

Agile, Distributed, Lethal CPs at NTC 25-03

Distributed C2

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The execution of command and control (C2) blends the technical capabilities of Army systems and command posts (CP) with the commander's ability to drive the operations process to provide effective direction and guidance to the operating force. Divisions must adapt to the modern battlefield at the pace of war by leveraging existing and emerging technologies to increase dispersion, generate redundancy, and increase survivability of CPs.

Divisions that use enhanced network technologies, restructure CPs and breaking historical norms will not only survive, but thrive, on the modern battlefield.

The C2 system is a comprehensive framework that uses all available resources to support C2, ultimately enhancing the commander's ability to conduct operations. By organizing a C2 system, commanders can:

1. Support informed decision-making.
2. Gather, analyze, and maintain relevant information to inform the commander's and leaders' understanding and visualization.
3. Develop and communicate clear directives.

To achieve these critical functions, commanders must design and organize the four components of their C2 system: people, processes, networks, and CPs. By doing so, they can ensure a seamless and effective C2 process (as shown below in **Figure 1**).

Successful execution of distributed mission command relies on an understanding of the division staff's operational processes, including inputs, outputs, contributors, and functionality. During National Training

Center (NTC) Rotation 25-03, 1st Infantry Division (ID) designed a responsibilities matrix and developed a detailed primary (P), alternate (A), contingency (C), and emergency (E) plan, or PACE, which outlined communication pathways and protocols for each node and assigned battle rhythm event responsibilities. By focusing on processes and functionality rather than traditional CP layouts, the division staff developed a unique and effective approach to optimizing their CP structure and network architecture, ensuring proper accountability and preservation of critical functions.

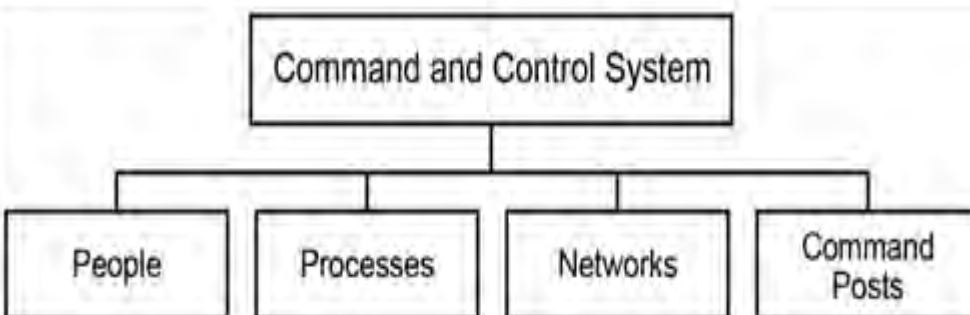
Historical mission command structures were largely driven by equipment and manning considerations, and command preference. Current program of record equipment sets and manning levels necessitate the consolidation of key personnel into a select number of CPs where commanders, driven by decades of historical preference, consolidate key staff, advisors, and subordinate commanders for face-to-face meetings and planning sessions.

The modern battlefield requires greater dispersion of multi-node CPs to ensure survivability and provide rapid mobility and adaptability on the battlefield. Enabling this requires revisions to the people and network components of the C2 system by generating revised CP structures and mission command processes. A dispersed multi-node command structure consisting of the analysis and control element (ACE), targeting cell, plans cell, and two bounding current operations integrating cells (COICs) enables the division to posture, consolidate, and reorganize the physical structure based on mission parameters.

To fully realize the capabilities of distributed C2, 1st ID and the Army/Department of Defense at large need to maximize the availability of commercial network systems to provide the necessary connectivity to operate in this condition. The design/array of these cells using the C2 system enables protection and lethality for the division CP by leveraging the tenets of multidomain operations (agility, convergence, endurance, depth).

To effectively address the people aspect of the CP, it is essential to understand how specific individuals enable certain processes. In traditional division CP context, various personnel play critical roles in supporting the operations process. As seen in the 2025 MTOE design, the traditional

Figure 1:
Components of a C2 system



Source: U.S. Department of the Army, ADP 6-0 Mission Command, (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 2019), 4-1.

CP structure is centralized at the division main CP (DMCP), resulting in a large C2 structure that is vulnerable to enemy targeting. The main command Post (MCP) has a larger personnel footprint, with 298 individuals representing all warfighting functions (WFFs) working together to plan, coordinate, and execute operations.

The traditional CP structure is cumbersome for the close area, making it an attractive target. At NTC 25-03, 1st ID revised its CP composition by reducing the MCP to approximately 90 personnel, representing all WFFs. The tactical command post (TAC) was further streamlined with only 25 personnel, focusing on C2, movement and maneuver (M2), fires, and intel to continuously operate for no more than 24 hours. The rear command post (RCP) had a larger personnel footprint, with around 300 individuals supporting C2, M2, intel, sustainment, and protection. This structure allowed the division to concentrate its continuous presence and analytical backbone in the rear area where it was less vulnerable and minimizes the targetable signature in the close area.

