Assessing the transmission of Commander’s Intent

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Introduction

Orders are fundamental to any military operation
They pass down the command hierarchy in several forms:

Warning
CONOPS
Confirming

BUT – Losing the original Commander’s Intent is a good way toward a failed operation ...
Assessing Transmission

The basic problem is:
how to assess transmission of the original orders.

Do they convey exactly what was in the original orders?

or

Have they lost such things as urgency, timings, interoperability
details, and some of those details that sum to the spirit and
INTENT of the originals orders?
Command structures

For most Army and Marine forces these are hierarchical
The details, and ranks involved, may change
We may talk of a few men, or a full brigade
There will usually be a Commander
Two or three subordinates
These in turn have two, three or four subordinates

Only at Platoon and below can a Commander give instructions direct to all ranks.
The British Battle-group

These are formed from a mix of Infantry and Armour
Typically two Battle-groups form one Brigade
Now we can identify levels

Level 1

Level 2

Level 3

Level 4

CMD (Brig)

SUB 1 (Lt Col)

SUB 2 (Maj, Capt)

(Lt)
Multi-level Assessment

There are now three points to consider:

- What can be assessed?
- Where can it be assessed?
- Who can assess it?
What can be assessed?

A commander is the best person to judge if his intent has been properly transmitted down the command structure.

Two levels of assessment are possible:

- An overall rating
- A detailed rating

Our aim is to minimise constraints on the commander’s judgements.
Where can it be assessed?

In practical terms, assessments are possible:

- Two levels down
- Three levels down

This takes the notional (Brigade) commander as the reference
Who can assess it?

Top level Brigade orders

Two levels from top

Three levels from top

Two levels from level 1
What can be checked?

AN OVERALL VIEW
The Commander’s opinion of the 2nd and 3rd level orders, as they reflect the original intent.

A DETAILED EXAMINATION
The same set of specific points are examined for each of the 2nd and 3rd level orders.
Detailed assessment needs a specific framework

The (the 5-Paragraph Model) for orders is standard.
This is common to UK, US and NATO. It has five main heads:

- SITUATION
- MISSION
- EXECUTION
- SERVICE SUPPORT
- COMMAND & SIGNAL

Command Intent features strongly in the first three
The detailed question set

We aim to establish a generic question set (8-10 questions), which can be applied to any set of orders by a commander.

Such features as (but not limited to):
- Urgency
- Timeliness
- Locations
- Deconfliction
- Clear Bounds
- Use of assets

must feature in the question set.

Only a Commander (as SME) can help to establish the necessary questions.
The Assessment Tool

Based on the Osgood Semantic Differential
Asks a question with an indeterminate answer
A continuum links two extreme descriptors
The respondent marks a position between them
This is a NO-POINT scale – and there are no fine shades of opinion to choose from

We have moved this from paper to computer
The Tool Appearance

How well did these orders convey your intent?

Minimally ________ Totally

OK
The Hidden Tool

Behind the line is a 100-point scale, which can be:

- used as numerical data
- grouped into as many points as needed
- grouped into asymmetric divisions

Practical Features include

Auto-save
Auto-move to next Question
Data export in standard format

But it must be usable in the field
How well did these orders convey your intent?

Minimally  

Totally

OK
PDAs are smaller

How well did these orders convey your intent

Minimally  Totally

OK  Cancel
The Experimental Plan

This requires a Commander in either:
- a Simulator/Command Post exercise
- a Field Training Exercise

Commander does the simple (single) assessment on all 2\textsuperscript{nd} and 3\textsuperscript{rd} level Orders first.

Commander then does the detailed assessment on the same Orders.

Responses are then analysed and correlated.
Validation

Validation of the question set is by reference to, and correlation with, the first question.

Content of the question set can be modified in the light of any comments made by Commanders.
Potential Uses:

This work is aimed at the transmission of intent;

- It can help to establish measures to determine the merit of any set of orders (identifying problems)
- It can be used as a tool in Command Training
- It can be used upward (by Junior Commanders) to act as a possible Risk Assessment tool
- It may identify measures to help reduce fratricide
Conclusion

The tool principle has already been tested.

The use of PDAs in field environments must be confirmed as practicable.

This work has reached the point where the concept must be tested in a genuine command situation.

The question-set must have military approval.

In a single-service / single-nation case, this presents no problem

With a coalition environment, the question-set may change, and direct comparison with the single-service / nation case may be difficult.
National differences:

US & UK have strongly hierarchical command structures (especially land forces)

Other countries (eg Sweden) have much flatter structures