# Strategy Research Project

# Selecting the Right Leaders for Mission Command

by

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# REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE

*Form Approved--OMB No. 0704-0188*

The public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing the burden, to Department of Defense, Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports (0704-0188), 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to any penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number. **PLEASE DO NOT RETURN YOUR FORM TO THE ABOVE ADDRESS.**

| 1. REPORT DATE *(DD-MM-YYYY)* | 2. REPORT TYPE | 3. DATES COVERED *(From - To)* |
|---|---|---|
| 01-04-2018 | STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT | |

| 4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE | 5a. CONTRACT NUMBER |
|---|---|
| Selecting the Right Leaders for Mission Command | |
| | 5b. GRANT NUMBER |
| | 5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER |

| 6. AUTHOR(S) | 5d. PROJECT NUMBER |
|---|---|
| Lieutenant Colonel Travis Habhab | |
| United States Army | 5e. TASK NUMBER |
| | 5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER |

| 7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) | 8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER |
|---|---|
| Dr. George Woods | |

| 9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) | 10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S) |
|---|---|
| U.S. Army War College, 122 Forbes Avenue, Carlisle, PA 17013 | |
| | 11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S) |

**12. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT**

Distribution A: Approved for Public Release. Distribution is Unlimited.
I understand this document will be included in a research database and available to the public. Author: ☒

**13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES**

Word Count: 7,107

**14. ABSTRACT**

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**15. SUBJECT TERMS**

Talent Management, Leader Development, Evaluations, 360 Feedback, Command Climate

| 16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF: | | | 17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT | 18. NUMBER OF PAGES | 19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| a. REPORT | b. ABSTRACT | c. THIS PAGE | UU | 34 | |
| UU | UU | UU | | | 19b. TELEPHONE NUMBER *(w/ area code)* |

**Standard Form 298** (Rev. 8/98), Prescribed by ANSI Std. Z39.18

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(7,107 words)


Abstract

The nation is counting on the Army to select and promote the right strategic leaders on active duty, in the Army Reserve, and in the Army National Guard components who effectively employ the mission command principles. The future security environment is more dynamic. Multi-domain and transregional conflicts require leaders at all levels to build cohesive teams through mutual trust, execute in a decentralized manner, lead joint and multinational units, and influence individuals with different cultures. If the Army is serious about employing mission command and really wants the right future leaders who can use it effectively, it should modify some of the existing mission command assessment mechanisms to make them more effective and ensure the Army promotes and selects the right leaders. The Army should improve its utilization of both 360 feedback assessments and command climate surveys by requiring raters to review them when completing evaluations of leaders and standardizing their use in all components. Taking into account true leadership feedback from subordinates, peers, and superiors will avoid shortsighted, results-driven evaluations. Modifying these assessment mechanisms will improve how the Army evaluates mission command and help select the right future leaders.

# Selecting the Right Leaders for Mission Command

If you look at readiness, if you look at combat power, the most important element of that is not technology. It's not the guns, the planes, the ships. It's not the weapons. It's not the computers. It's the people, and, most importantly, it's the leaders.

—Army Chief of Staff General Mark A. Milley[1]

In 2012, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Martin Dempsey, published a white paper declaring mission command critical to our future success defending this nation in the increasingly complex and uncertain operating environment.[2] The future security environment will be even more dynamic than it is today, as globalization and technology advancements lead to multi-domain and transregional conflicts. In order to be successful in more dynamic conflicts, the Army needs leadership at all levels in the Regular Army, Army Reserve, and National Guard who are proficient at mission command to build cohesive teams based upon trust, possess a shared understanding, and primed to make complex decisions in a decentralized environment.

According to General Dempsey, mission command is leadership-centric.[3] Leaders must effectively develop and lead multinational and joint units with strategic impacts, work interagency issues, and influence individuals with different values and cultures. He charged the military with adopting the mission command concepts and fostering it in all operations.[4] Years later, the Army's employment of mission command brings mixed results. Some senior leaders appear to apply mission command concepts well, while others do not. Promoting and selecting leaders who understand mission command and can apply it is more important now due to the uncertain and constantly changing environment. If the Army is serious about employing mission command and

really wants the right future leaders who can use it effectively, it has to change the way it measures and assesses leaders' mission command traits in all three Army components. The purpose of this paper is to discuss why the Army needs to improve how it assesses mission command in its leaders, its current direct and indirect mission command assessment methods, and recommend assessment changes for the Army to select and promote the right leaders who effectively employ mission command.

