

Section 16



OPERATION ORDERS

Key Points

- 1 Preparing an Operation Order
- 2 The Five Paragraphs of an OPORD
- 3 Troop Leading Procedures and OPORDs



In issuing orders or giving verbal instruction, [LTG Thomas J. “Stonewall”] Jackson’s words were few and simple; but they were so clear, so comprehensive and direct, that no officer could possibly misunderstand, and none dared disobey.

LTG James A. Longstreet

From P. G. Tsouras, editor, *The Greenhill Book of Military Quotations*

Introduction

As you learned in Section 15, an operation order (OPORD) is a directive issued by a leader to subordinate leaders to coordinate and execute specific operations. OPORDs are the vehicle for implementing an operation as the commander intends.

A good OPORD is a tool that allows the commander to exercise both command and control while at the same time encouraging initiative during the execution of a mission. As a small-unit leader, you must develop your communication and critical-thinking skills so that your OPORD promotes the discipline and initiative that lead to success in carrying out operations.

OPORDs must give subordinates operational and tactical freedom to accomplish the mission by imposing as few restrictions on their initiative as possible. As FM 5-0 states, “The measure of a good plan is not whether execution transpires as planned but whether the plan facilitates effective action in the face of unforeseen events.”

As with execution of the operation itself, building an effective OPORD requires the writer to be both *systematic* and *flexible*. When you write an OPORD, you are constrained to write the OPORD in the five-paragraph format, but you have the flexibility to incorporate new information in any of the five paragraphs as that information becomes available. As you write the OPORD, you may find yourself jumping back and forth between the paragraphs as you receive information from your commander or his or her staff (such as intelligence or logistical updates), or feedback from your NCOs or Soldiers (such as tactical updates from a leader’s recon). *You cannot write a good OPORD in a vacuum.* As you build each paragraph of this five-paragraph document, you must constantly be checking to ensure that the details are correct, and that your subordinates can understand and—most importantly—carry out what you write.

This chapter will walk you through the format and process of composing an effective OPORD. It is up to you to apply the standards for Army writing outlined in the Personal Development Track, Section 3, so that your OPORDs are clear, simple, and, like “Stonewall” Jackson’s orders, compelling.

Preparing an Operation Order

As you read in the previous chapter, a good operation order:

- clearly conveys the commander's intent
- is authoritative, simple, brief, clear, complete, and timely
- allows flexibility to exploit opportunities
- contains critical facts and assumptions
- uses positive expression and affirmative form
- avoids qualified directives and vague expressions
- balances centralized and decentralized control
- is written so that your lowest-ranking or most inexperienced Soldier understands and can execute the commander's intent.

A leader prepares a five-paragraph OPORD to give subordinate leaders enough information to carry out a mission. Among other things, the OPORD must balance two qualities: 1) it must be complete enough to prevent any misunderstanding or risky assumptions; 2) it must be brief and concise enough to be quickly understandable. The most important parts of the order are Paragraphs 2 and 3, the mission and execution. As you have learned in previous sections on terrain analysis, however, leaders at all levels must understand the terrain, weather, and light data covered in Paragraph 1 as well. While issuing a warning order (WARNO), you should emphasize Paragraphs 2 and 3 to provide enough information for subordinate leaders to begin planning and preparation (start necessary movement from the TLP). Don't worry that you'll repeat this information in the final OPORD: Redundancy is one key to a successful mission or OPORD.

The Five Paragraphs of an OPORD

Traditionally called the five-paragraph field order, an OPORD (Table 16.1) contains, at a minimum, descriptions of the following:

- Task organization (this is not one of the five paragraphs but details how the unit will organize to complete the mission)
- Situation
- Mission
- Execution (consists of the time, schedule, and tasks)
- Administrative and logistic support
- Command and signal for the specified operation.

