The qualities of commanders and their ideas are more important to a
general theory of command and control than are the technical and
architectural qualities of their computers and communications sys-
tems. This theory separates the art of command and control (C2)
from the hardware and software systems that support C2. It centers
on the idea of a command concept, a commander’s vision of a mili-
tary operation that informs the making of command decisions dur-
ing that operation. The theory suggests that the essential communi-
cations up and down the chain of command can (and should) be
limited to disseminating, verifying, or modifying command concepts.
The theory also suggests, as an extreme case, that an ideal command
concept is one that is so prescient, sound, and fully conveyed to sub-
ordinates that it would allow the commander to leave the battlefield
before the battle commences, with no adverse effect upon the out-
come.

This report advances a theory about military command and control.
Then, through six historical case studies of modern battles, it ex-
plores the implications of the theory both for the professional devel-
opment of commanders and for the design and evaluation of com-
mand and control architectures. The report should be of interest to
members of the Joint Staff and of the services involved in developing
command and control doctrine for the U.S. military, and to all those
interested in the “military art and science” of command and control.

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