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MISSION COMMAND IN THE AGE OF SAIL

Josh Weiss

Mission command is a command-and-control philosophy characterized by trust between senior and junior leaders and independent execution of orders on the basis of a common understanding of purpose and intent. While the concept has been part of the U.S. military's joint doctrine since the 1980s, recently it has received more attention from senior leaders.¹ In 2012, General Martin E. Dempsey, USA, then Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, argued that the rapidly changing and increasingly complex security environment, especially when paired with an enduring period of constrained fiscal resources, requires the joint force to be able to leverage any and all advantages presented by "smaller units enabled to conduct decentralized operations at the tactical level with operational/strategic implications."² In January 2021, Admiral Michael M. Gilday's Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) Navigation Plan (NAVPLAN) also called for the Navy to orient around commander's intent and to learn to "foster initiative, flexibility, and trust" throughout the force.³ Notably, however—and appropriately, given the CNO's central theme of

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providing commander's intent without specific direction—Gilday's NAVPLAN does not supply a method to achieve this goal.

Building a culture of mission command in the joint force requires a formal and continual education process. While practical exercises and training would be crucial to such a program, much would be gained from a solid foundation in theory and study.⁴ Fortunately, there exists an extensively studied area of history that possesses

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still-untapped potential to aid in building a mission-command-education program: the age of sail.

This is not a new idea. Even though the term *mission command* is an anachronism relative to that era, several historians already have used the concept to examine the age of sail. However, most of them, as well as practitioners seeking to apply the mission-command framework better, have done so primarily by examining Vice Admiral Lord Nelson's tactical brilliance, as well as the idea of the so-called Nelson Touch.⁵ That is a productive approach, and the Nelson Touch does anticipate many of the core aspects of contemporary mission command. But we should not limit ourselves to Nelson's tactics; the age of sail offers many other useful examples of mission command, and it does so at all levels of warfare.⁶ An analytical framework based on mission command can help discover, develop, and present effectively these lessons for the many modern practitioners seeking to apply mission command in the context of ongoing great-power competition.

This article answers General Dempsey's and Admiral Gilday's calls by developing an analytical framework for mission command and proposing the full age of sail as an area for current military officers to mine for case studies and lessons to learn. It further demonstrates the value of this novel approach by examining a case study from the age of sail through the lens of mission command. The resulting analysis not only exemplifies the value to practitioners of studying the age of sail; it also suggests some ways in which the current discourse on mission command could be extended productively.

A MISSION-COMMAND FRAMEWORK

At its heart, mission command is about the relationship between commander and subordinate.

The Relationship

The commander has a particular end state or specific goal in mind and must rely on the subordinate to achieve that objective. Ideally, the commander also can count on the subordinate to exercise discretion on the scene to take advantage of local conditions or react to unforeseen changes in the operating environment. This is the primary benefit of mission command. The commander also has an idea of the boundaries or limits within which the subordinate should operate when executing orders. Another way to say this is that the commander has an idea of an appropriate decision space within which a subordinate can create and choose a particular course of action.

The subordinate relies on the commander to provide the overall goal, as well as the intent behind the objective and any limits on or boundaries to the courses of action the subordinate may choose to achieve the desired ends. The commander

may provide the mission orders in written or oral form, depending on the situation. The subordinate then leverages the advantage of being on the scene, as well as an understanding of the implicit and explicit limits conveyed by the commander's intent and orders, to develop his or her own perception of the decision space from which to choose a particular course of action. The desired end state of correctly executed mission command is a subordinate who, even in an environment of imperfect or incomplete information, is able confidently to leverage any advantage deriving from proximity to the task or issue by independently interpreting and executing orders without further guidance.⁷ Of course, this is incredibly difficult to execute in the real world and requires significant effort on the part of both commander and subordinate.

Understandably, the commander has the more difficult job with respect to mission command. He or she must convey the objective or desired end state clearly while also conveying sufficiently understandable and workable boundaries within which the subordinate may operate. If these boundaries overly constrict the subordinate, the commander risks negating the ability of the subordinate to take advantage of local conditions or changes in the battle space. Put another way, simply conveying a directive or objective—for example, “Avoid hostilities with another nation's naval forces”—is insufficient, because it can overly constrain a subordinate and negate any advantage provided by that subordinate's ability to react to local conditions. On one hand, a subordinate may interpret such direction so strictly that it precludes protecting allies from attack; on the other hand, it could prevent the subordinate from taking advantage of a rapidly developing or unforeseen situation. Therefore, to leverage mission command fully, a commander must create and communicate clearly an acceptable and appropriate decision space within which the subordinate can act.

When creating the limits of such a decision space, the commander must consider three interrelated areas:

1. First and most importantly, the commander must explain to the subordinate the intent behind the orders. A shared understanding of why the commander wants something done, and any other reasoning behind the orders, will help align the commander's and the subordinate's decision spaces, minimizing the potential that the subordinate will select a course of action that is unacceptable to the commander. It also will provide maximum opportunity for a subordinate to take advantage of opportunities on scene.
2. Second, the commander must understand and incorporate the subordinate's personal history, personality, and other factors contributing to his or her mind-set when both explaining intent and issuing orders.

This will help the commander shape the orders to the particular strengths and weaknesses of the subordinate.

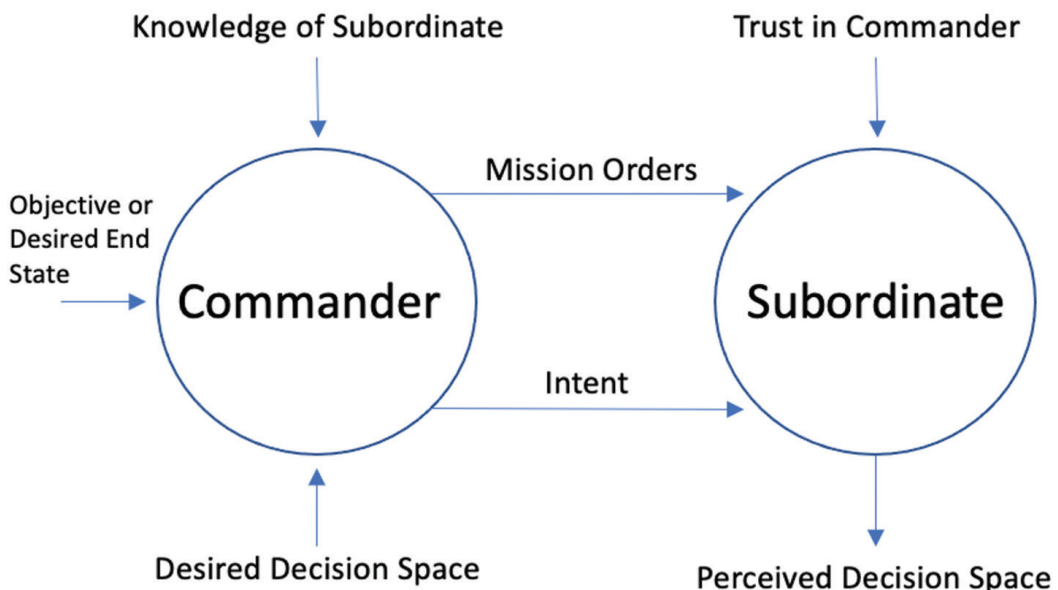
3. Finally, the commander must consider the specific language of the orders. Informed by an understanding of the subordinate to whom the orders will be issued, the commander must take care to use language that provides the subordinate sufficient maneuvering room while not allowing too free a hand.

Careful analysis and consideration of these three areas will help a commander issue effective mission-style orders and shape an appropriate decision space for the subordinate.

The subordinate's job is less complicated but still difficult. On receipt of orders, the subordinate must filter the language of those orders through his or her understanding of the commander's intent and the desired end state to create a perceived decision space from which to choose a particular course of action. Appropriately executed mission command ensures that the two decision spaces overlap to a significant degree, even if not completely. If needed, and if time and communications permit, the subordinate should seek clarification or further guidance. The subordinate should take advantage of any information or circumstances available on scene and select a course of action that stays within the bounds of the intended decision space.

Trust is the most significant prerequisite for successful execution of mission command. Both the commander issuing the orders and the subordinate executing

FIGURE 1
THE MISSION-COMMAND RELATIONSHIP



them must accept the risk of *all* possible outcomes.⁸ In other words, mission command is not a panacea; it does not guarantee success. Even a subordinate with a perfect understanding of commander's intent and executing beautifully written orders still may choose an improper or ineffective course of action. The subordinate may fail to achieve an objective or may do so in a manner contradictory to what the commander intended. So, both commander and subordinate must trust each other. In mission command, the commander's trust of the subordinate should be considered part of his or her knowledge of the subordinate, as previously discussed. An extra dimension exists for the subordinate, however. Subordinates must trust that commanders will understand their actions and protect them from irrational or excessive punishment resulting from the subordinates exercising discretion or interpreting commanders' orders. If subordinates do not have this trust in their commanders, they naturally will be unwilling to take risks or exercise initiative—effectively negating the prime benefit that mission command provides.

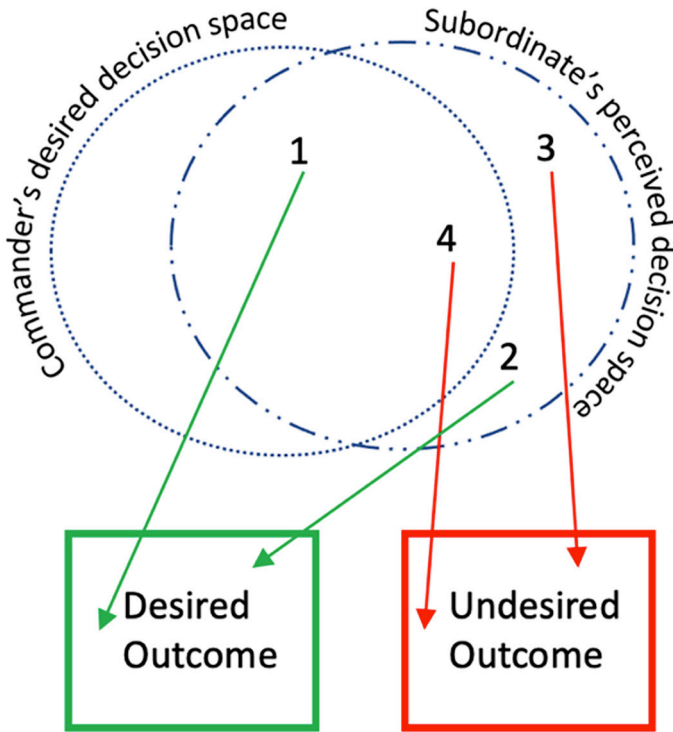
The Possibilities

A matrix of four mission-command possibilities can be developed for application to events, including during the age of sail, by laying out the roles of and requirements for both the commander and the subordinate. Each of the four elements in the matrix represents a possible combination of circumstances in the application of mission command, and therefore a unique framework by which to question, understand, and teach. None of the questions offered below should be taken to apply only to the possibility alongside which it is presented; in many cases, the questions will apply to multiple possibilities. Nor should the questions presented below be considered exhaustive; they are presented merely to show the outline of a possible framework for historical analysis.