## Mission Command Overview

Mission command is the process of leaders using mission orders to enable disciplined initiative within their superior's intent, to empower agile and adaptive leaders to conduct any operation.[5] It is the backbone of the Army's unified land operations, to seize and exploit the initiative over the enemy.[6] Mission command is the central leadership concept employed during a combination of offense, defense, and stability operations. Understanding mission command allows senior leaders to develop effective organizations capable of solving complex problems in a decentralized manner. It is an aspect of a unit being ready. Commanders and staffs execute mission command throughout the conduct of all operations to function effectively and have the greatest chance of success.[7] Successful mission command is based upon establishing mutual trust and a shared understanding of the end state. Decentralized operations are key as leaders may need to make decisions quickly and without consulting superiors. Therefore, it relies on leaders' ability to efficiently convey how they visualize problems and inspire potential solutions to unknown challenges.[8] Mission command consists of six guiding principles leaders must understand to be successful in this dynamic environment. The six principles are building cohesive teams through mutual trust,

creating shared understanding, providing a clear commander's intent, using mission orders, exercising disciplined initiative, and accepting prudent risk.[9]

The first mission command principle is building cohesive teams through mutual trust. Army Doctrine Reference Publication 6-0 specifies that mission command is based on trust and shared understanding.[10] "Because trust is the glue that binds mission command, leaders must understand the dimensions of trust and its impact on Soldiers and units."[11] Trust is frequently considered the most important concept of mission command because you must trust one another to make the best possible decisions in complex situations.

Mutual trust stems from superiors, subordinates, and peers having a shared confidence in one another. Subordinates trust that superiors will make good decisions, have their best interests in mind and care for them. Superiors trust their subordinates to act within their intent and do their best towards mission accomplishment. Leaders do not gain trust easily. It takes time and individuals must earn it. It is based on integrity, personal values, competence, experiences together, and other factors.[12]

The second principle of mission command is creating shared understanding, the process of ensuring subordinates and peers mutually comprehend the organization's purpose and a problem's desired end state. Army Doctrine Reference Publication 6-0 discusses how Army leaders must make a dedicated effort to effectively communicate with their subordinates, ensuring they understand a problem, the resources and constraints, and potential solutions.[13] Shared understanding is the first attribute General Dempsey discusses in his popular mission command white paper. He describes it as equipping decision makers at all levels with the insight and tools needed to make a

good decision. "This is the 'inner eye' – the cognitive ability 'at a glance' to see and understand a situation and thereby enable independent decision and correct action," General Dempsey quotes in reference to the famous Prussian theorist Carl von Clausewitz.[14] Army leaders must be able to create a shared understanding for the Joint Force 2020 to counter the asymmetrical threats of the dynamic environment and make rapid decisions in frenzied situations.

Providing a clear commander's intent is the third principle of mission command. Commander's intent is a concise statement describing the purpose of an operation and the desired end state.[15] It is a tool for a leader to articulate the reason for a mission, any constraints that apply, and general guidance on how to proceed. A leader's ability to communicate effectively is critical to providing commander's intent as it is the basis for transforming thought into action.[16] A primary theory of mission command, based on the German concept of Auftragstaktik, states "that a leader should clearly state his or her intent in regards to friendly forces, the enemy situation, and the mission while leaving the exact methods to accomplish the mission to be determined by the subordinates."[17] Similarly to providing a clear commander's intent is the fourth principle, using mission orders. Effective communication is also the key to appropriately use mission orders for providing guidance, assigning tasks, and allocating resources.

The fifth principle of mission command, exercising disciplined initiative, empowers subordinate leaders to act. It revolves around a climate that provides leaders the freedom to solve problems that arise and act on their own to achieve an end state while operating within their commander's intent.[18] It is leader action in the absence of guidance, when the previous guidance is no longer applicable, or when the situation

changes and there are new threats or opportunities. Exercising disciplined initiative is

an extremely important principle in recent years due to a constantly changing

operational environment that is transregional, consisting of security challenges spanning

across many regions.[19] A transregional environment requires decentralized execution as

leaders are often great distances from their superiors and without immediate

communication ability. Senior and junior leaders must fully understand this principle as

their decisions may impact the overall strategic situation.[20] Several analysts believe the

Army does poorly in this regard.[21] Those analysts believe senior leaders do not give

subordinates enough autonomy, constraining them in their decision-making process or

simply not allowing them to make decisions without consultation. Perhaps some leaders

are uncomfortable assuming the risk of their subordinates making decisions, or it could

be the culture of the Army to personally be involved. Eitan Shamir claims that tools such

as checklists inhibit mission command as opposed to providing a framework to solve a

problem.[22] Senior leaders that successfully practice this mission command principle

overcome shortcomings by effectively communicating guidance on how to solve new

problems and issuing clear advice on the left and right limits of subordinate initiatives.

