

Commander's Intent

DURATION: 45 Minutes

TEACHING METHOD: Discussion and Exercise (Live or Webinar)

READING: Student Guide

LESSON OBJECTIVE: Describe the essential elements that make up a Commander's Intent.

DESIRED LEARNING OUTCOMES (DLO):

1. Describe what is included in a Commander's Intent.
2. Describe the meaning of desired end state.
3. Summarize who needs the Commander's Intent.
4. Describe the documents that provide intent and vision.

LESSON STRATEGY: This lesson is designed to describe the importance of and the process for developing Commander's Intent.

A key task for the commander is to share his/her vision of the mission, the squadron's role and the members' role in assuring success. A useful tool is the Commander's Intent statement.

INSTRUCTOR NOTE: This lesson focuses on discussing the concept of and the process for constructing and sharing Commander's Intent. Ask the student body if there are any current or former military members who are familiar with the concept to share their experience with the concept with the other students.

Students should have completed their assigned reading in the pre-course before coming to the class. This allows you to spend most of your time on the discussion questions and the exercise. Survey the students to see how well they've absorbed the material and adjust your plan as necessary.

REVIEW: Ask the students if they have any questions about the reading. If they have question, answer them. If not, proceed with a short review. Ask students to share the most important points from the reading. First, ask students to describe in their own words what they think Commander's Intent is. Then, ask them to point out a CAP example of what a desired end-state is and where they've seen it. Students should be able to discuss the concept of Commander's Intent as a communication and focus tool. They should also be able to use the templates and examples in the lesson to begin to formulate Commander's Intent statements that are unique to their own squadrons. If there are former military members in the room who are particularly familiar with this concept, tap them to assist as required.

Time the class so that the first 15 minutes are review and questions, 20 minutes are for the exercise, and the final 10 minutes are for the students to share their Commanders Intent statements.

BRIDGE: How does your team respond when a plan changes? Does everyone seem to know what to do or is there confusion or a lack of meaningful activity? Military planners use Commander's Intent to ensure a plan maintains relevancy and applicability in a chaotic, dynamic, and resource-constrained environment. CAP also uses Commander's Intent to focus energy on the mission to ensure that everyone knows that to do and that all are pulling in the right direction.

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: Feel free to add or adjust questions as necessary to meet the students' needs as well as the unique conditions in your wing.

Lead off Question: Give me an example of Commander's Intent... something that you've seen before (it doesn't have to be called Commander's Intent or be from CAP) NOTE: Be ready to give your own example to start things off).

Supporting Question: What do you think a commander's members want to see (or believe) when they are presented with a Commander's Intent statement?

Supporting Question: You are a unit commander. What does "right" look like to you and for your unit?

EXERCISE: Split into groups of three or four people: You are the new Command Team for your Freedom Composite (or Cadet, or Senior) Squadron. Each of you will have composed a draft Commander's Intent Memorandum and brought it with you. Your task now is to review the ones within your groups and select and edit the best draft for final submission to the whole class. You have 20 minutes. You will be evaluated on the structure and quality of the work. Expect to share this letter with your fellow students. Prepare your final submission as a memorandum that meets CAP requirements.

CLOSURE: Commander's intent and command philosophy are vital tools to express your clear and concise concept of the mission to your members. It's something you all use to stay focused and stay together.

CLOSELY RELATED LESSONS: CAP Squadrons and Missions, Squadron Staff Responsibility, Meeting Planning, Communications Fundamentals

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(CAP LETTERHEAD)

(DATE)

MEMORANDUM FOR ALL SQUADRON MEMBERS

SUBJECT: COMMANDER'S INTENT

FROM: LIEUTENANT COLONEL JANE DOE, XYZ CADET SQUADRON COMMANDER

1. I am humbled to be selected by Colonel Stow as the XYZ Cadet Squadron commander. Many of us were here when the squadron was launched, and we've worked and grown together.
2. I want to take just a moment to outline for you my commander's intent as we move forward together:

MISSION: Our mission is simple, to grow the best cadets in the XYZ Wing. To do this, we will use all the tools at our disposal: leadership education (for cadets and for senior members), character development, aerospace education and emergency services training. We will help our cadets learn about and internalize CAP's Core Values by modeling them at every meeting, at every opportunity. We will work as one team with one goal: making our cadets the best they can be.

END STATE: We will have a squadron even more successful and vibrant than before. Our squadron will be a respected organization in the wing and in the community; more important, our cadets will be leaders. Their parents will be glad they "lent" them to us. And the cadets themselves will grow into outstanding young men and women who will in turn lead us.

3. You are the best members in XYZ Wing and we can, and will, succeed together.

JANE DOE, Lieutenant Colonel, CAP
Commander, XYZ Cadet Squadron

CC: All members

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A. An example of a Command Philosophy Message (a twist on the concept): (NOTE: Explain its structure, how it works, and why it is an effective means to get the message across)

(CAP LETTERHEAD)

(DATE)

MEMORANDUM FOR ALL SQUADRON MEMBERS

SUBJECT: PHILOSOPHY OF COMMAND, COMMANDER'S MEMO #1

FROM: LIEUTENANT COLONEL JANE DOE, XYZ CADET SQUADRON COMMANDER

1. As the squadron commander, I believe it is important for me to provide some insights into my personal philosophies... where I am coming from and the focus and direction I desire to see the squadron take. The strength of our squadron is built upon the hard work and continued dedication of the squadron leadership, but the future success is contingent upon a positive, proactive and honest command climate. To do otherwise, leads to a state of disgruntlement, where cohesion breaks down, and a reaction to crisis becomes the norm. On the other hand, success will breed success.

2. The Squadron motto is "Lead the Way". Maintaining that level of success requires great attention to the priorities of training, leading, maintaining, caring: and the key words of teamwork, concern, positive attitude, high standards, and effective chain of command. The following are essential to realize our full potential.

a. Action-oriented Leadership. Each member of the chain of command and staff member must take their role as a leader seriously. In turn, each leader must be a "doer", not merely a passive on looker. Our cadets expect and deserve to be challenged to reach their full potential, where they will improve and find a sense satisfaction and accomplishment. The squadron has no place for as complacent leader!

b. Proactive Spirit. Leaders who are offensive minded, action-oriented, and clearly attuned to the critical nature of both the CAP mission and routine squadron operations will be able to stay "in control" and ensure high performance standards are met. Proactive spirit is simply taking charge to do the right thing and do it the way it was intended to be done.

c. Freedom to Grow. Achieving regular improvement will present new challenges and they may will lead to well-intended miscues or innovative ideas that did not work out as well as planned. Such problems are to be tolerated as part of personal and professional growth. Mistakes will not be tolerated where safety is jeopardized; poor judgment is evident; or the problem was a result of individual complacency, an inappropriate attitude, breach of integrity or ethics.

d. Open Communication. Accurate, timely and honest information must flow through the squadron...up and down. The communication process is perhaps the single most essential element in helping our squadron function efficiently. Open communication must continue as we expand into a new facility. Develop a need and desire for information that will help you prepare properly and eliminate potential problems. Breakdowns, negativism, and other detractors that have a negative affect on communication must be avoided.

3. Time, experience, and new knowledge result in changes. As we work together, my philosophy will become more elaborate and will adjust over time. Just as I can be counted upon to let you know if you have not lived up to my expectations, I expect each of you to let me know if I have failed to live up to my own philosophies. I challenge each of you to the task at hand and earnestly seek your support.

JANE DOE, Lieutenant Colonel, CAP
Commander, XYZ Cadet Squadron

CC: All members