

## SPOTLIGHT

# COMMANDER'S CRITICAL INFORMATION REQUIREMENT

TRIDENT JAGUAR 2018  
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### IMAGINE IF YOU WILL THE FOLLOWING TRAINING SCENARIO.

Adversary units were reported crossing the border into Allied territory signaling an imminent major ground incursion. A **Commander's Critical Information Requirement** had been triggered, which referred to airspace, territorial waters, or border violations. The staff informed the commander and assessed that it would take three hours for the adversary vanguard to reach Target Area of Interest. Adversary forces were no longer contained, but the commander had sufficient time to direct his component commanders to initiate the Contingency Plans (CONPLANS). He had been given **relevant information** necessary to make a **timely decision**, and he was pleased with his staff.

*by* Lieutenant Colonel Gary Giles  
Royal Marines  
Observer/Trainer  
Transformation Delivery Division  
NATO Joint Warfare Centre

WHILST what was just described seems a simple process, making timely and appropriate decisions is a fundamental component of a Joint Headquarters' success on operations. Yet, it often becomes unnecessarily complex due to the vast amount of information received by the headquarters. In the example above, the commander was being guided toward future strategic decisions that required his close attention rather than reacting to the threat, leaving the components under his command to deal with the close battle. The blizzard of data that was out there had been refined into a relevant, cohesive and usable set, which could directly aid his decision-making. Correct use of what we call the Commander's Critical Information

Requirement, or CCIR, ensured that the commander was able to be proactive, adjust the operational design, initiate the necessary action and maintain the Joint Task Force (JTF) efforts in prosecuting this campaign.

CCIRs comprise information required for the commander to make timely decisions for mission accomplishment and are either critical for the success of the mission or represent a critical threat to the mission. Therefore, Friendly Force Information Requirements (FFIRs) and Priority Information Requirements (PIRs) are essential elements in the management of the CCIR.

The Joint Warfare Centre (JWC) staff is uniquely privileged in being able to observe NATO exercises and the varied approaches





Members of the JWC Training Team at JFC Naples during TRIDENT JUNCTURE 2018 CPX. Photo by JWC PAO



from different JTF headquarters, whether from the NATO Command Structure or the NATO Force Structure. The JWC Training Teams, in particular, observe and provide mentoring at all stages of the Exercise Planning Process, and get an eagle's eye overview of the end-to-end process. One area which has presented challenges for JTF headquarters' staffs in recent exercises is that of the creation and management of the CCIR. Although a common trend, the reasons for this apparent "blind spot" are unclear. CCIRs should meet the following to achieve the best effect:

- CCIRs need to be managed and assigned to a custodian probably in J-3/5 Division and there should be consistency in their management;
- The CCIR notification matrix should not be a "commanders' notification requirement" (CNR), which resembles a commander's "wake-up call" list;
- CCIRs should relate specifically to the Decision Points (DPs) on the operational framework or vice versa;
- Commander's approval of CCIRs must come early in the process;
- The Combined Joint Operations Centre (CJOC) must be fully conversant with the CCIR and the procedure for "triggering" action rehearsed and understood.

### But then again what exactly are CCIRs?

In STANAG 2248, the CCIR is defined as an "information requirement identified by the commander as being critical in facilitating timely information management and the decision-making process that affect successful mission accomplishment."<sup>1</sup>

Simply put, the effectiveness of the commander is proportional to his decision-making effectiveness, and how that translates into action. The volume of information available to the 21st century commander is greater than at any time in history, but in order for that information to be useful in assisting the commander's decision-making, it needs to be ordered and analyzed. Additionally, as their time is precious, information presented needs to be digestible and relevant. The CCIR offers a means of distilling the information to that which is most relevant to the mission. Current doctrine is good at pointing out the place of decision-making in the process, but arguably not so good at the "how". The explanation of the CCIR in the process could also be better.

