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Foundation stones for disaster readiness

> Subordinate yourself (as appropriate) to the US embassy leadership whenever possible. This practice should also be communicated visually, audibly, and in all business practices and daily routines … Take time to nurture this relationship … Recognize the capacity of numerous other organizations and 'actors' operating or located in the joint operations area. Coordinate and synchronize your efforts with them.[1]
>
> —US Army Center for Army Lessons Learned, 'Operation United Assistance'

> The tragedy of [Hurricane] Sandy is not that it was unprecedented; the tragedy is that it was entirely predictable, yet New York City was still not fully prepared for the flooding that came.[2]
>
> —Robert I. McDonald, *Conservation for Cities*

The US Centers for Disease Control (CDC), military epidemiologists and a USAID disaster response team were among the internationals lending expertise as the Ebola virus threatened West Africa in 2014. NGOs, IGOs and other aid providers likewise provided resources as West African governments struggled to contain the outbreak and educate their publics. The US military's senior representative early on was Major General Darryl Williams, commander of US Army Africa at the time. The US ambassador to Liberia, Deborah R. Malac, described how Williams's

1 CALL, 'Operation United Assistance', 6.
2 McDonald, *Conservation for Cities*, 106.

first steps included having lunch with not only her embassy staff and others from the disaster response team, but also Médicins Sans Frontières (MSF; aka Doctors without Borders), an organisation with a reputation for not wanting to work with military personnel. Effective response was Williams's goal, as was coordinating his military public affairs messages with other US organisations and local governments. For Ambassador Malac, the general's efforts were simply 'extraordinary'.[3] It was a rare demonstration of a government attempt at a 'comprehensive approach' to an operation—an approach that ensured cooperation between not only the multiple services in the US armed forces (called 'joint' operations), other parts of the federal government ('interagency' or 'whole of government'), those of other countries ('multinational'), but also relevant other-than-government groups, including commercial and volunteer organisations.[4] The fact that the resulting collective effort approximated a comprehensive approach—rarely achieved elsewhere—was notable if all but unheralded. The effort within Lagos was an extension of this success: civilian medical personnel and international organisations working with the governments of Lagos and Nigeria to contain the spread.

It would seem obvious that bringing all relevant partners together is the right step in times of catastrophe. That it is exceptionally attempted and even more rarely accomplished suggest otherwise. It was not too many years ago that my mention of the value of a comprehensive approach brought ridicule from one attendee at a conference in Washington, DC, with the speaker claiming that the sought-after condition was hard to achieve and thus unworthy of pursuit. He was right, but only on the first count. It is hard. Like many megacity endeavours—and undertakings more generally—pursuing the worthy goal potentially brings great benefits even if the efforts fall short of perfection. The costs of not working together can be dramatic. A previous quote relates how leaders in New York City's fire department had problems communicating with their firefighters on the upper floors of the World Trade Center towers on 9/11. Troubling? Yes, especially given the same problems existed during their operations when the complex was first attacked in 1996. Crippling? Absolutely, but more deadly yet was the inability of fire department personnel to communicate by radio with the New York Police Department (NYPD). Many police escaped the buildings before the collapse thanks to those flying overhead

3 CALL, 'Operation United Assistance', 6, 37.
4 Bucci et al., *After Hurricane Sandy*, 7.

in department helicopters warning of the second tower's pending fall and relaying that information to their leadership. That police and fire radios were incompatible, that the two departments did not regularly rehearse or conduct exercises together and (related to the second point, presumably) that they reportedly had a history of feuding meant word never reached many fire personnel who could have made it out in time had they been warned. Much has been done to right these wrongs since those horrifying days.[5] The same is not true of many other megacities where tensions or jealousies between fire, law enforcement, military and other authorities continue to undermine disaster readiness.

