MCPP
WARNING ORDER (E(P)1358)

Introduction

Warning orders are very important in the orders process. They should be completed upon the receipt of a mission or as a result of mission analysis. This section will introduce you to the purpose and design of warning orders. It will also build on your ability to develop effective warning orders.

Definition

"PRELIMINARY NOTICE OF AN ACTION OR OF AN ORDER WHICH WILL FOLLOW"

JP 1-02

Purpose

When issued, the warning order serves several purposes:

- The warning order will allow subordinates as much time as possible to prepare for the contemplated action or operation.
- It will provide for the conservation of both time and energy.
- Its issuance will allow for concurrent planning within all elements of the force.

Format

MCWP 5-1, *Marine Corps Planning Process*, does not specify a format for the warning order. As each situation is unique and means of transmission will vary, the preparation of the warning order in terms of format and content will require the application of sound military judgment. Other doctrinal publications (FM 101-5, FM 7-10, FM 7-20) provide recommended formats. Formats have also been suggested in various professional forums based on the operational experiences of the authors.

Contents

The contents of the warning order will vary based on the unique tactical situation. Generally, it will contain as much information as is available and instructions for carrying out known requirements, as of that specific time. The warning order may include information about movement, task organization, CSS coordination, etc. The unit's combat SOP may prescribe the contents of the warning order. In summary, the **content will be driven by the need for its issuance**. Figure 31-1 shows an example of a warning order.

WARNING ORDER

1. SITUATION

   - Brief description of enemy/friendly situations, attachments and detachments.

2. MISSION

   - Use the mission statement derived from mission analysis.

3. GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS

   - Special terms/task organizations.
   - Uniform/equipment changes that apply to all.
   - Special weapons/ammunition/equipment.
   - Tentative time schedule (to include earliest time of movement, time and place the operation order will be issued, inspections and rehearsals).
   - Special/general instructions.

4. SERVICE SUPPORT

   - Logistics/CSS information beyond that included in the combat SOP.

Figure 31-1. Warning order format.

OTHER WARNING ORDER MODELS

Other models in U.S. Army publications

- Appendix G to FM 7-10 *The Infantry Rifle Company* provides a sample format and narrative description of a company warning order in four paragraphs (situation, mission, general instructions, special instructions).

- Appendix A to FM 7-20 *The Infantry Battalion* provides a sample format for a warning order to be included in a battalion combat SOP and also provides a narrative summary of warning order contents on page 2-19.

The Vangeison Model

In his July 1992 *Marine Corps Gazette* article, Major D. J. Vangeison suggests standardizing the format/content of warning orders by further grouping the elements of information into five templates which can be quickly and easily transmitted using a brevity code. Vangeison strongly suggests that the standardized warning order be included in the unit's combat SOP. The five templates he proposed are:

- enemy situation (size, activity, location, unit, time, equipment, etc.);
- changes to task organization (by unit, section, team and time effective);
- friendly actions (probable battalion mission, mobility matrix, preliminary actions, etc.);
- orders group (time, date, location, method of communication associated with issuance of the operation order);
- remarks (can be used to identify special requirements, equipment, etc.).

THE WARNING ORDER AND THE MARINE CORPS PLANNING PROCESS

The planning process	MCWP 5-1 includes issuing a warning order following mission analysis. FMFM 3-1 indicates the issuance of the warning order should follow the commander's concept of operations. The warning order follows the commander's statement of the overall concept of operations and issue is concurrent with preparation of plans/orders by the staff. In actuality, the commander may issue a warning order at any stage of the planning process that new and pertinent information becomes available. This may include following mission analysis, or following the commander's planning guidance.
Initial and subsequent warning orders	Many of the current tactical decision making models used in service schools identify an **initial** warning order and a **subsequent** warning order. (U.S. Army doctrinal publications also include initial and subsequent warning orders and/or subsequent "updating" of information contained in the initial warning order as formal steps in the decision making and troop leading processes.) With these models, the **initial** warning order is issued following analysis of the higher mission, intent, and the commander's guidance. The **subsequent** warning order is issued following development of courses of action and the resulting commander's decision. As a "rule of thumb," **warning orders should be issued whenever time and energy can be conserved by their use.**
Means of transmission	Warning orders are usually issued as a brief oral or written message. Generally, transmission by an **quick**, **reliable,** and **secure** means is acceptable. Those include courier, digitally, radio, orally (or) by combinations of any of these means based on the varying proximity of subordinate units likely to be encountered in combat situations.

ORIGINATING WARNING ORDERS

Precautions	As with the other combat plans and orders, there are some elements of craftsmanship and some specific precautions associated with originating warning orders. Let's study some of them now.
"KISS" principle	As it is the intent of the warning order to conserve time and energy, it should be written in such a way as to make it quickly and easily read and understood. More directly stated, it should contain only the information required to warrant its issue. There is no need to address actions covered in the unit's combat SOP. (Keep it simple, stupid...)
"Half-rule"	Sometimes also referred to as the "1/3 -- 2/3 rule" or "1/5 -- 4/5 rule," this concept maintains that the issuing command should consciously endeavor to use no more than one-half (one-third, one-fifth) of the available time in origination and issue of the order, thus allowing subordinate units the maximum available time to prepare, rehearse, etc.
Assumptions	The originating commander should give due consideration to any assumptions that may serve as a basis for the warning order. Are subordinate units aware of these assumptions? In the pursuit of brevity the originator must be careful not to omit information needed for a complete understanding of the order.
Frequency and changes	The dynamics of the modern battlefield and the accompanying windfalls of information associated with gathering technologies may result in the requirement to update warning orders and other preparatory guidance issued by commanders. Care must be taken that the frequency of issue (or) changes do not result in confusion, needless movements or preparations.
Tasks and priorities	Warning orders should distinguish between tasks that require immediate execution and those that are to be planned for. This precaution is especially valid when the concept of operations involves deception and when reconnaissance tasks are involved.