The sixth and final concept of mission command is accepting prudent risk. The

ability to accept prudent risk when the opportunity arises is often key to gaining the

advantage on an adversary. It does not incentivize risky decisions, but rather relies on

leaders to use a deliberate process of ensuring potential gains outweigh the costs of

their decisions. Leaders must understand how to assess and mitigate risk, and then

accept prudent risk to make sound decisions in times of uncertainty or to take

advantage of new opportunities.[23] Leaders who properly apply this principle do not

punish subordinates for taking calculated risks, but instead create a climate that promotes action when opportunities present themselves.

## The Need for Improvement

"The nature of war doesn't change, but the character of war does, and our command and control construct needs to keep pace to the character of war," Chairman of the Joint Chief of Staff General Joseph F. Dunford expressed during a meeting with the Commander of U.S. Africa Command.[24] The current Chairman and his advisors believe that future warfare will be transregional, taking place over more than one country, and multi-domain, over a combination of land, air, sea, cyber, and space.[25] In order to be successful in future warfare, the Army needs senior and junior leaders in all three Army components who effectively apply mission command. Leaders must be capable of building cohesive teams based on trust who can make sound, complex decisions quickly in strategic, joint, and multinational environments. They must understand the higher-level intent and be able to communicate effectively with all elements they work with, including those with different values and cultures from other agencies and countries. Promoting and selecting leaders who understand mission command is extremely important in this constantly changing environment.

Over the past 5 years, numerous Army surveys, think-tank studies, and media outlets reported information that suggests the Army can improve in promoting and selecting leaders able to effectively employ mission command. Leaders at all levels must be able to instill trust and confidence amongst their subordinates to develop effective teams. In contrast, leaders who do not treat others with dignity or respect can create toxic environments.[26] Toxic leaders are typically self-serving, who lead in an abusive and dictatorial manner at times and create an unhealthy work atmosphere.

Leaders that act in contrary to regulations, laws, or morals create a divide in trust. This is even more important for strategic leaders as they possess an increased scope of operations and impact, they establish their organization's vision, and directly influence its culture. They face less supervision and are exposed to more vulnerabilities as their powerful positions provide opportunities to take advantage of systems or influencing others for personal gain.

There have been over 500 documented cases of misconduct amongst strategic leaders since 2013, including both flag officers and senior civilians.[27] These numbers include allegations that indicate the leader failed to lead by the principles of mission command and claims of ethical infractions. In most of these cases, the leader did not treat people with respect, build cohesive teams based on trust, or communicate effectively to establish shared understanding. These factors typically lead to toxic leadership and ineffective units. Retired Army Lieutenant General Walter Ulmer, a former Corps Commander and Chief Executive Officer for the Center for Creative Leadership, studied toxic leadership in the Army and its adverse effects on performance and mission command. He concluded in his research that roughly 18-20% of the Army's leaders are toxic.[28] Additionally, in the same study Command and General Staff College and War College attendees measured 8-10% of Army Colonels and Generals as toxic, a large concern as they have a significant impact on strategic operations.[29] The Army Times reported that over 129 Battalion and Brigade were relieved between 2003 and 2015.[30] The article cited several reasons for their removal from command, to include toxic environments, a loss of trust and confidence, and other adverse actions related to sexual or fiscal misconduct. Toxic environments and losing trust and confidence are

strong indicators that the leaders failed at one or more of the mission command

principles. If the Army accurately assessed mission command traits in its senior leaders,

perhaps many of these officers who failed and were relieved would not have been in

that important position to begin with.

Three specific examples highlight recent Army leaders that did not appropriately

practice mission command. Two of them received promotions and command selections

despite a history of failing to develop trust and cohesive teams. In 2016, Alaska

removed Army National Guard Brigadier General Jorgensen and Colonel (COL)

Grunwald from their senior positions due to a leadership crisis and a need to restore

trust and confidence in the Alaska Guard's leadership.[31] As a second example, COL

Frank Zachar, the Brigade Commander for 172nd Infantry Brigade, was relieved for

creating a toxic environment and a poor command climate.[32] The Army investigation

stated that members of that unit believed life was hell. "He said that if we are disloyal …

then he was going to take an ice pick and shove it in our left eye," a Lieutenant Colonel

working for COL Zachar recalled.[33] Finally, in the December 2017 O-6 Centralized

Selection List (CSL), at least one selectee for brigade command was previously

suspended and recommended to be relieved due to a poor command climate as a

Battalion Commander. Multiple reports published that the commander's leadership style

was toxic.[34] The 263-page investigation described this officer as one who consistently

belittled subordinates using profanity, a stark contrast from developing a climate that

builds mutual trust and cohesive teams.[35] For both COL Zachar and the O-6 CSL

selectee, their investigations state that the leaders acted in a similar manner throughout

their careers, not just while in their command positions. However, their toxic leadership

and poor command climates were not accurately evaluated and therefore not considered for subsequent selection and promotion boards. These three examples could be an indicator that the Army does not appropriately assess mission command in its leaders and may select the wrong leaders for higher level responsibility.

