



WAYS TO CARRY OUT THE MECHANISED BRIGADE COMBAT DISPOSITION IN THE OFFENSIVE OPERATION BY EFFICIENTLY USING MISSION COMMAND

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Due to the modern war conditions, governed by the avant-garde technologies, the military actions of all the forces services acquire new features and dimensions with special implications for the participating forces.

Carrying out a campaign involves combat-type actions that only a military force can accomplish, and its objectives are achieved both through a wide range of offensive or defensive operations, and through interaction with other military and non-military entities. At the tactical level, commanders must ensure a balance between the various elements of the functional framework to achieve the objectives set, in accordance with the campaign purpose.

In line with current trends in the field of modern armed struggle, the issue of the combat disposition of the forces in order to conduct operations must be addressed, in the context of the development of military technology, increasing force mobility, maneuverability and combat power. reconsidering, at the same time, the role of different categories of armed forces, in the sense of ensuring interoperability with NATO partner forces, spatial extension of the direct engagement of supple and mobile combat disposition. Nowadays, in the Romanian military literature, it is considered that the joint tactical large units combat disposition consists of: the command system, maneuver forces, the reserve and the logistics system.

Keywords: combat disposition; mission command; offensive; command and control; detailed command;



INTRODUCTION

In the military literature, it is considered that the magnitude of a military action is represented by the indicators of time, space and dynamics, which individualises an action in relation to all the factors of the situation. In military practice, it is considered that they are: the width of the offensive strip, the depth of the missions and the rhythm of the action.

In our opinion, the modern battlefield no longer accepts classical linearity, uniformity, with offensive stripes, alignments or deep rays. There has been a lot of talk lately about fluid combat space, in which the forces disposition can no longer be rigid, linear or circular, but asymmetrical (nonlinear). The linear, static, positional struggle is considered outdated and will be categorically avoided.

We appreciate that future fights and confrontations will take place in a multidimensional space where asymmetrical and hybrid actions will take place, characterised by mobility, deception, increased maneuverability, flexibility and the use of a wide range of actions carried out, continuously and at a fast pace, in order to decisively hit centers of gravity and critical points of the opponent.

In our scientific approach we want to present a series of aspects specific to the offensive operations carried out by a brigade-type military structure within the land forces, which is why it is necessary to make, from the beginning, some clarifications regarding this type of structure. The mechanised brigade (infantry) is characterised mainly by modularity and a structure of variable value forces, able to act together, integrated or assembled, for a period of time, under a single command, to fulfill independently a mission of a relative nature. The composition of the force structure is influenced by a number of factors, in our opinion, the most important being: the specifics of the mission, the available forces and means, as well as the geoclimatic characteristics of the area of operations where military actions

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rethinking combat disposition and adjusting tactical rules, increasing firepower, but also identifying security threats. The insufficiency of the explicitness of this concept in military doctrines and manuals, at that time, led to a difficult understanding of its essence, but also to the peculiarities in the non-uniform constitution of the combat disposition of the joint tactical large units.

The implementation of the concept in the doctrine and combat manuals was somewhat retained, for the first time finding it as command of the operation, later much better outlined, under the title: mission command statement, mission command (Manualul pentru luptă al batalionului de infanterie, 2012, p. 26), command by missions, single command – decentralised execution or command by mission/missions (Doctrina Operațiilor Forțelor Terestre, 2006, p. III-3).

The Doctrine of the Land Forces Operations, designed in 2006, mentioned the term of command of the operation which meant *“the authority and responsibility of the commander over an operative level force and has two fundamental components: the decision and the leadership”* (p. 61). Thus, the term is a sum of two fundamental components, the first – the decision, by which the commander puts into practice his intention and anticipates the development of the operation in reaching the desired final state. The decision is the exclusive attribute of the commander which involves understanding, visualizing the operation in time and space, but also directing the combat functions that converge to fulfill the mission and achieve the objectives. In terms of leadership, it refers to the commander’s ability to exert influence over subordinates, strengthening the relationship that is established between them. When we talk about leadership, from our point of view, we must understand that it also involves taking decisions that produce effects, the commander shows loyalty to subordinates, as well as the application of all measures necessary to fulfill the mission. We also believe that the term leading can be associated with the term leadership (Army Leadership and the Profession, 2019, p. 1-3), which, in the military sense, is the activity of influencing and motivating subordinates by providing a purpose. and a direction for the fulfillment of the mission and the improvement of the organisation and which,

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as an element of the fighting power, together with the information, strengthens the fighting functions.

