will accomplish the mission.⁷⁶

The results of this analytical process are expressed in a restated mission. FM 101-5 describes this statement as "a clear, concise statement of the task (or tasks) to be accomplished by the command and the purpose to be achieved."⁷⁷ From this discussion one might deduce the following:

Mission = task(s) + purpose

Purpose = intention or insight into intentions?

Purpose predominates over task

Purpose achieved = mission accomplishment

Thus, we have finally begun to approach a doctrinal definition of commander's intent. Yet, we are not quite sure if we can emphatically state that mission purpose equals intention or merely reflects insight into the commander's intentions. One other significant finding is evident from the above discussion and that is purpose (intention or insight into intentions) is not created by the subordinate commander, it is given by his superior.

FM 101-5 describes the culmination of the decision making process as an announcement by the commander of a specifically selected course of action and his concept for its execution.⁷⁸ This concept is defined as "a visualization of the operation from start to completion and it provides to subordinates the commander's intent so that mission accomplishment is possible in the absence of communications or further instructions."⁷⁹ One may logically become confused at this point. Our earlier analysis linked intention (or insight into intention) to the purpose of the mission statement. Now it appears that intent is more closely associated to the methodology of execution or concept of the operation. But where does that leave purpose and how is it then clearly defined? A clear definition of purpose is mandatory because we have already seen that the accomplishment of the purpose (and not necessarily the task) is essential to mission accomplishment. If purpose is not the intention, then what is it?

In rising frustration, we turn to FM 101-5-1 in hopes that the manual charged with clear definition of the all-important common doctrinal terminology will provide definitive answers to our questions. We are first drawn to the definition of commander's intent which is described as follows:

Commander's vision of the battle - how he expects to fight and what he expects to

accomplish (see also concept of operations).⁸⁰

Turning to "concept of operations", the FM states:

A graphic, verbal, or written statement in broad outline that gives an overall picture of a commander's assumptions or intent in regard to an operation or series of operations.... It is described in sufficient detail for the staff and subordinate commander's to understand what they are to do and how to fight the battle without further instructions.⁸¹

Finally, to define "mission", FM 101-5-1 provides the following:

The primary task assigned to an individual, unit, or force. It usually [emphasis added] contains who, what, when, where and the reason therefore, but seldom specifies how.⁸²

As opposed to providing clarity to our analysis of FM 101-5, these definitive statements add greater confusion. First, we earlier determined that purpose was predominant in the mission statement and that achievement of purpose was essential to mission accomplishment. However, the above indicates task is predominant and purpose (reason therefore) is merely a usually included element of the mission!

Secondly, our analysis of FM 101-5 established that the purpose in the mission statement was given by the higher headquarters, not created by the subordinate commander. How then, can purpose provide insight into the commander's intent when, by the above definition, intent is how the subordinate commander

expects to fight his battle and is something that he does clearly create, i.e., his concept of the operation. One might easily conclude that we are talking two separate elements here, that is, purpose (or reason therefore) of the mission and methodology (or concept) of how we expect to accomplish it. Might we even venture at this point, intention and intentions! The historical model would certainly support this contention.

Finally, we surmise that a doctrinal definition of "purpose" as a key (if not critical) element of the mission statement discussed in FM 101-5 might clear up our confusion. To our chagrin, however, "purpose" is not defined in FM 101-5-1.

The review of the doctrine thus far suggests several contentious issues with regard to the theoretical and historical discussions presented earlier. First and foremost, both theory and history indicated that the basis for a successful decentralized system must be established in a comprehensive, well-articulated philosophy of command. Furthermore, the philosophy must be embodied throughout the mind of the force providing Generalmajor Waegener's common "habit of thoughts,"⁸³ or Van Creveld's "uniformity in thinking."⁸⁴ Yet, our review has indicated that the doctrinal expression of the Army's command philosophy

is inarticulate, incomplete, and only discerned through exhaustive analysis. Can we expect such an inadequate expression to provide this commonality of thought?

Second, Van Creveld suggested that to successfully employ a decentralized method requires reliability of action. Two elements which might promote such reliability include a common tactical doctrine (implies common tactical terminology) and a common decision making process.⁸⁵ As we have discovered, however, the doctrine is incomplete and confusing with regard to commander's intent and its relationship with other essentials of the command process (the purpose in the mission statement, the commander's vision, and the concept of operation). Additionally, the doctrine specifically related to the decision making process is likewise confusing. While FM 101-5 suggests that purpose is predominant in the analysis process, FM 101-5-1 suggests task is predominant. Furthermore, neither task nor purpose is defined in FM 101-5-1. Can we logically expect the operating forces to sift through this confusion, reach the same conclusions, and attain the essential reliability of action?