The first possibility represents the best execution of mission command. In such scenarios, the subordinate's derived decision space overlaps significantly with the intended decision space the commander provided through mission orders and explanation of intent. The subordinate then chooses a course of action from this shared decision space that leads to the commander's desired outcome. Historians and practitioners should apply several questions to scenarios that fall into this category. What factors led to the two decision spaces overlapping so well? Was it in the way the commander understood the subordinate's limitations? Was it because the subordinate trusted the commander to provide protection from unintended consequences? Did the overlap of the decision spaces lead to the successful outcome, or was it some other factor?

The second possibility is best described as an adequate exercise of mission command. In such scenarios, the subordinate chooses a course of action from his or her decision space that leads to the commander's desired outcome. However, the chosen course of action lies outside the decision space from which the commander

FIGURE 2
FOUR MISSION-COMMAND POSSIBILITIES



	Subordinate's Course of Action Falls:	
	Within Commander's Desired Decision Space	Outside Commander's Desired Decision Space
Mission succeeds	Possibility no. 1: best execution of mission command	Possibility no. 2: adequate execution of mission command
Mission fails	Possibility no. 4: likely not mission command related	Possibility no. 3: failure of mission command

intended the subordinate to choose. In other words, the subordinate got the job done, but did so in a manner that the commander did not intend. This possibility should not be confused with the best execution of mission command simply because the subordinate achieved the desired outcome. Because mission command involves a relationship, it is at its best when the chosen course of action comes from a shared decision space. Historians and practitioners should ask why the two decision spaces did not overlap to include the successful course of action ultimately chosen. Did the commander convey intent poorly, or did the words of the orders overly constrain the subordinate from exercising initiative? Was there a viable course of action that lay within the shared decision space? Why did the subordinate choose a course of action

that lay outside the decision space the commander had provided?

The third possibility is similar to the second in that the subordinate chooses a course of action inside his or her own decision space but outside that intended by the commander. However, in this case, the subordinate fails to achieve the commander's desired outcome. This is best described as a failure of mission command. In addition to the questions presented for the second possibility, here practitioners and historians should focus on whether mission-command-related issues contributed to the failure to achieve the desired outcome. Would the desired outcome have been achieved if the subordinate had chosen a particular course of action within the commander's intended decision space? Or was the failure unrelated to a mission-command issue?

The fourth possibility likely does not relate to mission command at all. Here, the subordinate chooses a course of action from a decision space that overlaps with the commander's intended decision space yet fails to achieve the desired outcome. In other words, these scenarios may involve issues that even mission command could not have solved, such as those caused by chance or the fog of war. Here practitioners and historians should attempt to identify the factors that caused the chosen course of action to fail. Was it simply that, in war, bad things sometimes happen? Did the shared decision space contain a course of action that might have led to the desired outcome? If so, why was it not chosen?

Taken together, these four possibilities create a useful framework by which to analyze events from the age of sail.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT: THE AGE OF SAIL

The age of sail is a particularly useful era to mine for mission-command-related lessons, because of the challenges inherent in the age. The communications and strictly military-related challenges at the tactical level are well known and have been explored.⁹ However, the same challenges existed at the operational and strategic levels of war as well, and those are particularly relevant to the political and diplomatic challenges facing today's military leaders in a renewed great-power competition. Because of slow communication during the age of sail and the global nature of many of the wars fought, officers on station—that is, the subordinates—frequently were required to use their initiative and to make decisions at the operational and strategic levels of war in an environment characterized by incomplete or imperfect information. Likewise, ministers at home—that is, the commanders—had to try to shape those officers' behavior through orders that could take months to arrive, if they did at all, and which could have become irrelevant by the time they did. There are clear parallels from this information environment to modern militaries' concerns with disruption of today's communication and coordination capabilities at all levels of war.¹⁰ The case study examined here demonstrates those parallels and provides both a particularly rigorous test of the developed mission-command framework and an excellent example of the valuable lessons that such complicated events can yield.

Less clear but no less important are the parallels from the age of sail to today's information-rich environment. The same constant-communication capabilities that militaries worry about losing in the opening days of modern combat likely are acting to degrade subordinates' abilities to exercise initiative. John Nelsen neatly demonstrated this in his 1987 article "*Auftragstaktik: A Case for Decentralized Battle.*" The situation he anticipated then—which has come to pass today—was that newly developed communications technology both allows and incentivizes commanders to micromanage subordinates, to the detriment of

the subordinates' abilities and willingness to practice initiative to advantage.¹¹ Because commanders in the age of sail did not have the option of constant communications, they naturally developed methods to communicate within, and to develop subordinates' abilities to deal with, a sparse information environment.

Modern commanders seeking to prepare their subordinates for a severely degraded communications and information environment in a future conflict can learn from their predecessors in the age of sail. It is time, then, to apply the analytical framework to a specific case study and demonstrate the value of this approach.

THE CASE STUDY

Between 30 June and 11 July 1815, Rear Admiral Sir Philip Durham and Lieutenant General Sir James Leith, respectively the British naval and land-force commanders in chief of the Leeward Islands in the Caribbean Sea, engaged in a remarkable dispute regarding the island of Guadeloupe, whose governor had declared allegiance to the recently returned Napoléon Bonaparte. The dispute was carried out via a series of lengthy and legalistic letters between the two officers. The missives centered on whether the British forces should, or even were permitted to, intervene militarily to retake Guadeloupe in the name of the restored Bourbon king, Louis XVIII.¹²

The correspondence between the commanders makes clear that each was attempting to interpret imprecisely worded orders to fit a novel situation, and that this effort was complicated significantly by their inability to communicate quickly with ministers back in Britain. The fundamental problem was that the two commanders reported to different ministers in London, and the two ministers had issued them different orders. Leith's orders came from the Secretary of State for War and the Colonies, Henry, Earl Bathurst, while Durham reported to the First Lord of the Admiralty, Robert Dundas, Viscount Melville. Bathurst communicated effectively to Leith the end state he envisioned—provision of support to the Bourbon forces in the West Indies—while Melville constrained Durham, forcing him to wait for a positive order to engage in any hostilities. In other words, the two commanders on the scene were operating in two different mission-command scenarios.

As will become clear, though, the episode is not as simple as a case of two commanders with two different sets of orders. A close reading of the correspondence between Durham and Leith demonstrates that Durham did not understand Melville's desired end state and Melville did not understand the pressures that were weighing on Durham. Herein lies the value of mission command as an analytical tool; it encourages historians to delve into the mind-sets of the commanders on the spot, as well as those higher in the chain of command, and it does so in a language familiar to modern-day practitioners. When we do so here, not only do

we plumb useful depths for mission-command-related lessons, but we also revise our historical understanding of the particulars of this case.

Events in the West Indies during and after Napoléon's escape from Elba in February 1815 have received very little attention. Recent accounts of the naval history in the West Indies during this period either focus on American commerce raiding toward the end of the War of 1812 or do not touch on events in the West Indies at all.¹³ Nor is the nineteenth-century historiography much better.¹⁴ In both cases, the lack of interest in the region is understandable, given the enormity of the shadow cast by Napoléon's return to France, his defeat at Waterloo, and his exile to Saint Helena.

The Commanders

The few accounts we have of the dispute between Durham and Leith flow entirely from Durham's version of the events. James Ralfe's 1828 biography of Durham—very likely sourced from the admiral himself—blames the dispute on Leith and concludes that the root cause was “an excess of zeal on one part [Leith's], and the exercise of sound discretion on the other.”¹⁵ Durham's memoirs, published posthumously in 1846, come to a similar conclusion, although they do not attack Leith directly.¹⁶ The only modern analysis of the dispute relies heavily on both these sources, as well as three letters from Durham to Leith. It concludes that it was “Leith's belief that his letter from Bathurst clearly obligated him to restore by force of arms the usurped royal authority on [Guadeloupe], and Durham's insistence that his instructions dated 26 March prevented him from co-operating” that caused the dispute.¹⁷ In fact, a closer examination of the events in question suggests a different conclusion, as this article will demonstrate. In addition to applying a mission-command framework, the analysis relies on additional correspondence from Durham and other previously unconsidered perspectives of the events on Guadeloupe and Martinique during Napoléon's return.¹⁸

One new perspective on the dispute between Durham and Leith is that of the French general Eugène Édouard Boyer de Peyreleau, who was the principal deputy to the governor of Guadeloupe, Charles Alexandre Léon Durand, comte de Linois. In a pamphlet published in 1849, General Boyer provided commentary on the internal deliberations and a detailed view of the events leading up to the government of Guadeloupe declaring allegiance to the restored Bonapartist government on 18 June—the event that was the chief cause of the Durham-Leith dispute (occurring, coincidentally, on the same day as the Battle of Waterloo). When considering Boyer's account, however, it is important to consider that, while both he and Linois were sent home to face trial after Napoléon's final defeat, he was the only one to face any blame. He was sentenced to death for his role, although this quickly was commuted to a lifetime prison sentence, of which he actually

served only three years. As Boyer indirectly makes clear in his introduction, he published his pamphlet primarily to reclaim his reputation and to set the “public record” straight after Linois’s death.¹⁹ Therefore, aside from particulars such as dates, places, and names of participants, his account should be treated skeptically. Nevertheless, it provides a helpful French perspective on the dispute—which, after all, hinged on the behavior of the French in the West Indies.

In addition to ignoring the French perspective, the existing studies of the dispute also have failed to examine how the backgrounds of the British and French commanders in chief shaped their actions in the summer of 1815. When he was appointed to command Royal Navy (RN) forces in the Leeward Islands in November 1813, Rear Admiral Durham’s career was approaching its apex. In the thirty-seven years since he joined the Royal Navy, he had survived the disastrous sinking of *Royal George*, successfully commanded several ships and a squadron, fought and been wounded at Trafalgar in 1805, and amassed considerable fame and fortune.²⁰ He had made an excellent first impression in the Leeward Islands by capturing two French frigates while en route to his new command. American privateers were preying on shipping throughout the station, so Durham immediately set about employing his squadron to capture them, and his efforts earned lavish praise from the British merchants in the Caribbean.²¹

But Durham was eager to return to England to commence his postwar career, so shortly after the Treaty of Paris was signed in 1814 he applied for relief. While waiting for the identified officer to arrive and relieve him, including through the winter and early spring of 1814–15, Durham occupied his time and his squadron with several tasks. These included continuing protection of merchant ships while the Treaty of Ghent awaited ratification and implementation, removing British troops and colonists from the West Indian islands being returned to Denmark and France, and sending several ships of his squadron home to England as part of the general drawdown of the Royal Navy.²²

As governor in chief and commander of the British land forces in the Leeward Islands, Leith found himself in a position similar to Durham’s. Having served with distinction in the Peninsular War at Bussaco, Badajoz, and Salamanca, he received his appointment to the Leeward Islands on 15 February 1814. Arriving in the islands later that spring, Leith’s primary concern was handing over the administration and control of the captured islands to the newly arriving Danish and French authorities—not a simple task. The handover of Guadeloupe, which was completed in early December 1814, proved particularly challenging for all involved; apparently Leith’s personal intervention was required to overcome disagreements between the outgoing British governor and the incoming French administration. Adding to Leith’s difficulties in carrying out his duties was the fact that he had no legal authority over his naval counterpart or the troopships

in the region, and therefore he could not move troops around the station unless Durham agreed to supply the means to do so.²³