Reaching for the impossible: Megacity operations, mission command and the comprehensive approach

> President Lincoln preferred to avoid direct interference with his commanders in the field, informing General Banks in Louisiana that while he knew 'what I would be glad for Louisiana to do, it is quite a different thing for me to assume direction of the matter'. [His Chief of Army General Halleck concurred, believing] that the application of … principles should be left to the judgment of commanders, since they had the most local knowledge. General Sherman agreed, believing that it was virtually impossible to 'lay down rules,' and thus he also left 'the whole subject to the local commanders.'[6]
>
> —Nadia Schadlow, *War and the Art of Governance*

> Senior officers should visit units and talk to soldiers in order to understand what is actually happening at that level. But they should not involve themselves with the day-to-day running of units unless something is terribly wrong. If it is, action is probably required at [a] higher level to resolve it.[7]
>
> —Ministry of Defence, *Operation Banner*

5 Jim Dwyer and Kevin Flynn, 'Fatal confusion: A troubled emergency response; 9/11 exposed deadly flaws in rescue plan', *The New York Times*, 7 July 2020, available from: www.nytimes.com/2002/07/07/nyregion/fatal-confusion-troubled-emergency-response-9-11-exposed-deadly-flaws-rescue.html.

6 Nadia Schadlow, *War and the Art of Governance: Consolidating Combat Success into Political Victory*, Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2017, 48.

7 Ministry of Defence (MOD), *Operation Banner: An Analysis of Military Operations in Northern Ireland*, Army Code 71842, London: Chief of the General Staff, British Army, July 2006, 4–8, available from: wikileaks.cash/uk-operation-banner-2006.pdf.

The above make great sense—until one considers Abraham Lincoln's additional remark that 'my policy is to have no policy', which demonstrates that even the greatest of us makes mistakes. If there is no policy, leaders have no way of knowing how to fit their decisions into a greater plan—assuming there is a greater plan. Lincoln's was a wise if imperfect application of what we today label 'mission command'. While it is a term used by the US military and many of its English-speaking armed-force partners, other militaries, authorities such as New York City's police and fire departments and additional organisations employ very similar philosophies though the monikers differ. Definitions differ somewhat as well, with that of the Australian Army excelling in both clarity and conciseness, which is what we will use here with the deletion of one word to extend its applicability beyond military organisations alone: 'Mission command is the practice of assigning a subordinate ~~commander~~ a mission without specifying how the mission is to be achieved.'[8]

Savvy leaders understand the necessity of training subordinates to act in the best interests of their organisations—and in trusting them to do so in the aftermath of that training. Former NYPD commissioner James O'Neill recognised that managing operations in large-city environments relies on several truths. Among them: surprise is ubiquitous; the unexpected is the expected. It is impossible for a senior leader to know the details of what's going on at the lowest-leader levels thanks to the dispersed nature of undertakings. The men and women at those lowest echelons are the ones who therefore have the best grasp of a situation thanks to their being closest to the action. For higher-level leaders to have no policy is to accept total chaos, with each lower-level organisation doing its own thing, little if at all coordinated with others. Success demands good information and intelligence, but these are by themselves not enough. Both are squandered without good decisions at the right levels.

Getting mission command right imposes responsibilities on both seniors and subordinates. First and foremost is senior leadership clearly stating: 1) what they expect to accomplish (the 'mission'), and 2) their intent, which provides context for the mission (the military calls it the 'commander's intent'). The mission is an explicit, generally short

8 Australian Army, *Land Warfare Doctrine 1: The Fundamentals of Land Power*, Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, 2014, 45, available from: researchcentre.army.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-01/lwd-1_b5_190914.pdf. Those interested in reading further on mission command might find value in Russell W. Glenn (ed.), *Trust and Leadership: The Australian Army Approach to Mission Command*, Dahlonega, GA: University of North Georgia Press, 2020.

expression of who, what, where, when and why something is to happen. The 'who' is the organisation or person who is to make that something happen. The 'what' is, obviously, what it is that is to happen. 'Where' and 'when' are clear in meaning. The 'why' gives the who, what, where and when a first cut at context. So, the mission for a medical unit providing support during a pandemic might be: XX Caregivers (the who) move to Blueville (the where) to provide immunisations and lifesaving aid (the what), beginning at noon, 4 July (the when), to reinforce currently overwhelmed mobile medical units (the why). 'How' is left to the leaders of XX Caregivers to figure out. Do they take over a portion of Blueville so other organisations already there can consolidate their overwhelmed resources? Do they instead work side-by-side with them to take advantage of their familiarity with local conditions? For a fire chief, the mission to one of their stations might be 'Station 354 immediately moves to 8521 Main Street, frees survivors trapped beneath rubble, and evacuates casualties to Mercy Hospital'—in this case, the 'why' being understood without overt expression. An example mission for a military unit fighting in a city: A Company attacks to clear Oak Park of enemy forces at 1300 hours to allow 1st Battalion to consolidate and continue the offensive.

