

TACTICAL TERMINOLOGY

Implementation (Four Types of Orders)

By Sid Heal

Orders are so rudimentary to the conduct of tactical operations that they are usually taken for granted. Yet, it is only by timely and unambiguous orders that meaningful collaboration can occur. Hence, an understanding of what orders are (and are not), as well as the roles they play, can assist in avoiding confusion and disruption.

An "order" is a command given by a superior requiring immediate and full obedience in the execution of some task. Orders differ from similar terms, such as "instructions" or "directives," because they require immediate and strict compliance. While orders can be written, they are most often issued verbally.

Generally, there are four types of orders. An "alert order" is used to initiate a heightened state of vigilance or preparation for some action. It signals individuals or units that they may be assigned a mission concerning a developing situation. Alert orders are sent as soon as it becomes likely that a situation may require the efforts of the notified individuals or units, and provides as much information about the situation as is known, as well as any concept of operation being considered.

A "warning order" is used when it appears certain that an individual or unit will be required, but is not immediately needed. It can also be used to advise that some type of action may be required. This is particularly valuable if the action requires unusual resources or extraordinary preparation. When used in this manner, it is sometimes issued with the admonition to carry out the action "on order." This identifies the need to be ready to immediately perform the assignment upon receipt of the order to execute it. Warning orders provide notice to begin preparations for deployment and furnish as much information about a developing situation as available together with any anticipated problems and the probable mission.

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Warning orders will usually, but not always, follow an alert order.

Neither alert nor warning orders should ever be considered definitive since they are always based upon incomplete information. Consequently, more thorough and precise information is required before any detailed planning can occur or a commitment is made to a particular course of action. Nevertheless, they perform a valuable role in tactical operations by providing timely preparation and planning while the situation develops.

An "execute order" is used to implement or carry out some action in accordance with a plan. Execute orders can be initiated in any of three ways. The most common is immediately upon receipt. This happens when a commander gives the order and it is implemented without delay. The second method is according to a preset time. The order may be given minutes or hours before it is actually implemented, but requires no further order to implement. In fact, to stop or delay the action, an additional order must be given. The last way is according to a predetermined event. In this manner, an event which can be anticipated is used as a "tripwire" (see *The Tactical Edge*, Fall 97, page 81) to automatically initiate action without further orders.

The last type of order is called a fragmentary or "frag" order. A frag order is used to modify any existing order by providing additional details to a situation or by adding to, changing or countermanding a previous order. Because it is only used for changing an existing order, nothing except essential information is provided. Thus, it is incomplete, or "fragmentary," without the pre-existing order. Frag orders are very common in developing situations and are used to update personnel and units of new developments or changes to plans. ■