Regarding the historical precedent, Auftragstaktik, one might rather generously surmise that the Army's adaptation of this system of command

and action has attempted to take advantage of the German professional experience and the time-tested principles of command which they applied. Yet, we must question whether this adaptation includes the assimilation of a complete historical study. The adaptation appears entirely too focused in general terms on mission-type control, and specifically, on commander's intent. We have already demonstrated that these elements are only some of the threads in the fabric of Auftragstaktik.

Both the theoretical and historical models highlight the significance of commander's intent as the true engine of mission-type control within the decentralized framework. Certainly, it has been demonstrated that current doctrine underscores this significance. Yet, we must question the relation of the doctrinal interpretation of commander's intent to the German concept which differentiates between commander's intention (purpose) and commander's intentions (methodology). Further, we must question whether it is practical to adapt the concepts of commander's intent and mission-type control without simultaneously adapting the entire philosophy which we have described as the fabric of Auftragstaktik. In short, it might be said that while we attempted to adapt the engine (commander's intent) and drive train (mission-type orders) of the German system, we never

adequately redesigned our basic automobile (command philosophy) to accommodate the changes. If this is true, what kind of product should we expect our assembly line (educational institutions) to produce.

As stated earlier, the object of this study is to determine if the concept of commander's intent is adequately addressed in the doctrine of AirLand Battle. While one may have already formulated an opinion regarding the doctrine's adequacy at this point, such formulation is premature and of little utility. We must first analyze the interpretation and resultant education concerning the doctrine in the Army's formal schools, and then evaluate the application of the doctrine by the operating forces. Such analysis will allow a determination as to whether the doctrine provides a guide to action, reduces friction, promotes standardized language and practice, and facilitates the orders process. It is only through this analysis that we can truly measure the adequacy of the doctrine.

V. THE DEBATE: MIXED RESULTS IN EDUCATION AND FAILURE IN APPLICATION

In 1986 the U.S. Army Training Board published Discussion Paper 1-86, "Auftragstaktik in the U.S. Army", which included several observations germane to the analysis at hand. These included the following:

1. The school system orients primarily on the creation and use of lengthy, detailed orders.⁸⁶

2. Field training generally tends toward the use of longer rather than shorter orders.⁸⁷

3. Field training reflects what is taught in schools.⁸⁸

4. We train young officers to expect specific "how to" guidance and when this guidance is missing, subordinates falter. Unlike German officers who are programmed to expect maximum flexibility to exercise their initiative in accordance with commander's intent, the U.S. officer expects to receive "how to" orders.⁸⁹

The obvious implication of these conclusions is that the schoolhouses, and consequently the operating forces of the U.S. Army, have largely eschewed mission-type orders which are characteristically short, less detailed, and purpose vice task oriented. Further, they suggest that the force has largely accepted mission as defined in FM 101-5-1 (the primary task of a unit or force) and rejected that proposed in FM 101-5 (task + purpose where purpose predominates). This may partially explain the generation of lengthy, detailed orders that specify "how to" which are generally the product of a mission analysis entirely too focused on task vice purpose. While this may be perfectly adequate for a more centralized system of command, it is grossly incapable in achieving the decision making agility demanded in AirLand Battle. Additionally, some of this orientation on mission task

vice purpose is a manifestation of the confusion resulting from the lack of a coherent philosophy of command and the absence of a doctrinal definition of commander's intent which specifies its relation to mission purpose and the concept of operations.

We might concede, however, that Discussion Paper 1-86 is five years old and is not indicative of current instruction or application of doctrine regarding commander's intent and mission-type control. However, three recently completed studies indicate that the conclusions of the Army Training Board remain valid. Two of these by Majors Johnson and Crain, have already been cited. The third is a thesis by Major Robert J. Tezza entitled "Teaching Mission Orders in Officers Advance Course Instruction: Myth or Reality?".

The essence of Major Tezza's study was a comparison of instruction at the Infantry and Armor Advanced Courses. The results of his study indicate that the two schools approach the instruction concerning the Army doctrine of command and control differently. While he found the Infantry School's instruction was in harmony with FM 101-5 placing emphasis on the primacy of mission purpose (intention) over task, he found that mission analysis and the resultant restated mission were task-oriented at the Armor School.⁹⁰ The results of his study indicate a

dichotomy of thought among separate branches regarding the doctrinal interpretations of FMs 100-5, 101-5 and 101-5-1. While his study does indicate some improvement with regards to the assertions of the Army Training Board, specifically at the Infantry School, the improvement is not universal. The findings of Crain and Johnson further substantiate the continued evidence of a debate regarding the interpretation of doctrine.