Task Organization

The task organization states how the unit is organized for the operation and who holds the main responsibility. It includes the unit's normal structure, plus any attachments or detachments. For a tactical order, the task organization section reorganizes the unit from its normal Table of Organization and Equipment (TO&E) structure into a structure to complete the tactical mission. Your company commander may attach another platoon's squads to your platoon for the mission, or detach a squad from your platoon to help another platoon that is executing the company's main effort. Or your company commander may attach combat support or combat service support assets to your platoon to help you accomplish your mission.

At the platoon level, you have the authority to task organize your own squads, teams, or sections to best accomplish the mission. Reflecting back on your previous tactics lessons, you will recall cases in which a platoon or squad conducting a recon or combat patrol was organized into smaller elements, such as the assault, security, and support elements, or reconnaissance and security (R&S) teams. These are good examples of task organization at the small-unit level. (You will have the opportunity to task organize your own units as an MSL III and MSL IV Cadet.)

If you will not have attachments or detachments, or you will not be task organizing your subordinate units, then you will state, “No change to SOP” (standing operating procedure).

1. Situation

Your situation paragraph includes all the information your subordinate leaders need to understand the situation.

Enemy Forces. Identify the enemy forces, their composition (infantry, armor, mechanized), strength (are they operating at 100 percent strength, or 40 percent strength?), their location (give grid coordinates), what they are currently doing (attacking, retreating, patrolling, defending), and their most likely course of action in the near future, or how they will react to your action (fight, retreat, counterattack). It is also important to include any information you have on their morale or those things that affect their morale, such as the last time they received supplies or if they are short on food, water, or ammo.

Critical Thinking

Why do you think it is important to know the enemy’s morale?

Friendly Forces. List the mission of the next higher unit and the higher commander’s intent. State the mission or critical task of the friendly units to your left, right, front, and rear. List the units that will provide fire support and close air support for your mission, and give their locations.

Critical Thinking

Why is it important for you and your Soldiers to know the grid coordinates to the units providing you with indirect or close air support?

TABLE 16.1a

Operation Order (OPORD)

OPORD [number] [code name]—[issuing headquarters] (Place the classification and short title of the OPORD at the top of the second and any subsequent pages.)

Task Organization: Describe the allocation of forces to support the concept of operations.

1. SITUATION.

Enemy forces. Express information in terms of two enemy echelons below yours. Describe the enemy's most likely and most dangerous COAs. When possible, provide a sketch of the enemy COA with the written description. Include an assessment of terrorist activities in the area of operation (AO).

Friendly forces. List the mission, commander's intent, and concept of operations for headquarters one and two levels up. Subparagraphs state the missions of flank and other units.

Environment.

- List all critical **terrain** and **weather** aspects that can impact operations.
- List all critical **civil considerations** that can impact operations.

Attachments and detachments. Do not repeat information already listed under Task Organization. List units that are attached or detached to the headquarters that issues the order. State when the attachment or detachment is effective, if different from the effective time of the OPLAN (such as, on-order, or on commitment of the reserve).

2. MISSION. Provide a clear, concise statement of the task and describe the purpose for doing it. Ensure that *who*, *what*, *when*, *where*, and *why* are covered. A mission statement contains no subparagraphs. The mission statement covers on-order missions.

3. EXECUTION INTENT.

State the commander's intent.

Concept of operations. The concept of operations describes how the commander sees the actions of subordinate units fitting together to accomplish the mission. At a minimum, the concept of operations includes the scheme of maneuver and concept of fire. Whereas the commander's intent focuses on the end state, the concept of operations focuses on the method used for the operation and synchronizes battlefield operating systems to translate vision and end state into action.

The concept of operations addresses the decisive and shaping operations. It describes the overall form of maneuver, designates the main effort for each phase of the operation, and includes any be-prepared missions. The concept of operations is concise, understandable and describes:

- the employment of major maneuver elements in a scheme of maneuver
- a plan of fire support or "scheme of fires" supporting the maneuver with fires
- the integration of other major elements or systems within the operation—these include ISR, intelligence, engineer, and air defense assets.
- any other details the commander considers appropriate to clarify the concept of operations and ensure unity of effort.

