

APPENDIX E: DEFINITIONS AND EXPLANATIONS OF TERMS

Last Updated: 7 January 2020

COMMAND

Command is “the authority that a commander in the Armed Forces lawfully exercises over subordinates by virtue of rank or assignment” (Joint Publication [JP] 1, [Doctrine for the Armed Forces of the United States](#)). **Although commanders may delegate authority to accomplish the mission, they cannot delegate the responsibility for the attainment of mission objectives.**

CONTROL

Control is “authority that may be less than full command exercised by a commander over part of the activities of subordinate or other organizations” ([JP 1](#)). Control is the process, inherent in command, by which commanders plan, guide, and conduct operations. This process requires strong leaders who conduct [assessment](#) and evaluation of follow-up actions. Time and distance factors often limit the direct control of subordinates, especially in a contested environment. Commanders should rely on delegation of authorities and promulgation of [commander’s intent](#) as methods to control forces.

COMMAND AND CONTROL (C2)

Command and control is “the exercise of authority and direction by a properly designated commander over assigned and attached forces in the accomplishment of the mission” ([JP 1](#)). C2 enables mission accomplishment by collaborative planning and synchronizing, integrating forces and operations in time and purpose. Fluid horizontal and vertical information flow enables effective C2 throughout the [chain of command](#). This information flow, and its timely fusion, enables optimum decision-making, operationalizing the [tenet of centralized control and decentralized execution](#). A

“C2 functions are performed through an arrangement of personnel, equipment, communications, facilities, and procedures employed by a commander in planning, directing, coordinating, and controlling forces and operations in the accomplishment of the mission.”

-- JP 1

robust and redundant C2 system provides commanders the ability to effectively employ their forces despite the fog and friction of war while simultaneously minimizing the enemy's capability to interfere with the same.

COMMANDER

The dual-hatted air component commander (joint force air component commander [JFACC] and commander, Air Force forces [COMAFFOR]) is the most common and historically most successful arrangement for command and control of airpower.

The JFACC should be the Service component commander within a [unified combatant command](#), [subordinate unified command](#), or [joint task force](#) (JTF) with the preponderance of air forces to be tasked and the ability to plan, task, and control joint air operations.

The COMAFFOR is the single Air Force commander of an Air Force Service component [assigned](#) or [attached](#) to a [joint force commander](#) (JFC) at the unified combatant command, subordinate unified command, or JTF level.

UNITY OF COMMAND

[Unity of command](#) is one of the [principles of joint operations](#). According to AFDP-1, “unity of command ensures concentration of effort for every objective under one responsible commander. This principle emphasizes that all efforts should be directed and coordinated toward a common objective.”

Unity of command is not intended to promote [centralized control](#) without delegation of execution authority to subordinate commanders. As the breadth of command expands to include full spectrum of operations, commanders are typically unable to exercise immediate control over all operations in their area of command. Thus, C2 arrangements normally include the assignment of responsibilities and the delegation of authorities between superior and subordinate commanders. Senior commanders should provide the desired [end state](#), desired effects, [rules of engagement](#) (ROE), and required feedback on the progress of the operation while subordinate commanders direct tactical operations.

Forces should be organized to assure unity of command with commanders clearly delineated at appropriate echelons. Within a joint force, the JFACC provides a single Airman in command of assigned and attached Air Force forces and joint air forces made available for tasking.

CENTRALIZED CONTROL AND DECENTRALIZED EXECUTION

Centralized control and decentralized execution are a key tenet of C2; providing Airmen the ability to exploit the speed, flexibility, and versatility of airpower. Centralized control

is defined as “in joint air operations, placing within one commander the responsibility and authority for planning, directing, and coordinating a military operation or group/category of operations” (JP 3-30, [Joint Air Operations](#)). Decentralized execution is defined as “the delegation of execution authority to subordinate commanders” ([JP 3-30](#)) and other tactical-level decision makers to achieve effective span of control and to foster disciplined initiative and tactical flexibility. Airpower’s speed, range, and ability to maneuver within three domains depend on centralized control and decentralized execution to achieve the desired effects.

Because of airpower’s potential to directly affect the [strategic level of war](#) and [operational level of war](#), it should be controlled by a single Airman at the air component commander level. A single commander, focused on the broader strategic perspective necessary to balance and prioritize use of airpower resources and aspects of an operation, can best mediate competing demands for tactical support against the strategic and operational requirements of the conflict.

AFDP 1, [The Air Force](#), more fully explains the Air Force’s commitment to the tenet of centralized control and decentralized execution of airpower.

MISSION COMMAND

“Mission command is the conduct of military operations through decentralized execution based upon [mission-type orders](#) and is a key component of the C2 function. Commanders delegate decisions to subordinate wherever possible, which minimizes detailed control and empowers subordinates’ initiative to make decisions based on the commander’s guidance rather than constant communications. While philosophically consistent with historical C2 of air operations, modern joint air operations demand a balanced approach to C2” ([JP 3-30](#)). See also [JP 1 for further discussion](#).

Its intent is for subordinates to clearly understand the commander’s intent and to foster flexibility and initiative at the tactical level to best accomplish the mission. Decentralization of tactical planning via conditions-based or mission-type orders, combined with command by negation and accepting the appropriate level of risk, allows subordinate commanders to focus on the superior commander’s intent and required effects to accomplish the mission in an efficient manner. Joint education, planning, and training are required to develop and demonstrate professional competence based on doctrine and knowledge. **This approach is best codified in centralized control and decentralized execution.**

COMMANDER’S INTENT

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” (JP 3-0, [Joint Operations](#)).

Two joint C2 concepts that nurture implicit communications are commander's intent *and* mission-type orders. By expressing intent and direction through mission-type orders, the commander attempts to provide clear objectives and goals to enable subordinates to execute the mission. The commander's intent should specify the goals, priorities, acceptable risks, and limits of the operation. Subordinates should be able to operate independently for some period of time based solely on commander's intent.

Guidance for planning and conducting air component operations is reflected in the commander's intent. Those granted delegated authority must understand the commander's intent, which is disseminated through such products as a JFC's operation plan; a JFACC's [joint air operations plan](#) and air operations directive; air, space, or cyber tasking orders produced by appropriate components; and annexes to such plans and orders that provide specific guidance for specialized functions. [Unity of effort](#) over complex operations is made possible through [decentralized execution](#) of centralized, overarching plans. Roles and responsibilities throughout the chain of command should be clearly spelled out and understood, not only to ensure proper follow-through of the original mission intent and accountability for mission completion, but also to provide [continuity of operations](#) in the event of degraded communications between echelons. Communication between commanders and those to whom authority is delegated is essential throughout all phases of the military operation.

Air Force commanders at all echelons are expected to command, to lead their forces to accomplish assigned and implied tasks in furtherance of the superior commanders' objectives. Training and exercises programs should be structured to ensure Air Force commanders are equipped with the skills and knowledge to accomplish assigned or implied tasks in a degraded or contested environment.

BATTLE RHYTHM

[Battle rhythm](#) discipline enhances control of forces. Effective operations in a theater require the [integration](#) and [synchronization](#) of strategic, operational, and tactical processes, to ensure mission planning, preparation, execution, and assessment are coordinated. It is essentially a schedule of important events that should be synchronized with the other Service or functional components and combined forces.