Unhelpfully, the term CCIR is also frequently used in the non-operational sphere to describe administrative priorities for commanders, which adds further confusion for staff not familiar with using CCIRs. The CCIR

is not a notification matrix nor a list of the commander's administrative priorities in barracks, and yet the term is often used in this way. Where this occurs, it confuses the purpose of the CCIR in the Operational Planning Process environment. CCIRs are not simply a list of things a commander may wish to know; for example, casualties and equipment losses. Clearly, commanders would wish to be aware of these too, but they do not constitute a CCIR, unless they are directly related to DPs and require a time-critical decision. CCIRs should<sup>2</sup>:

- focus the staff on supporting commander's critical decisions
- be linked to important DPs
- be both decision- and time-critical
- be driven by the commander
- be continually be revised and updated

Additionally, FFIRs and PIRs are derived from the CCIRs, not vice versa; and the staff must be trained and exercised in the use and triggering of CCIRs prior to any operation.

### CCIRs' management

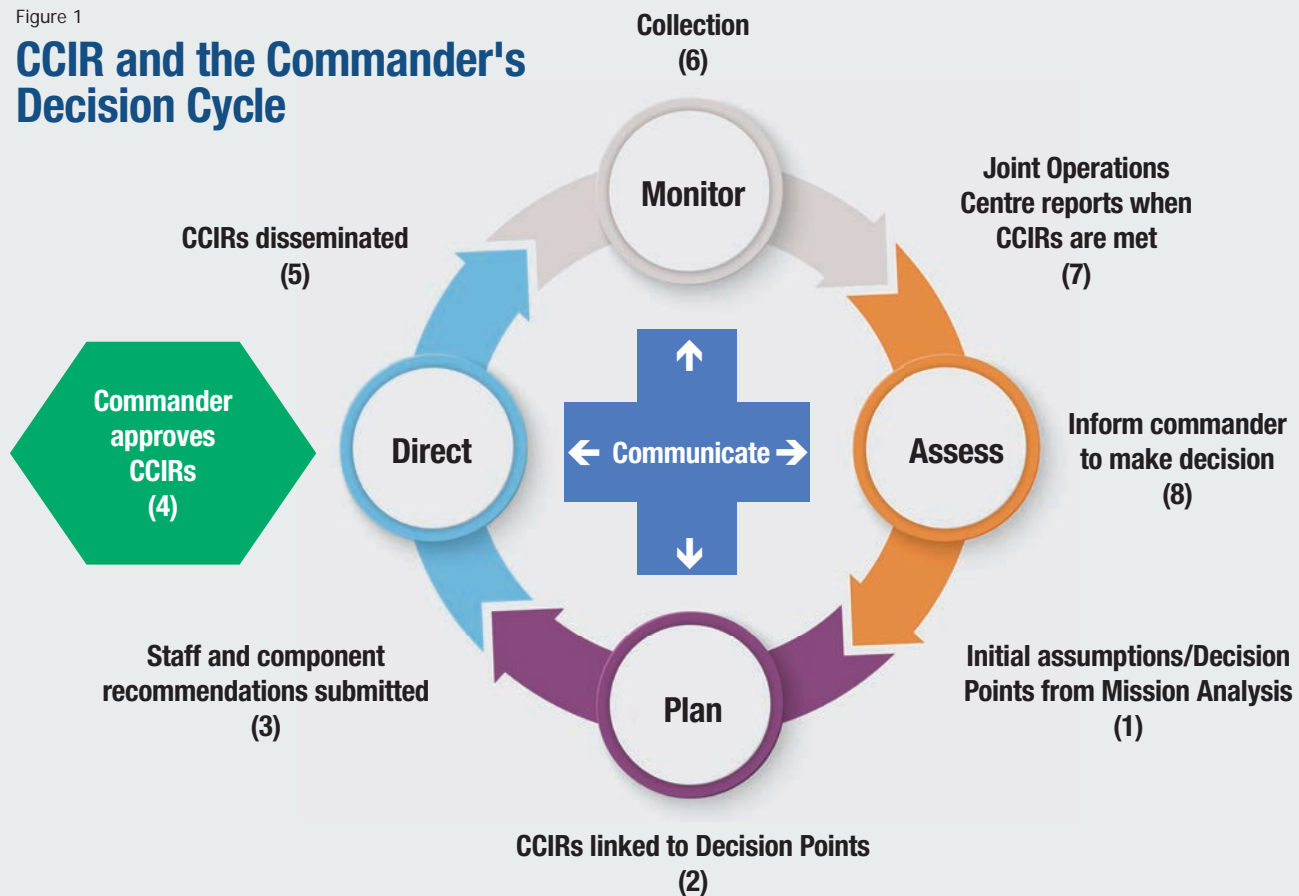
So, how should the CCIR be created and managed to best effect? In short, the three main stages are as follows (see *Figure 1*):

- The Joint Operations Planning Group (JOPG) identifies DPs and develops the



Figure 1

## CCIR and the Commander's Decision Cycle



related CCIRs;

- Situation Centre (SITCEN)/Combined Joint Operations Centre (CJOC) monitors and tracks;
- During the operation, J-3/5 normally reviews and adapts the CCIR according to situational development.