We find the concept of mission command at the smallest tactical level structure, namely – the battalion. The infantry battalion's combat manual presents the mission command as *“the commander's attribute to exercise authority and orientation, using orders of operations, to allow the initiative of subordinate leaders, according to the commander's intent, by delegating authority to lead the whole spectrum of military actions”* (Manualul pentru luptă al batalionului de infanterie, 2012, p. 42).

The participation of land forces in external missions provided an opportunity to improve and gain military expertise, both for commanders and military planners, in aligning training and evaluation with specified standards. This aspect is found in the Land Forces Operations Doctrine, developed in 2017, which details the concept of command by mission/missions.

A definition of the command by mission concept, very similar to the one presented above, is found in the General Tactical Manual of Land Forces, 2013 edition, under the phrase *command by missions* and represents *“the commander's attribute to exercise authority and guidance, using orders of operations, to allow the initiative of subordinate leaders, according to the commander's intention, by delegating authority in leading the whole range of operations”* (p. I-15). The difference in the nuance of the concept consists only in the fact that the battalion can perform punctual actions, and from the brigade echelon upwards, where we find joint structures, extensive operations can be performed. Also in this context, the role of the commander in the management of the mission remains the same, in order to direct and coordinate, from the planning stage to the end of the execution phase, continuously evaluating the actions. In our opinion, the central element is represented by the commanders' initiative, expressed during the conduct of military operations, which aims to integrate combat functions to achieve certain objectives or fulfill the mission.

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Command by mission ensures clear centralised intent and decentralized execution, in fact it is a command style that specifies “*what needs to be done*” and not “*how to do it*”. Within American forces, we emphasise two definitions of the concept of command by mission, as follows:

- conducting operations, in accordance with orders of operations, through decentralised execution, in order to carry out the mission effectively (FM 6-0 Mission Command: Command and Control of Army Forces, 2003, p.1-17);
- empowering subordinates in decision-making and decentralised execution of the mission (ADP 6-0 Mission Command: Command and Control of Army Forces, 2019, p.1-3).

In our opinion, the success of the mission command is the result of the exercise of the initiative by the commanders from the subordinate echelons, within the limits of the operation commander’s intention.

To use this concept, a working environment must be created in which commanders and subordinates trust and understand each other. Mission command is the preferred concept of command and control for planning operations, emphasising the timeliness of decisions and the subordinates’ understanding of the commander’s intent. *Command by mission* accepts the uncertainty characteristic of combat actions, reducing the degree of security required to act. We appreciate that in such a philosophy, commanders use less formal command relations, ensuring the freedom of action of subordinates and waiting for them to show initiative. In this situation, orders and plans are as simple and short as possible, with commanders relying on subordinates’ coordination skills and ability to understand, using a minimum exchange of information.

Therefore, the last clarification of the term is the one that comes closest to the original meaning of the concept of command by mission, but beyond the explanations presented, we must remember the origin, evolution and meaning of the concept of command by mission.

The famous military history professor Martin van Creveld, in the study of command and control systems, stated that it is a continuous struggle between the human desire for certainty and the need

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to function, despite the uncertainty of the situation. (1985, p. 6). This struggle results in the development of the two fundamental philosophies of command and control: centralised and decentralised. As we have previously analysed, from our point of view, the differences between these philosophies are strictly related to the essence of command and control.

In the combat manuals of the US Army, we find the concept of *command-control (C2)*, at all levels, which defines the command as the process by which the will and intention of the commander are transmitted to subordinates (Corps and division command and control, 1985, p. 3-1). This process has the role of directing and has as a premise a behavior of subordinates in accordance with the intention of the commander. Control is the process by which the behavior of subordinates who do not respect the will and intention of the commander is identified and corrected. This behavior may result from a misunderstanding of the doctrines, procedures or terminology used and, why not, a lack of trust.

