Training Command Posts for the 21st Century
Land Forces Doctrine Review

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Commandement

The CITADEL GUIBERT 18 exercise made it possible, in March 2018, to train and certify the command post system69 of the 1st SCORPION Division, the heir unit of the 1st Armoured Division which distinguished itself in the French campaign in 1944. But what relationship could there be between the Command Post (CP), light of the 1st DB, which jumped from the Mediterranean to the Vosges in a few weeks, and the training of GUIBERT's CP, which included up to two thousand people and one hundred and fifty shelters at the height of the exercise?

This wide gap is the result of history, the transformation of armed conflicts and the evolution of our CPs towards the command of crisis management operations. However, the feedback from contemporary theatres and the increasingly lively confrontations between major powers suggest that there may be "a possible return to high-intensity conflict"70. 70 Therefore, the training of our PC systems should not be a matter for the future.Isn't he moving towards something simpler, more, mobile, lighter? Indeed, the transformation of conflictuality invites us to an open reflection on the future of the training of level 1 and 2 PCs. This article is a plea for an ambitious revival of training, where the "why" will be successively addressed. "of this revival, followed by a few ideas on the "how? ».

Why renew command post training?
Training CPs at the end of the 20th century

The training of high-level PCs in France and NATO was structured after the end of the Cold War, when the small size of the new Western armies, the concepts of jobs oriented towards crisis management and the arrival of powerful IT resources made large open-field PC exercises obsolete. In the late 1990s, a model was consolidated in which Level 1 and 2 PCs were deployed in CPX71 format with all their components. The CPXs allowed the CPs to be deployed without actual troops to command, training both headquarters on

their work procedures and signals units in the assembly and disassembly of equipment. This format of CPX eventually replaced open terrain exercises or LIVEX72 when the army's professionalized and heavily committed OPEX force made mass deployments impossible. However, the training of the PCs in the early 2000s perfectly met the needs set out in the 1994 White Paper: The Army was now part of an expeditionary force, and the deployment and appropriation of a new panel of Information and Communication Systems (CIS) required time and drills.

Moreover, in the context of the early 2000s, the Division or Corps level CP was preparing for engagement in an asymmetric conflict model where air and information superiority was necessarily acquired. It had to be able to conduct a brief coercive operation, before quickly being able to switch to a position of military administration, and to implement a comprehensive crisis management approach alongside civilian and military partners. As the operation was taking place in a totally permissive environment, recourse to structures such as AMPC73 with a very large logistical and CIS footprint seemed perfectly justified. After all, there was no reason to camouflage a CP whose primary reason was to accommodate journalists and NGOs! PC training was thus consolidated to become what it is today: the deployment of a gigantic PC system as a training platform, like the PC of the 1st DIV at GUIBERT 18.

This type of training allows command support units to deploy a low-intensity PC, identical in format to those we find today on our bases in external operations. It allows the 1st Division staff to train for the command of an expeditionary force on a cycle of coercion - stabilisation - normalisation, by rehearsing their staff procedures, with all their IT tools, in an ideally functional work environment. Faced with a new air-land engagement, rethinking the command post.

But the commitment of the armed forces is evolving. Since 2014, conflict transformation as well as feedback from the Ukrainian and Iraqi theatres invite us to rethink air-land engagement. The Future Land Action (ATF)74 model thus sketches out a future of operations marked by the end of "operational comfort" and "varied confrontation modalities".These will cover the entire scale of intensity, including possible phases of symmetrical confrontation with a technically superior adversary. Wondering about the consequences of these high-intensity conflicts, several SB/ISC75 trainees conducted a study in 2017 on CPs in operations, as part of the CDEC document "Understanding the Factors of Operational Superiority.

76 They identified three requirements. A CP must be mobile in order to evolve at the pace of a rapid manoeuvre; it must be stealthy in order to evade the adversary; it must êlt must be protected because it now operates in an environment where air, cyber or simply tactical superiority is no longer assured. This reflection is shared by the entire doctrinal community, but also by our allies and within NATO, where, in general, questions are being asked about the renewed commitment of the CPs. The RRC-FR77 HQ has been given a mandate on "The Corps for the 21st Century 2025-2030." Colonel SANTONI, in Its article "Commanding from the front: a tactical opportunity renewed by new technologies", even envisages the eventual disappearance of LCC or divisional CPs as we know them: "Natively joint, they should be protected in Zones to Hold (ZATs) and leave field control to smaller, more discreet and more discreet PCs, and especially more mobile"78.