On the French side, the governors of Martinique and Guadeloupe appointed by Louis XVIII's newly restored Bourbon government were reliant on a prerevolutionary ordinance for the organization of the colonies. The two governors were in charge of military matters, while administration and finances were left to an intendant and a superior counsel. The first French ships of the expedition to reclaim the West Indies for the Bourbons left France on 1 September 1814, while the governors set sail in late October.²⁴

The new governor of Guadeloupe, the comte de Linois, had served in the Bourbon, revolutionary, and Imperial French navies, seeing notable service in the Mediterranean Sea and Indian Ocean as part of the last two. Linois's active service ended when he was injured in a battle with Admiral Sir John Borlase Warren, RN, during his return to France in March 1806 and taken prisoner to England. Linois spent the remainder of the war there, until Napoléon's abdication in 1814. While captive in England he was created Baron of the Empire and awarded a pension of four thousand livres per year. Linois arrived on Guadeloupe and assumed his post as governor on 14 December 1814.²⁵

Unlike Linois, Pierre René Charles Marie, comte de Vaugiraud, was a staunch royalist. He was made a vice admiral and appointed governor of Martinique in June 1814 after having spent the previous twenty-four years in exile in London. It also is worth noting that in 1795 Vaugiraud was serving as the pilot on Durham's *Anson* off Noirmoutier when the ship ran aground—resulting in a threat from Durham to hang him. Vaugiraud arrived on the island in early December. His first several months there appear to have been fairly routine, concerned mostly with the mechanics of the restoration of Bourbon rule and the reestablishment of commerce to and from the island. However, Vaugiraud's knowledge of Linois's background likely played a part in his decision to order the captain of the royalist ship *L'Hermione* on 15 December 1814 to bring him an account of the situation on Guadeloupe, Linois's attitude, and any Bonapartist activities there.²⁶ Clearly, during the winter and early spring of 1815 some tension existed between the two French governors.

The Islands

It is important next to understand the relative economic and strategic unimportance of the islands of Guadeloupe and Martinique compared with other islands in the West Indies. It is true that sugar, and the ability to produce it inexpensively using enslaved labor, made West Indian colonies very valuable possessions throughout the eighteenth century. Furthermore, strategically, the West Indies provided a convenient peripheral theater in which a nation could distract its

opponent or force a diversion of forces away from another theater. In fact, in every war between 1748 and 1815 the British conducted major operations there to disrupt French and Spanish trade. From Britain's wartime perspective, the importance of Guadeloupe and Martinique was not in bringing their cane land under British rule but in bolstering Britain's domestic sugar market by destroying the islands' capacity to produce sugar, and thereby denying the French the ability to profit from them. Later, the possessions could be used as diplomatic bargaining chips in peace negotiations. So, for instance, at the end of the Seven Years' War in 1763, Britain effectively traded both islands, along with a number of other West Indian possessions, back to France in exchange for Canada, and in the 1802 Treaty of Amiens it gave back Martinique for no directly related concessions.²⁷

A similar line of thinking seems to have influenced the decision by Robert Stewart, Viscount Castlereagh, Britain's foreign secretary, to return the islands to Louis XVIII in the 1814 Treaty of Paris. Castlereagh appears to have returned Martinique and Guadeloupe solely as a salve for France's national pride, as that country's borders on the continent were being driven back to the *status quo ante bellum*, and British sugar production on Jamaica, Trinidad, and Saint Lucia and at Demerara was not threatened by the resumption of French production on Guadeloupe and Martinique.²⁸ As a result of the treaty, during the winter and spring of 1815 Leith and Durham busied themselves redistributing colonists and naval and land forces to restore French control over the islands.²⁹

The French merchant interest, on the other hand, assigned more economic and strategic importance to returning the islands to their control, maintaining peace, and restarting trade. The 1814 Treaty of Paris also gave the French government the right to attempt to reconquer Saint-Domingue (Haiti) from the regime that had held control of the island since a successful slave revolt during the early days of the French Revolution. This possibility gave the traders and merchants who had suffered since the onset of the French Revolution, both in France and in the colonies, hope of restoring their former glory and prosperity.³⁰ They were eager to be rid of their overbearing former British overlords; they hoped to resume a more profitable life under the rule of Louis XVIII's newly installed government.³¹

Napoléon's Return

Napoléon's unanticipated return from Elba, and the response of the French armed forces to that return, had global implications. While the allies meeting in Vienna were quick to declare Napoléon an outlaw and to ratify the seventh coalition on 13 March, a week after learning of his escape, Napoléon's return nonetheless caused significant angst and debate within the British government.³² The debate did not center on whether Britain should oppose Napoléon's resumption of his

throne; in fact, on 18 March, even before Napoléon arrived in Paris, the Duke of Wellington was able to inform Castlereagh of the allies' decision to renew the Treaty of Chaumont, which bound each signatory to supply 150,000 troops for a common defense against Napoléon's expected aggression. The military provisions of the treaty were "instantly accepted" by the British government after it was signed on 25 March, with an immediate commitment of £2 million in subsidies to be paid to continental powers for the raising of one hundred thousand troops to help Britain meet its quota.³³

Instead, the debate focused on what ends the British government publicly could commit itself to attempting to achieve through the use of military force against Bonaparte. The government was particularly concerned with whether the Bourbon monarchy was worth restoring. Louis XVIII's abrupt flight from Paris to Lille and then to Belgium within a span of nineteen days did not help his supporters in Britain.³⁴ Neither, however, did his flight soften the British government's intent to fight Napoléon. After hearing the news of Louis's departure, Castlereagh wrote to Wellington that Britain's involvement must be of "the largest scale. . . . [Y]ou must inundate France with force in all directions."³⁵

The final results of this debate, and the fate of Napoléon himself, have been studied extensively and need not be addressed further here. However, the fact that this debate occurred from the moment the British government and its ministers learned of Napoléon's return on 10 March until the end of May serves as an important backdrop to the orders those ministers sent to their respective commanders in the West Indies during this period.³⁶

The Orders

The first letter that Melville wrote to Durham after Napoléon's escape was a cancellation of his relief as naval commander in chief of the Leeward Islands station. Writing shortly after news of Napoléon's return reached London on 10 March, Melville told him about Napoléon's escape, praised Durham's conduct, and specifically mentioned that the admiral had given "such great satisfaction" to the merchants on his station. Melville concluded, "Should, however, peace not be disturbed, I will take care to send out an officer to relieve you."³⁷

Having disappointed Durham's hopes of a return to England, Melville then wrote the order that would drive and guide Durham's conduct for the next four months. Because a subordinate's understanding of the intent behind a commander's orders and how the commander conveys that intent are so important, Melville's orders of 26 March are worth quoting in their entirety here.

The vessel that conveys this letter and other despatches for you, carries out orders from Louis XVIII to the Governments of Martinique and Guadaloupe [*sic*], to hold those islands in his name.

I hope they will obey the requisition, but if they should not, and if on the contrary they declare for Bonaparte, it will nevertheless be your duty (indeed it is scarcely necessary for me to remind you of it) to abstain from any hostile acts against his flag, unless the vessels which carry it should commit any act of aggression against British ships, or until you learn hostilities between France and this country have actually commenced. If Martinique and Guadaloupe continue faithful to Louis XVIII, and their vessels carry his flag, they must of course be treated as friends.³⁸

On the face of it, Melville's orders seem to differ significantly from the attitude of the rest of the British government. He wrote them two weeks after the allies in Vienna had declared Napoléon an outlaw and a week after Wellington had informed Castlereagh of the allies' intent to renew the Treaty of Chaumont and commit 150,000 troops to Napoléon's defeat. However, Melville's orders still fit within the overall response of the government. During this period, even as the navy continued to deal with the ongoing postwar reduction in the strength of its squadrons around the world, including in the Leeward Islands, the service, like the rest of the British government, was dealing with the shock of Napoléon's return, and Melville faced the growing potential of a renewal of a worldwide war in which the Royal Navy was likely again to play a major part in protecting the British homeland and its possessions overseas.

Looked at this way—with the benefit of hindsight and the knowledge of how the greater conflict concluded—Melville's desired end state seems clear; he did not want to provoke unnecessary conflict in the West Indies.³⁹ However, his guidelines for acceptable action by Durham are less clear, serving to obscure his true intent. Durham was neither to act aggressively nor to allow his actions to start an unprovoked conflict with any French ship, regardless of whether it flew the white Bourbon flag or the imperial tricolor. Crucially, what was less clear was what Durham should do, or even was permitted to do, if events in the West Indies exceeded the scope of Melville's orders before new ones could be sent across the Atlantic. In the end, Melville's language is extremely rigid; it is that of a commander restricting too severely the options available to a subordinate in the field. "[T]o abstain from any hostile acts" gave Durham very little room to maneuver as circumstances changed, and the focus on "hostilities between France and this country" only confused matters. After all, the allies claimed to be taking up arms against French forces *as allies of France*—they merely were seeking to capture the outlaw Napoléon Bonaparte. Whether France and Britain actually were at war seems a simple question on its face, but in the context of Napoléon's return Melville severely limited Durham's available courses of action and confused his understanding of the evolving events in Europe.

On 10 April, amid efforts to supply and prepare the Duke of Wellington's army on the Continent after Britain's official commitment to the renewed Treaty of Chaumont on 25 March, Bathurst wrote his orders to Leith. As with Melville's orders to Durham, they are worth quoting in their entirety here.

The events which have recently taken place in France give too much reason to believe that some endeavours may be made by the party attached to Bonaparte to gain possession of the islands of Guadeloupe and Martinique and there is ground for apprehension that the governors of those islands may not be able without assistance to maintain the authority of His Most Christian Majesty.

Under these circumstances I am commanded to signify to you the pleasure of His Royal Highness the Prince Regent that in the event of any requisition being made to you for assistance for such a purpose from the officers in command in those islands you should without delay afford from the force under your command such assistance as the means placed at your disposal may be able to furnish.⁴⁰

Unlike Melville's orders, these clearly communicate Bathurst's desired end state to Leith: retention of the islands of Guadeloupe and Martinique under the control of Louis XVIII. In further contrast to Melville's orders, Bathurst's are those of a commander setting a goal for the on-scene subordinate while leaving significant room for that subordinate to choose how best to accomplish that goal. His full intention is clear: the islands must be retained for the king of France without removing Leith's ability to do his job, which included protecting the British colonies under his charge. By using open and permissive language, Bathurst gave Leith significant room to maneuver and to match his actions to the situation. This will become important later.

As evidenced by the first sentence of Melville's orders of 26 March to Durham, the French ministers also felt the need to send prescriptive orders to Vaugiraud and Linois in the immediate aftermath of Napoléon's return. The Bourbon minister of the navy and the colonies wrote to Vaugiraud on 12 March, sending him copies of newspapers announcing the return of "l'usurpateur." Louis's ambassador in London wrote to both governors on 24 March urging them to hold their islands in the name of Louis XVIII. However—likely understanding the different backgrounds of the two governors—the ambassador gave additional instructions that neither of them should permit any new forces to enter Guadeloupe, nor should they hand over the administration of the colony without a personal order from the king countersigned by Blacas d'Aulps, the minister of the king's household. Another potential reason for the firm tone of the ambassador's order is that the king apparently was considering permanent retirement to Guadeloupe and Martinique if Bonaparte was ultimately successful in his return.⁴¹ Much like Melville's, these orders served to box in the French commanders on station rigidly.