Johnson primarily focused his study on the Army's educational institutions through a survey of resident students at a number of schools located at Fort Leavenworth. His research was orchestrated to determine the overall effectiveness of the U.S. Army's mission-oriented doctrine at the tactical level. His methodology included the administration of a survey designed to determine if the subjects had a common understanding of the term "mission" and whether they could correctly identify the characteristics of mission orders. The survey's subjects principally came from the current student bodies at Command and General Staff College, Pre-Command Course, Combined Arms and Services Staff School, and the Tactical Commander's Development Course. The primary results of his study indicated the following:

1. The U.S. Army's decentralized command and control philosophy is not adequately taught in the Army schools.⁹¹

2. Fifty-nine percent of the officers surveyed believed they understood mission orders well enough to use them in combat but could not demonstrate a knowledge level to support their contention.⁹²

3. Thirty-eight percent did not know that the doctrine regarding mission orders required them to change their mission [task] when the situation changed dramatically and communication was lost with their commander.⁹³

4. Only twenty percent of the officers surveyed were able to identify all the characteristics of mission orders.⁹⁴

Johnson summarized his findings with the general conclusion that "the U.S. Army does not have an effective doctrine for the formulation of mission orders at the tactical level."⁹⁵

Crain's study, on the other hand, focused on the doctrine's application by the operating forces. The basis for his analysis was the extensive evidence contained in the National Training Center's (NTC) files from the rotations of units to include the unit orders, taped After-Action Reviews (AARs) and Unit Take-Home Packets (THPs). Crain's study found only limited success achieved in implementing mission-oriented command and control. He attributed this marginal performance to the following problems:

1. Confusing doctrine [which] hinders the process of mission-oriented orders.⁹⁶

2. Inadequate communication of commander's intent.⁹⁷

3. Mission statements [which] are alarmingly incomplete, only nineteen percent including task and purpose.⁹⁸

4. A predominant focus on task accomplishment rather than meeting the commander's intent.⁹⁹

5. The contents of mission statements [which] indicate confusion of the terms "operations," "task," and "purpose." This results in mission statements which appear as "attack to seize" and "defend to retain" specifying a type of combat operation as the task, the original task as the purpose, and omission altogether of the original purpose.¹⁰⁰

Crain concludes that the "U.S. Army's experience at the NTC indicates there is a problem with intent communication and effective execution."¹⁰¹

Probably the most condemning statement as to the problems associated with the doctrine related to commander's intent was related during a recent AirLand Battle Future MAPEX conducted 11 September 1990 at Fort Leavenworth. After a discussion concerning commander's intent was presented by Brigadier General Miller, General Foss stated that "the definitions, purposes, and relationships of the commander's vision, his intent, and the concept of the operation needed to be more clearly established in doctrine."¹⁰² In the same session, General Foss approved the following definition for commander's intent:

Intent is the commander's stated vision which defines: the purpose of the operation, the relationship among the force, the enemy, and the terrain; and briefly how the end state will be achieved by the force as a whole.¹⁰³

While it is heartening that those most responsible for doctrine have identified the problem, the proposed definition hardly creates an impression that the problem is soon to be solved. The proposal merely wraps everything that could possibly have any relation to the concept into a broad statement which neither provides succinct definition nor solves the doctrinal shortcomings regarding the other essentials of the command process.

In view of the above discussion, we must conclude that the doctrine describing commander's intent and the decentralized system of command which incorporates it does not provide an adequate guide to action. This analysis has highlighted significant evidence which supports this contention. Most compelling among this evidence is the divergent approach to instruction of the doctrine at the Advanced Infantry and Armor Courses. Regretfully, Tezza's study clearly indicates we are institutionalizing a dichotomous "habit of thought" between the Armor and Infantry Branches.

Additionally, as opposed to reducing friction in the process of command and control, the confusing doctrine is increasing it. The scope of debate regarding the definition and method(s) of expressing commander's intent alone would support this contention. The simple fact that Johnson's survey

indicated fifty-nine percent of the officers attending the Army's premier schools at Fort Leavenworth stated they understood mission orders but could not demonstrate a knowledge level to support their contention portends potential disaster. If his number is only marginally representative of the officer corps at large, imagine the friction that these officers will generate as they execute command and staff responsibilities attempting to apply a doctrine which they clearly do not understand.