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On the other hand, a centralised style places more emphasis on control than command and does not allow subordinate echelons to express their freedom of movement or responsibility to make decisions, compensating with a high degree of certainty. The advantage of such a detailed system is the training of subordinates in a shorter period, because their training must not include skills and decision-making skills. The extent to which military planners incorporate detailed planning techniques into plans and orders depends first on the nature of the task or action, then on the qualities of command personnel, but also on the capabilities of the adversary. In this case, the upper echelon assesses the situation on the basis of reports from lower entities, sets out the set of measures and actions to be taken and directs subordinates to the implementation of decisions.

The detailed command, as described in Field Manual 6-0 of the US Army, centralises all information, and the decision-making authority belongs to the higher levels. The orders and plans are detailed and explicit, and for a successful action the plan must be strictly followed, with the maximum limitation of the initiative and decision of the



subordinates (p. 1-16). We believe that this command encourages the vertical flow of information, in the sense that information and reporting are transmitted to the upper echelons, and commands and tasks are transmitted from top to bottom, so that commanders lead by detailed orders or instructions provided personally to subordinates.

Using detailed command, commanders impose discipline and coordination, from superior to subordinate, to ensure the timely execution of the tasks set out in the plan. Detailed commands can create a very high level of coordination in the planning phase, but after the operation starts, it allows subordinates a little “*freedom of manoeuvre*” and will have to constantly ask for instructions or approvals from the echelon that issued the order.

In our opinion, detailed command is not effective for leading joint tactical large units in order to exploit opportunities that arise during combat. It is also not functional when the flow of information in the chain of command is interrupted because it causes gaps in decision-making at lower levels. As a result, detailed command is less efficient in dynamic operations, which involve rapid changes in the situation or which require analysis, creativity and initiative on the part of the commanders.

Given these disadvantages, *command by mission* was adopted, as a basic principle, in the leadership of military structures belonging to the land forces.

Following our own analysis, we can conclude that the principle of mission/mission command is a process by which the act of command is exercised, adapted to the uncertainty and complexity of the operational environment and must be applied and practiced to produce effects.

Freedom of movement and maneuver on the battlefield, as well as building a coherent decision-making framework are aspects that demonstrate the effectiveness of applying the command by mission and allow commanders to exercise the virtue of command, respecting the concept approved by the upper echelon, and to achieve the success. The command of the joint tactical large units, of brigade level, supposes the integration in a unique plan of all the structural elements, and the maneuver of the subordinated battalions falls within the intention of the brigade commander.

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WAYS TO CARRY OUT THE JOINT TACTICAL LARGE UNITS COMBAT DISPOSITION IN THE OFFENSIVE OPERATION

The combat disposition of the joint tactical large units adopted in offensive operations is the vital structural element for the success of military actions, being designed and dimensioned in direct correlation with the striking system (fires) and the sapper activities. For the successful conduct of military actions it is not enough to allocate a certain amount of forces and means, just as important being the achievement, based on them, of a functional system.

The arrangement of the combat disposition is usually influenced by the following factors: the entrusted mission and the conception of the operation; the combat procedure adopted depending on the type of operation; the value and capabilities of the enemy; the number of offensive directions; the content and objectives of combat missions; combat composition of joint tactical large units and subordinate units; the amount of means of struggle and logistical support, but also of the characteristics of the terrain (Mureşan, 2004, p. 19).

The command system must be designed in such a way as to ensure the continuity of the exercise of the command act and the achievement of a secure and functional communication and information system (CIS) with the upper echelon, subordinate structures, forces cooperating in the area of operations and those attached. The command of the forces is usually carried out *“by centralising the entire activity by the commander, combined with the wide manifestation of the initiative by the subordinates during the accomplishment of the received missions”* (Mureşan, 2004, p. 19).

The direct command of the forces is ensured by its commander, who in turn is subordinated, as a rule, to the commander of a group of forces, which can be national or part of a coalition. In case the military structure executes multinational joint operations, its commander will be subordinated to OPCOM or TACOM (Doctrina Operațiilor Forțelor Terestre, 2006, p. 140) to the commander of the designated mission. The participation of Romanian forces in operations carried out outside the national territory, together with NATO allies or partners, requires the alignment of the command system with the operational requirements of the mission, as well as the creation of computer and radio communications networks

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We appreciate that the command system is based not only on the creativity, judgment, intuition and individual experience of the commanders, but also on a set of scientifically in-depth methods or ways of accomplishment. Today, however, the situations in which decisions have to be made change very quickly, many new and very complex situations appear, determined by the enemy's movements or political negotiations.