As the Bourbons' situation in France worsened, however, even those prescriptive orders did not provide sufficient confidence to Louis's government. On 18 April, Blacas wrote to Vaugiraud and Linois, as well as to the intendant of Guadeloupe, to inform them that the king had appointed Vaugiraud governor general of both Martinique and Guadeloupe. He gave Louis's reasoning for this change to be the events that had come to pass in France. Implicit, however, is Louis's ministers' concern that military and government leaders continued to declare for Napoléon, leaving the royal court anxious to consolidate power in the West Indies in the French commander that it trusted.⁴²

The Orders Delivered

By the third week of April, then, both the British and French ministers in Europe had cast their dice, from a mission-command perspective. On both sides, intent was imbued, intentionally or otherwise, into orders. On the French side, Louis XVIII's government decided it did not have the right military commander on Guadeloupe for the unfolding situation. All the orders and commands then were sent on the long journey to the West Indies, to be interpreted and carried out by the disparate group of commanders.

In this period, instructions from ministers in Europe took between one and two months to reach their intended recipients in the West Indies. For the British, the primary mail route to the West Indies originated, like all other wartime mail service to overseas destinations, from Falmouth in the southwest of England. The service followed a relatively consistent path from Britain to the West Indies that was designed to take advantage of prevailing winds and geography. Occasionally, the first stop for the ships after their departure from Britain was Lisbon—three of the twelve packets called there in 1815. Next, the ships would sail to the northeast coast of South America before proceeding into the Leeward Islands, where typically they would stop at the various colonies in the region. Barbados, followed by Dominica and Antigua, were the colonies visited most often in 1815. Finally, from the West Indies the packets would take about a month to return by a more northerly route to Falmouth, where they would start the cycle again.⁴³

Between the fall of 1814 and the end of 1815, the route to the West Indies was serviced by approximately a dozen packets that departed on a roughly monthly schedule. On all the routes that the packet service maintained, the primary determinant of the scheduling seems to have been the availability of the packet ships themselves; however, if important mail needed to be sent and no packets were available, mail also could be consigned to any available RN vessels.⁴⁴

On the French side, Louis XVIII's flight to Ghent meant that his government would not be able to rely on the French postal service to relay instructions to his commanders in the West Indies; instead, his ministers would have to rely on the British postal system for assistance. As the opening line of Melville's 26 March

orders to Durham points out, the packet carrying his orders also carried orders to the governors of Guadeloupe and Martinique. This also is likely why Blacas, when notifying Vaugiraud of his appointment as governor general in the West Indies, directed him to relay all reports on the colonies through Louis XVIII's ambassador in London. Constrained by similar difficulties, Bonaparte's newly restored imperial minister of the navy and the colonies sent his first letter to Vaugiraud and Linois via a French armed schooner.⁴⁵

Also inherent in this timeline is the assumption that the packet ship, warship, or merchant vessel entrusted with the mail makes it to its destination safely. However, packets faced many risks in the early nineteenth century, including falling victim to a competing nation's warships or privateers, or simply to the elements. This was true especially for transatlantic packets during the War of 1812, which saw the average loss of mail-carrying ships at sea jump from two a year to seven after June 1812. Luckily for Leith and Durham, however, the last loss of packets to any source in the West Indies in 1815 occurred in February, when an American privateer took *Lady Mary Pelham* on the latter's return trip to Falmouth, and in April, when *Duke of Montrose* foundered on rocks off Barbados, managing nonetheless to save the mailbags. Correspondence successfully and regularly arrived in the West Indies throughout the entirety of the Hundred Days.⁴⁶ Of course, neither Bathurst nor Melville, nor Leith nor Durham, could have known this during the spring and summer of 1815; instead, they would have been used to the opposite, with the timely arrival of guidance being something on which they could not depend.

From a mission-command perspective, the slow and semireliable system responsible for conveying orders and guidance from ministers and commanders at home to subordinates in the West Indies created a dangerous information environment in the spring and summer of 1815. Despite the generally reliable, stable, and periodic arrival of mail from Britain, the potential for the loss of orders, combined with the significant travel time, meant that the British and French commanders in chief were operating in an environment characterized by incomplete and imperfect information—or at least the fear of flawed and late information. This, in turn, placed even greater emphasis on the latitude provided to those commanders in the orders that were about to begin arriving.

The Course of Events in the Islands

The orders and other communications arrived in quick succession. Newspapers carrying the first reports of Napoléon's escape from Elba and the upheaval in France reached Barbados on 28 April in the mailbags saved by the crew of the sinking packet *Duke of Montrose*.⁴⁷ The news reached Guadeloupe on 29 April. A few days later, on 2 May, after having stopped at Martinique, HMS *Badger* arrived at Guadeloupe with the 24 March orders from Louis XVIII's ambassador in

London, before the ship proceeded on to Barbados. Melville's orders to Durham of 26 March also arrived in *Badger*, reaching Barbados on 8 May, but Durham actually did not receive them until a few days later, as he was off on an initial reconnoiter of the situation on Guadeloupe. It is not known exactly when Leith received his 10 April orders from Bathurst or by what means he received them. However, Durham, in a letter to the Admiralty dated 28 May, stated that Leith had received instructions to help Linois and Vaugiraud maintain their islands loyal to Louis XVIII. On the basis of recorded packet sailing and arrival dates during this period, these instructions could have been delivered only by warship or private vessel, and they likely arrived shortly after Durham's orders from Melville.⁴⁸

On Martinique and Guadeloupe, as in France, news of Napoléon's return created immediate difficulties for the Bourbon governments. In early May, both governors, fearful of their respective populations' increasingly pro-Napoléon sentiments, reached out to Leith to ask for assistance. Vaugiraud, facing imminent mutiny from two-thirds of the 1,300-man garrison on Martinique, swiftly communicated with Leith and concluded a signed agreement with the British governor on 20 May to allow British troops to garrison forts on Martinique as auxiliary forces for the preservation of Louis XVIII's authority.⁴⁹

On Guadeloupe, Linois, concerned with rumors spreading across the island of the return of the hated "Anglais" and with his government's inability to keep news from the inhabitants about Napoléon's increasing success in France, wrote to Leith on 3 May asking for a British man-of-war to patrol off both Martinique and Guadeloupe.⁵⁰ He requested that this patrol "intercept any vessels with the tri-coloured flag," and Durham, not yet having received the 26 March orders from Melville, complied with the request immediately.⁵¹ Durham and Leith then both sailed at once for Guadeloupe, arriving 13 May, to inform Linois that the requested patrol would be established, to offer him assistance, and to request an in-person interview. Likely fearing the effect of his being seen conferring with British commanders in chief, subsequent to rumors among the general population of an imminent reinvasion of the island by the hated British, Linois refused an in-person interview. However, he and Leith continued to communicate by letter for the remainder of May, culminating with Leith's offer on 26 May to send an auxiliary force to garrison the forts of Guadeloupe. Linois declined the offer, citing his orders from Louis XVIII's ambassador in London to allow no new forces to enter the colony without express permission. On hearing of his refusal, Vaugiraud wrote to Linois on 6 June counseling him that the ambassador's orders were intended solely to exclude any new *French* troops from Europe, and that he should allow British help in maintaining the colony's loyalty to the French king. Linois refused again.⁵²

Durham and Leith, both newly in receipt of guidance from their respective ministers in England, swiftly made preparations to assist Vaugiraud. By 27 May, Leith had assembled two thousand soldiers, along with artillery, provisions, and other stores, at Saint Lucia. Having no authority over the troopships or Durham himself, Leith requested the admiral's assistance to ferry the British troops from Saint Lucia to Martinique as soon as Vaugiraud was ready to receive them.⁵³ Durham readily, and without any apparent argument, agreed, arriving at Saint Lucia with the required transports on 31 May.⁵⁴

While making preparations to deliver the British troops to Vaugiraud on 31 May, Durham reported to the Admiralty Linois's refusal of Leith's similar offer of an auxiliary force. In his missive, Durham described the deteriorating situation on Guadeloupe yet defended Linois's loyalty. He believed that Linois was basing his refusal on his inability "to permit an English Soldier to land[,] as almost every Man on that Island 'is attached to Buonaparte,' to 'Privateering,' and 'Plunder' and are the most disorderly set in the West Indies." He also noted—with the concern of a man whose reputation in the West Indies to this point had been built on his success in defending the merchant trade from attack—that he had received reports of a force of up to twenty privateers waiting in the harbor at Pointe-à-Pitre (the main anchorage of Guadeloupe). He believed they were waiting only for the "moment the tri-colored flag is hoisted or that they hear of Hostilities having commenced" to begin wreaking havoc on British trade. Durham then went on to assure the Admiralty that he would do everything in his power to avoid being the first aggressor in the region. He also reported to the Admiralty that he had asked for and received Linois's promise that the governor would not endorse any expedition to occupy two valuable islands to the south of Guadeloupe, the Saintes. Finally, in a postscript Durham warned that *Duchesse d'Angoulême*, a French frigate, had departed for France, leaving only one French warship in the area. It is clear that at this point Durham understood the fragile situation on and around Guadeloupe, especially the weakness of its government, and the potential consequences of that island declaring for Napoléon. Despite having received Melville's direction to engage in no hostile act against a ship carrying the tricolor flag, Durham left four brigs—the maximum amount of force he could spare—to watch both for any indication that privateers had begun to attack shipping and for the arrival of any ships from the French mainland.⁵⁵

Both Durham and Leith expected Vaugiraud to take immediate advantage of the agreement but were surprised when, after being notified of Durham's readiness to land troops, the governor balked. Durham's report to the Admiralty describes the governor's hesitation as resulting from fear of the reaction of the inhabitants to the arrival of the British. However, in two letters to Durham, on

29 May and 1 June, Vaugiraud asks Durham to postpone the arrival of the troops until he can make proper arrangements to receive them, mentioning concerns that some of the more recalcitrant Bonapartist soldiers should be sent back to France first. Durham and Leith, both of them concerned about the health of the British troops packed together in ships, were understandably upset, and they leaned heavily on Vaugiraud to accept the troops.⁵⁶

It also is worth noting that while Durham and Leith were exchanging letters with Vaugiraud, Durham began to dictate a summary of his career-long exploits and the several plaudits he had received for his service to king and country. As Hilary Rubinstein observes in her book *Trafalgar Captain*, it appears that amid preparations for an occupation of French territory and the potential onset of another world war, Durham was focused on memorializing himself.⁵⁷

Ultimately, on 5 June the British auxiliary force landed safely on Martinique; the forts were garrisoned in the name of Louis XVIII, with appropriate pomp and circumstance; and the colony remained loyal to the French king. Recognizing that the inhabitants of Martinique might be wary of the return of British troops to their island, Leith and Vaugiraud took care to publish widely the terms of their agreement. They also tried to assuage the fears of the French colonists by incorporating two conditions regarding the retention of Bourbon authority over the colony. Specifically, Leith guaranteed that the sovereign administration of Martinique would remain under Vaugiraud's control entirely, and that the British troops, as auxiliaries, would report to Vaugiraud for use as he saw fit to maintain Louis's authority.⁵⁸

The news of the British troops' arrival on Martinique reached Guadeloupe the next day, on 6 June, and the terms of the agreement between Leith and Vaugiraud were published there on 10 June. According to Linois's deputy, Boyer, news of the troops caused a significant uproar, while word of the agreement did nothing to calm the population; in fact, according to Boyer, it was only his own heroic efforts that prevented the island's inhabitants from immediately declaring for Bonaparte.⁵⁹ Writing to the Admiralty on the same day on which the terms of the agreement were published, Durham offered a different perspective. Because of Melville's orders of 26 March, Durham had found it necessary to resist requests from Leith, Vaugiraud, and Linois to "act in any way hostile to the tri-colored flag." Clearly, Leith, Linois, and Vaugiraud had grown uncomfortable with the situation on Guadeloupe, realized that the arrival of orders from Napoléon's government would set the island on fire, and understood that the Royal Navy was the only means of preventing this from happening. Durham did not disagree with this conclusion, expressing his relief later in the same letter that he was "happy to say [that no ship carrying Napoléon's flag] had . . . appeared yet in these seas." He, however, appeared concerned that soon he might be forced to act outside the restrictive bounds of Melville's orders.⁶⁰ So,

by the second week of June the situation on Guadeloupe had reached a tipping point—as had Admiral Durham.

