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**“C2 – Less is more”**

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### **Biography**

**Lieutenant Commander Ryan Ramsey is a command qualified submarine warfare officer who has 18 years service in the Royal Navy of which 15 have been within submarines. He has served in 4 diesel submarines and 4 nuclear submarines and has conducted NATO and national operations at every level. He completed the submarine command course or “Perisher” as it is colloquially known in 2000. In addition to the standard submarine warfare career, he has served on exchange with the Royal Netherlands Navy at sea and been a Command rider for Flag Officer Sea Training. He has provided specialist operational training to nine different nations submarine forces. Currently on exchange with the United States Navy he works for Commander Submarine Development Squadron 12.**

### **Abstract**

**“In order to ensure the domination in any battlefield of the future, the new generation of war fighters needs to be empowered and educated to practice Mission Command. The net effect will be to allow Commanders more time (a precious commodity) to deal with the delicate transition between political requirements to strategy and provide relevant Command and Control. The direction and guidance provided to the unit commander will allow him to best employ his team, platform and tactics. The force who capitalizes on developing intuitive leadership and decision making will have an advantage against any adversary and enhance the capability of Command and Control.”**

## **C2 – LESS IS MORE**

### **Introduction**

*“Those who command can be divided into two those who control and those who delegate; the minorities who trust their subordinates reap the rewards.”<sup>1</sup>*

1. Attempting to predict the future of warfare is proving futile; unfortunately it always has been. If strategists at the end of the World War 1 had predicted the course of World War 2, then Allied forces would have been prepared for Admiral Donitz’ onslaught with the U boat – instead it was a surprise and Allied forces were forced to respond. The transformation of current doctrine to deal with ad hoc warfare as well as standard maneuver warfare is difficult. Any strategy or process that is produced must be simple and robust enough to adapt to any style of warfare anywhere we may chose or be forced to engage. In addition, while we look for methods to employ future technology, we must ensure that we can fight effectively with what we have. The environment, politics, strategy and technology may change, however the one constant will be people. Command and Control (C2) refers to procedures used in effectively organizing and directing armed forces to accomplish a mission. The process must be tailored to meet not only the needs of those exercising control, but those receiving it. Increasing the degree of C2 is expected to mitigate some of these warfare issues; however it is becoming all consuming.

2. The increase in the C2 process maybe advantageous to providing answers at the political level, however it has having the effect of *reducing* the decision making ability of those intended to succeed this generation of warfighters. It has evolved from its origins of providing direction and guidance and support to those intellectuals leading at the front line to a self consuming process continually requiring the decision-making process to move up the chain of command allegedly to satisfy both operational and strategic requirements. Warfare needs innovation if it is to progress but innovation does not solely involve the development of technology, it should involve dealing with the issue directly by learning from the past. Nothing is more fundamental than the human element within warfare; it is the winning factor in most cases.

### **Aim**

3. This paper offers support to the C2 process by offering Mission Command as the solution. In addition the paper aims to point out in simple terms how effective preparation at the unit level will ensure a decisive contribution allowing technology to concentrate on answering as opposed to defining requirements for battlespace dominance.

### **Discussion**

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<sup>1</sup> “The pursuit of victory” – The life and achievements of Horatio Nelson by Roger Knight

4. The belief that tactical decisions have strategic effect means that those higher in the command chain feel that they need to delve into the tactical level. We have continually sought to find a solution involving computer power to deal with this generation of warfare; some surmise that future warfare may be too complex for humans to direct. It is without doubt easy to overburden the human with too much information, but those that practice the art of warfare correctly learn to determine what is relevant and thus what is possible. Due to the increase in bandwidth and C2 capability, front line units are provided with vast amounts of information from which they must draw out what is relevant. This time consuming requirement reduces the ability to conduct tailored preparation particularly when those front line planners are provided little training in what is necessary and what is not. In addition the requirement to pass information up the chain reduces the operational tempo of the front line unit; it becomes inefficient as it deals with attempting to execute the plan, while reporting back to satisfy routine requirements and daily churn.