The Army conducts the Center for the Army Profession and Ethic (CAPE) Annual Survey of the Army Profession (CASAP) to provide a state of the Army assessment from the perspective of junior to senior level Soldiers and civilians.[36] The CASAP concluded that a sufficient sample of Soldiers and Army civilians possessed the least amount of trust in Senior Army Leaders than all the other trust categories they measured, ranging from trust in peers to the American public. This survey determined that 72% of the Soldiers and Civilians trust the Army's Senior Leaders. While this percentage is generally consistent with previous surveys of the Army's profession, CAPE determined it is a principled finding for improvement.[37] Sixty-six percent of those surveyed trusted Army Senior Leaders to ensure the Army is well led and prepared. [38]

Also consistent with previous surveys, CAPE believes senior leaders should take action to decrease the one-third of the military that does not trust their senior-level leadership. Other factors, such as the distance subordinates are from their senior-level leadership and lack of communication between the elements may also create a lack of trust. As developing mutual trust is a key component of mission command, the Army may not properly assess this trait in the evaluation of leaders. In accordance with CAPE's principled finding, the Army should seek to improve trust amongst the military and its senior leaders. Improving how it assesses mission command traits may help the Army select leaders who effectively build trust to more senior positions.

The Center for Army Leadership Annual Survey of Army Leadership (CASAL) determines the impressions of Army leaders from nearly 26,000 active and reserve component officers, noncommissioned officers, and civilians. The most recent CASAL provides several indicators that the Army can improve in selecting leaders that understand and practice the mission command traits. Those surveyed concluded that the ability to effectively lead others is the most important trait to possess and practice. They rated 36% of uniformed leaders as very effective, 37% as effective, and the remaining 37% as less than effective.[39] While similar to previous years' data and having only minor variations throughout the three components, CASAL stated that the Army should cultivate a service-wide emphasis on improving leader effectiveness by training how to build trust, effectively communicating, and leading by example.[40] CASAL determined that there is a large positive correlation between leaders demonstrating mission command traits and subordinate attitudes. Over 80% of the time leaders who effectively practiced mission command developed motivated Soldiers and cohesive units that were ready for their assigned mission.[41]

The CASAL survey contained several sections specifically queried mission command. The CASAL determined that leaders rated their supervisors as demonstrating mission command effectively between 71-78% for the six principles.[42] The two lowest rated principles, building effective teams (71%) and creating shared understanding (74%) are important when dealing with evolving challenges in joint, interagency, intergovernmental, and multinational operations. The Army should not be satisfied with these ratings, which did not improve over the last three years of surveys and look for ways to improve. Additionally, the CASAL determined that only 83% of

active duty Majors through Colonels are even familiar with mission command doctrine, and the number drops to 81% in the reserve component.[43] These numbers are improved from 77% in the active component and 73% in the reserve component three years prior, showing that Army can improve its familiarity and execution of mission command with directed effort.

The Army needs to promote the right strategic leaders as future conflicts may be more unpredictable than previous ones. The emergence of non-state actors and technology improvements increases the likelihood that future conflicts will be multi-domain and transregional.[44] With new vulnerabilities due to cyber and space threats, it is important for the Army to select the right leaders for active duty, Army Reserve, and the Army National Guard who understand mission command and can execute in the absence of long-range communications.

<div align="center">How the Army Currently Assesses Mission Command</div>

The Army assesses the mission command traits of its leaders directly and indirectly, using several mechanisms with varying impacts on a leader's career progression. The mechanisms are not completely standardized throughout the Army's total force of 1.26 million Soldiers as active duty, National Guard, and Army Reserve apply many of them differently.[45] Directly, the Army assesses a leader's ability to effectively employ mission command principles in command climate surveys and 360-degree feedback tools. These direct assessments evaluate the specific criteria of the six mission command principles. The Army's indirect assessment mechanisms rate a leader's performance without using specific mission command criteria. Indirectly, the Army assesses mission command using a leader's performance evaluation and at Combat Training Centers (CTCs). With the exception of CTC rotations, all of the

mission command assessment mechanisms are used similarly for both operating forces (units designed to participate in combat) and generating forces (recruiting, training, and sustaining units). While some of these mechanisms are used in the selection and promotion process of Army leaders or used in accordance with regulations, others are not. A system that assesses is no good unless used correctly and considered to promote the Army's leaders. If higher level leadership does not use it, believe it is important, or follow up on it, then that particular assessment will not be taken seriously and will not make a difference in selecting the right future leaders.