Dispatched by Napoléon's government from France on 9 May with a mission to “rallier la Martinique et la Guadeloupe à la métropole,” the French schooner *L'Agile* made its first landfall at Saint-François on the eastern side of Guadeloupe on 12 June, carrying two letters for the governor.⁶¹ HMS *Barrosa*, one of the brigs cruising around Guadeloupe at Linois's request—to prevent exactly this type of thing from happening—came upon *L'Agile* shortly after it left Saint-François. *Barrosa*, ignorant of *L'Agile*'s success in already landing letters, determined the schooner to be acting suspiciously and brought it to Durham, whose flagship was anchored at the Saintes. Durham's interrogation of *L'Agile*'s commander revealed that the ship carried both the tricolor and the Bourbon flag, and that the captain had instructions to fly the Bourbon flag when away from the coast to fool any patrolling British ships. Most importantly, Durham learned that *L'Agile* carried instructions and exhortations from Napoléon's newly installed minister of the navy and the colonies for the governors of Martinique and Guadeloupe, as well as for all French warships still in the West Indies, to return themselves to imperial rule. Likely remembering the rigid words of Melville's orders, Durham forwarded the dispatches to Linois on Guadeloupe and asked what he would like done with them. Linois's reply, revealing the increasing stress he felt in his position, was unambiguous. He asked Durham to send the dispatches to Vaugiraud, who recently had learned of his appointment by Louis XVIII's government in exile as governor general of all the French West Indian colonies, to ask for his advice and instruction. Tellingly, Linois also implored Durham—taking care to refer to him as a friend—to have *L'Agile* forcibly escorted out of the West Indies to ensure continued tranquility.⁶²

At this point, Durham faced what seemed to be an easy choice: either confiscate the dispatches carried aboard *L'Agile*, and possibly the ship itself, or release it to deliver the instructions. No act of aggression actually had occurred yet. *Barrosa* had encountered *L'Agile* while the latter was flying the Bourbon flag, and the French ship appears to have come peacefully to the Saintes, where, again, the captain had surrendered the dispatches without any recorded violence. In other words, Durham had stayed within the letter of his instructions and easily could justify confiscating the imperial dispatches, if not *L'Agile* also. This is especially true given the explicit request from the Bourbon governor of Guadeloupe to do exactly that, which was in line with Bathurst's orders to Leith. Even if the confiscation of the imperial dispatches generated a protest from a yet-to-be-established Napoleonic government in the distant future, it was extremely unlikely that Durham would face censure from a government that had joined in declaring Napoléon an outlaw and that had directed another commander

in chief on the same station to give the royalist governors any assistance they requested.

It is also possible to argue that it was in Durham's best interest as the naval commander in chief to confiscate the dispatches. Left unchecked, *L'Agile* had instructions to provide the incendiary dispatches to any French warship it could contact. While Durham knew that only one such warship remained, even that single ship would have presented a significant threat to his diminished squadron and the merchant shipping in the area. Additionally, as he had reported to the Admiralty previously, Durham was concerned that the twenty or so privateers in harbor at Pointe-à-Pitre in Guadeloupe were waiting only for a return of Napoléon's government to begin ravaging trade in the region. Finally, regardless of what happened to Napoléon in Europe, in no way would Britain's interests in the West Indies be bettered by having a Bourbon government secured by British power on Martinique and a Bonapartist government on Guadeloupe. Again, it is extremely unlikely that a British commander in chief would face any discipline or displeasure for taking measures to prevent depredation of British trade in the West Indies. Nonetheless, Durham wrote to the Admiralty on 13 June that he did not believe the "nature of his instructions" permitted him to do anything other than return the dispatches and allow *L'Agile* to go wherever it chose.⁶³

Unsurprisingly, the captain of *L'Agile* chose to proceed directly back to Guadeloupe, arriving at Basse-Terre on 15 June. Immediately on landing, the crew distributed copies of the *Moniteur* and other newspapers, then gave dispatches to the commander of the harbor. The ship's captain, proudly displaying a tricolored cockade on his hat, proceeded through town to meet with the governor, drawing an increasingly large and boisterous crowd as he went. Over the next three days events proceeded exactly as Linois had feared when he asked Durham to send the dispatches to Vaugiraud and to banish *L'Agile* from the West Indies. The enthusiasm of the general population for Napoléon's return followed a path identical to that of the people in France. The arc of events culminated in Linois—likely out of a sense of self-preservation rather than any overwhelming attachment to Napoléon's cause—allowing the tricolor to be raised over the island on 18 June and issuing his formal declaration of loyalty to Napoléon's government on 19 June.⁶⁴

This proved too much for the island's intendant, Jean François César de Guilhermy, a staunch royalist. He fled Guadeloupe for the Saintes on the night of 20 June, along with several other leading citizens of the colony. Two days later, Linois sent an armed detachment to the island to deliver a letter to Guilhermy. In accordance with Durham's orders, HMS *Barbadoes*, stationed at the Saintes to monitor Guadeloupe, did not interfere with the armed party's landing or its stay on the island. In his letter to Guilhermy, Linois asserted that he had no other choice but to

attach his own destiny to that of Bonaparte. He also requested that Guilhermy return to Guadeloupe to resume his post. At the same time, according to Guilhermy's personal papers, published in 1886, Linois threatened Guilhermy's wife, who was still in her house on Guadeloupe; the governor warned that he would keep her and her children hostage until Guilhermy agreed to return. The threat did not persuade Guilhermy or the others on the Saintes, who escaped aboard *Barbadoes*, leaving the Saintes in the possession of the armed party from Guadeloupe. Guilhermy arrived on Martinique on 26 June—one day after his family members did, who apparently had not been held captive. Three days later, after receiving a report of events on Guadeloupe, Vaugiraud, in his capacity as governor general of the French West Indies, issued a proclamation dismissing Linois as governor of Guadeloupe.⁶⁵

Meanwhile, Durham had returned to Guadeloupe on the morning of 18 June and discovered the tricolor flying above all the fortifications. He apparently had “long been in expectation of [it] taking place.” In his report of this news to the Admiralty, Durham did not give an explicit reason for his return to Guadeloupe, but his concern that he might be found at fault for releasing *L'Agile* and its dispatches was implied heavily by a postscript to the report. In it, Durham informed the Admiralty that he had just learned that *L'Agile* had delivered dispatches at the eastern side of Guadeloupe before *Barrosa* came into contact with it. He clearly was trying to demonstrate that his release of *L'Agile* was not the sole cause of the island declaring for Napoléon. Durham then informed his superiors in London that he had sent an officer ashore to confer with Linois, whose reply convinced him that the colony's leadership now was dedicated fully to Napoléon's cause. Finally, wholly in line with Melville's orders of 26 March, Durham informed the Admiralty that once he heard of hostilities actually beginning he immediately would place the island in a state of blockade.⁶⁶

Having completed his report on the revolt of Guadeloupe, Durham next took an action that baffled Leith. Shortly after 18 June, Durham wrote to Linois, informing him that, having received no orders to commence hostilities, he would not interfere with any ship flying Napoléon's flag, regardless of the mission on which it was engaged. It did not matter whether the ship was engaged actively in hostility toward Louis XVIII's authority or bringing troops, weapons, and supplies to fortify Guadeloupe against a Bourbon reinvasion; Durham would not permit his squadron to intervene unless his ships were attacked or he learned that war had commenced between Britain and Napoléon's France.⁶⁷

This news circulated rapidly throughout British, Bourbon, and Bonapartist circles, appropriately encouraging or enraging each audience as late as 22 July. At the time, Leith could not comprehend why Durham's ship had allowed the rebels to seize the Saintes without opposition. Leith was troubled especially by Durham's decision to tell Linois that he effectively had a free hand to undermine Bourbon

authority in the West Indies, and as a direct consequence put Leith's troops on Martinique, and anywhere else they were assisting Bourbon forces, in danger.⁶⁸

But the rationale behind Durham's decision becomes clearer when viewed through the lens of mission command. As previously discussed, Melville's orders of 26 March overly constrained Durham's available options. They limited too severely the decision space available to Durham to deal with a unique and rapidly evolving environment in which he could not hope to get clarification on a useful timescale.

Undiscussed to this point, however, is that Melville's orders also failed to account for the personality and mind-set of the person receiving them. It is clear that by the end of June 1815 Durham wanted to go home to England. He had applied for a relief and been granted one, only to find that hope snatched away at the last moment by Napoléon's escape from Elba.⁶⁹ Sensing the possibility of another destructive world war, Durham was acutely aware of the degraded material state and decreasing numbers of the squadron he had available to protect the vital commerce in his theater. This, in turn, could threaten the reputation he had built throughout his entire career and affect his prospects at home; in fact, he was concerned enough about this reputation to begin memorializing it while busy preparing to land troops on Martinique. As with the *L'Agile* incident, Durham could have stayed well within the bounds of his orders simply by ordering his ships not to interfere with French ships flying the tricolor; he did not need to tell Napoléon's sympathizers on Guadeloupe explicitly that they had a free hand to do as they pleased. Durham's broadcasting of his intention neither to interfere with nor to intercept any of Napoléon's ships likely only served to ensure that none of those ships would act aggressively in the first place, which would have forced Durham to start a conflict he did not want. When looked at in light of all these stresses, it is clear that the restrictive nature of Melville's orders, as well as his explicit tying of Durham's prospects of relief to the maintenance of peace, provided Durham an excuse to do nothing and hope for the best. Put another way, Melville's orders did not take into account the mind-set of the commander for whom they were intended; instead, they took away any incentive for boldness or initiative and provided room for the admiral to equivocate.

The Back-and-Forth

Leith, of course, did not know any of this when he wrote his first contribution to what turned out to be a seven-letter exchange. He simply was trying to accomplish his mission as he understood it, and Durham was doing things that both did not make sense to him and could hinder significantly Leith's ability to carry out his own orders.