### **Mission Command**

5. The submarine was almost the last bastion of junior leaders being allowed to conduct warfare with autonomy. Other disciplines had already been provided with constant reach-back and reciprocating continual supervision. Submarine commanders were charged with making decisions capitalizing on extensive training and warfare knowledge. They operated within the realm of “negative information” to maintain their covert nature. No news is good news and as long as the senior command maintains the discipline not to ask for reports, they were able to operate within decent constraints. They were able to do this successfully because they exercised Mission Command in whatever form. Mission Command is defined as:

*“A sound philosophy of command has three enduring tenets; timely decision making; understanding a superior commander’s intention; and a clear responsibility on the part of subordinates to fulfill the superior’s intention. This requires a style of command that promotes decentralized concept of mission Command.”<sup>2</sup>*

6. Many organizations will state that they already practice this, but it is certain that if a critical analysis was conducted, they would discover this was not the case. This decentralized concept is vital to dealing with many issues, particularly in this era of asymmetric and insurgent warfare. In the maritime, technology will not always be the winning factor; mission command will. Those that are used to operating with autonomy require direction alone, however, they are becoming few and unless this process is elevated they will become the exception as to the norm. However by providing, concise doctrine, tailored unit operational planning and empowering subordinates, mission command can be revived and trend reversal can be achieved.

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<sup>2</sup> BR1806 British Maritime Doctrine

## Concise doctrine.

7. C2 is the method of transitioning force strategy to the tactical level. If you understand what effect you are supposed to achieve and where it contributes to the strategic aim, you can tailor the unit effort accordingly, ensuring that you focus correctly. Tactical doctrine is a most difficult area; you must attempt to convey your vision and yet tailor it to the recipient. The process could be made significantly easier if the recipients were provided with the correct tailored principles from the prolific war theorists. Military theory and principles that can be adapted to this current generation of warfare, must be advertised, reflected in doctrine and then practiced. Doctrine is about understanding why a military force effects operations and the “style” of these operations; it should be constantly evolving to take into account future warfare and learns from past encounters. This becomes the basis for enabling component for unit operational planning. In addition if links become severed and the C2 structure breaks down, those exercising mission command, armed with a thorough understanding of the philosophy, behind their tactics conduct warfare accordingly. Broadly, this generation of warfighters at every level has yet to have the relevance of doctrine both explained and demonstrated; instead it is intimated that it is not necessary until an officer has reached a certain rank; when actually it is almost too late.

## Tailored Operational Planning

8. There are a variety of methods of operational planning available for every level of command and operation that suit different organizations, units, team and **personality**. There are two decision inhibitors that the operational planner must overcome. The first is the amount of information provided is significantly more and therefore the unit level commander has to determine what is relevant and what is not. The second is whether the unit level commander worries about how their actions and plan will be perceived at the higher level. When you are able to deal with these two the planning and execution process becomes significantly simpler.

9. If Mission Command is practiced, the unit is encouraged to demonstrate initiative and to participate early in the decision making process. This, in turn provides the one factor vital to success in warfare, time to decide. Having provided training to many command teams, it became evident that advocating only one style of planning was unsuccessful and that what worked for one team would not work for another. Adaptation became the key to success. However each planning process asked the same questions:

- What are the enemy doing and why?
- What have I been told to do and why?
- What effect do I want to have on the enemy?
- Where can I best accomplish each action?
- What resource do I need to accomplish each action?
- When and where do these actions take place in relation to each other

- What control measures do I need to impose?<sup>3</sup>

10. Situational awareness is the accurate perception of the operational and environmental factors which affect a unit during a specific period of time. Maintaining this requires the understanding of the relative significance of these factors and their future impact on the situation. Technology's contribution within this realm is vital and can be achieved at a variety of junctures, not just while the Command team is at sea. One of the major factors that C2 could attempt to address is how to understand your enemy. Many unit commanders forget about the personality in warfare and concentrate on comparison of technological ability, however as Sun Tzu stated in the Art of War:

“If you know the enemy and know yourself you need not fear the result of a hundred battles. If you know yourself but not the enemy, for every victory gained you will also suffer a defeat. If you know neither the enemy nor yourself, you will succumb in every battle”<sup>4</sup>

11. The best method of explaining its relevance in Mission Command is to provide an example. A NATO SSN is enroute to a potentially hostile area. C2 has provided the mission aim, objectives and some of the constraints within which it must operate, including reporting cycle. The team has determined that they are required to conduct ISR and ASW but if escalation occurs, it is likely that they will be tasked with offensive strike and Carrier Strike Group defense. The only threat to their platform is from air launched weapons, mines and also the unlocated enemy SSK on patrol. The missing factor, unless the Commanding Officer (CO) and his teams planning process identify they need it is about the enemy himself.