Officer and non-commissioned officer evaluation reports are one of the indirect tools used to assess mission command. The evaluation mechanism is standardized throughout the total force as the Army uses the same evaluation forms and general procedures for active duty, Army Reserve, and Army National Guard leaders. Their primary purpose is to provide information to the Army Headquarters for personnel decisions.[46] The Army evaluation process is a top-down approach. A leader is evaluated by his or her rater and senior rater, without any opportunity for subordinates or peers to share feedback on a leader's capability.[47] The Army uses four different officer evaluation forms. One covers O-1s to O-3s, another for O-4s and O-5s, a third for O-6s, and a fourth for O-7s.[48] Non-commissioned officers have three evaluation reports, one for E-5s, another for E6s to E8s, and a third for E-9s.[49]

Although the evaluation forms are slightly different, they all provide space for a rater and senior rater to provide comments on a leader's performance and potential, along with a block check system to evaluate them. The evaluations do not provide any mandatory sections that directly discuss mission command traits or how the rated

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leader uses them. On all officer and non-commissioned officer evaluation forms, there are sections that give supervisors the opportunity to comment on mission command traits but are not required to do so.[50] On the officer evaluation forms up to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel, raters and senior raters designate the leader's overall performance and potential by selecting a block that categories which percentage of that rank pool the leader falls within. The highest block, often referred to as a "top block", is designated for the top 49% of leaders demonstrating the potential to flourish in more senior positions. Army Operations Research and Systems (ORSA) Analyst Paul Dalen believes this system fails to identify the Army's top performers and actually obscures the truly exceptional leaders, an application of the Pareto Rule.[51] Italian economist Vilfredo Pareto's rule, an 80/20 distribution concept, states that 20% of your employees produce 80% of the results.[52] When Army designates the top 49% of its leaders with top blocks, it may be difficult to distinguish the truly exceptional leaders the Army needs for strategic operations, likely around the top 20%. The O-6 and E-9 evaluations do not have this limitation as their top blocks are restricted to annotate the upper 24% with potential to succeed as strategic leaders.

Army Regulation 623-3 and Department of the Army Pamphlet 623-3, which specifies the evaluation process and explains how to fill out the forms, do not mention mission command. "The pace at which the Army is conducting current operations, coupled with downsizing, often contributes to shortsighted assessments of leaders," COL Eifler expresses in his article about measuring leaders effectively.[53] Since Army leaders are often extremely busy given the number of ongoing combat operations and train-ups, supervisors quickly make results-driven evaluations that tend to overlook

building trust, command climate, and empowering subordinates.[54] Evaluations are primarily results-based, which makes the assumption that being good at one job leads to success in higher-level, more complex jobs. Subordinate and peer perspectives are frequently overlooked.[55] Negotiating with politicians, working with different agencies, and leading joint and multi-national units is much different from a leader's tactical achievements, requiring evaluations to provide more insight on a leader's ability to apply the mission command principles.

Combat training centers are the second indirect tool used to evaluate the Army's leaders and units overall. They focus primarily on active duty units, as the number of available CTC rotations only permit a few National Guard or Reserve rotations annually. Operational units and their enablers conduct CTC rotations, while personnel assigned to generating force units, to include training commands and medical commands, do not. With approximately 1.26 million Soldiers in the active duty, Army Reserve, and Army National Guard, only 480,000 of them are on active duty.[56] Active operational forces consist of 330,000 Soldiers, which gives the CTCs the opportunity to train and evaluate less than 26% of the total Army force.[57] Designated operational units and their enablers spend approximately 30 days at either the National Training Center (NTC), Joint Readiness Training Center, or Combat Maneuver Training Center training in demanding environments that replicate combat operations. Each Battalion size unit is evaluated by a team of experienced leaders who Observe, Coach, and Train (OC/T) them. Throughout 2-3 weeks of operations, the OC/Ts provide formal and informal feedback to the units' junior and senior leaders, and may include comments on how they employed mission command. If they are open and willing to accept feedback, the unit's leaders

can integrate the OC/Ts' advice and potentially improve. National Training Center

Regulation 350-1 is the defining document outlying training and leadership development

at NTC. Its vision discusses mission command directly.

> Focused on developing leaders at echelon who can prevail in conditions of ambiguity; Leaders that think fast, make sound decisions, exercise disciplined initiative, and conduct mission command in a tough, realistic, decisive action training environment. Develop Leaders that learn HOW to Think, not WHAT to think. [58]

The OC/Ts determine their coaching and training priorities from the Exercise

Operating Procedures, discussions with the unit conducting training, and the

Commander of Operations Group.[59] The current Commander of Operations Group

published a "Lucky 13" PowerPoint slide, focusing the OC/Ts on 13 points to coach their

unit to establish the shared understanding principle of mission command.[60] The OC/Ts'

feedback to units is an indirect mechanism of assessing mission command as they do

not always provide this information to the unit's superiors, but rather share lessons

learned with recommendations directly to the unit through conversations and After-

Action Reviews. Upon returning to home station, the rotational unit has the ability to

share this assessment with its superiors, and the superiors also have the option to talk

directly to the OC/Ts to inquire how the units' leaders performed.