In our opinion, the command system, nowadays, involves alignment with unanimously accepted standards in the alliance, in compliance with operating or system procedures, in order to use a common language during the execution of operations.

The specificity of the command system in offensive operations must be analysed from a double perspective, from a structural point of view, highlighting its component parts, and on the other hand, from a functional point of view, regarding the organisation and functioning of information subsystems.

From a structural point of view, the command system in offensive operations comprises the decision-making, operational, security and logistics structures, organized in such a way as to ensure a single command and continuous control.

Regarding the functional perspective of the command system, we can admit it includes the relations and functional responsibilities of the information subsystems, as well as the connections with all the forces participating in the operation carried out in the entrusted area.

So, the accomplishment of the informational subsystem presupposes, based on rational principles and norms, the process of critical analysis and redesign of the system, as a whole, as well as its elements, in order to increase its functionality and amplify the efficiency of the decision act (Dumitru, Stoian, Baltă, Toma, 2000, p. 100). The rationalisation of the informational subsystem leads to the increase of the efficiency of the whole activity, but not always by reducing the operating costs of the informational subsystem.

We believe that the improvement of the command system of the joint tactical large units can be achieved through the following ways:

- development of a unique information subsystem, which would allow the efficient integration and interconnection of the obtained data;



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- implementation of secure information flows and circuits;
- providing the raw data and information necessary for staffs to substantiate decisions;
- simplification, reduction of the number and volume of documents, by formalising and standardising them in standardized procedures, and moreover, the use of information systems, in order to reduce the time required for staff in decision-making centers or resources for administrative and routine activities and increase weight planning, management, coordination and control activities at the command points;
- the use of high-performance computer systems to ensure the protection of classified information, as well as the development of applications for the generalization of automatic data processing, in key areas of activity, such as Intelligence, so that the decision of commanders is computer-assisted and commander of the upper echelon.

From our point of view, the purpose of improving the command system is to provide with maximum efficiency and accuracy the information and data necessary for commanders, staffs and all decision-making structures, to know the status and efficiency of offensive operations, such as and developing the ability to draw multiple courses of action, adapted to the evolution of the situation in the confrontation space.

During the land forces operations, the joint tactical large units organise mainly command, base and reserve points. Ensuring their operation, in conditions of safety and efficiency, implies the observance of some operational requirements regarding their positioning within the combat disposition, being recommended to use localities that allow a good masking and a high protection.

The integration and synchronisation of the operations in depth, in contact and in the rear determines us to rethink the way they are commandes and, implicitly, the arrangement of the command points. Therefore, the specifics of modern combat, the new configuration of the current battlefield, but also the existence of many types of weapons that have the ability to execute precise shots at long distances, more than likely, will require the identification of new ways of arranging command points.



In general terms, the place and role of the mechanised brigade (infantry) depend on the group of forces to which it belongs (national or multinational), the structure to which it is subordinated and the missions received. The destination of the joint tactical large units corresponds to the forces and means in the staff, the capabilities available, as well as the structures (groups of forces) within which it operates.

Depending on the tactical or operational situation, the armed struggle of the brigade can be manifested in offensive operations (contact, movement, combined, pursuit) and defense (mobile, in the area, on intermediate alignments, in encirclement). Within the engagement group, the brigade forces are divided and arranged according to the mode of use in combat, as follows: the forces on the main direction of effort, the forces on another direction of effort and the forces directly supporting the main effort (Manualul pentru luptă al brigăzii mecanizate (infanterie, infanterie ușoară), 2004, p. 42).

Analyzing all these possibilities and hypostases we can say that the ways of using the forces of a joint tactical large units in the offensive operation are multiple but, in our opinion, the establishment of battle echelons must be adapted to the current needs of the operational environment specialised in the fight against drones, which have capabilities of engagement and neutralisation from considerable distances, so that the control points are not affected and, to the same extent, the attachment of structures that can perform EW (electronic warfare) tasks, which is increasingly used in contemporary conflicts (since 2014 in Donbass – Ukraine or between September 27 – November 10, 2020 in Nagorno-Karabakh, in the conflict between Armenians and Azeris).