12. Information about the man is discovered, including enemy operating patterns, team dynamics, experience and resolve. The man can be fought, because he is understood; where his weaknesses are, what he knows about the coalition platform. The fact that he has neither the knowledge of mission operating areas, and probably never detected a NATO submarine can be used as an advantage. This must be tailored however to the context of the enemy's operations; he is about ship sinking and it is certain that when he receives his direct tasking he will engage the first ship he detects. The psychological pressure of knowing that there is a NATO submarine operating in the area will put the enemy CO under enormous pressure. The NATO submarine CO will understand this pressure, because he too has experienced it; he is operating in the same environment, with the some of the same issues, the thought of family and sense of duty all count. If the NATO CO does not have the correct tools to deal with this instantaneously when the time comes, he needs to reach back in a timely fashion to take into account the C2 process inclusive of political involvement. If the NATO CO understands how his commander works he should be able to exercise the plan effectively providing relevant and timely information. The preparation phase is

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<sup>3</sup> British Army 7 Questions

<sup>4</sup> Sun Tzu “The Art of War”

vital and now Mission Command will allow the tactical level commander to execute his operations in his own way, taking into account the limitations of his team, knowledge and perception of the enemy. The crew of a resolute captain will fight as though inspired.

### **Empowering subordinates**

13. Continuous superior interference in subordinate level decision-making will also have the effect of rendering subordinate commanders inexperienced in dealing with the challenges that arise. Those regarded as the best and effective CO's are those that have provided opportunities for their Junior Officers to exercise their warfare knowledge and develop experience. We become less capable of decision making as we are forced to pass the decisions up the chain of command because the capability exists. Senior Officers have to learn at some point during their career before they become senior officers, and yet the vehicles to achieve this are not yet in place. Many junior officers are not aware of current doctrine, how national security decisions are made and how they are executed; rather they expect to receive orders and act on them. This level of knowledge is rarely sought until much later in an officers career structure, and then it is slightly too late. It is certain that all Officers know of Carl Von Clausewitz, but actually few have labored to read "On war". It is in fact the methodology of turning this theory into practice that is most concerning. If the junior leadership of today is not provided with the opportunity to understand the strategy, relying on C2 to do that for them, they will not be able to exercise command in the next generation of warfare. In fact as it is proving more difficult to preempt the next generation of warfare, by the provision of Mission Command as well as the supporting structure to enable officers to exercise it at the required time, you produce a robust C2 process.

14. In the majority of navies, the consequence of failure far outweighs the commendation for success. Many Joint Warfare Publications mention that Officers must be prepared to take risks, however the culture of ensuring that someone is found accountable in the event that something goes wrong places great pressure on the CO. Mistakes at worst can be fatal; this is nature of warfare but we need to engender a culture of risk awareness versus risk aversion. We need to enable subordinates to understand the limits of their operational persona by encouraging risk. Enabling a more philosophical approach to warfare theory, focusing on those facets which influence the tactical arena, you allow the new generation to transition from receiving to providing.

### **Technology's contribution**

15. There is a drive to find a technical solution to aid decision making based on the premise that warfare is now more complicated. Tools to aid situational awareness are almost at an optimum now and despite this they continue to progress. The amount of information being provided is having the exact opposite

effect it was intended to; it is overloading the decision maker because technology and those that provide it decide what is necessary. Apart from increasing situational awareness for the warfighter; technology should search for a “structured” method of dealing with personality in war. One soldier equipped with an AK47 does not operate exactly the same as another. One navy’s ship captain does not operate the same as another. They deal differently with stress, they manage their teams differently. Dependent on their personality type and character they may respond differently to challenges and situations. Some will take risks and some will not; some will respond to stimulus differently. There are many variables in this field, but it is certain that if technology places the significant part of its effort towards understanding potential enemies and effect on those enemies in combination as to the best method to communicate what needs to be done between generations of warfighters, significantly better and more comprehensive warfighting ability could be achieved.

## Conclusion

16. Enhancing C2 is not the answer to ensuring success in the next generation of warfare. The navy needs more who are strategically educated to exercise the cohesive plan of any Admiral; if you understand what and why you are executing something, it becomes easier. We stand the danger of becoming peace time navies, driven by process rather than driving process. C2 should be responsible for observing and detecting emergent patterns and maneuvering forces accordingly rather than controlling minutia. Provision of coherent doctrine, decision making skills and effective leadership is the key to success. Decision making involves **judgment** and no machine has yet to achieve this core skill to the level required to engage in the art of warfighting. Nelson’s ability to be successful in battle was based on the ability to understand the information provided to him, provide succinct guidance and trust his captains. No matter how many options for solution a computer can achieve, it is unlikely that it will be able to deal with every single potential enemy’s personality, preferences, variation in training, experience, emotional value, personal value and potential response. In fact, the enemy may be in a better position because of automation; they will be able to work out the computer’s response. When two forces engage against each other, the one with superior firepower and better equipment should win. However, if personality and intuitive leadership are added into the equation the result can be quite different.

“The war of today is being fought with new weapons, but so was the war of yesterday and the day before.”<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> The Layman’s guide to Naval Strategy – Bernard Brodie 1942