Another popular personnel evaluation tool is 360-degree assessments. These

assessments provide rated leader feedback from superiors, peers, and subordinates.

Many civilian institutions use 360-degree evaluations to develop their workforce and find

their appropriate senior leaders.[61] The Army uses 360-degree assessments in a more

limited role and primarily for confidential, developmental purposes. The Army

predominantly uses two versions as a way to directly evaluate the six mission command

principles of their leaders.

The Army has utilized the Multi-Source Assessment and Feedback (MSAF) program for over 10 years, providing leaders with confidential 360-degree feedback. The MSAF asks selected recipients to evaluate a leader on a multitude of categories. Numerous MSAF questions regarding trust, building cohesive teams, developing shared understanding, and communicating effectively assess the mission command traits of the leader evaluated.[62] AR 600-100 requires each leader to complete the MSAF at a minimum of every three years, and it is standardized for active duty, Army Reserve, and Army National Guard components. However, completion of the MSAF is self-reported and there is not a tracking mechanism that supervisors can use to verify a leader completed a quality MSAF.[63] The rated leader selects the participants and can omit those from whom the leader does not want to receive feedback.[64] While the feedback comes from subordinates, superiors, and peers, it is only seen by the rated leader. The rated leader's superiors cannot consider it during the performance evaluation process.

If the MSAF is utilized in accordance with Army regulations, it can allow a leader to be self-aware and improve. Being self-aware of a leader's own tendencies and personality is important to establish a climate that facilitates mission command. A leader needs to understand how open he or she is and appears to others. If the leader is not receptive to new ideas, the leader may inadvertently create a climate that prevents subordinates from trying new ideas and exercising disciplined initiative while solving a problem.[65] Some leaders read the MSAF report thoroughly and use it for personal development, while other leaders disregard it. RAND conducted a study on 360-degree assessments and determined that approximately 50% of Army leaders believe their MSAF had little or no impact on their personal and professional development.[66]

Additionally, only 28% of those who completed an MSAF showed their supervisor for mentorship.[67] Seventy-two percent of supervisors never had an opportunity to develop the subordinate leader on their MSAF shortcomings or use it to help determine their opinion of the leader's quality.

The Commander 360 program is another 360-assessment, but restricted to Battalion and Brigade Commanders only. Army Directive 2016-06 requires active duty commanders to complete it twice during command, once at the 3-6 month mark of assuming command and once at the 15-18 month mark.[68] The rater of the Battalion or Brigade Commander initiates the feedback assessment and selects the participants to provide an adequate sample. This mechanism is not standardized throughout the Army's three components. The Army Directive instructed the Director of the Army National Guard and the Chief of the Army Reserve to determine how to use it within their components and provided more time for full implementation.[69] Unlike the MSAF, the rater can prevent the rated officer from intentionally omitting anyone the leader may not want to hear from. An additional change from the MSAF is that upon completion, the rater receives a feedback report to review with the rated leader.[70] The supervisor should conduct a developmental counseling session with the rated leader to discuss the results and determine possible ways for improvement. However, the results are designed to be solely developmental and not used for performance evaluations. Army Regulation 600-100 states "The CDR360 report will not be shared with the senior rater and will not be used as input into the commander's DA Form 67–10 series report."[71]

The Commander 360 program asks subordinates, superiors, and peers to comment on numerous questions that effectively assess mission command. Questions

regarding empowering subordinates, establishing a clear vision and shared understanding, developing teams, building trust, creating a positive environment, and communicating skillfully evaluate how the rated leader employs the six mission command principles.[72] However, there is not a system in place to ensure leaders use this program in accordance with the regulations. Some former Battalion and Brigade Commanders never initiated or conducted the Commander 360 program, and therefore never received any feedback.[73] As a result, the rater never saw any subordinate and peer feedback. Additionally, Army Reserve and Army National Guard components have not fully implemented it and use different time periods for its completion. Without peer and subordinate feedback, indicators of a leader not efficiently practicing mission command may be missed, and the overall valuation of a leader may be based solely on quantifiable results. The Commander 360 system may be useful if used appropriately, but leaders must enforce it.