Second among senior leaders' mission command responsibilities is accompanying their mission statements with equally clear statements of leader intentions—statements that give subordinates the broader context needed to act appropriately when the unexpected inserts itself into a situation. Statements of intent tend to (but need not) be somewhat longer than mission statements and are less constrained in terms of structure. What if the XX Caregivers team leader finds that reports of the in-place medical unit's personnel being overwhelmed were greatly overstated? What if the leader of Station 354 finds the building adjacent to 8521 Main Street is on fire and no other fire personnel are onsite? What if the A Company commander finds Oak Park already free of enemy but spots an adversary unit waiting in ambush for fellow unit B Company? An intent provides additional insight into what's behind the mission statement so the subordinate can make an advised decision when the mission proves no longer viable or situations change and communications with the senior commander have failed (remembering how difficult it can be to communicate in urban areas). A well-articulated intent provides 'big-picture' context beyond the 'why' in the mission statement such that subordinates' advised decisions support the larger objectives underpinning a mission. The intent cannot cover every possible contingency, but

it should do what it can to equip subordinates for dealing with the unforeseen. Drawing on our notional mission examples, an appropriate intent from the senior leader whose responsibilities include Station 354 might simply be: save as many lives as possible. What to do if an adjacent building threatens to collapse on 8521 Main? The Station 354 leader makes the call given the actions he or she judges will best meet the priority of saving lives.

As for an intent for our A Company commander:

> I expect the battalion to secure all ground in our area of operations south of 8th Street (Phase Line Detroit) in preparation for passing the rest of the brigade forward in continuation of the attack. Blunt any enemy attempt to disrupt our momentum and maintain that momentum both during your assault and when passing follow-on forces through your own.

Helpful should Oak Park be found clear of enemy? Yes. Secure Phase Line Detroit and either continue attacking in coordination with flank units or immediately pass follow-on units forward without giving the foe a chance to re-establish its defences. Helpful if a large enemy unit is spotted moving against a neighbouring company? Yes, as continuing A Company's attack and ignoring the enemy would likely cause the whole battalion to fail in its attack.

The value of mission command is hard to overstate. US Army doctrine advises commanders to be aware of the intentions of leaders two levels up in the chain of command to provide even greater understanding of what is to be accomplished from the big-picture perspective than were they to focus only on that from their immediate leadership. Marine General Charles Krulak (who gave us the terms 'three-block war' and 'strategic corporal') realised the importance of mission command: 'The inescapable lesson of Somalia and other recent operations, whether humanitarian assistance, peacekeeping, or traditional warfighting, is that their outcome may hinge on the decisions made by small unit leaders and by actions taken at the *lowest* level.'[9] Nicholas Warr, another US Marine and a veteran of combat in Hue, Vietnam, during the 1968 Tet Offensive, reinforces Krulak while providing another reason a clear mission and commander's intent are not only crucial during urban operations but also fundamental to success should leaders fall in battle. 'Knowledge of the overall plan must

9 Glenn and Kingston, *Urban Battle Command in the 21st Century*, 27–28. [Emphasis in original.]

be disseminated down to the rifleman level,' Warr wrote: 'Casualties are so heavy and come so quickly during urban fighting that junior personnel will quickly find themselves leading platoons and companies.'[10] The US Army has long been in the know when it comes to how difficult it can be to conduct operations in urban areas. Drawing on fighting in the early months of World War II, the service's *Attack on a Fortified Position and Combat in Towns* manual related:

> [I]n no other form of warfare except in dense jungle is observation so restricted. This condition makes centralized control difficult. Commanders will be able to get close to their units in contact but will be able to observe only fractions of them at one time. These conditions will mean that most of the fighting will resolve itself into small independent actions and will place a premium upon initiative and aggressiveness of the small unit leader.[11]

