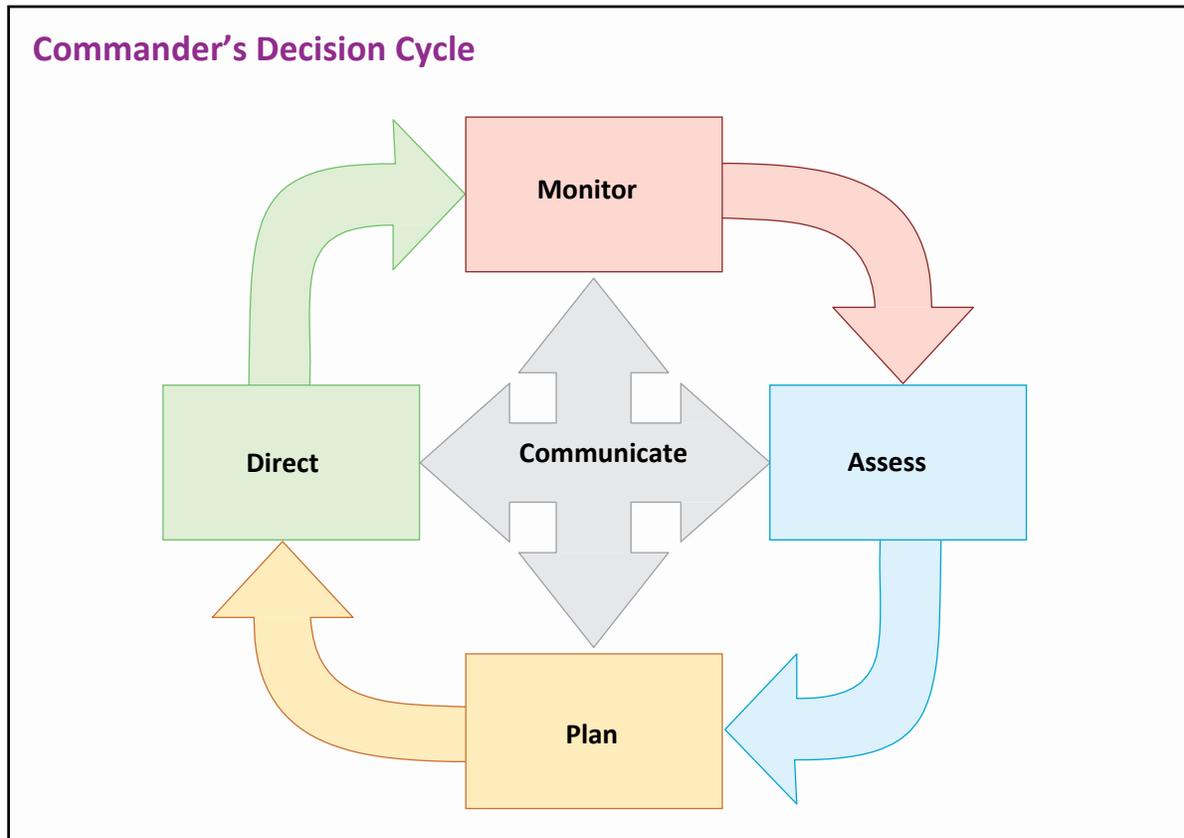


Commander's Decision Cycle

The commander's decision cycle is a process that depicts how command and staff elements determine required actions, codify them in directives, execute them, and monitor their results. The commander's decision cycle has four phases:



Monitor

- Monitoring involves measuring ongoing activities that may affect the command's operating area or future operations.
- The baseline for this measurement of the situation is the current plan or plans.
- This baseline allows the commander and staff to identify where the current situation deviates from the one envisioned in the plan.
- Although staff sections monitor their individual staff functions to maintain current staff estimates, the preponderance of the command's monitoring function is conducted by Current Operations (MOC Watch Floor) and depicted visually through the common operational picture (COP) display.
- **The operational staff typically monitors:**
 - CCIRs and request for information (RFI)
 - Operational situation
 - Critical subordinate unit actions

- Critical supporting force actions
- Protection information throughout the force (threat levels and threat warnings)
- Unit strength, current and projected
- Adversary actions and reactions
- Logistics status
 - Status of national, theater, and organic intelligence and intelligence-related assets.

Assess

- Within the commander's decision cycle, assessment is the determination of the impact of events as they relate to overall mission accomplishment.
- Judgments are fundamental to assess progress toward the necessary tasks, effects, objectives, and desired end state, including recommendations to mitigate risks, act on opportunities, and improve mission accomplishment.
- These judgments allow the commander and the staff to determine where adjustments should be made to operations and serve as a catalyst for planning.
- **Ultimately, assessment allows the commander and staff to keep pace with a constantly evolving situation while staying focused on mission accomplishment.**

Plan

- In the planning portion of the commander's decision cycle, the commander and staff adjust the current plan or develop new plans, branches, or sequels with the purpose of successful completion of the broader mission.

Direct

- Headquarters directs actions to ensure current orders and directives are completed as intended.
- This direction is done with the broader purpose of accomplishing the overall mission.
- Tools like the commander's intent and CCIRs assist in this role.
- **The preponderance of the command's directing function is conducted by the MOC / Current Operations.**

Communications

- Communications, within the operational command staff, externally with other commands and DIME elements of national power, are **key to the commander's decision cycle.**
- Command-level attention to communication "pipes," systems, tools, and processes are fundamental to successful implementation of the commander's decision cycle.
- As it relates to the commander's decision cycle, communications encompass not only the exchange of information, *but also the management of that information.*
- **Communications are the catalyst that facilitates the commander's decision cycle.**

- **A correctly implemented communications infrastructure encourages:**
 - Timely, effective, and accurate flow of information and guidance within the force, interagency, and multinational environments in which the force operates.
 - Effective linkage of all higher, supported, supporting, and subordinate organizations (vertical and horizontal coordination).
 - Rapid, reliable, secure flow of data processing to ensure continuous information exchange throughout the force, from the earliest stages of planning through redeployment.