When an operation involves two or more clearly distinct and separate phases, the concept of operations may be prepared in subparagraphs describing each phase.

If the operation overlay is the only annex referenced, show it after "a. Concept of Operations." Place the commander's intent and concept of operations statement on the overlay if the overlay does not accompany the OPORD.

The number of subparagraphs, if any, is based on what the commander considers appropriate, the level of command, and the complexity of the operation. The following subparagraphs are examples of what may be required within the concept of operations.

Maneuver. State the scheme of maneuver. Be sure this paragraph is consistent with the operation overlay. It must address the decisive and shaping operations, including security operations and the use of reserves, and it must specify the purpose of each. This paragraph and the operation overlay are complementary, each adding clarity to, rather than duplicating, the other. Do not duplicate information in unit subparagraphs and the coordinating instructions.

TABLE 16.1b

Operation Order (OPORD), continued

Fire. Describe the scheme of fire. State which unit has priority of fire. Include the purpose of, priorities for, allocation of, and restrictions for fire support. To write the fire paragraph, list essential fire support tasks using the task, purpose, method, and effect format.

- a) **Air support.** State allocation of close air support (CAS) sorties, if any.
- b) **Field artillery support.** Cover priorities such as counterfires or interdiction. State organization for combat. Include command and support relationships only if they are not clear in the task organization. Ensure that allocation of fire supports the concept of operations.
- c) **Additional combat support assets (engineers, air defense, artillery).** State the concept of employment of any combat support attachment or who gets priority of their use, how they are used, and how they will be controlled and by whom.

Tasks to maneuver units. State the missions or tasks assigned to each maneuver unit. Every task must include a purpose that links it to the concept of operations. Use a separate subparagraph for each unit. List units in task organization sequence. Include reserves. State only tasks that are necessary for comprehension, clarity, and emphasis. Place tasks that affect two or more units in Coordinating Instructions.

Tasks to other combat and combat support units. State the missions or tasks assigned to nonmaneuver combat units and CS units. List units in task organization sequence. List only those tasks that are not specified or implied elsewhere.

Coordinating instructions. List only instructions applicable to two or more units and not covered in unit SOPs.

- a) **Commander's critical information requirements.** List CCIR here.
- b) **Risk reduction control measures.** These are measures unique to this operation and not included in unit SOPs. They may include mission-oriented protective posture, operational exposure guidance, vehicle recognition signals, and fratricide prevention measures.
- c) **Rules of engagement (ROE).** Refer to annex E (ROE) if required.

4. SERVICE SUPPORT. Address service support in the areas shown below as needed to clarify the service support concept.

Support concept. State the concept of logistics support to provide a visualization of how the operation will be logistically supported. This could include:

- the location—current and proposed—of the unit support location
- support command headquarters or support area locations, including locations of the next higher logistic bases if not clearly conveyed in the CSS overlay
- the next higher level's support priorities and where the unit fits into those priorities
- the commander's priorities of support
- the use of host-nation support and
- significant or unusual CSS issues and sustainment risks that might impact the overall operation.

Materiel and services.

- a) **Supply.** Information on all classes of supply of interest to the unit.
- b) **Transportation.** Constraints and limitations.
- c) **Services.** Information on the type of services available, designation, and location of the facility and schedule for service.
- d) **Maintenance.** Information that differs from the established SOP regarding maintenance of weapons and equipment.
- e) **Medical Evacuation.** Procedures for evacuation of wounded if different from SOP.

5. COMMAND AND SIGNAL.

- a) **Command.**
 - Location of higher unit command and CP/unit leader or CP/alternate CP
 - Succession of command if different from SOP.
- b) **Signal.**
 - Listening silence, if applicable
 - Methods of communication in priority/Emergency signals, visual signals/Code words.

The elements of OAKOC
 Observation and
 Fields of Fire
 Avenues of Approach
 Key and Decisive Terrain
 Obstacles
 Cover and Concealment.