Currently, the Romanian Armed Forces have major procurement programmes in place, and the purchase of HIMARS (High Mobility Artillery Rocket System) is a good opportunity to rethink combat disposition and tactical rules, and from our point of view, the integration into the brigade staff of such a battalion would greatly optimise the fighting power and striking system of joint tactical large units.

Therefore, we can admit that the elements of the combat disposition for the offensive operation, as well as the current tactical

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norms, which we find in specialised manuals (for combat) decisively influence the organisation and structure of the command-control system for leading joint tactical large units, aspects that we consider important and we propose that they be taken into account during the analysis and design of the force disposition.

Depending on the tactical situation, the operational environment, the combat procedure adopted, the terrain, the actors involved, as well as other factors that influence the conduct of the fight, the tactical rules are purely indicative.

Making even a minor change to a system, in our case the combat positions of joint tactical large units, without taking into account what has been previously established, by rules and patterns, can cause unintended effects and undesirable in the evolution of the struggle. These effects can cause damage that is accounted for in the loss of personnel, military equipment or expensive equipment. Therefore, all stages of the cycle of development and evolution of military systems, as a whole, allow returning to the starting point, at any time of the planning process.

Our scientific approach involved the activity of identifying ways to achieve and improve the combat disposition, which consisted in providing with maximum objectivity the information and data necessary for commanders and staffs to know the status and effectiveness of offensive and defense operations.

Thus, we consider that the improvement of the combat disposition of the joint tactical large units, in the offensive operation, is achieved mainly through its optimisation, namely, the rationalisation of the constituent elements, by:

- clear specification of the tasks and conception of the operation of the upper echelon;
- accurate knowledge of the value, capabilities and possibilities of the enemy;
- identification of the objectives to be conquered and reduced vulnerability;
- creating the conditions for interoperability with allied forces;
- developing the capabilities of real logistical support;



- elimination of parallels in the collection, synthesis, transmission and processing of data and information;
- ensuring its own ability to hit the opponent's center of gravity;
- realisation of IPB (Intelligence Preparation of the Battlefield) – in due time for the development of own courses of action;
- ensuring the compatibility of information to facilitate their centralisation and decision making;
- the functionality of the command-control system (C2) and the accomplishment of the information management.

It is well known that, in general, in the offensive operation, multilateral support and assurance are indispensable for creating the conditions for success and that through support and maneuver the main content of the complex category called the combined arms struggle is achieved.

CONCLUSIONS

Over time, commanders have applied the two variants of the command-control concept, namely, command by mission and detailed command. Some armed forces preferred detailed command, but understanding the nature of the war, the dynamics of the operational environment, or its uncertainties, highlighted the advantages of mission command. Although its principle plays a predominant role in the conduct of day-to-day operations, commanders, regardless of echelon, cannot rely solely on detailed planning or mission control techniques.

We can say that a particularly effective way to improve the combat disposition of joint tactical large units is to introduce, at least at the brigade command level up, computer systems with battle simulation possibilities, which have software and applications. It is necessary in the practice of war games, but more, the implementation of those that have capabilities of artificial intelligence used in the conduct of combat actions. Thus, the mechanical operations and routine data processing functions is performed, which machines do more efficiently than humans.

From our point of view, this capability gives the military the freedom to focus on the tasks of conception (analysis and evaluation)



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that require knowledge (knowledge management) and self-judgment. Automation has made great strides in information processing, but people remain the most effective means of determining the relevance and combination of information. Technology can help these exclusively human activities, but it cannot replace people, being ubiquitous in decision-making throughout operations.

In our opinion, in the current war, the maneuver of the offensive forces and the multilateral support of the actions have become intrinsic components of the operations, an indispensable dimension of the battlefield.

In conclusion, the combat disposition of joint tactical large units must ensure reduced vulnerability, rapid maneuverability, flexibility and real support, and the organization of missions according to rational rules and principles has direct consequences on increasing the efficiency of the whole operation by reducing planning and preparation time, and especially by creating all the conditions for quick and fair decisions.

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* Operational Command/OPCOM – the authority entrusted to a commander to establish *missions* or *tasks* to subordinate commanders to deploy units, to re-subordinate forces and to maintain or delegate *operational* or *tactical control* as needed. Does not include administrative or logistical responsibilities.

** Tactical Command – Tactical Command/TACOM – authority delegated to a commander to give *tasks* to the forces received under command/assigned to fulfill the mission established by the upper echelon.