

The comprehensive operations planning directive

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Introduction

Certainly there is a change in how we do things, different terminology, better organisation in our planning processes and stressing the need for collaboration between all involved in a crisis but, the basics of operational art and human thought/input for example are as relevant today as they ever have been in the past.

As known, we followed the “Guidelines for Operational Planning” also known as GOP (2005) over the entire course of the last NATO Operational Planning Course organized by G5 Plans at the HQ NRDC-ITA. For a number of reasons including comprehensive approach, effects based thinking and the need for guidance on planning at the strategic and operational level, the GOP is being replaced and the operations planning process is still evolving. The result of this evolution is the Comprehensive Operations Planning Directive (COPD).

G5 Plans, as the core branch for all operational planning activity within HQ NRDC – ITA, assess that the COPD would have an impact on the OPG planning efforts from the next year onward. Therefore, G5 Plans, through this article, aims to give the planners an overall idea on the guiding principles for the COPD, the content of it, and the new planning process the Directive puts forth.

Evolution, why?

Modern crises are characterized by complex interdependencies; conflicts are underpinned by a combination of histori-

cal, political, military social, cultural and economic issues. The environment called engagement space, in which the Alliance decides to engage and in which the interaction of different actors creates conditions that may be acceptable or unacceptable to the Alliance in terms of its end-state, is different any more. Understanding the engagement space requires a comprehensive view of all systems relevant to the crisis.

NATO recognizes six domains within an engagement space, which are political, military, economic, social, infrastructure, and information. Through systems analysis of the goals, strength, weaknesses and interdependencies of the main actors within these six domains, knowledge is developed about the behaviour of the main actors within the engagement space. That knowledge is then used by decision makers at all levels, to gain a thorough understanding of the behaviour and capabilities of different actors and their interactions in order to determine how they might be influenced in ways that achieve the Alliance’s strategic objectives and end-state, thereby contributing to the international community aims.

NATO’s contribution to a comprehensive approach represents the recognition that the military alone cannot resolve a crisis or conflict. There is a need for more deliberate and inclusive planning and action through established crisis management procedures that allow for both military and non-military resources and efforts to be marshalled with a greater unity of purpose. Adopting such a “Comprehensive Approach” to operations begins with inculcating a culture of active

collaboration and transparency among those involved in crisis management.

The aforesaid changing environment brings about the need for evolution of the GOP in order to prepare for and conduct complex and multidimensional operations. This is necessary to develop comprehensive operations plans addressing all relevant factors for the efficient and successful conduct of an operation.

What's new?

The COPD covers in detail effects based planning principles, doctrine and processes. It is the repository of planning knowledge and therefore details and explains each step of operations planning at the military strategic and operational levels of command in ACO. A number of newly developed publications will complement the COPD most notably the

Knowledge Development handbook and Assessment handbook.

The COPD consists of eight chapters and improve linkage between strategic and operational level.

Ch 1 - Operational Art

Ch 2 - Knowledge Development (*new*)

Ch 3 - Strategic Level (*with Force Generation*) - including templates (*new*).

Ch 4 - Operational Level - including templates. (*Operational planning revised, no major changes but greater clarity on links to the strategic level.*)

Ch 5 - Assessment

Ch 6 - Formats and Administration

Ch 7 - Glossary of Terms

Ch 8 - Abbreviations

Some significant changes and new topics given detailed explanation in the COPD are summarized below:

Strategic Level	Operational Level
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strategic Operations Planning Group. - Process synchronised with HQ NATO's. - Comprehensive Approach. - Effects based planning. - Knowledge Development. - Assessment. - Collaborative Planning across all levels. - Updated terminology and processes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Situation Awareness (Inc. Knowledge Development). - Effects – Desired effects. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Measures of Effectiveness (MoE) – Measures of Performance (MoP) - Comprehensive Approach and better liaison with IOs. - Planning in close collaboration with strategic level. - A few new terms. - Focus on Mission Command.

Although the COPD has 350 – 400 pages, it brings together, in place, theory and practice – process and products. The COPD is NATO Unclassified for distribution as widely as possible within the international military community to offer a set of common principles and an approach to operations planning and training.

The new planning process

The process comprises seven stages which are closely aligned with the NATO Crisis Management Process to harmo-

nise the interface between different levels as described below.

The seven stages of the strategic process are designed to develop comprehensive strategic products for consideration by NATO military and political authorities in deciding the strategic direction for NATO in response to a crisis. The seven stages of the strategic level process as shown below are specifically designed to develop the strategic level assessments, comprehensive planning products, directives and orders required by the political-military and operational

levels. The key issue is collaborative planning between the various levels.

