

## MCP FRAGMENTARY ORDERS (E(P)1358)

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**Introduction** A **fragmentary order (fragO)** is nothing more than a condensed or shortened version of the normal five-paragraph order. Fragmentary orders have traditionally been the most frequently used type of order on the battlefield.

The fragmentary order is the quickest way to reorient/refocus units in combat.

**Definition** Joint Publication 1-02 defines a fragmentary order (fragO) as:

*“An abbreviated form of an operation order, usually issued on a day to day basis, that eliminates the need for restating information contained in the basic order.”*

**Historical perspective**

*“The most essential lesson is that the German Army... faced the same problems that other armies faced. However, what made the German Army different was its ability and willingness to evaluate itself and undertake the necessary changes to improve in both personnel and training. Through years of “efficiency aimed” training and a common doctrine, staffs were able to dispense with lengthy operation orders during the actual campaign and simply operate with fragmentary orders. The concept of commanders at the front ensured more face to face discussion between commanders and subordinates, contributing not only to higher confidence levels in the command, but also furnishing a clear understanding of the leaders’ aims.”*

*—Guderian’s XIXth Panzer Corps and the France, F. K. Rothbrust*

**Requirements for a fragO** In analyzing the definition and the historical vignette, three requirements will enhance the effectiveness of the fragO:

- a complete order to reference
- training (with the fragO)
- common doctrine and SOPs

Let’s now look at the format of a fragmentary order.

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## FRAGMENTARY ORDERS: FORMAT AND CONTENT

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### Format

The format for a fragmentary order generally conforms to these guidelines:

- The five-paragraph order (SMEAC) format is used
  - A matrix format may be used
  - May be issued in oral or in message form
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### Content

The content of the fragmentary order usually includes information which has changed or is of a significant nature. The following are some elements of information that should be included:

- changes in the current situation
- mission
- execution
- detail in a fragmentary order is dependent on many crucial variables

**Remember, the key is to be brief, but complete.** Let's examine each element of the content more closely.

## CONTENT: CHANGES IN THE CURRENT SITUATION

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### Changes in the current situation

This information relates to that found in paragraph 1 of a written order and includes conditions regarding:

- enemy forces
  - friendly forces
  - attachments and detachments
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### Enemy forces

A statement as to the current enemy activity, location, and strength of the enemy is included. This may be deleted if current intelligence summaries are accurate. In this case, just state "See current INTSUM."

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### Friendly forces

Information regarding the friendly situation includes changes in:

- the chain of command or personnel
- higher headquarters mission or intent
- higher headquarters task organization
- supporting units

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**Attachments and detachments** This information should reflect significant changes in attachments or detachments that could not be more clearly conveyed in the tasking subparagraph. This subparagraph is usually deleted.

## **CONTENT: MISSION**

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**Mission** You must include a clear mission statement (tasks together with the purpose) only if the mission changes. A good “in order to” here may suffice for a commander’s intent in paragraph 3 if the intent has not changed.

## **CONTENT: EXECUTION**

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**Execution** The execution paragraph will reflect changes in:

- commander’s intent and concept of operations
- subordinate unit taskings
- reserve
- coordinating instructions

Let’s look at each of these in further detail.

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**Concept of operations**

**Commander’s intent is included only if the intent has changed.**

The concept of operations is the heart of a good fragmentary order. This must be clear, simple, and complete. At a minimum, you should identify the:

- overview statement
  - main effort
  - supporting actions
  - reserve
  - priority of fires
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**Subordinate unit taskings/tasking the reserve**

- Clear, simple missions with good “in order to” statements. The purpose is the most important aspect of the subordinate mission statements.
  - Any changes to the unit’s task organization.
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**Coordinating instructions**

Any information vital to the accomplishment of the mission (such as a boundary change, time of attack, limit of advance, rate of march, etc.).

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## CONTENT: DETAIL IN A FRAGMENTARY ORDER

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### **Detail in a fragmentary order**

Detail in a fragmentary order is dependent on many crucial variables:

- unit training
  - unit esprit
  - comprehensiveness and practicality of unit SOPs
  - judgment and initiative of subordinate unit leaders
  - complexity of the mission
  - number of units to be “fragged”
  - time, space and tempo
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## METHODS OF ISSUING FRAGMENTARY ORDERS

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### **Methods of issuing fragmentary orders**

Fragmentary orders can be issued by:

- digital means
  - wire and telephone (orally)
  - message
  - use of a matrix/overlay
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### **Other useful aids**

Other useful aids for issuing a fragmentary order include:

- sand tables and terrain models
  - maps and aerial photographs or imagery
  - vantage point/leaders reconnaissance
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## FUNDAMENTALS OF PREPARATION FOR SUCCESSFUL FRAGMENTARY ORDERS

**Fundamentals of preparation** The following is provided as a checklist of the information needed in a fragO:

- Train subordinate commanders and staff on using a fragO beforehand (most important).
- Clarity:
  - Avoid “left/right, up/down” directions.
  - Do not go beyond mission at hand.
  - Use multiple techniques and aids to issue orders.
  - Develop good SOPs before hand.
- Brevity:
  - Keep orders short.
  - Use proper tactical terms and symbols.
  - Elements of fragmentary orders by exception only (“no change”).
- Anticipate
- Remember the 2/3 or 1/2 time management rule that was discussed earlier in the course.
- Frag from existing operation plans and overlays.
- Consider time and space.
- Issue fragOs at the appropriate time and place.
- Communicate commander’s intent.
- Keep your plans simple.
- FragOs must address the situation and talk to the appropriate audience.
- Distribute fragOs to higher, adjacent, and supporting units.

### Summary

As you have seen in this section, a fragmentary order is nothing more than a condensed or shortened version of the normal five-paragraph order. FragOs have traditionally been the most frequently used type of order on the battlefield, because it is the quickest way to reorient/refocus units in combat. As a MAGTF officer, your use of fragmentary orders are of the utmost importance in creating the high tempo of combat operations that the Marine Corps seeks.