The above points summarize the management of CCIRs, but how are they created?

### The planning phase: where do CCIRs come from?

Effective decision-making begins during the Crisis Response Planning (CRP), with the pro-

duction of considered and well-defined DPs, and the corresponding CCIRs, supporting each. The JOPG will produce DPs and the potential CCIR as they fall out of the planning and the operational design for the commander's consideration. Ultimately, it is the commander himself who finalizes his CCIR.

DPs are key to the CCIRs, and they represent the point in time and space where the commander or staff anticipates making a decision concerning a specific course of action. A DP is usually associated with a specific target area of interest (TAI) and is located in time and space to permit the commander sufficient lead in time to engage the adversary in the TAI. DPs are also associated with friendly forces and the

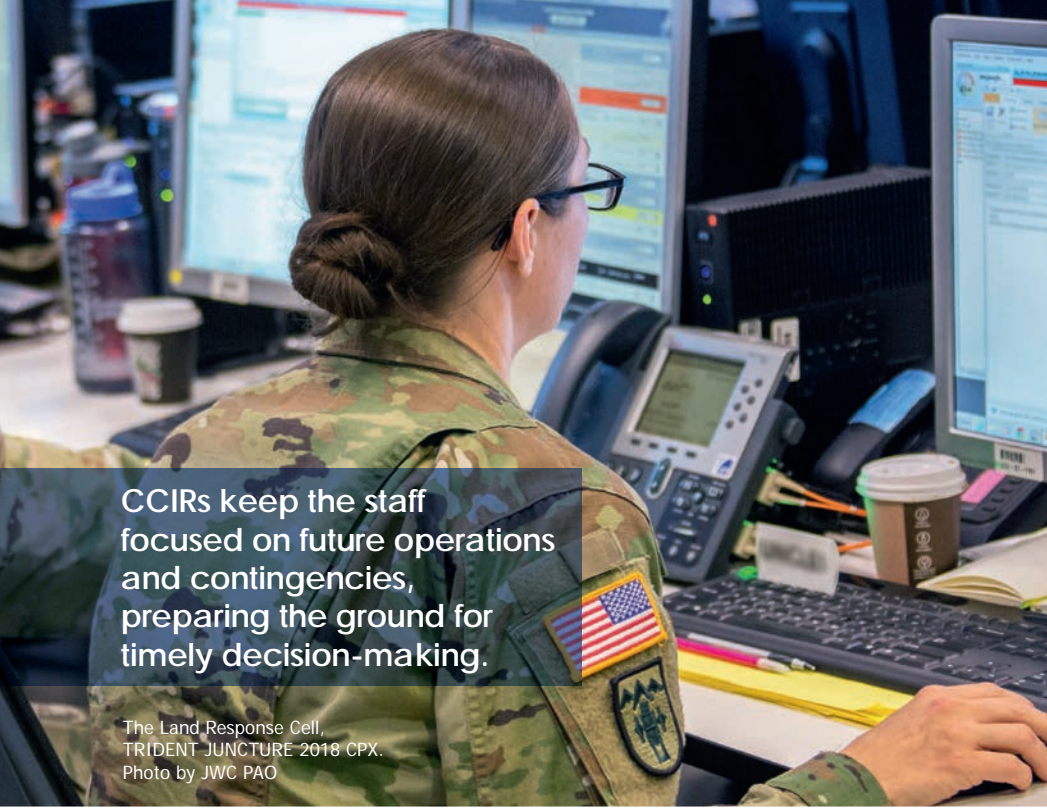
status of ongoing operations and the condition and effectiveness of his assigned forces. By attaching CCIR to the DPs, the commander is further articulating his vision of the campaign and informs the staff of the potential decisions he envisions to be made.