The observations apply equally to the police captain responsible for security at a major public event or an NGO leader with food distribution points scattered about a city. Maintaining an understanding of the situation and controlling complex operations during city undertakings are among the most difficult of challenges. Risk assessment and response to a changing situation are no longer in the hands of the chief outside once firefighters enter a building should communications fail. It is the squad leaders' war once soldiers go house to house and room to room. Soldiers, like those firefighters, will inevitably be out of sight and frequently cut off from communications. Understanding of plans and their leader's intent thus must be known not only to those squad or team leaders but also to every man and woman given how busy the reaper can be amid those buildings and rooms, and how great the chances are that small groups and even individuals will find themselves isolated. Mission and intent need to be sufficiently forward-looking and unambiguous to provide subordinates with a basis for good decisions even when guidance is hours or days old. What these often-young men and women confront are 'wicked problems':

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10 Nicholas Warr and Scott A. Nelson, 'Lessons Learned: Operation "Hue City", 1968', in *Ready for Armageddon: Proceedings of the 2001 RAND Arroyo-Joint ACTD-CETO-USMC Nonlethal and Urban Operations Program Urban Operations Conference*, Russell W. Glenn, Sidney W. Atkinson, Michael Barbero, Frederick J. Gellert, Scott Gerwehr, Steven Hartman, Jamison Jo Medby, Andrew O'Donnell, David Owen and Suzanne Pieklik (eds), Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2002, 69, available from: www.rand.org/pubs/conf_proceedings/CF179.html.

11 *Attack on a Fortified Position and Combat in Towns*, Field Manual 31-50, War Department Basic Field Manual, Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 31 January 1944, 64.

> problems which are ill-formulated, where the information is confusing, where there are many clients and decision makers with conflicting values, and where the ramifications in the whole system are thoroughly confusing.[12]
>
> These problems share a range of characteristics—they go beyond the capacity of any one organisation to understand and respond to, and there is often disagreement about the causes of the problems and the best way to tackle them.[13]
>
> Nothing really bounds the problem solving process—it is experienced as ambiguous, fluid, complex, political, and frustrating as hell.[14]

Similar challenges confront leaders, military or otherwise, when combat is not a part of these goings-on. California Army National Guard Major General Jim Delk found the command challenges equally demanding and potential strategic consequences no less serious during his soldiers' support of civil authorities during rioting in Los Angeles in 1992. Delk recalled:

> [A]n E-5, a young sergeant fire team leader with a total of five soldiers, had total responsibility for Gateway Plaza Shopping Center … We had to trust these young E-5s to do exactly what you would hope they would do without a commissioned officer standing there with his arm around them. And they did.[15]

Mission command requires at least five basic elements if it is to be effective in these toughest of environments. First comes the essential clarity when drawing up mission and intent statements. Muddled wording or—equally bad—failing to provide guidance because the senior leader is afraid to release a grip on control is a disservice to those whose actions most directly affect ultimate success or failure. Mission command is impossible without the second element underlying that release: decentralisation of authority based on trust. It is a both-ways trust. There is the senior leader's trust that their subordinates will do their best to make correct decisions

12 C. West Churchman, 'Wicked problems', *Management Science* 14(4) Application Series (December 1967): B-141–B-142, available from: www.jstor.org/stable/2628678.

13 Australian Public Service Commission, *Tackling Wicked Problems: A Public Service Perspective*, Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, 2007, available from: www.apsc.gov.au/tackling-wicked-problems-public-policy-perspective [page discontinued].

14 Nancy Roberts, 'Wicked problems and network approaches to resolution', *International Public Management Review* 1(1) (2000), available from: ipmr.net/index.php/ipmr/article/view/175.