This thinking is also fuelled by the growing and ambiguous role of new technologies in the structures of large PCs. A growing role, because technologically very advanced tools

are making our Operations Centres (OCs) more and more efficient. Augmented intelligence, through artificial intelligence or cognitive sciences, could tomorrow constitute a breakthrough technology by completely revolutionising decision-making and the functionalities of a staff79. Big Data" analysis software is expected to transform the G2 by bringing new data search capabilities on the Internet and social networks. Around them a myriad of technological advances could, in the next decade, change the morphology of a PC to an extent that is difficult to assess today.

However, this appetite technology has a cost: the need for storage capacity, as well as intra- and inter-theatre throughput, is expected to increase exponentially, and With them the SIC physical architectures (networks, cables) will swell. As a result, future PC systems will have to reconcile stealth and mobility with huge logistical needs (especially electricity and fuel), and the need for protection with their footprint and electromagnetic signature80.

Building a new form of drive

But do the current conditions of PC training meet these future developments?

The answer is no. The huge footprint of the exercises prevents any training for mobility and stealth. If we consider only the main CP of the 1st Division at GUIBERT 18, it would be necessary to the order of seven days to reasonably slide or move a structure armed with 250 people and consisting of 90 MPCA, using a fleet of extremely constrained R81 LTVs. This footprint also has a significant resource impact: it took seven weeks for two signals regiments to deploy the full CP system from exercise GUIBERT 18, another five weeks to redeploy it, for an actual exercise duration of two and a half weeks.

As a result, major CP exercises tend to become large platforms where headquarters repeat, over a short period of time, their complex procedures around a time-critical messaging cycle. Seen through the prism of the return of high-intensity conflicts, this form of exercise poses two risks for the future. The first risk is that the PC manoeuvre will be permanently lost in favour of a static training base. The second risk would be to inhibit tactico-active thinking.operative staffs, well installed in the comfortable situation of a functional "drill" platform, but lacking the combat dynamics essential to high-intensity combat.

This is why the training of tomorrow's PCs will have to move away from this platform logic to a manoeuvre logic.

This will allow, first of all, to test the robustness of the command post system. From the outset of training, the staff will have to concern itself not only with its command functions, but also with the survival of those command functions, seeking the best compromise between survivability and effectiveness82.

It will then be a matter of making the most of technological change by incorporating CP exercises into the army's short-loop approach to innovation, in order to select new equipment and test it in the field in a laboratory of ideas and technologies. On the other hand, PC training should also enable this staff to do without this high technology, to work in degraded mode in the event of a service interruption. Finally, training will regain a combat dynamic by working on the resolution of difficult scenarios that will go beyond the simple reality of current operations to put the staff under pressure in high-intensity conflicts with a very strong logistical dimension.

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69 A CP system potentially includes, depending on the levels and operations: a front CP, a rear CP, tactical CPs, a logistics base with functional areas, implementation centres.

70 Hearing of General FACON, Commander of the Army Command Doctrine and Education (CDEC) at the National Assembly, 25 September 2018.

71 Command Post Exercise.

72 Live

73 Modular Command Post Shelter.

74 Future Land Action, Army Staff, September 2016.

75 Superior Inter-Service Course - now Land Warfare School.

76 Understanding Operational Superiority Factors (OSF), Studies & Prospectives, CDEC, February 2018.

77 Rapid Reaction Corps Headquarters - France.

78 Colonel Pierre SANTONI, "Commander à l'avant: une opportunité tactique renouvelée par les nouvelles technologies", in cahier de la Pensée Mili-Terre, April 2018.

79 Madame LEBOEUF, Commander HOURS, Squadron Leader LARCHET, "Sciences cognitives et organisation des postes de commandement" in the Pensée Mili-Terre notebook, April 2018.Earth, November 2018.

80 From this point on, thinking about technology in PCs tends to become "how can-can we do without this technology? or "do we have the technological means to circumvent it?" ». For example, the US Army is working on ways to bypass GPS or to rationalise the supply of electricity using artificial intelligence.

81 Transport Logistics Vehicle with Trailer.

82 James R. SAJO, The Command Post: A comparison of Tactical Command Post Doctrine of the US and Soviet armies, Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, March 1988.

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