If identified during the Mission Analysis as intended, this sets the conditions for a more mature course of action development process. Well-defined and articulated CCIRs will focus the information collection priorities for the staff and inform the PIRs for the J-2 (Intelligence) staff. The thread that links each CCIR to the Mission Analysis should always be visible; after all they are derived from the commander's and his staff's Mission Analysis.

**"The volume of information available to the 21st century commander is greater than at any time in history."**







CCIRs keep the staff focused on future operations and contingencies, preparing the ground for timely decision-making.

The Land Response Cell,  
TRIDENT JUNCTURE 2018 CPX.  
Photo by JWC PAO

They should not appear during an operation without any provenance in the operational design. As already stated, they will be refined and adjusted, but should always relate to the commander's DPs and support his decision-making. For this reason, they will be time and decision critical; if they are not, they should not be in the CCIR list. CCIRs can be subdivided into categories concerning the enemy, the friendly forces, and the environment:

**Enemy or threat:** Critical items of information that are required by a particular time, which can be related to other existing information and Intelligence to aid assessment and understanding of an enemy or threat.

**Friendly:** Information concerning own assigned forces, which allows timely and appropriate decisions. For instance, combat supply levels or combat effectiveness.

**Environment:** Information concerning political, infrastructure and meteorological conditions. For instance, serious adverse weather conditions, condition of infrastructure, and changes in national political policies with regard to the operation.

The commander "owns" his CCIR, and therefore, he has the final say on what they should be. Ideally, it should be an iterative process between the commander and the JOPG, with input from the components, applying both

operational art and the mission analysis of the JOPG conducted during Crisis Response Planning. The commander and his staff should have agreed an initial set of the CCIRs by the Mission Analysis briefing. These CCIRs are then normally refined and adjusted throughout the planning process.

### The execution phase

During the execution phase, CCIRs allow the staff to refine their thinking and reduce the amount of "information clutter" that they are faced with. They do so by providing clear guidance about what information is required to make good decisions—the commander is directing his staff in providing guidance, which allows them to focus their effort on the most relevant detail possible. Based on the situation, the commander and his staff will continually review CCIRs. They will be adjusted as the situation develops, or when they are overtaken by events and are no longer relevant to the current phase of the operation or overall campaign. At each adjustment, new CCIRs will be disseminated and the staff familiarize themselves with the new list, particularly those working in the SITCEN/CJOC.

The CJOC should have the greatest situational awareness in the headquarters and will monitor and track CCIRs, and should, therefore, be fully conversant with them and the "actions on" when the critical information is received. This process should be rehearsed

and CCIRs displayed prominently to all CJOC staff. Notification should not wait for a battle rhythm event.

To conclude, CCIRs keep the staff focused on future operations and contingencies, preparing the ground for timely decision-making. CCIRs attune the staff with the commander's thinking, which allows an amount of preparatory work on likely options for a particular event that occurs. In doing so, tempo is maintained, and the synchronization of the campaign is aided greatly. Further refinement of CCIRs during the execution phase also assists in keeping the staff aligned with the commander's direction, vision and guidance.

Decision-making remains a central function of a command. The effectiveness of the commander and his decisions directly affects the lives of those under his command. The technological advances, which can aid this decision-making process produce information on an unprecedented scale, and without processes that refine the management of information, it can increase the workload on staff.

A correctly employed CCIR sets the conditions for the staff to manage information and present that which is digestible and relevant. By disseminating the commanders' vision, they can improve all areas of the Operational Planning Process, focusing the staff on the same objectives, and in effective support of the commander. Thus, efficient use of CCIRs can increase tempo, assist synchronization, keep the campaign on track, and improve decision-making, and ultimately, win the fight. ✦

### References:

- 1 AJP-3 (B) (2011) describes in detail the intent and the use of CCIRs as a management tool.
- 2 AJP-5 (2013) describes CCIRs and supporting elements.
- 3 The COPD identifies at which level and at which phases of operational planning and operational execution CCIRs are required.
- 4 ATP 3.2.2 Command and Control of Allied Land Forces Edition B Version, 1 December 2016.

### ENDNOTES

- 1 AAP-39 Glossary of Land Military Terms and Definitions (STANAG 2248)
- 2 JWC Operational Staff Handbook, 2017