Environment. Use the acronym OAKOC to conduct a comprehensive analysis of how the terrain, weather, and light will affect both friendly and enemy military operations.

Attachments and detachments. List any element not normally attached to your unit that will accompany you on the mission and any element of your unit that will be staying behind for whatever reason. Your task organization will depict how you will incorporate, or organize, your attachments into your unit for the mission.

Critical Thinking

Why do you think it is important to use the DTG format in OPORDs?
 Why do you think it is important that your mission statement be nested within that of your higher HQ?

2. Mission

The *who*, *where*, *when* of the mission statement is straightforward. The *what* and *why*, however, are more challenging to write clearly and can be confusing to your subordinates. The *what* is a tactical mission task that you express using action verbs (for example, *contain*, *destroy*, or *isolate*). You can group these measurable tasks by actions of friendly forces and effects on enemy forces. The *why* puts the task into context by describing the reason you are conducting it. FM 5-0, *Army Planning and Orders Production*, page 3-5, provides a list of tactical mission tasks, but this is not a complete list of all task choices available to the commander (see Figure 16.1).

Always give the exact execution time of the mission using the date-time-group (DTG) format. For example, for a mission on November 11, 2005 at 8:30 pm, you would write 112030NOV05. Do not use phrases such as "30 minutes from now."

Actions by Friendly Forces

- Attack-by-Fire
- Breach
- Bypass
- Clear
- Consolidate and Reorganize
- Control
- Disengage
- Follow and Assume
- Follow and Support
- Linkup
- Occupy
- Reduce
- Retain
- Secure
- Seize
- Support by Fire.

Effects on Enemy Forces

- Block
- Canalize
- Contain
- Defeat
- Destroy
- Disrupt
- Fix
- Interdict
- Isolate
- Neutralize
- Penetrate
- Turn.

Figure 16.1 Tactical Mission Tasks

The *why* of a mission statement provides the mission's purpose—why are we doing this task? You normally describe the purpose, which is often more important than the task itself, using a descriptive phrase. The purpose must directly relate to, or be nested within, your commander's concept of operations. The example below includes a purpose in the mission statement.

- NLT 031100Z JUL 03 (**When**) 1st Bde (**Who**) secures (**What/Task**) OBJ BRAVO (**Where**) to prevent enemy forces from crossing the BLUE RIVER (**Why/Purpose**).

3. Execution

In this paragraph, you give a clear statement of the commander's intent—the purpose of the operation and what the situation should look like when the operation is complete.

Commander's intent. State clearly and concisely what end state the commander wishes to achieve.

Concept of operation. Describe in chronological order (from start to finish) how the unit will accomplish the mission. Stick to explaining the mission-essential tasks, decisive points of action, and the main effort. This paragraph must be short and should tell the “big picture” step-by-step story of how you see the operation unfolding. On the offense, you begin the concept of the operation from the point you begin your movement, such as departing the forward operating base (FOB), tactical assembly area (TAA), or line of departure/line of control (LD/LC). You conclude when your mission ends, such as establishing the hasty defense on the objective, or returning to your FOB, TAA, or patrol base.

When writing your concept of the operation, think of it as writing an outline for a book report or research paper. You don't want to get into the details—you only want to capture the main ideas or parts. Be sure to state your units' order of movement, the maneuver formation, and the maneuver technique when on the offense.

An example of a concept of operation is: “We will depart the patrol base, order of movement, 1st squad, 2nd squad, 3rd squad using the wedge formation and traveling overwatch technique. We will move on an azimuth of 210 degrees for 800 meters and occupy our ORP (objective rally point). I will conduct the leader's recon of the objective and return to the ORP to finalize the plan. We will depart the ORP, order of movement Security, Support, Assault. Security will leave a security team in the ORP. I will leave Support and Assault at the release point and emplace left and right flank security. I will return to the release point and emplace Security and Assault. After actions on the objective, we will return through the release point, Assault, Support, Security, gain accountability, and return to the ORP. After disseminating PIR (priority intelligence requirements), we will depart the ORP on an azimuth of 156 degrees for 1,100 meters to our alternate patrol base.”

