THE TARGETING PROCESS...
THIS UNKNOWN PROCESS (Part I)

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Preface

The level of ambitions of this serial of articles is focalised to propose to the audience a general flavour of what TARGETING is and what it could provide for supporting our accomplishment of the Mission. In particular, this first Part aim is to give the essential & basic background concepts to better understanding the entire development process.

Introduction

In the general framework of the Military Operations, the Targeting Cycle is one of the most significant and, in parallel, one of the most complex procedures we have to deal with.

Indeed it implies a massive and extremely dynamic course involving all the key elements of the HQ acting with a top-down data evaluation process.

Most of the time when we use the word Targeting, we principally are referring to all those kinetic actions taken to hit or strike a specific critical point or, more properly speaking, a well defined target itself.

In other words in our perception we immediately associate this concept with something that looks like in our eyes as an effective, destructive and lethal combination of power and strength.

This is a tricky vision of the reality indeed, since we have to assume that a target in itself is not identified – at all - by the effects we want to achieve for hitting it (both kinetic or non-kinetics as well) using the entire range of lethal means or non-lethal ones available at our level of command.

Having highlighted this misperception of ours, we do need to define clearly the real object of the targeting process: ***how a target has to be prosecuted.***

Among the many ways we could use to deal with this issue the first and the most critical distinction we have to do - speaking of the target prosecution - is defining which kind of means we want to select for achieving the desiderate effect on it.

This is the direct approaching line telling us what kind of target we are dealing with.

Consequently we will make use of ***lethal*** means when the required effect is to destroy

the target. Otherwise **non-lethal** means will be utilized when the required effect is to degrade a target, disrupt it or deny the use of it to our opponent.

This procedure, therefore, generates another misperception since it drives our way of thinking to generalise and to label – quite improperly - a target in term of **lethal target** and **non-lethal target.**

To add a furthermore semantic difficulty on this matter, we could state looking from a different perspective that the word **kinetic** mostly works with **lethal** means but is not real the vice versa at all.

In fact a target prosecuted with **lethal** means produces both **kinetic** effect and even **non kinetic** ones as well.

On the contrary, as said previously, it is not possible to say the opposite.

Therefore a **lethal** mean could even have a secondary undesired **no-kinetic** effect or unintended one. And this very last option could be even have a more massive impact than the expected desired effect on the conduct of Operations, hampering the full achievement of the Mission itself.

Nowadays our units are daily operating in different **COIN operations** and therefore an integration between **kinetic** and **non-kinetic** effects - or solutions suitable to combine both of them - are the more and the more crucial aspect and above all very more demanding than in the past. Meanwhile an increasing importance has to be attribute to all the different de-confliction processes about the means used in the execution of these specific tasks, as well.

No doubt this practise has to rely on a range of choice based on the risk assessment and effectiveness mainly.

This approach gives us the possibility to discover the non-kinetic **side of the moon**

generally known as **Info Ops** or better so called **Effect Based Operations** (EBO).

Addressing our attention to this very last aspect of the development of operation an important one EBO key aspect to mention is its **Objective based-approach,** which forms a hierarchy that drives us from a desired effect on some specific objectives to specific targets.

A peculiar key component for the Info Ops is the ability to perform the CA which provides feedback of the effect based strategy to task methodology and relates on what is occurring within the battle space to the intentions of the civilian leadership.

In fact it is relevant that the EBO affects a larger number of actors, have different implications PAN HQ and moreover a more significant sequence of impact at a different tier in the Public Opinion.

Last but not least I would even mention that the **targeting process** aimed to deliver such as a non-kinetic effect is quite problematic in terms of judging or assessing in the framework time the effects delivered to the target itself. Assessing is always a crucial step wherever you are, but when the cycle has to regenerate itself or if a target needs to be vetted or a new pool of effects has to be re-delivered (re-target), you understand that this is a non negotiable condition.

The Process

Now we are entering in a more detailed discussion to explain how this targeting process works.

In general terms, the purpose of targeting is aimed to develop, coordinate, integrate and synchronise both **lethal** and **non-lethal** means of fire in support of the COM's intent and plan. This has to be in accordance with High Cdr's D & G and reinforced with Subordinate Cdr's Objectives and intent.