On 30 June, Leith wrote two letters to Durham. The first expressed Leith's general frustration at Durham's decision to allow *L'Agile* to put into Guadeloupe, at Durham's public insistence that he would not interfere even with ships

bringing reinforcements to Guadeloupe that Leith's troops eventually might have to fight, and with Durham's complete unwillingness to take a risk for the greater good. Leith concluded the first letter by informing Durham that he had ordered a body of soldiers to retake the Saintes, by force if necessary. Likely anticipating significant pushback from Durham, Leith asked only for Durham's ships to provide protection from aggression and to prevent the garrison on the Saintes from communicating with Guadeloupe. The second letter was an extension of the first. Leith informed Durham that, because of a communication from Vaugiraud concerning events on Guadeloupe, Leith felt compelled to accelerate greatly his preparations to make his army ready for offensive operations against any French island that might declare for Napoléon. He again implored Durham to change his policy of allowing French reinforcements to enter Guadeloupe, seeking to prevent the island's inevitable recapture from Bonapartist forces from being prohibitively costly in blood and treasure.⁷⁰

Durham's reply on 1 July was extremely narrow in its scope and almost as acerbic in its tone, going well beyond the intent behind Melville's orders. Durham, in an overtly defensive and offended manner, stated plainly that he could not and would not permit any ship under his command to be the first aggressor against any force coming from Guadeloupe. Most surprisingly, Durham informed Leith that only because the forces occupying the Saintes had withdrawn to Guadeloupe would he permit his ships to intervene and protect Leith's troops from attack. He then went further, limiting that protection to "warn[ing] off any force that may be sent from Guadeloupe." In other words, Durham implied that if a French force still had occupied the Saintes he would have required his ships to stand off and watch an attack on British troops, and even if he did allow his ships to intervene he would have permitted the French to attack first.⁷¹ His narrow interpretation of Melville's orders was clearly excessive. In no way did Melville intend for his commander in chief in the West Indies to stand by and watch British soldiers die, but that is how Durham, intentionally or not, had construed his orders.

As it happened, the British successfully landed a force on the evacuated Saintes on 4 and 5 July. However, Leith and Durham continued to exchange letters, as Vaugiraud and Leith had decided to repossess Guadeloupe's main islands forcibly.⁷²

The two British commanders exchanged another four letters over the next six days; the missives contained arguments and reasoning similar to those in the previous three. On 2 July, Leith attempted to reason with Durham; most importantly, he sought to demonstrate that the two commanders should be able to find a path to cooperation that would satisfy Durham's narrow interpretation of his orders. Leith's line of argument laid out that he was acting in accordance with the spirit and intent of the orders of the prince regent, not just his department head, Bathurst, to support Louis XVIII's government by employing force short of

declaring war. Leith also argued that he considered anyone attempting armed rebellion against Louis's authority, regardless of the flag under which it was done, to have committed the first act of aggression against British and French troops. Leith ended by asking Durham pointedly whether he would permit his ships to protect the British troops on the Saintes from being attacked by troops and weapons that Durham's ships had allowed the French to deliver to Guadeloupe.⁷³

Leith's arguments convinced Durham only partly. On 4 July, the admiral hastened to inform the general that he already had sent orders to his ships to "prevent [any] renewed attempt at the repossession of that post, and when the British have garrisoned it to keep all French ships of war under whatever flag at a respectful distance." However, that is as conciliatory as Durham got. The rest of his letter was dedicated to legalistic arguments about how he could not possibly allow his forces to become the aggressors. First, he argued that only if the governor of Guadeloupe had requested assistance, as Vaugiraud had done at Martinique, would he feel satisfied that the British were acting defensively. Then he concluded that, because he had received "several communications from the Admiralty subsequent [to Leith's receipt of his 10 April orders from Bathurst], all of which recommend to [him] a cautious line of conduct with respect to any act of aggression against the French nation under whatever flag," his naval forces could not participate in an operation against Guadeloupe until he received orders from Britain, which he expected to arrive at any moment.⁷⁴

In his reply on 6 July, Leith shifted tactics, primarily attacking Durham's legalistic arguments. He reminded Durham that Vaugiraud had been appointed governor general of all the French West Indies, and that in fact he had requested British assistance—making Linois a rebel instead of a governor refusing assistance. He also informed Durham that he had received another dispatch from Bathurst, dated two days later than the last instruction Durham had referenced previously, again instructing him to support and maintain Louis's authority. Yet, not willing to base his argument entirely on technicalities, Leith concluded the letter with a remarkable paragraph, writing, "The responsibility of every commander ought naturally to oblige him to regulate the extent of his cooperation, in absence of direct orders, by his zeal for the public service, and by his professional judgment founded on all the circumstances of the case, while the principle of action is established by facts, and do not, for that purpose, require the exercise of discretion."⁷⁵

Unsurprisingly, Durham was not swayed by this, and in the final letter of their exchange, dated 7 July, he simply responded by restating the same argument he had made since 30 June: that he could not and would not act offensively until the Admiralty gave him permission to do so.⁷⁶ Clearly, nothing Leith could say was going to change Durham's mind—he would do nothing differently until directly ordered to do so.

The Deadlock Broken

That order came quickly. On 10 July, having had enough of Leith questioning his decisions, Durham prepared to forward the correspondence between the commanders in chief and began a letter to the Admiralty complaining that Leith was “insisting [he] commence offensive operations.” He also took special care to call attention to “the many extraordinary Arguments and Accusations that [Leith] has brought forward,” in an attempt to “goad me into compliance.”⁷⁷

If Durham had more to say about the pressure to which Leith was subjecting him, he never got a chance to record it. On 11 July, when he was halfway through drafting the letter, Durham received Admiralty orders directing him to cooperate with Leith.⁷⁸ To his credit, Durham quickly informed Leith that he was ready to do so. Perhaps fearing criticism from the Admiralty, however, he also was quick to inform the lords that he had been preparing for the expedition “without intermission.”⁷⁹ Given his strident opposition to Leith’s entreaties, this was likely at best a bending of the truth, but one that would not affect the overall operation.

Finally released from his narrow interpretation of Melville’s 26 March orders, Durham lost no time in cooperating fully with Leith to prepare to retake Guadeloupe. Compared with the effort to launch the expedition, and contrary to Leith’s fears, the assault on Guadeloupe was relatively uneventful. It began on 8 August, and, despite spirited resistance, Linois and Boyer surrendered the island on 10 August after little loss of life. However, according to Leith’s report to Bathurst, the attack had come just in time to prevent the return of the terrors of the French Revolution, as several royalists apparently were due to be executed only five days later, to mark Napoléon’s birthday. Somewhat surprisingly, Leith included in his report fulsome praise for Durham’s efforts. Likewise, Durham heaped nothing but accolades on Leith in his dispatch to the Admiralty.⁸⁰

In the end, the events in the West Indies caused by Napoléon’s escape from Elba concluded with no major consequences. Napoléon was defeated and exiled again. British trade to and from the West Indies was not interrupted. Leith was able to execute his orders and shore up Louis XVIII’s authority in the West Indies. Melville kept his promise, with Rear Admiral John Harvey being named as Durham’s relief; Durham finally could go home. He even was able to bolster his reputation further when, in the closing hours of the assault on Guadeloupe, a fort close to Basse-Terre hauled down its flag on 10 August in response to bombardment from Durham’s flagship, HMS *Venerable*. On this basis, Durham claimed for the remainder of his life that he had been present at, and responsible for, the surrender of the first and last tricolor flags of the war.⁸¹ Even Linois was acquitted by a court-martial in France, promoted in retirement to vice admiral, and created a grand officer of the Legion of Honor.⁸²

When we look at these events only against a backdrop of insignificant consequences for the people involved and the minimal effect on the larger war, it is easy to see why they largely have evaded analysis. But when we look at them through the lens of mission command, their importance stands out.

APPLICATION OF THE MISSION-COMMAND FRAMEWORK

Mission command is a powerful tool, one that can provide a nuanced and more compelling explanation of events during the age of sail, considered at all levels of warfare. In the case of the events during the spring and summer of 1815 in the West Indies, and especially in the case of the conflict between Durham and Leith, using mission command as an analytical framework provides a much better explanation than the previously accepted narrative. It also provides important lessons for modern commanders at the strategic and operational levels of war.

This article's mission-command framework demonstrates clearly that the cause of the dispute between Leith and Durham went much deeper than a difference in interpretation of orders or Durham's alleged desire to avoid plunging his "nation into a rash, and perhaps unnecessary, war."⁸³ Clearly, Melville and Durham's relationship, as evidenced by Melville's orders and the communications between the two, fits into the failure-of-mission-command category (the third of the possibilities presented in the introduction). Not only did Durham fail to achieve the desired end state by allowing Guadeloupe to fall into Bonapartist hands, when minimal and nonaggressive action could have prevented it from doing so, but Durham's and Melville's respective decision spaces barely aligned, if they did so at all. This failure was primarily Melville's. His orders were overly restrictive, preventing Durham from adapting to a fast-changing situation or taking advantage of his position on scene. Melville also failed to take Durham's mind-set into account when writing his subordinate's orders. He knew Durham had requested relief and wanted to return home, but he does not appear to have anticipated how this might affect Durham's actions on station. Taken together, these failures created such a narrow potential decision space for Durham that the orders both forced and allowed him to take actions that made no strategic sense and could have complicated Britain's position in the West Indies greatly if Napoléon had fared differently in Europe.

On the other hand, at the operational level of war, the interaction between Leith and Bathurst exemplifies the best execution of mission command (the first of the possibilities presented in the introduction). Leith, operating with orders that specified an end state and that used permissive language, made the most of his initiative by securing Martinique quickly, preventing an imminent uprising there. Bathurst's orders to Leith also clearly were well tailored to Leith's mind-set and the trust existing between the two. This is demonstrated by the fact that Leith

did not feel the need to ask for clarification or further orders; he understood what was required of him, and he trusted that his actions would receive Bathurst's support, despite whatever consequences Durham's actions might have brought about. This is demonstrated even more powerfully by the extract from Leith's last letter to Durham, quoted above; while Leith obviously had no familiarity with the term *mission command*, he clearly understood, and strove to apply, its core concepts.⁸⁴

Modern commanders can draw two lessons from Melville's failure of mission command and from Bathurst's best application of the same. The first is the difficulty in crafting adequate mission orders. Put simply, word choice matters. As Melville found out, overly restrictive language can restrict the subordinate's perceived decision space to the point where it brings about unintended consequences, even at the strategic level of war. Permissive language, on the other hand, allows a subordinate freedom to maneuver and adapt, as Leith did. A commander must consider whether the orders in question define an appropriate decision space for the subordinate or instead will remove potential courses of action that should have been available.

Implicit in this is an understanding of the subordinate for whom the orders are intended. A subordinate who is energetic and willing to take risks, whether to his or her physical safety or personal reputation, might be trusted with more latitude in orders. A subordinate who is too reckless or aggressive may need to be restrained, whereas a subordinate who is too timid may need to be forced into action. So, when crafting mission orders, modern commanders should take care to use language that shapes and appropriately constrains the subordinate's decision space. As demonstrated above, permissive language usually will provide better results than constrictive wording.

The second lesson commanders can draw concerns the importance of intent. Even precise wording of orders still can prove insufficient if a subordinate does not understand why the commander wants an objective to be achieved. If Melville had written even a few lines to Durham in the 26 March orders explaining why he was to avoid hostilities, Durham likely would have been in a much better position to adapt his restrictive orders to a changing situation. In contrast, Bathurst's orders to Leith demonstrate the power of intent. Simply by telling Leith that the prince regent desired the French West Indian islands to remain faithful to Louis XVIII, Bathurst gave Leith the confidence to adapt to the situation. This lesson is applicable to all three levels of war. Explanation of the intent behind orders, then, is the most powerful tool a modern commander has when applying mission command.