Nested concepts is a planning technique to achieve unity of purpose whereby each succeeding echelon's concept of operations is embedded in the other. When developing the concept of operations, commanders ensure their concept is nested within that of their higher headquarters. They also ensure subordinate unit missions are unified by task and purpose to accomplish the mission. (FM 5-0)

Maneuver. Address the mechanics of the operation by listing each subordinate maneuver element and its specific critical task for the mission. When you write it correctly, each of your subordinate maneuver elements will have its own mission statement that it will use to write Paragraph 2 of its own OPORD. In the example above of an offensive combat patrol, the maneuver paragraph could read: “1st Squad, the main effort, assaults OBJ SPIKE at 10S NB34986451 NLT 110830NOV05 in order to destroy enemy personnel and equipment. 2nd Squad occupies support by fire position vicinity 10S NB34068614 in order to suppress enemy on OBJ SPIKE. 3rd Squad provides flank and rear security on OBJ SPIKE vicinity 10S NB34986451 in order to seal the objective and provide early warning.” As you can see, each squad can take information from this maneuver paragraph and write its own Paragraph 2 mission statement for its own squad OPORD.

Fires. State each type of fire support asset that will support your mission (battalion 120 mm mortars, company 60 mm mortars, BCT Fires Battalion 155 mm howitzers). For each asset, state what level of support it will provide—direct support (DS) or general support (GS)—and state whether your unit has priority of fires for each fire support asset. For each phase of your operation, and for each fire support asset, state the purpose of the fire, your priority targets, and any restrictive control measures. Consider publishing a separate fire support plan that lists target numbers, grid locations, a description of each target, and the effects you intend the fire to have on each type of target (destroy, suppress, screen, obscure, etc.).

A notional fires subparagraph could be: “We have priority of fires during actions on the objective. Battalion 120 mm mortars are in DS and located at 10S NB35698371. Company mortars are in DS and located at 10S NB34788173. BCT Fires Battalion 155 mm howitzers are in GS and located at 10S NB25679823. The purpose of fires during movement to OBJ SPIKE is to obscure our movement from enemy observation. The purpose of fires on OBJ SPIKE is to destroy the enemy and seal the objective. The purpose of fires during movement off OBJ SPIKE is to suppress enemy reinforcements and obscure our movement from the objective.

Tasks to maneuver/combat support units. List each combat and combat support unit by name and give its task as the five Ws and “how” (who, what, where, when, why, and how).

Coordinating instructions. List the details for coordination and control that apply to two or more units or elements. This might include a long list of items; it’s important to develop unit SOPs so that you don’t have to repeat them in the OPORD—remember, keep it short and concise!

1. Order of movement, formations, and movement techniques—
use a sketch or terrain model
2. Actions at halts (short/long)—SOP
3. Routes (primary/alternate)—give the azimuth and distance
4. Departure and reentry of friendly lines

5. Rally points and actions at rally points—specify either IRP (initial rally point), ORP, PB (patrol base), or RRP (reentry rally point) and include grid coordinates and/or terrain references
6. Actions at danger areas (if different from unit SOPs)
7. Actions on enemy contact (if different from unit SOPs)
8. Reorganization and consolidation instructions (if different from unit SOPs)
9. Fire distribution measures: point fires versus area fires for all weapons systems (M4/M16, M249, M240B, etc.)
10. Fire control measures: List in order the targets you want units to shoot at (i.e., crew-served weapons, then radio operators, then leaders), sectors of fire to include target reference points and visual or sound signals
11. Military-Oriented Protective Posture (MOPP) levels (gear to protect against chemical or biological attack)
12. Troop safety and operational exposure guidance
13. Time schedules (rehearsals, back briefs, inspections, and movement)—state who must be there, when, where, and what you'll rehearse
14. Priority Intelligence Requirements (PIR)
15. Debriefing requirements
16. Reports—state when you want to receive reports (after all contact with the enemy)
17. Rules of Engagement (ROE): i.e., when to shoot and when not to shoot. If you are in an ambush, do you shoot at one enemy soldier walking down the road alone? Do you engage with your squad an enemy battalion going along the road? What if there are civilians in the combat area?
18. At the small-unit level, it is best to list classes of supplies that pertain to two or more units in coordinating instructions, such as number of meals ready-to-eat (MREs), the number of rounds of 5.56 mm each Soldier is to bring on the mission, or the number of Claymores each squad must carry on the mission. At the company level or higher, this information is often included in Paragraph 4.