15 Delk, 'MOUT', 143.

within the bounds of their mission and intent. Then there is subordinates' trust that should those decisions turn out to be less than perfect, the senior leader will back them as long as the decision was reasonable given the senior's guidance and the junior leader's experience level. The third element: senior commanders must adapt the extent of direction given to individual subordinates. Not all subordinates should receive the same level of supervision, the same degree of detail in the guidance given them or the same freedom of action. These will vary based on: 1) the junior leader's past performance, 2) the subordinate's skill level with regard to mission requirements, 3) a junior leader's experience relevant to the challenges at hand, and 4) the senior leader's familiarity with the subordinate. Thus, a senior leader can afford to provide less-detailed guidance and lesser supervision when a junior leader is familiar to them, of demonstrated ability and familiar with the tasks at hand. Guidance and extent of supervision will be more detailed if: 1) the subordinate's past performance has been less than stellar, 2) the subordinate's mission-related training or skills are limited, 3) the junior leader's past does not include the kind of operation being undertaken, or 4) the subordinate just joined the senior's organisation (and thus is an unknown quantity).

To these three mission command elements we add a fourth: junior leaders must recognise that mission command is not 'fire and forget'. Once they provide a clear mission and intent, the senior retains responsibility to check on subordinates to ensure performance continues to be in line with expectations and to provide any further guidance deemed necessary without defaulting to overly detailed direction. The wise senior will tend to check more often on one with whom they are less familiar or who is less experienced than another in whom they have more trust. The wise subordinate will understand and respect a senior's responsibility to make these checks. Fifth and finally, subordinates also have the responsibility to keep their commander informed of the situation as they see it to the extent feasible. Doing so helps the senior leader gauge whether the subordinate's efforts are indeed within the bounds of mission and intent guidance while also providing information helping the higher-level leader to distribute resources most effectively in the service of accomplishing the mission.[16]

16 Readers interested in more on the nature and application of mission command during various types of undertakings might find the following of value: Glenn, *Trust and Leadership*.

Setting the foundation for preparations

> A recent documentary film on Istanbul's building boom reflects, 'Everything changes so fast in this city of 15 million that it is impossible to even take a snap-shot for planning. Plans are outdated even as they are being made.'[17]
>
> —Anthony M. Townsend, *Smart Cities*

> The single greatest lesson learned from September 11, 2001, was the need for robust local communication channels with emergency response officials. We have made significant progress in achieving this goal in many of the larger cities that we own properties in. New York City has, in my opinion, become the gold standard in this regard.[18]
>
> —Michael L. Norton, managing director, Global Property Management, Tishman Speyer

The formal concept of mission command is relatively new to Western military circles even if its underlying common sense has been long recognised by effective leaders. Those leaders adopted other military procedures that, like mission command, have application beyond the battlefield. Among them: recognition that it is easier to modify an existing plan than to begin from scratch when reacting to a disaster. Having plans 'on the shelf' not only saves time but also serves as the basis for exercises bringing relevant participants together. One author drew on Los Angeles' in-place preparations when looking back on the megacity's 1994 Northridge earthquake to highlight additional advantages:

> Los Angeles had a pre-event earthquake recovery plan which specified agency roles and responsibilities and identified relevant programs following a large earthquake. The process of developing this plan had familiarized city staff with earthquake consequences, recovery actions, and the roles of other city agencies.[19]

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17 Townsend, *Smart Cities*, 308.

18 In United States Senate, *Lessons from the Mumbai Terrorist Attacks: Parts I and II*, Hearings before the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, United States Senate, 111th Congress, 1st Session, 8 and 28 January 2009, Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 2009, available from: www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CHRG-111shrg49484/html/CHRG-111shrg49484.htm.

19 Robert B. Olshansky, Laurie A. Johnson and Kenneth C. Topping, with Yoshiteru Murosaki, Kazuyoshi Ohnishi, Hisako Koura and Ikuo Kobayashi, *Opportunity in Chaos: Rebuilding After the 1994 Northridge and 1995 Kobe Earthquakes*, Urbana-Champaign, IL, and San Francisco, CA: Department of Urban and Regional Planning, University of Illinois and Laurie Johnson Consulting & Research, 2005 [Online 2011], 11–18, available from: docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/0b4d51_a073dddfe4f0474ba7b91f1d5572dfa6.pdf.

A good plan at the ready helps organisations prepare for, practise, perfect and then execute their response to disaster. Having good metrics to gauge response effectiveness helps further, providing ready means to measure what works, what does not and how even what works might work better, thereby adding a third pillar alongside mission command and preplanning to the foundation for crisis preparation. Identifying metrics before they are needed shares several of the benefits accruing from pre-event planning. Time saved and a chance to refine them during exercises are but two.