Mission command never has been more important than in the current era of great-power competition, because it is one of the strongest methods by which to leverage the advantages inherent in decentralized command in today's rapidly

evolving battle space.⁸⁵ This is especially true with the emergence of the cyber and space domains of warfare. However, mission command is neither simple nor easy to use effectively. To reap the full benefits made available by mission command, practitioners must both practice it in day-to-day operations and study the past for lessons learned previously.

The age of sail is a gold mine for those lessons at all levels of warfare and complexity. As previously mentioned, historians already have succeeded in drawing mission-command-related lessons from the age of sail at the tactical and operational levels of war. However, this article's framework provides a standardized and more rigorous analytical method for future study than that applied previously. There are many other examples from the age of sail at all levels of war—such as Graves at the Battle of the Capes, Calder in the Trafalgar campaign, and Berkeley in the Peninsular War—that should be mined for military-related mission-command lessons.

The case study presented in this article was particularly complicated. Politics and diplomacy played an important role; events changed rapidly and unexpectedly when Napoléon returned; there was a long lead time in communications between commanders and subordinates; and two separate British ministers with different priorities issued orders to two different military commanders, with no theater commander to provide a unified chain of command. Because of all these elements and challenges, the case provides an extremely tough test of the mission-command system—and equally valuable lessons.

This further demonstrates the utility of this framework and of the idea of mission command at the strategic level of war, because it can be applied to situations involving all the instruments of national power, not just the military. For example, applying this framework to Collingwood's time in the Mediterranean or Saumarez's in the Baltic likely would provide senior admirals and generals with invaluable lessons in the application of diplomacy, information, and economics—something they face on an increasingly frequent basis in today's era of great-power competition.

NOTES

1. An in-depth discussion of the Prussian origins of mission command and how the various U.S. military services have incorporated it into their doctrine is beyond the scope of this article. For an excellent summary, see James W. Harvard [Lt. Col., USAF (Ret.)], "Airmen and Mission Command," *Air & Space Power Journal* 27, no. 2 (March–April 2013), pp. 131–45.
2. Martin E. Dempsey [Gen., USA], *Mission Command White Paper* (Washington, DC: Joint Chiefs of Staff, 3 April 2012), available at www.jcs.mil/.
3. Michael M. Gilday [Adm., USN], *CNO NAVPLAN* (Washington, DC: January 2021), available at media.defense.gov/.

4. Donald E. Vandergriff, *Adopting Mission Command: Developing Leaders for a Superior Command Culture* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2019), pp. 259–64.
5. Ryan Mewett provides a comprehensive analysis of the existing historiography on the “Nelson Touch,” as well as lessons for modern leaders, in his 2017 article, “The Emergence of Horatio Nelson: Lessons for Leaders,” *War on the Rocks*, 14 February 2017, warontherocks.com/. John T. Kuehn also provides a thoughtful mission-command analysis of Nelson’s actions at the Battle of the Nile in “Nelson, Mission Command, and the Battle of Nile,” in *16 Cases of Mission Command*, ed. Donald P. Wright (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2013), pp. 31–40.
6. J. Ross Dancy and Evan Wilson are the rare examples of historians who have applied mission command above the tactical level of war. See J. Ross Dancy and Evan Wilson, “Sir John Orde and the Trafalgar Campaign: A Failure of Information Sharing,” *Naval War College Review* 73, no. 2 (Spring 2020), pp. 141–71.
7. Dempsey, *Mission Command White Paper*; Robert C. Rubel, “Mission Command in a Future Naval Combat Environment,” *Naval War College Review* 71, no. 2 (Spring 2018), pp. 109–15; Milan Vego, “Mission Command and Zero Error Tolerance Cannot Coexist,” U.S. Naval Institute *Proceedings* 144/7/1,385 (July 2018), pp. 59–61.
8. Dempsey, *Mission Command White Paper*; Vego, “Mission Command and Zero Error Tolerance,” p. 60.
9. Kuehn, “Nelson, Mission Command, and the Battle of Nile,” pp. 31–40.
10. Rubel, “Mission Command in a Future Naval Combat Environment,” p. 109.
11. John T. Nelsen II, “Auftragstaktik: A Case for Decentralized Battle,” *Parameters* 17, no. 3 (September 1987), pp. 31–33.
12. Hilary L. Rubinstein, ed., *The Durham Papers: Selections from the Papers of Admiral Sir Philip Charles Henderson Calderwood Durham, G.C.B. (1763–1845)* (London: Routledge, 2019), p. 404; Philip Durham to John Wilson Croker, 10 July 1815, Letters from Commanders-in-Chief: Leeward Islands, ADM 1/336, The National Archives, Kew Gardens, Richmond, London [hereafter UKNA].
13. N. A. M. Rodger, *The Command of the Ocean: A Naval History of Britain, 1649–1815* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2005), pp. 563–74; James Davey, *In Nelson’s Wake: The Navy and the Napoleonic Wars* (New Haven, CT: Yale Univ. Press, 2015), pp. 304–11.
14. William James, *The Naval History of Great Britain: From the Declaration of War by France in 1793 to the Accession of George IV* (London: Macmillan, 1902), vol. 6, p. 229; William O’Byrne, *A Naval Biographical Dictionary: Comprising the Life and Services of Every Living Officer in Her Majesty’s Navy, from the Rank of Admiral of the Fleet to That of Lieutenant Inclusive* (London: J. Murray, 1849), s.v. “Philip Charles Calderwood Henderson Durham”; John Marshall, *Royal Naval Biography* (London: Longman, 1823–35), s.v. “Sir Philip Charles Durham.”
15. James Ralfe, *The Naval Biography of Great Britain: Consisting of Historical Memoirs of Those Officers of the British Navy Who Distinguished Themselves during the Reign of His Majesty George III* (London: Whitmore & Fenn, 1828), vol. 3, pp. 38–46.
16. Alexander Murray, *Memoir of the Naval Life and Services of Admiral Sir Philip C. H. C. Durham* (London: John Murray, 1846), p. 96.
17. Hilary L. Rubinstein, *Trafalgar Captain: Durham of the Defiance* (Stroud, U.K.: Tempus, 2005), pp. 242–45.
18. Leith does not appear ever to have commented publicly on his disagreement with Durham, as neither his report to Bathurst nor his memoirs refer to anything other than the successful recapture of Guadeloupe. For a copy of Leith’s report to Bathurst, see the issue of the *Caledonian Mercury* (Edinburgh, U.K.) for 21 September 1815. For Leith’s memoirs, see *The Annual Biography and Obituary, for the Year 1819* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1819), pp. 488–91.
19. Eugène Édouard Boyer de Peyreleau, *Événements de la Guadeloupe en 1814 et pendant les Cent-Jours* (Alais, Fr.: 1849), p. xxxiii.
20. Durham’s full career reads like a combination of Horatio Hornblower’s and Jack Aubrey’s. For a comprehensive account, see Rubinstein, *Trafalgar Captain*.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 240.

22. *Ibid.*, pp. 241–42; Admiralty to Durham, 6 September 1814, Lords' Letters: Orders and Instructions, ADM 2/166, UKNA; Durham to Croker, 30 March 1815, 7 April 1815, and 1 May 1815, Letters from Commanders-in-Chief: Leeward Islands, ADM 1/336, UKNA.
23. *London Gazette*, 16 February 1814; *The Annual Biography*, pp. 488–91; Admiralty to Durham, 6 September 1814; *Calcutta Gazette*, 25 May 1815; Boyer, *Événemens de la Guadeloupe*, pp. 9–20; Durham to Croker, 17 June 1815, Letters from Commanders-in-Chief: Leeward Islands, ADM 1/336, UKNA.
24. Papiers de Pierre René Marie de Vaugiraud, gouverneur de la Martinique puis gouverneur général des Îles du Vent [hereafter Vaugiraud Papers], Les Archives de la Vendée [hereafter AV], available at recherche-archives.vendee.fr/; Boyer, *Événemens de la Guadeloupe*, p. 5; *Evening Star* (London), 10 November 1814.
25. Georges Six, *Dictionnaire biographique des généraux & amiraux français de la Révolution et de l'Empire (1792–1814)* (Paris: 1934), vol. 2, pp. 126–27; William James, *The Naval History of Great Britain, from the Declaration of War by France, in February 1793, to the Accession of George IV. in January 1820* (London: Harding, Lepard, 1826), vol. 4, p. 319; Boyer, *Événemens de la Guadeloupe*, pp. 14–27.
26. Vaugiraud Papers, AV; Murray, *Memoir of the Naval Life*, p. 41; Rubinstein, *Trafalgar Captain*, p. 65; *Caledonian Mercury* (Edinburgh, U.K.), 10 December 1814; état des dépêches de M. le gouverneur de la Martinique parvenues au ministère de la marine depuis le 1^{er} janvier 1815 jusqu'au 31 juillet 1817, 40 J 16, Fonds de Fériet (1581–1867) [hereafter FF], AV; comte de Vaugiraud, rapport au roi sur le système colonial et la prospérité de commerce, [October 1814], 40 J 25, FF, AV; instructions secrètes données par Vaugiraud, gouverneur général des Îles du Vent [sic], à M. de Bussy, capitaine de vaisseau, commandant "l'Hermione," 15 December 1814, 40 J 46, FF, AV.
27. J. R. Ward, "The British West Indies in the Age of Abolition, 1748–1815," and Michael Duffy, "World-Wide War and British Expansion, 1793–1815," both in *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, vol. 2, *The Eighteenth Century*, ed. P. J. Marshall (Oxford, U.K.: Oxford Univ. Press, 1998), pp. 415–30 and 186–206, respectively.
28. John Bew, *Castlereagh: A Life* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2012), p. 360; Ward, "The British West Indies," p. 429.
29. Admiralty to Durham, 6 September 1814.
30. P. Butel, "Traditions and Changes in French Atlantic Trade between 1780 and 1830," *Renaissance and Modern Studies* 30, no. 1 (1986), pp. 136–45.
31. Boyer, *Événemens de la Guadeloupe*, pp. 7–13.
32. This portion of the larger struggle is known as the War of the Seventh Coalition, and also as the Hundred Days.
33. Roger Knight, *Britain against Napoleon: The Organization of Victory, 1793–1815* (London: Penguin Books, 2013), p. 455; Charles Webster, *The Foreign Policy of Castlereagh, 1812–1815: Britain and the Reconstruction of Europe* (London: G. Bell and Sons, 1931), pp. 441–44; Bew, *Castlereagh*, pp. 390–91.
34. Webster, *The Foreign Policy of Castlereagh*, pp. 439–40.
35. Bew, *Castlereagh*, p. 444.
36. *Ibid.*, p. 390; Webster, *The Foreign Policy of Castlereagh*, p. 452.
37. Murray, *Memoir of the Naval Life*, p. 95.
38. No copy of these orders survives today. A request to the British Archives for all correspondence from the Admiralty to Durham during 1815 did not produce a copy, and Rubinstein's edition of Durham's papers does not contain them either. They are quoted in Durham's memoir as an excerpt from a longer letter. Murray, *Memoir of the Naval Life*, pp. 95–96.
39. There is significant potential for further research in this area. Because of COVID-19 restrictions, I was unable to access any of Melville's personal papers.
40. Rubinstein, *Durham Papers*, pp. 455–56. The future King George IV served as regent for his father, George III, during the last years of the latter's life.
41. Murray, *Memoir of the Naval Life*, p. 95; état chronologique des dépêches du ministre de la marine et des colonies adressées au comte de Vaugiraud, soit individuellement, soit en nom collectif avec l'intendant Dubuc, depuis le 17 juin 1814 jusqu'au 30 avril 1817, 40 J 15, FF, AV; Boyer, *Événemens de la Guadeloupe*, pp. xxx–36; Léon Muel, *Gouvernements, ministères*