The discussion also highlights that the doctrine does not promote standard language and practice, nor does it facilitate the orders process. First, we demonstrated earlier that the lexicon of tactical terminology is imprecise, confusing, and significantly incomplete. Additionally, the process of mission analysis as practiced by the operating force is entirely too focused on task vice purpose resulting in lengthy, detailed, "how to" vice mission-type orders.

VI. SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATIONS

The initial review of theory indicated that the concept of commander's intent was the linchpin of an effective decentralized system of command. Further, theory suggested that successful application of decentralized command, and by default, the concept of

commander's intent, required uniformity of thought and reliability in action. Our analysis of the current doctrine specifically related to commander's intent, and the philosophy of decentralized command on whole, demonstrated a failure to meet the requirements which theory suggests are necessary.

Further, the research dissected the historical precedent, Auftragstaktik, to establish a complete contextual appreciation of the threads which were woven into its "seamless fabric" over a period of eighty years. Against this historical model, we evaluated the current doctrine and found that our adaptation of the German system of command and action does not reflect a complete assimilation of the key components of that system. The analysis indicated that what we refer to today as commander's intent represented two separate elements in the German context. Additionally, the research indicated that our adaptation of the German model is entirely too focused on mission-type orders and commander's intent and excludes an overarching and clearly articulated philosophy of command.

Finally, we considered the institutionalization of the doctrine through the Army's schoolhouses and its application by the operating forces at the NTC to support a conclusion as to the adequacy of the doctrine. This analysis demonstrated that the

doctrine fails to provide an acceptable guide to action, does not reduce friction, does not promote standardized language or practice, nor does it facilitate the orders process.

In light of the foregoing, one must conclude that the concept of commander's intent is inadequately addressed in the doctrine of AirLand Battle. However, theory, the German historical model, Auftragstaktik, and serious studies like those of Majors Johnson, Crain, and Tezza have probably placed the remedies to the current deficiency at our fingertips. A distillation of recommendations from all of the above might indicate the following:

1. FM 100-5 requires a clearly articulated philosophy of command which emphasizes command, subjugates control, and expresses a primary reliance on decentralization. Further, this philosophy must be embodied in the mind of the force to promote "uniformity of thought" and "reliability of action."
2. FM 101-5-1 must define mission as task plus purpose, emphasizing that purpose is predominant.
3. Tactical tasks (block, canalize, retain, etc.) require explicit definition in FM 101-5-1.
4. The two elements of commander's intent require separation and definition. Doctrine could relate the German "general intention" to the purpose in the mission statement. "Commander's intentions" could then be defined as the purposes of the separate tasks assigned to each subordinate element. Collectively, "intentions" is therefore expressed in the concept of the operation.
5. Modify the current subparagraph under execution to reflect "missions" to

subordinates vice "tasks." This would uniformly present task + purpose, reinforcing a mission-orientation vice task-orientation.

One final general observation is made with regard to this study. While the entire research effort was focused on the concept of commander's intent, time and again it was apparent that the lack of a clearly articulated, unequivocal philosophy of command was an underlying basis for much of the doctrinal shortcomings, educational confusion, and application failure in the operating forces. Until this weakness is addressed, attempting to simply clarify the doctrine specifically regarding commander's vision, commander's intent, purpose and the like will be similar to treating the symptoms of a disease without treating its root cause. In the short term, we might feel a little better, but in the long run, the disease will prevail and may even prove fatal.

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⁵ Ibid., p. 22.

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¹¹ John W. Foss, "Command," Military Review, May 1990, p. 3.

¹² Martin Van Creveld, Command in War, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985, p. 264.

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¹⁴ Carl Von Clausewitz, On War, ed. and trans. by Michael Howard and Peter Paret, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984, p. 104. "Four elements make up the climate of war: danger, exertion, uncertainty, and chance."

¹⁵ Van Creveld, Command in War, p. 274.

¹⁶ Raanar Gissan, "Command, Control, and Communications Technology," Dissertation, 1979, pp. 66-67.

¹⁷ Richard Simpkin, Race to the Swift, London and New York: Brassey's Publishers, 1985, p. 206.

¹⁸ William Crain, "The Mission: The Dilemma of Specified Task and Implied Commander's Intent," SAMS Monograph, 1990, pp. 7-8.

¹⁹ Van Creveld, Command in War, p. 261. To highlight the difficulty in trying to identify one or more "master principles" which should "govern the structure of command in war", Van Creveld identifies numerous other factors which significantly impact on any system of command. These include: "technology, nature of armament, manpower systems, tactics and strategy, organizational structure, training, discipline, the political construction of states, and the social makeup of armies."