Time Horizons

- Operational commanders establish **far-, mid-, and near-time horizons to focus staff** preparation and execution of the campaign/major operation plan.
 - The window for each time horizon is mission dependent.
 - The **far-, mid- and near-time horizons** are commonly linked to the **future plans, future operations, and current operations** elements of the staff, respectively.
 - **Each time horizon has a unique commander’s decision cycle associated with it.**
 - The speed each decision cycle moves (spins) is unique to each time horizon.
 - **As a rule, the near-time horizon decision cycle spins faster than mid-time horizon decision cycle, which spins faster than far-time horizon decision cycle.**
- **Near.** Commonly associated with the cross-functional teams (CFTs) within the **current operations elements of the staff.**
 - The near time horizon focuses on the “**what is,**” and can rapidly progress through the decision cycle — sometimes in minutes for quick-breaking events.
 - Current operations elements of the staff produce a large volume of orders including administrative FRAGORDs and small tactical FRAGORDs (e.g., change in priorities).
- **Mid.** Commonly associated with the CFTs within the **future operations elements of the staff.**

The mid-time horizon focuses on the “**what if,**” and normally moves slower with more deliberate assessment and planning activities, resulting in such things as major FRAGORDs directing major tactical actions (e.g., named operations) and TF movements within theater (e.g., movement of a carrier TF from one carrier operations area to another).
- **Far.** Commonly associated with the CFTs within the **future plan’s elements of the staff.**
 - The far time horizon is focused on the “**what’s next,**” interacts heavily with higher headquarters planning efforts, and moves very deliberately through the decision cycle. It focuses on activities such as development

of OPLANs and FRAGORDs to campaign/major OPLAN and policy directives or major force rotations.

Time Horizon Example	Far	Mid	Near
Products	Campaign/major operation plans, OPLANs; FRAGORDs to plans and policy directives	Major FRAGORDs directing major tactical action and force movement	Orders, including administrative and small/limited tactical FRAGORDs
Staff Focus Area	Future Plans	Future Operations	Current Operations
Maintain Alignment	Validate operation's mission statement and commander's intent. Synchronize with higher headquarters commander's intent and goals.	Allocation requests remain aligned with the operation's mission statement and commander's intent (purpose, sequence, end state, and priorities).	Execution decisions remain aligned with the operation's mission statement and commander's intent (purpose, sequence, end state, and priorities).
Provide Situational Awareness	Utilize historic data trends to build assumptions of friendly force, adversary and operational environmental dispositions.	Analyze and forecast friendly force, adversary, and operational environmental dispositions to determine if branch plans are still valid.	Observe friendly force disposition to determine if in accordance with the plan, whether adversary's force disposition is in accordance with expectations, and whether forces are executing according to the plan and procedures.
Advance the Plan	Specify anticipated conditions. Periodically review and update standing plans against current situational awareness.	When unanticipated conditions are forecast, modify time line and plan branches.	Monitor all aspects of the plan execution against the time line. When unanticipated conditions are encountered adjust plan.
Comply with Procedure	Establish baseline TTP in campaign/major operation plan. Develop standing standard operating procedures, operational taskings.	Publish intentions, modify baseline, standing procedures to account for forecast operational environment.	Oversee compliance with procedures.

Counter the Enemy	Develop/maintain campaign/major operation plan based on IPOE to modify adversary's PMESII structures to achieve higher headquarters objectives.	Modify time line of branch plans in response to emerging intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance information that differ significantly from expectations.	Countermove (ideally with a branch plan) adversary's actions upon receipt of reliable information.
Adjust Apportionment	Maintain campaign/major operation plan currency upon notification of a change in apportioned forces.	Modify time line of branch plans in response to changes in apportioned, allocated, or made available forces.	Reapportion forces due to changes in asset availability, attrition, on-scene requirements, priorities, enemy disposition, or enemy tactics.

Commander's Critical Information Requirements (CCIRs) are elements of information the commander identifies as critical to timely and effective decision making.

- CCIRs focus IM and help the commander assess the OE and identify decision points during operations. CCIRs belong exclusively to the commander.
- The CCIR list is normally short so the staff can focus its efforts and allocate scarce resources.
- The CCIR list is not static; at a minimum, CCIRs should be reviewed and updated throughout mission analysis, plan development, refinement, and adaptation and during each phase of order execution.

Categories of CCIRs.

- **Priority intelligence requirements (PIRs)**
 - PIRs are designated by the commander to focus information collection on the enemy or adversary and the operating environment (OE) to provide information required for decision making.
 - All staff sections can recommend potential PIRs that may support the JFC's decision-making process.
 - The intelligence section consolidates the staff's recommended PIRs to the commander.
 - **PIRs are continuously updated in synchronization with the commander's decision points.**
 - PIRs are periodically reviewed to support plan refinement and adaptation based on the OE and prior to each execution phase transition to ensure the PIRs remain relevant to the commander's anticipated decision points.

- **Friendly Force Information Requirements (FFIRs)**
- FFIRs focus on information the JFC must have to assess the status of the friendly force and supporting capabilities.
- All staff sections can recommend potential FFIRs that meet the commander's guidance.
- The N-5/J-5 typically consolidates FFIR nominations and provides staff recommendation to the commander during planning prior to execution.
- During execution, the joint force J-3 consolidates these nominations and provides the recommendation for FFIRs that relate to current operations. The J-5 consolidates nominations and recommends FFIRs related to the future plans effort.
- Commander approved FFIRs are automatically CCIRs.