- et constitutions de la France depuis cent ans* (Paris: Marchal et Billard, 1891), p. 92.
42. Three letters, Blacas to Vaugiraud, Linois, and Guilhermy, 18 April 1815, 40 J 18, FF, AV.
 43. Howard Robinson, *Carrying British Mails Overseas* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1964), pp. 75–79; John S. Olenkiewicz, “British Packet Sailings Falmouth–Surinam 1810–1816,” *Frajola*, 8 July 2013, www.rfrajola.com/.
 44. Olenkiewicz, “British Packet Sailings”; Robinson, *Carrying British Mails*, pp. 79–95.
 45. Blacas to Vaugiraud, 18 April 1815; Boyer, *Événemens de la Guadeloupe*, p. 36; Durham to Croker, 13 June 1815, Letters from Commanders-in-Chief: Leeward Islands, ADM 1/336, UKNA.
 46. Robinson, *Carrying British Mails*, p. 103; Olenkiewicz, “British Packet Sailings.”
 47. There is a small disagreement regarding which day *Duke of Montrose* arrived. Robert Schomburgk gives the date as 28 April, while *Lloyd’s Maritime List* gives it as 29 April. See Robert H. Schomburgk, *The History of Barbados* (London: Longman, Brown, Green and Longmans, 1848), p. 391, and *Lloyd’s List* (London), 9 June 1815.
 48. Schomburgk, *The History of Barbados*, p. 391; Boyer, *Événemens de la Guadeloupe*, pp. 34–36; Durham to Croker, 11, 20, 28 May 1815, Letters from Commanders-in-Chief: Leeward Islands, ADM 1/336, UKNA.
 49. Leith to Vaugiraud, 27 May 1815, 40 J 28, FF, AV; *Royal Gazette* (Kingston, Jam.), 29 July 1815; *London Courier and Evening Gazette*, 26 July 1815.
 50. Boyer, *Événemens de la Guadeloupe*, pp. 36–41.
 51. Durham to Croker, 11 May 1815.
 52. Boyer, *Événemens de la Guadeloupe*, p. 41; M. A. Fabre, “La Guadeloupe pendant les Cent-Jours,” *Revue historique de l’armée* 13, no. 1 (1957), p. 79.
 53. *Royal Gazette* (Kingston, Jam.), 29 July 1815; Durham to Croker, 28, 31 May 1815, Letters from Commanders-in-Chief: Leeward Islands, ADM 1/336, UKNA; Leith to Vaugiraud, 27 May 1815.
 54. Durham’s memoirs and Rubinstein’s *Trafalgar Captain* both make a reference to Durham sending an officer to Martinique incognito to ensure that Vaugiraud actually was still in command of the island. Heavily implied in both these descriptions is that if Vaugiraud already had been overthrown, Durham would not have supported landing troops on Martinique, to stay within the bound of the 26 March orders from Melville. This contention does not make sense given Durham’s demonstrated propensity for communicating his intentions to the Admiralty. Also, he makes no mention of his intention to verify Vaugiraud’s hold on power in either of the letters he wrote to the Admiralty prior to embarking Leith’s troops. See Murray, *Memoir of the Naval Life*, p. 97; Rubinstein, *Trafalgar Captain*, p. 243; and Durham to Croker, 28, 31 May 1815.
 55. Durham to Croker, 31 May 1815.
 56. Durham to Croker, 28, 31 May, 19 June 1815, Letters from Commanders-in-Chief: Leeward Islands, ADM 1/336, UKNA; Leith to Vaugiraud, 27 May, 2 June 1815, 40 J 28, FF, AV.
 57. Rubinstein, *Trafalgar Captain*, p. 243.
 58. *London Courier and Evening Gazette*, 26 July 1815; Durham to Croker, 28, 31 May, 19 June 1815; Leith to Vaugiraud, 27 May, 2 June 1815; Rubinstein, *Trafalgar Captain*, p. 243.
 59. Boyer, *Événemens de la Guadeloupe*, pp. 42–44.
 60. Durham to Croker, 10 June 1815, Letters from Commanders-in-Chief: Leeward Islands, ADM 1/336, UKNA.
 61. Boyer, *Événemens de la Guadeloupe*, p. 46.
 62. Durham to Croker, 13 June 1815; two letters, Decrès to commanders of French warships and to Vaugiraud and Guilhermy, 16 April 1815, 40 J 19, FF, AV.
 63. Durham to Croker, 13 June 1815; Linois to Durham, 12 June 1815, Letters from Commanders-in-Chief: Leeward Islands, ADM 1/336, UKNA. If Boyer is to be believed, Durham initially agreed to Linois’s request and sent *L’Agile* under tow to Martinique, but then, out of a fervent desire to ravage Guadeloupe in the name of George III, he immediately regretted the decision and chased down both ships to release *L’Agile*. See Boyer, *Événemens de la Guadeloupe*, p. 47.
 64. Boyer, *Événemens de la Guadeloupe*, pp. 47–60; Fabre, “La Guadeloupe pendant les Cent-Jours.”

65. The events that took place on Guadeloupe 15–18 June present a significant opportunity for further research that this article cannot encompass. See Jean François César, baron de Guilhermy, *Papiers d'un émigré, 1789–1829*, ed. Col. Guilhermy (Paris: E. Plon, Nourrit, 1886), pp. 390–95.
66. Durham to Croker, 18 June 1815, Letters from Commanders-in-Chief: Leeward Islands, ADM 1/336, UKNA.
67. Rubinstein, *Durham Papers*, pp. 452–55; Rubinstein, *Trafalgar Captain*, p. 243; *Royal Gazette* (Kingston, Jam.), 22 July 1815.
68. Rubinstein, *Durham Papers*, pp. 452–55; Rubinstein, *Trafalgar Captain*, p. 243; *Royal Gazette* (Kingston, Jam.), 22 July 1815.
69. Durham concluded an already despondent letter to Vice Admiral Cochrane, written 28 June, with the sentence “No hopes of peace.” Rubinstein, *Durham Papers*, p. 452.
70. Rubinstein, *Durham Papers*, pp. 452–56; Leith received additional orders from Bathurst, dated 20 May, on 21 June, directing him to prepare his forces to attack any French colony in the West Indies in the event of war with France. See Leith to Durham, 22 June 1815, Letters from Commanders-in-Chief: Leeward Islands, ADM 1/336, UKNA.
71. Durham to Leith, 1 July 1815, Letters from Commanders-in-Chief: Leeward Islands, ADM 1/336, UKNA.
72. Ironically, Durham may have been in receipt of bad intelligence here. According to both Boyer’s and Guilhermy’s memoirs, the British imprisoned the small garrisons found on the Saintes. Even more damning for the British intelligence is Guilhermy’s statement that the attacking force took unspecified measures to minimize the resistance of the troops on the island prior to landing and were extremely surprised to find the Bourbon flag already flying over the islands on their arrival. See Boyer, *Événemens de la Guadeloupe*, p. 68, and Guilhermy, *Papiers d'un émigré*, pp. 390–95.
73. Rubinstein, *Durham Papers*, pp. 457–59.
74. *Ibid.*, pp. 460–61. Considering Durham’s established reputation as a man who loved to spin a good yarn, especially when it enhanced his personal reputation, and his clearly defensive response to Leith’s repeated questioning of his narrow interpretation of his orders, it is possible that Durham is lying about, or at least exaggerating, the existence of these other orders. The only proof that they existed is Durham’s letter to Leith and James Ralfe’s biographical entry about Durham, which very likely was sourced from Durham himself. An examination of the lists of correspondence that Durham received from the Admiralty between January and 11 July 1815 shows that Durham received fifty-three letters during this period—none of which appears to be the mentioned orders. However, Durham’s acknowledgment and receipt letters give only a brief summary of the contents of the letters, so it is possible, though unlikely, that the guidance he mentioned was contained in letters with different subject lines. See Rubinstein, *Trafalgar Captain*, p. 22; Ralfe, *Naval Biography*, vol. 3, p. 44; and Durham to Croker, 22 May 1815, and three reports to the Admiralty of received letters, 2, 17 June, 13 July 1815, Letters from Commanders-in-Chief: Leeward Islands, ADM 1/336, UKNA.
75. Rubinstein, *Durham Papers*, pp. 461–63.
76. *Ibid.*, pp. 464–65.
77. Durham to Croker, 10/11 July 1815, Letters from Commanders-in-Chief: Leeward Islands, ADM 1/336, UKNA.
78. Rubinstein incorrectly identifies the day of Durham’s change of heart as 27 July and that the cause was receiving word of the Battle of Waterloo. See Rubinstein, *Trafalgar Captain*, p. 244.
79. Durham to Croker, 10/11 July 1815. Durham actually received two separate orders from the Admiralty on 11 July. The first, to which he refers in his 10/11 July letter, was dated 8 June. The second, dated 22 May, directed him to “detain and bring into Port all French National armed vessels,” and provides a useful example of the variability in delivery time for instructions. Bathurst had written to Leith on 20 May and Leith received the orders 21 June, whereas Melville’s orders, written two days later, took another three weeks to arrive. See Durham to Croker, 13 July 1815, Letters from Commanders-in-Chief: Leeward Islands, ADM 1/336, UKNA.
80. *Royal Gazette* (Kingston, Jam.), 23, 30 September 1815; *Caledonian Mercury* (Edinburgh, U.K.), 30 September 1815.

81. *Royal Gazette* (Kingston, Jam.), 2 September 1815; Rubinstein, *Trafalgar Captain*, p. 246. It is more accurate to say that Durham was responsible for the surrender of the first and last tricolors of the war to British naval forces. The final surrender of a tricolored flag of the Napoleonic Wars likely occurred when the fortifications at Charlemont and Givet surrendered to Blücher's army, which may have had a contingent of British siege artillery with it, on 30 November 1815. However, there is no indication Durham or any of his biographers were aware of this. Gareth Glover, *Waterloo: Myth and Reality* (Barnsley, U.K.: Pen and Sword Books, 2014), p. 226.
82. Six, *Dictionnaire biographique*, vol. 2, pp. 126–27.
83. Ralfe, *Naval Biography*, vol. 3, p. 45. This quote is taken from what is effectively a rebuttal by Durham, through Ralfe's biography of him, to Leith's striking, and mission-command-sounding, quote in Leith's last letter to Durham. That Durham still felt the need to rebut Leith over a decade after Leith's death, and that he did so publicly, speaks both to the power that the events in the West Indies held over Durham and to how Durham felt about the legitimacy of his actions.
84. COVID-19 restrictions prevented a closer study of the relationship between Bathurst and Leith, but one is warranted. Particularly, there are likely more mission-command-related lessons to be drawn from their correspondence about why the two trusted each other so implicitly and why Bathurst did not feel the need to be more prescriptive with Leith.
85. Vego, "Mission Command and Zero Error Tolerance," p. 61; Dempsey, *Mission Command White Paper*; Gilday, *CNO NAVPLAN*.