While the COPD is applicable to all operations planning activities at the strategic and operational levels of command within the NATO Command Structure, it may also be adapted to the component/tactical level in the HQ NRDC-ITA in order to enhance collaborative planning activity through OPG led by G5 Plans.

Broadly speaking, as it can be noticed on the right of the diagram above, there is no significant change at the operational level planning process.

The figure below, of the aforementioned Directive, demonstrates the proposed framework of Effects Based Approach to Operations (EBAO) interaction between the levels of command from strategic to tactical. As illustrated, the tactical level (Component Commands)

receives missions, objectives, effects, actions and tasks from the operational level (JFCs). It processes those inputs and delivers missions and tasks to its subordinate tactical units. This conversion from EBAO language to tactical language is the NRDC-ITA's function within the NATO command hierarchy thus bridging the gap between the operational and tactical levels.

The implications of this framework are clear for NRDC-ITA: As a LCC, the headquarters will receive missions, objectives, effects, actions, and tasks; Acting as a Corps, it will receive missions and tasks. In both cases the primary function is to convert these inputs to missions and tasks for subordinate units while enabling a clear understanding of the ultimate endstate and the effects the higher levels of command need to achieve and avoid.

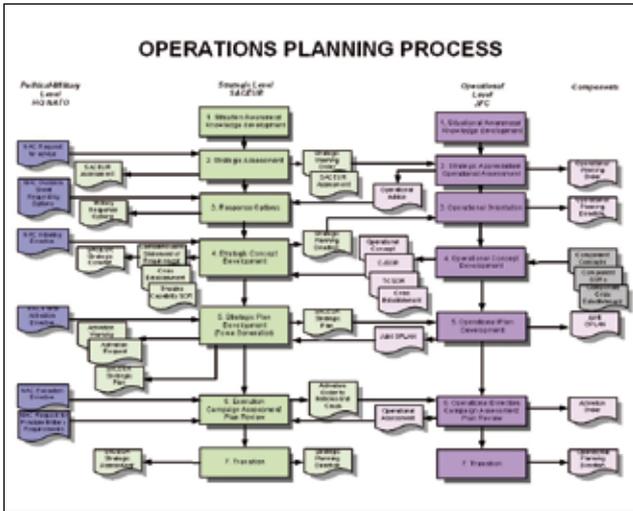
NATO Level	Receive	Issue
Strategic Political Level NAC		Single NATO End- State Strategic Objectives Strategic Effects
Strategic Military Level SACEUR	Single NATO End- State Strategic Objectives Strategic Effects	Mission Military Objectives Effects Actions
Operational Level JFC	Mission Military Objectives Effects Actions	Mission Objectives Effects Actions Tasks
Tactical Level Components	Mission Objectives Effects Actions Tasks	Mission Tasks

The COPD implementation timeline

The implementation timeline for the COPD is described below which will have an impact on the OPG planning efforts from the next March onwards in the HQ NRDC-ITA.

Feb 09	Strategic and Operational process validated.
May 09	COPD agreed by EBAO WG.

Jun 09	COPD to OPWG for approval.
Sep 09	Final Draft Revised COPD issued to planners for comment.
Nov 09	Comments integrated in COPD, Bi-SC KD and Bi-SC Assessment Handbooks.
01 Mar 10	COPD published under ACO signature.
Mar 10	COPD/TOPFAS Training implementation.
Jun 10	Revised MC133, NATO OPP, Revised MCM 0052?



To sum, the revision of the NATO Strategic Concept, MCC 133, NATO Crisis Response Force Manual, Comprehensive Operations Planning Directive, Assessment Handbook, Knowledge Development Handbook will be finalized by the second half of the next year. G5 Plans will continue to follow and provide the OPG with the innovations on these documents, as it has happened so far.

Conclusion

G5 Plans assess that the aforementioned Directive provides a common framework for collaborative operations planning when defining NATO's contribution in a Comprehensive Approach.

The Commander and staff at a high tactical headquarters, such as the NRDC-ITA, must fully understand the EBAO process, on which the COPD dwells sufficiently, at the operational

level because it will receive inputs in the form of a mission, objectives, effects, actions, and tasks which must be understood two levels above. At the tactical level, the traditional commander's intent portion of orders is the most appropriate forum to continue the effects thread of continuity. By writing the intent in terms of the effects the commander desires to create or avoid, the commander is specifically able to describe his vision and enable his subordinates to autonomously operate within his intent in the absence of further guidance.

Design, planning and execution are human matters where commanders lead and staff support. Intuition, experience and military judgement remain paramount and this Directive provides the processes and tools to enable commanders' decision making, it is not an end in itself. ■