4. Service Support

This paragraph explains how CS and CSS units will support you during your mission. You write how much and when you will issue classes of supply for your unit in the coordinated instructions of Paragraph 3. Include in Paragraph 4 the logistical information your platoon sergeant will need in order to plan, coordinate, and requisition classes of supply to support the platoon during the operation. The S-4 (logistics staff officer) will write this paragraph at the battalion level. As a platoon leader, you will need to know how to glean the right service and support information from the battalion S-4's Paragraph 4 to incorporate into Paragraph 4 of your platoon OPORD.

General. Give the SOPs in effect to sustain operations, current and future resupply or cache points, casualty collection points, and the location of the MEDEVAC pickup zone.

Materials and services.

1. Supply: List information on all relevant classes of supply, to include the grid location where each class of supply can be obtained; operating times for each supply point; how you will be resupplied for each class of supply; how often you will be resupplied for each class of supply; and the quantity and type of classes of supply required to support your mission.
 - a. Class I: Subsistence (food and water). State how many meals Soldiers will get prior to, during, and after the mission and how they will receive them. State the location of mess tents. State the water resupply plan, potable water sources en route, or nonpotable water sources en route where Soldiers must treat water themselves.
 - b. Class II: Clothing and individual equipment. State where and how Soldiers can turn in (DX) old or damaged equipment and clothing and receive new equipment and clothing.
 - c. Class III: POL (fuel). State where the POL points are and what POL products are required to support the mission. State the method and location of resupply.
 - d. Class IV: Construction and barrier material. State where Class IV is stored, the method to requisition, and whether it will be delivered or you must arrange for pickup.
 - e. Class V: Ammunition. State where the ammo supply point (ASP) is located, its hours of operation, and whether you will be resupplied during your mission. State the type and total number of Class V your platoon has for the mission; what you want each squad to draw (Claymores, mines, flares, smoke); and what you want each Soldier to draw (grenades, smoke, 5.56 mm, 7.62 mm).
 - f. Class VI: Personal demand items. State when and how often Class VI will be delivered, or the plan to take Soldiers to Class VI locations.
 - g. Class VII: Major end items. At the small-unit level, you will need to explain the requisition procedure to turn in and receive Class VII items (serial numbered items such as weapons, vehicles, night vision goggles, tents, etc.).
 - h. Class VIII: Medical supplies: State how, when, and how often your attached medic or the aid station will inspect combat lifesaver (CLS) bags. List minimum quantities of critical Class VII that each CLS must carry, such as number of intravenous (IV) bags, number of litters, etc.
 - i. Class IX: Repair parts. See Class VII.
 - j. Class X: Agriculture/economic development (tractors & farm equipment). List the location, requisitioning process, and delivery method for Class X items that you are responsible for during stability and support operations (SASO).

