



Te Matataua

The Scouting Party of Air Power

RNZAF Air Power Development Centre Bulletin
Issue 8, May 2017

Command and Control



“The fact is that any organisation on the level of high command, however neat, tidy and logical on paper, will not work smoothly if the personalities at the top are not reasonable people who can get on well together and respect each other’s difficulties; if they are and do, almost any system can be made to work”

Sir John Slessor, Marshall of the RAF 1950-1952

The importance of our leaders cannot be overstated, they alone will orchestrate success. But they cannot do it all. As such, Command and Control (C2) is about the people who drive it, and the people who implement it. C2 affects us all.

Command and control are closely linked, but they are separate concepts, usually exercised by separate people – try thinking command **or** control. Command is basically the authority vested in a commander to direct military forces. This authority can be *delegated* to, and thus exercised by, a subordinate for the achievement of the commander’s intent (military objective); thus someone else usually has control of the task or mission; the key difference is the subordinate commander cannot employ the forces under their control for anything but the assigned task. Also note that a commander cannot delegate *responsibility* for achieving the objective. So what does C2 look like at its most basic level?

Perhaps the most visible manifestation of this is at Base level, through the Base Commander who has command and control of all operational and support elements on their base. Base Commanders are the principal enabler of *unity of command* at each of our bases; which ensures *unity of effort* and greatly simplifies reporting lines. It is all based on the principle of *centralised control* and *decentralised execution*, which underpins all air operations.

As an example, it means that the Base Commander will delegate their command authority to subordinate commanders such as wing or squadron Commanding Officers (CO). In the case of wing commanders (such as Commanding Officer Flying Training Wing), they may then delegate authority to

squadron level. Finally, command authority exercised by squadron personnel may be delegated by the squadron commander.

Base-level C2 is relatively simple and generally remains stable. It is during operations and exercises, particularly when deployed, that C2 becomes more complex and new terms come into play.

Some key C2 terms:

Full Command: The military authority and responsibility of a commander to issue orders to subordinates in all military contexts (within national Services).

Operational Command (OPCOM): The authority granted to a commander to specify missions or tasks to subordinate commanders, to deploy and reassign force elements, and to retain or delegate OPCOM, TACOM, and/or TACON, as may be deemed necessary.

Operational Control (OPCON): The authority delegated to a commander to accomplish a specific mission or task without reference to a higher command.

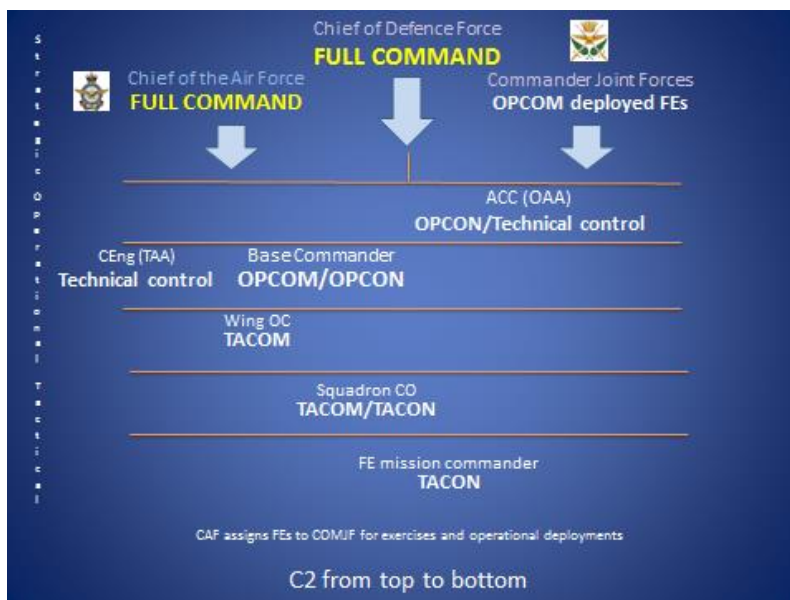
Tactical Command (TACOM): The authority delegated to a commander to assign tasks to forces under their command for the accomplishment of missions assigned by a higher authority. TACOM is narrower in scope than OPCOM, although it includes the authority to delegate or retain TACON.

Tactical Control (TACON): The detailed and normally local direction and control of movements or manoeuvres.

Direct Support: The support provided by a force element not attached to or under command of the supported element or formation.

Technical Control: The specialised or professional guidance and direction exercised by an authority in technical (professional) matters. Technical control advice may not be modified, but may be rejected in part or in total by a commander in consideration of operational factors.

Full command starts at CDF and reaches down to unit commanders. Single service chiefs also have full command of their respective services, so, CAF has full command of the RNZAF, and their authority is delegated down until it reaches the squadrons. CAF's main job is to maintain Force Elements (FEs) at DLOC.



Support Operation (UN PSO). The UN commander will have OPCON at their HQ, with some form of combined air operations centre (CAOC) attached who will generate tasking. The CO of the squadron detachment, who has TACOM, will assign crews to tasks. Dependant on the situation, the CO may retain or delegate TACON - whoever has TACON will be the mission commander, and they will plan and lead the mission. So, we have moved from the commander at HQ, who has the big picture and

states what is to be achieved in an operational context, to the crew member in the field who leads the mission at the tactical level, deciding how to achieve the objective; think centralised control and decentralised execution. Higher command has to focus on the big picture, and is responsible for achieving objectives at the strategic level, and is reliant on others to operationalise their plans.

Once an FE is assigned for deployment, COMJFNZ is delegated OPCOM of that FE and is authorised to employ them as they see fit to meet the military objectives of the deployment. In a multi-national scenario COMJFNZ would in turn assign OPCON to the theatre or regional commander - note that coalition or allied commanders cannot have full command over other nations' forces. Commanders may then delegate TACOM, and TACON, as required in meeting their intent.

Translation of the commander's intent will be progressively broken down at each subordinate level of command into actionable lower-level tactical objectives – this is sometimes referred to as strategy-to-task and links tactical-level tasks with operational objectives, all the way up to campaign objectives and even government policy. A commander states what is to be achieved and the subordinate commander decides how it will be achieved.

By way of example, let's say our FE is a detachment of NH90s deployed on a United Nations Peace

As there are never enough helicopters in-theatre, it is usually inefficient to permanently attach helicopter FEs to a particular land formation. However, for a specific mission or task, assets can be allocated on a priority support basis in direct support. The land formation commander will be the supported commander, while the air FE commander will be the supporting commander. This arrangement is temporary and could even reverse under specific circumstances, where land might support air.

Regardless of who has OPCON, Technical control remains firmly in the hands of the relevant technical (professional) authority.

Key Points

- Command and control is based on the principle of centralised control and decentralised execution.
- Commanders state what is to be achieved and subordinate commanders decide how it will be achieved

APDC Update

Publication of the RNZAF Journal, Part B has been delayed. It will hopefully be out later this month.