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²⁴ Ibid., p. 58-59.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 59.

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³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

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⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 3-17.

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⁶⁰ FM 100-5, p. 22.

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APPENDIX 1: PHILOSOPHY OF COMMAND

It is essential that our philosophy of command support the way we fight. First and foremost, in order to generate the tempo of operations we desire and to best cope with the uncertainty, disorder, and fluidity of combat, command must be decentralized. That is, subordinate commanders must make decisions on their own initiative, based on their understanding of their senior's intent, rather than passing information up the chain of command and waiting for the decision to be passed down. Further, a competent subordinate commander who is at the point of decision will naturally have a better appreciation for the true situation than a senior some distance removed. Individual initiative and responsibility are of paramount importance. The principal means by which we implement decentralized control is through the use of mission tactics, which we will discuss in detail later.

Second, since we have concluded that war is a human enterprise and no amount of technology can reduce the human dimension, our philosophy of command must be based on human characteristics rather than on equipment or procedures. Communications equipment and command and staff procedures can enhance our ability to command, but they must not be used to replace the human element of command. Our philosophy must not

only accommodate but must exploit human traits such a boldness, initiative, personality, strength of will, and imagination.

Our philosophy of command must also exploit the human ability to communicate implicitly. We believe that implicit communication - to communicate through mutual understanding, using a minimum of key, well-understood phrases or even anticipating each other's thoughts - is a faster, more effective way to communicate than through the use of detailed, explicit instructions. We develop this ability through familiarity and trust, which are based on a shared philosophy and shared experience.

This concept has several practical implications. First, we should establish long-term working relationships to develop the necessary familiarity and trust. Second, key people - "actuals" - should talk directly to one another when possible, rather than through communicators or messengers. Third, we should communicate orally when possible, because we communicate also in how we talk; our inflections and tone of voice. And fourth, we should communicate in person when possible, because we communicate also through our gestures and bearing.

A commander should command from well forward. This allows him to see and sense firsthand the ebb and flow of combat, to gain an intuitive appreciation for

the situation which he cannot obtain from reports. It allows him to exert his personal influence at decisive points during the action. It also allows him to locate himself closer to the events that will influence the situation so that he can observe them directly and circumvent the delays and inaccuracies that result from passing information up the chain of command. Finally, we recognize the importance of personal leadership. Only by his physical presence - by demonstrating the willingness to share danger and privation - can the commander fully gain the trust and confidence of his subordinates.

We must remember that command from the front does not equate to oversupervision of subordinates.

As part of our philosophy of command we must recognize that war is inherently disorderly, uncertain, dynamic, and dominated by friction. Moreover, maneuver warfare, with its emphasis on speed and initiative, is by nature a particularly disorderly style of war. The conditions ripe for exploitation are normally also very disorderly. For commanders to try to gain certainty as a basis for actions, maintain positive control of events at all times, or shape events to fit their plans is to deny the very nature of war. We must therefore be prepared to cope - even better, to thrive - in an environment of chaos, uncertainty, constant change, and friction. If we can

come to terms with those conditions and thereby limit their debilitating effects, we can use them as a weapon against a foe who does not cope as well.

In practical terms this means that we must not strive for certainty before we act for in so doing we will surrender the initiative and pass up opportunities. We must not try to maintain positive control over subordinates since this will necessarily slow our tempo and inhibit initiative. We must not attempt to impose precise order to the events of combat since this leads to a formulistic approach to war. And we must be prepared to adapt to changing circumstances and exploit opportunities as they arise, rather than adhering insistently to predetermined plans.

There are several points worth remembering about our command philosophy. First, while it is based on our warfighting style, this does not mean it applies only during war. We must put it into practice during the preparation for war as well. We cannot rightly expect our subordinates to exercise boldness and initiative in the field when they are accustomed to being oversupervised in the rear. Whether the mission is training, procuring equipment, administration, or police call, this philosophy should apply.

Next, our philosophy requires competent leadership at all levels. A centralized system theoretically needs only one competent person, the senior commander, since his is the sole authority. But a decentralized system requires leaders at all levels to demonstrate sound and timely judgment. As a result, initiative becomes an essential condition of competence among commanders.

Our philosophy also requires familiarity among comrades because only through a shared understanding can we develop the implicit communication necessary for unity of effort. And, perhaps most important, our philosophy demands confidence among seniors and subordinates.