
A SHORT NOTE ON PACE PLANS

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Many of us are aware of the communications staff officer's (S6's) responsibility to develop a communications plan to support the maneuver warfighting function's (WFF) mission command requirement to maintain communications. This plan is usually expressed in an order of communication precedence list called a primary, alternate, contingency, and emergency (PACE) plan. It designates the order in which an element will move through available communications systems until contact can be established with the desired distant element.

The S6 must develop a PACE plan for each phase of an operation to insure that the maneuver commander can maintain mission command of the formation. The plan must also reflect the training, equipment status, and true capabilities of the formation. If a subordinate element has a communication system but is untrained or lacks all of the sub-components to make the system mission capable, including it in the PACE plan does nothing to ensure continuity of mission command. Therefore, it should not be included. During a branch or sequel of an operation, mission command can suffer due to some communication systems not being available because they are in transit or otherwise unavailable. If a formation does not have four viable methods of communications, it is appropriate to issue a PACE plan that may only have two or three systems listed. Accurate PACE plans are crucial to the commander's situational awareness.

Upon receipt of an order from a higher command, the receiving unit must evaluate the PACE plan for two key elements. Does the receiving unit have the assets to execute the plan to higher, and how can it nest the higher command's plan when it develops its own plan to subordinate elements? If the unit cannot execute the full PACE plan to its higher command, it must inform the issuing headquarters with an assessment of shortfalls, gaps, and possible mitigations as part of the mission analysis process during the military decision-making process (MDMP). During course of action development, the S6 should try and nest his element's plan with higher whenever practical. This aids in maintaining continuity of effort.

As staffs work through the MDMP process, it is important to remember that PACE plans are not just for the maneuver WFF. Each WFF should evaluate its communication requirements with subordinate echelons and work with the S6 to develop an effective plan. If a WFF places any form of information



Photo by SPC Tim Morgan

A lieutenant with the 2nd Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment, 4th Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, gives a situation report during a mission in Afghanistan on 26 April 2013.

requirement on one or more of its subordinates, that requirement should be accompanied with an executable PACE plan. The PACE plan must be included in the operations order (OPORD) or fragmentary order (FRAGO) when published. It is suggested that the data requirement be published in the base OPORD/FRAGO's execution paragraph in the tasks sections with a reference to the specific annex for detailed format and PACE.

PACE planning is not the sole responsibility of the S6 or focused only on the maneuver WFF. It is not a single, all encompassing plan. PACE plans must be developed for each phase, branch, and sequel of the operation, by each echelon of the formation, and by each WFF in the staff. Developing comprehensive PACE plans will not win you the battle, but they will help to ensure that you have removed one more layer in the fog and friction of war and further set conditions for mission success.

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