The command climate survey is another direct tool designed to provide feedback about the state of the unit and the quality of their leadership. Active duty, Army Reserve, and Army National Guard leaders use the command climate surveys in a similar manner. "The surveys provide leaders another look inside a subordinate leader's unit in order to assess the morale and perception of the leadership."[74] It asks specific questions about the leadership's ability to employ mission command by addressing the unit's climate and morale. Climate is the unspoken foundation in which team members operate and interact with each another.[75] It is the mood of the unit and directly influences its performance. In order to effectively practice mission command, leaders need to develop a climate that fosters its principles.[76]

Army Regulation 600-20, Army Command Policy, requires company level leadership to conduct a command climate survey within 90 days of assuming command in active duty units and 180 days in the reserve component, and then annually thereafter. It is optional for commanders above the company level.[77] These surveys give all members of a unit the opportunity to respond, and the Army encourages units to achieve a high percentage rate. While there may be some outlier comments, as long as the sample size is large enough it will provide good insights of the unit and their leaders. Army regulations require the leadership to share the feedback with their unit and their supervisor.[78] Sharing this assessment provides superiors with other opinions of the rated leaders and allows them to develop a shared plan for improvement. Lieutenant Colonel Clayton Kuetemeyer, a Deputy Inspector General, determined the Army's Command Climate Survey process falls short of its goals.[79] Many leaders never share this feedback with their superiors, and some superiors do not follow up on the requirement due to factors such as a high operational tempo, deployments, and other duty requirements.

Similar to the 360 feedback programs, the command climate surveys ask specific questions about a unit's atmosphere and assesses how the leadership practices mission command traits. While the majority of the survey focuses on Equal Opportunity and Sexual Harassment/Assault Prevention, 38 of the 105 questions (36%) addresses topics such as trust, cohesion, communication, teamwork, and satisfaction.[80] The Department of Defense Organizational Climate Survey provides a comprehensive report to the leaders of a unit. The report breaks down each category of questions and provides the leaders with a comparison of how they are doing in relation to similar unit

types and the Army as a whole, as well as analyzing the results by rank, sex, and ethnicity.[81]

<center>Ways to Improve Assessing Mission Command</center>

Promoting and selecting leaders at all levels who understand mission command and can apply it is more important in recent years due to the complexities of the operational environment and evolving challenges by state and non-state actors. Army leaders must understand how to build trust, create a shared understanding, and employ decentralized leadership for global conflicts working with joint, interagency, intergovernmental, and multinational teams.[82] While the Army could create a new tool to measure mission command, adding another requirement may decrease the effectiveness of military units as there is already not enough time to execute all required training set forth in Army Regulation 350-1.[83] In order to promote and select the right strategic leaders in all three Army components and within both operating and generating forces, the Army should improve its current mission command assessment mechanisms as discussed below.

Starting with the indirect assessment tools currently used, there are several ways the Army can improve how it assesses the mission command traits of its leaders. First, the Army could change the evaluation forms themselves, mandating specific blocks to evaluate and discuss mission command traits of the rated leader. The Army could also change the block check system. As Army ORSA Paul Dalen stated, a 49% top block may fail to identify the Army's top performers and actually obscure the truly exceptional leaders.[84] Some leaders already believe the Army should change the evaluation blocking system to be similar to the O-6 evaluation plate, where senior raters can only top block 24% to clearly identify the best Army leaders with the greatest potential to

<center>20</center>

succeed as a strategic leader.[85] The Army has made five significant changes over the last 20 years to the officer evaluation process.[86] Every change creates time requirements and additional resources for training and implementation. As a result, the Army should not change the performance evaluation forms for its three components at this time, but consider the above modifications when the next change is implemented. However, the Army should consider more data when completing leaders' evaluations as discussed below with modifications to the 360s and command climate surveys.

The Army could also modify the second indirect mechanism the Army uses to assess mission command, combat training center rotations. The CTCs already assess mission command of the units they evaluate. It is nested in their vision, and the Commander of Operations Group provides a focus to the OC/T teams to offer mission command feedback to their units and its leaders.[87] The Army could modify the CTC procedures by creating a standardized product that OC/Ts use to grade mission command and then provide that product to the unit's leaders and higher headquarters. Similarly, the Army could do the same for externally evaluated Division and Corps level Warfighters, a large-scale command post exercise focusing on planning, command, and control. However, this modification would have a limited impact as not all units execute CTC rotations or Warfighters. Operational active duty units remain training centers' focus, meaning the CTCs train and evaluate less than 26% of the total Army force. Additionally, creating an evaluation form for OC/Ts to fill out could distract their attention away from developing the entire unit to focusing on just a few leaders. The CTCs may already provide a holistic assessment of mission command while developing units and should not change their current procedures.

Making a few changes to both direct mission command assessments can make a major impact on assessing Army leaders' ability to apply mission command in all three Army components. For the first change, the Army should use both 360 feedback assessments and command climate surveys as background data when completing evaluations of its leaders. These assessment tools apply to both operating and generating forces in a similar manner and climate surveys are customizable, enabling leaders to ask questions specific to their type of unit. If the Army does not take into account true leadership feedback from subordinates, peers, and superiors then they could potentially promote toxic leaders to more senior positions.[88] Supervisors may not recognize poor leaders without this feedback, possibly advancing the same type of leaders the Army wants to remove – those who do not lead with dignity and respect and fail to build cohesive teams based on trust. [89]

