

NRDC-ITA Information Operations seminar

Ex ACTIVE EAGLE 2009

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Among all nations and inside military coalitions and organizations, Communication and Information in military affairs become a real and central topic, related to current operations as well as long term strategies. Torn between NATO doctrine, national regulations and changes in the structures, NATO tactical level units and HQs may meet difficulties in keeping up to date with this ever evolving subject.

The annual NRDC-ITA Information Operations Seminar, was held in Solbiate Olona (13-15 October 2009), and was designed to assist all NRDC and CRR HQs and related functions to their part within the INFO OPS dynamic and to share their experiences and subject matter understanding.

Although the objectives of the seminar were aimed at tactical operations, the briefings and discussions focused on our main concern: how is it possible to gain real coordination amongst all components of military affairs and what is the place of Info Ops and related capabilities in this process, particularly at the tactical level?

When we are talking about coordination, Info Ops staffs feel at ease, since they drive a coordinating function. But this coordination is functionally limited to specific capabilities: PsyOps, KLE, OPSEC, EW, PPP¹ and deception. Public Affairs (PA) and CIMIC are still related but separated functions.

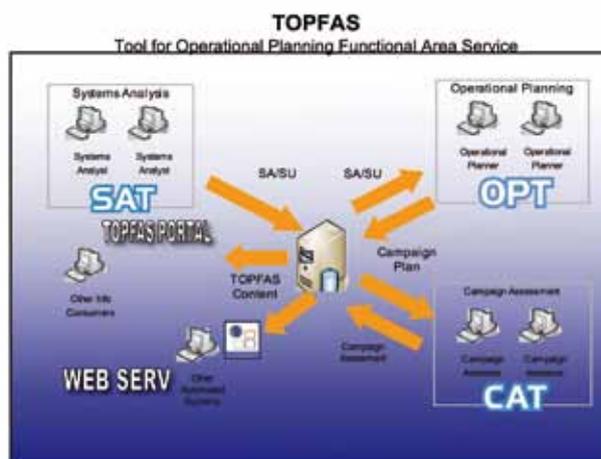
Moreover, all these functions are still considered in support of the overall aim of military "attrition" operations and military diplomacy at the tactical level, instead of being fully integrated in both early planning and assessment. An example of this was shown by LTC A. Dirksen, from JFCN IO, in a briefing about the new JF HQ structure. To enhance participation and improve coordination, the PE review set 3 Joint branches for the Planning, Execution and Assessment phases of the operational cycle inside the Operations Directorate; despite this Info Ops is still considered apart of these in a Joint Effect Management branch. If this is the case, how does this coordination work?

¹ Presence, Posture and Profile related to own forces on the ground.

Though, the necessity of synchronisation of Deeds, Words and Images around a given objective is universally recognised and new military concepts all support that evidence, the idiom "Comprehensive Approach"² clearly shows the need to encompass all tools of military power in our processes.

The concept of Knowledge Development, presented by LTC M. Stocuto from NRDC-ITA IO Branch, was linked to both EBEO and Comprehensive Approach. It relies on PEMSII³ analysis in order to set coordinated DIME⁴ objectives and lines of operation. Joint Force level HQs already provide for a Knowledge Directorate in their new PE structure, and even if they are still undermanned and not trained to cover all these domains, no doubt it will increase the coordination capability and enhance the operational interest in these HQs.

One of the questions is "what about the tactical level?" Do we have to try to mirror this structure, knowing that we already lack many staff trained officers in our current organisations? It seems to be a much too distant objective and the solution must be in improved integration, information sharing and knowledge between the different military levels of responsibility and domain of expertise. Above all, we must establish links with the much more developed civilian capabilities, namely the universities and the national scientific research centers.



² Comprehensive Approach is still not doctrinally defined in NATO.

³ Political, Economical, Military, Social, Information, Infrastructure.

⁴ Diplomacy, Information, Military, Economy.