2. **Transportation:** Your platoon sergeant (PSG) or assistant patrol leader (APL) should develop the transportation plan for movement required during all phases of your mission, to include ground and air movement, by-name manifests, and by-name sticks and chinks written with a load or seating diagram based on the type of vehicle transporting the Soldiers. List any weapons constraints or weight limitations.
3. **Services:** Give information on the types of services available and location of the facility—laundry, showers, haircuts, satellite phones, E-mail, etc.
4. **Maintenance:** State any information that differs from the SOP on maintaining weapons and equipment. This paragraph is pertinent if you have mechanized or wheeled vehicles on your modified table of organization and equipment (MTO&E).
5. **Medical Evacuation:** This is probably one of the most important and most overlooked subparagraphs in the OPORD. A complete, well-thought-out MEDEVAC plan will make the difference between life and death for your Soldiers. As the platoon leader, you must take a personal interest in planning, coordinating, and rehearsing your MEDEVAC plan. Take the time to walk through your plan, step by step. In the garrison environment, have a backup plan to 911—know the medical facilities, know the route to the medical facilities, and know the phone numbers. In the field or in combat, know the primary and alternate frequencies, plan multiple casualty collection points (CCPs), and have primary and multiple alternate CLS and aid and litter (A&L) teams. Confirm that MEDEVACs can get in and out of your planned CCPs. Plan primary and alternate evacuation routes for ambulance vehicles. List the priorities and method for evacuating wounded Soldiers and enemy fighters if different from the SOP.

5. Command and Signal

This paragraph explains where the command and control elements will be located during each phase of the operation.

Command. Give the location of the higher commander and the command post. State where key personnel will be during all phases of the operation. At the platoon level, list the succession of command down to the squad leader level. Ensure that each squad has a succession of command between the Alpha and Bravo team leaders. Beyond team leaders, unit SOPs usually call for succession by Soldiers' date of rank, but this may be based on time in grade or unit experience. List any adjustments to the unit SOP.

Signal. Give the signal operating instruction (SOI) in effect, with frequencies and call signs. Describe all pyrotechnics and signals, including arm-and-hand signals. List any code words, the challenge and password (for use behind friendly lines), the number combination code (for use forward of friendly lines), the running password, recognition signals, and any special instructions for radio telephone operators (RTOs).

Troop Leading Procedures and OPORDs

Troop Leading Procedures

- 1. Receive the mission*
- 2. Issue a WARNO*
- 3. Make a tentative plan*
- 4. Start necessary movement*
- 5. Reconnoiter*
- 6. Complete the plan (OPORD)*
- 7. Issue the complete order (OPORD)*
- 8. Supervise and refine (FRAGO).*

In Section 6, you learned about the Army troop leading procedures (TLP). The relationship between the steps of the TLP and the OPORD should be clearer to you now. The OPORD is an essential part of the TLP. First, you receive the mission. Next, you issue a warning order (WARNO), develop your tentative plan, start the necessary movements, evaluate the ways in which you want to proceed, complete your plan (OPORD), then issue the complete order (brief your subordinates on the OPORD). At that point, you supervise and refine, if necessary issuing a fragmentary order (FRAGO) that contains only changes or updates to the OPORD.

Critical Thinking

The story goes that Napoleon would have a corporal in his headquarters read drafts of operation orders intended for his generals. The purpose of this was to test the drafts for readability. Napoleon felt that if the corporal could understand the order, the generals would also. How could you use a similar technique for testing your orders?



CONCLUSION

An OPORD must give a clear description of the operation in a manner that allows the recipient to plan, execute, and apply the initiative in carrying out your intent.

To ensure unity of effort, it is essential that your mission be “nested” with that of your higher headquarters. You must use the OPORD both to command and control the operation, as well as to encourage initiative. Your technique for writing an OPORD should be systematic—following the five-paragraph structure—and flexible, always allowing the incorporation of new information and feedback from those above and below. If your subordinates don’t understand your OPORD, they can’t execute the mission correctly. Your responsibility is to write or revise your orders to minimize the risk of such misunderstanding. Write your orders so your lowest-ranking or least experienced Soldier can accomplish the mission.

Learning Assessment

1. Explain the five paragraphs of an OPORD.
2. Review the troop leading procedures, explaining when you issue a FRAGO, an OPORD, and a WARNO.

References

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