It's also important to note that the division CPs may receive additional support from enablers such as joint and coalition liaisons, a maneuver enhancement brigade (MEB), or a main command post operational detachment (MCP-OD). While it's not logical to plan solely on the availability of these enablers, they can significantly enhance the successful execution of processes. An MEB provides additional maneuver and security capabilities, enabling the division to respond more effectively to emerging threats. An MCP-OD can also offer specialized expertise and resources to augment the CP's planning and operations capabilities, such as enhanced intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) or cyber support.

The network is no longer an inhibitor of operations/training for all WFFs as it was with legacy Warfighter Information Network-Tactical (WIN-T) Military Satellite (MILSAT) Transport. Armored Formation Networks – On the Move (AFN-OTM) and its capability as an expeditionary multi-transport network node allowed 1st ID to experiment fully with distributed mission command. AFN-OTM, which provides continuous mobile upper tier internet (TI) connectivity through geostationary/low earth orbit (GEO)/LEO Satellite and 5G connectivity enabled the division to maintain Mission Command Information Systems (MCIS) connectivity while dispersed and without requiring any physical connection between command nodes.

To maximize the effectiveness of the multi-nodal CP structure, 1st ID used Command Post Computing Environment (CPCE) for digital common operating picture (COP) management, Sharepoint for product distribution and sharing, Cisco Meet Service for battle

rhythm events, and Web-based Mission Command (WEB-MC) for orders distribution to subordinate units via Joint Battle Command Platform (JBCP). To maintain common situational understanding, 1st ID maintained a continuously open “Hot Net” Cisco Meet Server (CMS) channel which allowed rapid and continuous synchronization between the responsible current operations integration cell (COIC) and the subordinate brigades, and between the division's distributed CP nodes. Distributed mission command necessitates development of a detailed and comprehensive PACE plan for communications, outlining feasible options varied by upper or lower TI to maintain connectivity between CPs and other units.

When assessing the PACE plan, three routes a planner must consider are:

1. Division à adjacent division à corps
2. Division à subordinate brigade/separate battalion
3. CP à CP

The traditional CP structure is familiar and comfortable. However, this approach can create vulnerabilities, such as concentrating critical personnel and equipment in a single location, limiting flexibility and adaptability, and restricting the ability to distribute C2 functions across multiple locations. To move towards a more modern and agile CP structure, we must re-examine the underlying assumptions and drivers that have shaped the current approach.

By understanding the processes, people, and network, the commander can make informed decisions on tailoring the CP's composition and disposition to support the specific operational requirements of the mission rather than being driven by traditional layouts. For example, the TAC can be subdivided into smaller, condensed nodes with specific functions and integrated into the other elements, allowing dispersion. 1st ID's TAC used this concept and employed the COIC, the Joint Air Ground Integration Center, and enablers as a cluster of independent elements supported by communication extension nodes. This approach enables the CP to be more flexible and adaptable, reducing its vulnerability to disruption or attack.

By using digital mission command systems, such as CPCE, to maintain a COP, CPs were modular and interchangeable, with COICs operating in a rotational configuration. This allowed for rapid and effective transitions between command posts and physical relocation of the COIC when necessary.

Use of duplicate COICs, operating in a rotational "UP-MOVING/WARM" configuration, provided an additional layer of redundancy and flexibility, enabling the command post to maintain continuity of operations — even in the event of a disruption or

attack. COIC cells were positioned within the FM retransmission range of the brigade combat team (BCT) formations, retaining primary responsibility for the execution of movement and maneuver and fires warfighting functions. COIC cells were positioned within the FM retransmission range of the brigade combat team (BCT) formations, retaining primary responsibility for the execution of movement and maneuver and fires warfighting functions. The successful execution of distributed C2 requires a deep understanding of the processes, people, and network that underpin the division staff's operations.

The 1st ID's experience during NTC Rotation 25-03 demonstrated the importance of understanding these components in designing a CP structure optimized for success in a rapidly changing and uncertain environment. This transition will see impacts across the Doctrine, Organization, Training, Materiel, Leadership, Personnel, Facilities & Policy (DOTMLPF-P)

framework but is primarily concentrated in the material and personnel aspects supported by organization and training then codified in doctrine. These concepts require further development and testing at scale to implement Army standard doctrine for division-level distributed mission command but must be fed by the full-scale implementation of these distributed mission command systems at the Combat Training Center and other large-scale division-level training events.

Fielding of the necessary Command Post Modernization system, AFN-OTM system, and personnel augmentation to provide manned and capable CPs are key. The success of distributed C2 relies on commanders' understanding of the complex interplay between processes, people, and networks to design command post structures that are optimized for success in a rapidly changing and uncertain environment which enables the commander to mass forces against a determined peer enemy and win decisively.

About the authors

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