Designing good metrics can be tougher than it appears. Leaders lean towards metrics that are easy to understand and allow comparison horizontally across different types of activities at a given echelon and vertically between echelons. Managers at the highest levels can then scan the few similar measures in the belief that they have a good grip on their organisation's performance. Simplification sometimes takes the form of measures appearing in 'stoplight' form. Green represents all is well for a given concern. Yellow (or 'amber', in military-speak) reflects that there are issues interfering with effectiveness. Red shows things aren't going well. The approach is not without its effective applications. For example, it can work well in showing the status of an NGO's vehicle fleet. Green might mean 90 per cent or more vehicles are roadworthy, yellow that 70–89 per cent are operational and red that fewer than 70 per cent are available. It works less well for measuring trends and worse yet if the metric fails to measure what's really important. General David Perkins, who, as a colonel in 2003, led the US Army attacks to seize Saddam Hussein's primary Baghdad palace, recalled a case of the latter from his time as a brigade commander in Fallujah, Iraq.[20] At least one metric was ill-conceived to the point that it reflected failure when in fact success was at hand. His description is a long but worthwhile read:

> I tell people that you have to be very careful regarding the metrics you use because what you measure drives what people do. Everybody wants his or her entry on the status chart to be green. Metrics generate activity and focus … I would go out and talk to the mayor, sheiks, and other leaders in Fallujah. We were a tank brigade … We had tanks and Bradleys [a tracked infantry fighting vehicle]. Our patrols through the city at night were keeping people awake and tearing up the roads. Those city leaders told me, 'We don't want you bringing your tanks and Bradleys into

20 David Zucchino, *Thunder Run: The Armored Strike to Capture Baghdad*, New York, NY: Atlantic Monthly, 2004.

> the city.' I told them, 'I have to bring them in because I have to conduct patrols. People are getting attacked. We need to secure your markets and protect your residents. You don't want tanks or Bradleys in the city? Then you make sure there are no attacks.' The response was, 'It's not Fallujah people. It's people from outside the city.' I said that I didn't really care who it was. 'I know you know who's doing this stuff and I know you have control over it. Here's the deal: I agree not to bring tanks or Bradleys into the city and you figure out how you are going to keep people from being attacked. We'll start out for a week. If it works, we'll continue not bringing tanks and Bradleys into the city.' So we went for a week. There wasn't a single attack in Fallujah. Not one attack. It was unheard of at that point in time. We go for another week—no attacks. What happens? I get queries from higher: 'Hey, you know we have this chart that tracks the number of patrols units are making. Your unit is the worst of out of [*sic*] all the units we monitor. I said, 'OK, but you understand this is part of the whole dynamic, that we have cut back the patrols because we worked this deal with the sheiks and the mayor and they agreed they are going to keep their city safe. If they keep their city safe and our guys aren't attacked then I don't need to bring tanks and Bradleys into Fallujah.' 'But you don't understand. We measure patrols. We don't measure the number of enemy attacks. You aren't green. You're red. You used to be doing great and now you've dropped off. What happened?' 'But look at the attacks. The number of attacks used to be high and they've dropped off.' We were measuring the wrong thing, and what we were measuring was driving our actions.[21]

A second—and more positive—example is less military than civil government in character, more strategic than down at the tactical level with which Colonel Perkins was dealing. It demonstrates mission command's potential when guidance from above is clear and leaders encourage initiative from junior leaders.

The city is Hong Kong, the year 1945. Japan has just surrendered in Tokyo. World War II is at an end. David MacDougall is dispatched to serve as head of the Hong Kong Civil Affairs Unit to get the city back on its feet. London's guidance to MacDougall directed he was to:

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21 David G. Perkins (Commanding General, US Division—North), Interview with Dr Russell W. Glenn, Tikrit, Iraq, 28 June 2011, as appears in Russell W. Glenn, *Core Counterinsurgency Asset: Lessons from Iraq and Afghanistan for United States Army Corps of Engineer Leaders*, Study sponsored by the US Army Corps of Engineers, 31 May 2012 [revised 8 December 2016], 261–71, at 262–63.