Normally the targeting process is developed throughout five important steps. These, namely, are defined by the following **Decide, Detect, Track, Deliver** and **Assess** phases, aimed to produce a quite complete target package to be delivered to the Manoeuvres Units.

In particular each step includes a serial of actions - to be taken - relating to develop a **Capabilities Analysis,** followed by the **GO/ NOGO COM Decision Briefing** and the

Target

'A target is an area, structure, object, person, organization mindset, thought process, attitude or behavioural pattern which can be suitably and effectively influence by a capability.'
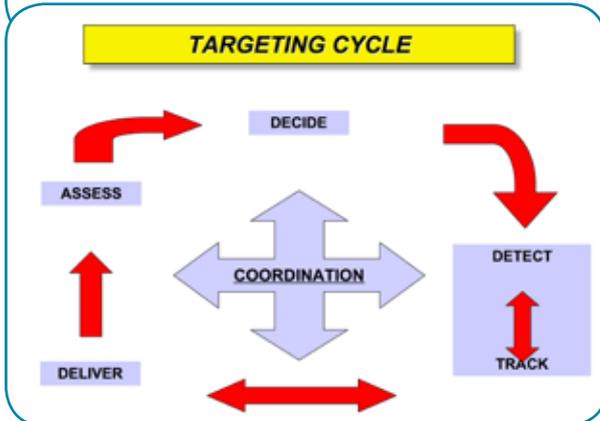
Section IV – AJP 3.9

Targeting process

'The process of selecting and prioritising targets and matching the appropriate response to them, taking account of operational requirements and capabilities.
Joint Targeting determines desired effects necessary to accomplish operational objectives; selects targets that achieves those effects; and selects or task the means, lethal or non-lethal, with which to take action upon those targets.'

Section IV – AJP 3.9

TARGETING CYCLE

DECIDE

ASSESS

COORDINATION

DETECT

DELIVER

TRACK

Force assignment & Mission planning, anticipating the Force Execution.

The entire process refers to the need to **Detect & Monitor** the target in the ultimate moments prior to the delivery of effects and it's end, after the target effects have been achieved, with the **Combat Assessment.**

Beforehand a sequence of pre-actions has to be considered in order to trigger the process (i.e the target nomination, the target validation and Prioritisation according to the Cdr's D&G).

In particular analysing the different function we can state that: **Decide** is strictly linked up with the Intel cycle and tends to define priorities on interventions against various targets. **Detect** means to provide an appropriate sharing on the different ISR Assets IAW CCIR, meanwhile **Deliver** is when the engagement takes place accordingly to right location & identification of the target. Finally **Assess** is like analysing the impact of the effect we created with the engagement.

In a conflict (war-fighting operation) normally we categorize a target in the **HVT- Hight Value Target & HPT –High Payoff**

Target list as a direct result of a War gaming & Mission analysis.

Practically, targeting defines even a process of selecting targets and matching the appropriate response to them in order to achieve the desired effect or actions, depending on the various level of C2.

It consists of a core multiple discipline WG that involves in principle J3, J2, J9 PSYOPS, PAO, Legal, AOCC, SOTF, KLE, LNOs, and should involve COS and the Cdr at different stages.

Therefore a serial of Key factors are to be considered when a targeting process has to be established;

Targeting Key Factors

- Task analysis process; Process balancing sufficient assets capability, without overlapping efforts and avoiding assets/action redundancies, IOT achieve Cdr's effect in priority, intensity and duration;
- Cross boundaries coordination: Assuming that targets are not just static but are moving within and even out the AOO, a good regional coordination is foreseen;
- J2 nodal link analysis;
- CCIRM detailed plan;
- Pan HQ staff internal coordination and synchronisation;
- Unintended and undesired effect and effects interconnectivity
- Operational plan;
- Vetting of targets;
- Targeting coordination tracking;
- Threat assessment;
- Evaluation on CD when targets are nominated for a lethal attack
- Priorities and Influence and/or benefit gained;
- Intel and Info Ops profile development on the target folders;
- Credibility & timely evidence provided by collection assets;
- Resource implication to effectively collate & manage information;
- Eenhanced requirement to gather detailed Intelligence.
- Fire coordination lines etc.

Those entire factors will be the fundamental bit for next article. ∎