ORIGINATING WARNING ORDERS, Continued

Movement instructions

Warning orders which require unit movements should specifically state a time **before** which no movement is authorized and any other restrictions involving movement. The warning order should be specific in terms of priority for use of main supply routes (MSRs). Wholesale confusion might occur behind the line of departure (LD) if units assume the warning order allows them to move without coordination. Consider issuing a time schedule with the warning order when necessary.

Unnecessary duplication of effort

A timely, properly crafted warning order will minimize or guard against needless and useless planning, movements, and preparations.

PREPARATION OF THE WARNING ORDER

Recommended format

The eleven elements listed below are considered essential and are derived from a review of successful warning orders issued at various levels of command in previous conflicts.

w Addressees
w Changes to the task organization
w Probable mission
w Commander's intent
• Tentative concept of operations
w Earliest time of movement
w Movement Instructions
w Reconnaissance instructions
w Operation order issue (time/location)
w Special equipment/instructions
w Acknowledge receipt

NOTE: As previously stated, in urgent situations there may not be sufficient time to follow the warning order with a more detailed operation order. The warning order may be purposefully written so that it will require only an "execute" order. In this respect, **military judgment** is central to the content of the warning order.

HISTORICAL EXAMPLE

Late on the afternoon of July 25, 1913, the U.S. 167th Infantry completed the relief of elements of the 26th Division northeast of Courpoil. The 1st and 3d Battalions, each with a machinegun company attached, took over positions in the front line; the 2d Battalion was held in reserve near the north end of Etang de Lagette. Enemy artillery fire was heavy during the night and continued throughout the next day.

Early on the 26th, front-line battalion commanders sent patrols forward to gain contact and locate the enemy line. At 0800 the patrols returned. They reported that the enemy line was only four to five hundred yards in front of the American position and that it bristled with machineguns. Patrols from both battalions had suffered casualties. Since the 26th Division had stated that the enemy was four or five kilometers away, this report was immediately forwarded.

The same morning, the regimental and battalion commanders inspected the front line. During this inspection the colonel oriented his battalion and company commanders on a proposed plan of attack. In fact, he issued what amounted to a tentative attack order. To be put into execution it required only confirmation and designation of H-Hour.

The direction of advance, probable objective (which the regimental commander said would undoubtedly be la Croix Rouge Farm and the woods beyond) and the mission of each battalion were covered. Positions from which the 37mm guns and the Stokes mortars were to support the attack were specified. The aid station, the ammunition distributing point, and the regimental command post were located. Each company knew what it was to do.

Shortly after these arrangements had been completed, the regimental commander was directed to report to brigade headquarters. Expecting to receive an attack order, he ordered the battalion commanders to assemble at the regimental command post to await final instructions.

The brigade attack order was issued to assemble regimental commanders at Courpoil at 1620. The order called for a two-hour artillery preparation. H-Hour was designed at 1650.
The colonel of the 167th pointed out that the artillery could not comply unless H-Hour was changed. He further stated that the French commander on the left of the 167th said he had no orders to attack. The brigade commander replied, *"We will attack as ordered, and be sure you jump off at 4:50 p.m."*

The colonel of the 167th Infantry immediately issued an oral attack order to his executive officer who was waiting with a motorcycle and side-car to rush it to the assembled officers at the regimental command post.

The colonel's order was simply this:

> *"H-Hour is 4:50 p.m. Tell battalion commanders to attack as we planned this morning. There will be no artillery preparation. Caution Major Carroll to place a platoon to protect his left, as I don't believe the French are going to attack."*

The battalion commanders received the order at 1642. The regiment attacked on time, made a successful advance and captured 305 prisoners and seventy-two machineguns. The 168th Infantry on the right attacked somewhat later. The French did not attack.

(From the personal experience monograph of Colonel William P. Screws, who commanded the 167th Infantry.)

Discussion

Owing to the foresight of its regimental commander, the 167th Infantry was enabled to attack on time. In anticipation of an attack he had carried his preparations to an extreme. Fortunately, his tentative plan was in full accord with the instructions he subsequently received.

In open warfare, anticipation to this extent is seldom advisable. Nevertheless, if the general situation clearly indicates the order that can be expected, a subordinate leader may well make many preliminary provisions. Reconnaissance, the establishment of contact with adjacent units, feeding a hot meal to the troops, issuing extra ammunition, dropping packs, providing for the instant transmission of orders, and the orientation of subordinates, are matters that need not await the receipt of an attack order. Indeed, such steps will frequently change many a laboriously logical explanation of failure to comply with orders to the succinct and satisfying phrase -- *"Attack launched on time."*

Summary

This section introduced you to the purpose and design of warning orders. This section has provided you with an understanding of and the ability to develop effective warning orders. Remember, warning orders are very important in the orders process. They should be completed as a result of mission analysis and after a decision has been made for a COA.