- Establish a police force and military courts.
- Set up relief camps for the suffering. Provide medical care, public health and adequate sanitation for those individuals.
- Put banking and other financial procedures in place.

… and do all of this using local resources to the extent possible.

Complementing this guidance from the Colonial Office, the War Office offered its input in terms of longer-term ends (the War Office was overseeing Hong Kong during the initial weeks after the Japanese surrender before the Colonial Office could once again assume the reins). We can comfortably equate the War Office guidance to an effective commander's intent:

- Return both public and private physical infrastructure to service with special attention to air and port services.
- Re-establish the colony's education system.
- Prepare for full transition from the current British military colonial administration to civil government.

MacDougall's superior in Hong Kong at the time was Admiral Sir Cecil Harcourt. Harcourt understood the need to grant his senior civilian the authority essential to meeting the guidance dispatched from 10,000 kilometres away in London. He therefore informed the secretary of state for the colonies that 'signals congestion' would limit the sending of civil government dispatches to once a month. London agreed, trusting their man on the ground based on both his previous performance and his considerable experience. (MacDougall's prewar training as a Hong Kong cadet provided some familiarity with the colony. Being in charge of the Hong Kong Planning Unit since September 1944 made him intimately familiar with London's expectations.) The trust paid off. MacDougall took unorthodox but effective steps while acting within his previously received guidance. In his own words:

> We had a whole month, every month, free and then reported what we had done retrospectively. This is why we got so far ahead; everything we did was just click, click, click, and before they knew it things were done, fait accompli. We did things they would never have thought of, things they would never have authorized. We overprinted Japanese notes; I put minimum wages up in half

> an hour from fifty cents to two dollars; in a week we paid fifteen thousand people on the streets $2 a day. These things would have taken months to do.[22]

These successes were not merely the result of luck in having the right leaders on the ground at the right time. Plans were put in motion to get the city-colony back on its feet well before the end of the Pacific War. The Hong Kong Planning Unit had been established two years earlier in August 1943. Its staff was militarised in May 1945; each of the 38 staff members was given military rank the better to meld with the armed forces organisation that would rule once the colony returned to British control.[23] The right people were put in charge, given the necessary guidance and permitted to act within its constraints.

Whether reaching halfway around the world as between London and Hong Kong or from one building to that next-door, we might think of mission command as being a little like the driver's navigation app Waze. The app benefits from the same technologies as others but early on had the added benefit of users being able to provide real-time updates as they came across problems. An Israeli friend of mine with a sense of direction Captain Cook would have envied uses it not for getting from here to there in his country's densely populated cities, but to avoid the inevitable traffic jams. Unsurprisingly, densely populated areas offer a breadth and depth of traffic information lacking where drivers are fewer. Waze is therefore of limited value in infrequently travelled rural regions but of notable benefit in densely populated areas.

Okay, Waze is not all that much like mission command. The driver does not have some boss telling them where to go and what to accomplish once they get there (well, depending on the relationship with your significant other perhaps). And the guidance from Waze is far more constant and detailed than effective mission command would dictate thanks to satellites, speed-monitoring algorithms and the like. But the app recognises that its users have a better grasp of detailed road conditions than any central effort at control could ever hope to achieve. Further, individual drivers (equivalent to our junior leaders in mission command) benefit from

22 This quote and the previous material regarding British re-establishment of government in Hong Kong after World War II are from Neil Monnery, *Architect of Prosperity: Sir John Cowperthwaite and the Making of Hong Kong*, London: London Publishing Partnership, 2017, 40–42.
23 ibid., 40.

their reporting to 'higher command' via Waze's automatic monitoring of locations; the app can then provide the whereabouts of nearby petrol stations, restaurants and rest stops in addition to traffic delays.

Leaders, regardless of their organisation, are well advised to consider the advice of Molly Phee, former senior Coalition Provisional Authority representative to Maysan, Iraq: 'You will be better served by progressively devolving authority and acting more like a guide than a god.'[24]

24 Molly Phee, senior Coalition Provisional Authority representative to Maysan Province, Iraq, as quoted in Russell W. Glenn, *Band of Brothers or Dysfunctional Family? A Military Perspective on Coalition Challenges during Stability Operations*, Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2011, 71.

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