Col D. Anderson, ARRC Info Ops chief, presented the INFLUENCE way of thinking recently established in ARRC HQ. Starting from a full integration perspective, as with US STRATCOM concept, Influence becomes the HQ philosophy, the way to understand and to connect between all military activities. In this sense, there is no specific “Influence operation” or “Influence campaign”, there is one campaign organized around Influence effects. As Col Anderson stated, in this concept, “Influence is a combination of Coercion, persuasion and Reassurance, underpinned by/to achieve communication”. All military activities are considered as Influence Tools, and they are coordinated in this respect.

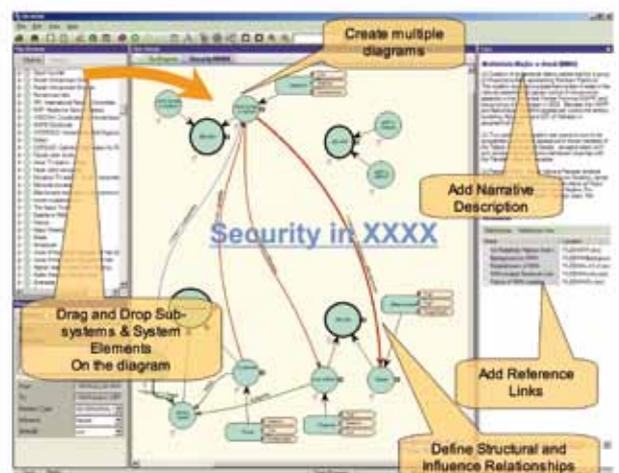
Questions arose regarding the place of NATO STRATCOM in this way of thinking. This is still a challenge for ARRC, but we understood that each level of coordination would fit into the next level of command, rather like a Russian doll. If Info Ops coordinates its capabilities, STRATCOM then coordinates Info Ops and PA in relation with military support to public diplomacy, and finally the Influence cycle coordinates all tools and actors together.

The necessity of coordination between Communication and Information, between PA and Info ops, is still an issue at the tactical level. Even if NATO STRATCOM concepts and structures (in SHAPE, JFC and ISAF HQs) are already running, the process and the doctrine are not as yet agreed upon amongst nations and HQs. ISAF experience shows that it is not enough to write SOPs and SOIs, there must be the will from all parties. There is no magical solution, each area is trying to manage coordination within its own capabilities; the Communication Executive Board, set in the NRDC-ITA core process, sets coordination at command group level without adding any resources to the process. Maj A. d'Ambrosio, from NATO CIMIC Group South, showed that this issue of coordination with Info Ops is still not well understood nor accepted. It is very clear that there must be coherence between CIMIC projects and messages to the population, and messages and words must be the same from the Key Leader Engagement (KLE) to face-to-face talks at low levels.

French RRC (LTC U. Biasotto) and NRDC-Spain (Cap J. Garcia Trejo) briefed us about their understanding and organization of the KLE process. It was surprising to see how the understanding of KLE and how it is implemented differ from one HQ to another. We agreed that it is a commander's prerogative to stress or not the process in different circumstances; but it becomes harder when, for ex-

ample, KLE is extended to public speeches from key leaders by some nations and limited only to face-to-face with highest level key leader by others. This lack of consistency, highlighted after handovers of HQs on operations, may endanger the continuity of the process, and by association, the process in itself. During the syndicate works around KLE, it was also clear that the perception of a same problem completely differs from an HQ to another.

For all these reasons, it seemed important to achieve harmonization about NATO functions and principles, mainly around the processes themselves, so that we all talk the same language. It will be different for the structures, because of different historical organizations or lack of trained personnel.



A very good example of this agreed position about principles was provided by Prof Trevisani, an Italian external consultant, about intercultural communication. In a fascinating lecture, he presented the 4 personal distances of cross communication⁵, and highlighted the risks of incommunicability if we are not able to identify and then enter in our counterpart speaker's “communication boundaries”. ISAF, Tchadian or Somalian experiences have shown how it is important to grasp all cultural, historical and psychological characters of our target audiences, and how difficult it is to communicate with them if we don't share the same communication spaces.

The challenge now is to set these right processes in order to prepare for the next NATO operational commitment in the best conditions for us all. At the same time we must share our experiences amongst the tactical Info Ops community. ■

⁵ *Self distance, semiolinguistic distance, ideological and value distance, personal referential distance.*