The Army should require rated leaders from all three components to show their 360-degree feedback to their rater, along with their support form, for consideration during the completion of their evaluation. Whether it is the MSAF or the Commander 360, this inclusion will ensure they are completed in accordance with Army regulations and leaders are held accountable for their true leadership, as seen by superiors, subordinates, and peers. Additionally, higher level leadership following up on these reports during the evaluation process will prove to subordinate leaders that it is important and they will take it seriously. Lieutenant General Retired Ulmer made a similar recommendation during his study on preventing toxic leadership. With supervisors reviewing the 360s, they can identify poor leadership qualities not otherwise observable and help prevent promoting lower quality strategic leaders.[90]

The Army should execute a few more changes to the 360 programs to improve their accuracy and impact. For the MSAF, the rater should determine which superiors, peers, and subordinates participate in the feedback process as opposed to the rated leader, preventing the leader from intentionally omitting participants.[91] Additionally, the Army needs to actually use Commander 360 program the way regulations specify and standardize its use throughout active duty, Army Reserve, and National Guard components to ensure a unity of effort in leader development and assessment. Since not every unit is utilizing it, the Army should assign a monitoring agency, such as the Center for Army Leadership who created the system, to track its completion, remind leaders when they are due, and report noncompliance to a rater's superior.[92]

Similarly, Army raters should review command climate survey results during the evaluation process and require Battalion and Brigade level commands to complete them in addition to the current company level requirement. In all three Army components, commanders and noncommissioned officers in charge of a formation should submit command climate survey results with their evaluation support forms to the leaders' raters. Since 36% of the surveys address topics such as trust, cohesion, communication, and teamwork, raters will receive true subordinate feedback on a leader's qualities.[93] Once again, Ulmer made a similar conclusion during his study on toxic leadership.[94] By reviewing the 360s and command climate surveys during the evaluation process, raters will now have access to data that analyzes how a leader employs mission command traits amongst his or her formation. While 360s and command climate surveys could contain some dishonest comments from Soldiers, Army

leaders will be capable of interpreting the results accurately, eliminating the outlying data, and conducting an improved evaluation of the leader.

To accomplish these recommendations, the Army will need to overcome some challenges. The largest challenge to overcome is the organizational culture of not using 360s and command climate surveys when conducting evaluations. In 2015, RAND advised the Army against incorporating 360 assessments directly into the evaluation system for use by promotion boards. RAND stated that using 360s adds complexities, and many leaders may not understand how to interpret the results. Many of the participants in the RAND survey were military leaders themselves, who were concerned about incorrect data, dishonesty, and survey burnout.[95] Critics of RAND's study believe the recommendation against incorporating the 360s into evaluations lacked background data and were out of concern that leaders do not want their superiors to know what people really think of them.[96] Even though RAND recommended against using the 360s overall, the study determined that if the Army elected to do so, providing the 360 reports to supervisors and allowing them to decide how to incorporate into a performance evaluation may be an acceptable option.[97] The Army can overcome this challenge by training its leaders on the importance of taking into account true leadership feedback from subordinates, peers, and superiors to avoid results-driven evaluations, eliminate toxic leaders, and promote the right leaders capable excelling in complex environments. Building this sense of urgency amongst the Army's leaders, establishing a guiding coalition, and communicating this vision are the first steps to changing this aspect of the Army's culture.[98] Additionally, these recommendations will require some minor changes

in doctrine and policy, and add some slight time requirements for training Army leaders on how to accurately interpret the results of 360s and climate surveys.

<div align="center">Conclusion</div>

The Nation is counting on the Army to select and promote the right strategic leaders on active duty, in the Army Reserve, and in the Army National Guard components who effectively employ the mission command principles. Globalization and technology advances are amongst the drivers leading to complex conflicts that are multi-domain and transregional. The future security environment is more dynamic, requiring leaders at all levels to build cohesive teams through mutual trust who can execute in a decentralized manner. Army leaders must be able to effectively lead joint and multinational units with strategic impact, work interagency issues, and influence individuals with different values and cultures.

The Army currently assesses mission command traits in its leaders using direct and indirect methods. If the Army is serious about employing mission command and really wants the right future leaders who can use it effectively, it should modify some of the existing assessment mechanisms to make them more effective and ensure the Army promotes and selects the right leaders. The Army should continue to use the current evaluation forms and CTCs without modification. The Army should improve its utilization of both 360 feedback assessments and command climate surveys by requiring raters to review them when completing evaluations of leaders.

Additionally, the Army should standardize their use in active duty, Army Reserve, and Army National Guard components and assign a monitoring agency to ensure they are completed in accordance with Army directives. Taking into account true leadership feedback from subordinates, peers, and superiors will avoid shortsighted, results-driven

evaluations. Modifying these assessment mechanisms will improve how the Army

evaluates mission command and help select the right future leaders to preserve the

peace and win the nation's future wars.

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