

Commander's Critical Information Requirements By MSTP

All information management should focus on critical information requirements. This demands vision on the part of the commander and understanding on the part of subordinates in order to recognize critical information when they see it.

MCDP 6, *Command and Control*

Commanders have always required critical elements of information to make sound, timely, and informed decisions on the battlefield. Determining the information needed to make these decisions is crucial to a commander's ability to act decisively in the fog and friction of war. The commander's critical information requirements (CCIRs), issued as a subset of the commander's battlespace area evaluation, is the commander's method for focusing his staff on the information he needs for critical decision-making. CCIRs aid the commander in reducing information needs to a manageable set. MCRP 5-12C, *Marine Corps Supplement to the Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, defines the term CCIR as, "information regarding the enemy and friendly activities and the environment identified by the *commander* as critical to maintaining situational awareness, planning future activities, and facilitating timely decision-making." Despite their importance, MSTP commonly sees units encountering difficulty in utilizing CCIRs by establishing too many; writing CCIRs that are not properly focused on the commanders needs; and not tracking current CCIRs.

The three broad categories of CCIRs identified above (enemy, friendly, and environment) are normally answered for the commander via the development of priority intelligence requirements (PIR), friendly forces information requirements (FFIR), and essential elements of friendly information (EEFI). PIRs are those information requirements related to the enemy and the environment, FFIRs relate to the status of friendly forces, and EEFI concern information about friendly forces and plans that must be kept from the enemy.

CCIRs help focus information management and drive the intelligence collection plan. CCIRs are primarily a decision-making tool that links critical decisions or decision points the commander must make with the information required to make those decisions. For example, suppose a battalion commander is trying to decide where and when to breach an enemy minefield. To make this decision he may establish the following CCIRs:

- What are the enemy units/weapons that can range the potential breach site? (PIR)
- Has the enemy deduced the location of our planned breach site? (EEFI)
- How long will it take for Company B (with attached obstacle clearing detachment [OCD]) to breach the minefield? (FFIR)

With these elements of information, the commander would be able to determine if there are enemy forces in place to counter the breach in progress, whether the enemy knows where the breach will be conducted, and the capability of his own breach force. The commander hopes to have all this information available when it comes time to make the decision. Without the focus

provided by CCIRs, the commander could have either too little data or too much irrelevant information. With CCIRs, he is able to combine tailored information with his judgment, intuition, and experience to make a timely decision.

The following observations and recommendations may assist commanders and their staffs in the development and employment of CCIRs:

- **The terms CCIR and PIR are not interchangeable.**

A careful use of terminology is essential to effectively employ CCIRs. Many times this is not the case, and confusion is the result. MCRP 5-12C defines a PIR as “an intelligence requirement associated with a decision that will critically affect the overall success of the command’s mission.” PIRs support those CCIRs that are related to the enemy and environment and are the highest order of intelligence requirements. While a PIR may constitute a CCIR, not all CCIRs are PIRs.

- **Limit the number of CCIRs to avoid diffusing their focus and diluting their critical nature.**

The tendency to designate too many CCIRs violates the overarching reason they are used, which is to focus information management on the requirements the commander needs to make critical decisions. A leading cause of this problem is the tendency to designate lower priority staff information requirements as CCIRs, even though they provide no service to the commander in making critical decisions. Although the staff frequently recommends information requirements to the commander to assist him in identifying what he is going to need in order to make the decisions, the commander alone approves CCIRs. Although doctrine does not specify a maximum limit to the number of CCIRs for a unit, the limited collection assets and capability of a particular staff to manage information will be the deciding factor in how many CCIRs a commander can effectively designate. A classic example of how many CCIRs a commander requires to make a critical decision is General Eisenhower’s decision to land at Normandy. To make the final decision to execute the largest amphibious assault in history, he required four pieces of information:

- When will I have sufficient landing craft to set a date for the invasion?
- How quickly can the reserve German panzer divisions respond to the assault?
- When will the weather break to allow the assault and build up of forces ashore?
- Do the Germans know the deception plan?

- **Post CCIRs in a manner conducive to awareness, recognition, and reporting.**

Units routinely develop CCIRs but often do not establish procedures to ensure they are posted in areas that will facilitate immediate reporting when the information becomes available. To be effective, CCIRs need to be disseminated widely to all staff sections and subordinate commands and posted in a manner that will keep all necessary personnel focused on the requirements. Additionally, watch standers and staff personnel need to be fully aware of the importance of the CCIRs. When the information becomes available, it can then be recognized as a response to a CCIR and reported to the commander as such.

- **Focus CCIRs.**

Writing CCIRs with a focus that is too narrow provides information that does not support timely decision-making. The information a commander receives should, when combined with other elements of information he has identified, lead him to making critical decisions. For example, in the earlier breaching scenario, the commander asked “*How long it would take Company B to breach the minefield?*” If instead, he had asked “*How many line charges and Bangalore torpedoes does Company B have in its OCD?*” He might have quickly received the correct numerical response, but he would not have learned the overall capability of the force to conduct the breach.

A useful tactics, techniques, and procedures that might assist staff members in determining recommended CCIRs is to consider it within a hypothetical situation: “If you were a COC watch officer and obtained the piece of information, would you awaken the commander at 0300 to deliver it to him? What decision or decision point does this information support?”

- **Update CCIRs to reflect changes in the battlespace and tactical situation.**

As planning and operations progress, the information needs of the commander will change. Many times units fail to make the necessary changes to the CCIRs or disseminate changes to subordinate units. As CCIRs are answered, current CCIR status is often not published and precious resources are squandered duplicating information the staff has already obtained. CCIRs must be constantly updated to reflect the commander’s current concerns so collection efforts and information management can be focused on the commander’s requirements.

- **Track and report on higher headquarters’ CCIRs.**

Subordinate units have a responsibility to maintain situational awareness on the CCIRs of the higher headquarters commander. Information collected at the subordinate level will help answer the CCIRs for the commander at HHQ. HHQ CCIRs should to be posted and tracked along with their unit’s CCIRs.

Summary

Advances in technology have increased the speed and volume of information available in today’s battlespace. While these technological advances can help maintain enhanced, they also possess an inherent risk of information overload for decision makers. Thoughtfully crafted, CCIRs provide a filter for staffs to sort through today’s information glut and extract the information their commander truly needs to make key decisions that achieve desired results.