

**NATO STANDARD**

**AJP-10**

**ALLIED JOINT DOCTRINE  
FOR STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS**

**Edition A, version 1**

**MARCH 2023**



**NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION**

**ALLIED JOINT PUBLICATION**

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13 March 2023

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## Related documents

### Policy and Military Committee documents

PO(2009)0141	<i>NATO Strategic Communications Policy</i>
PO(2015)0673	<i>Strategy on NATO's Role in Countering Hybrid Warfare to foreign ministers</i>
MC 0402/3 FINAL (INV)	<i>NATO Military Policy on Psychological Operations</i>
MC 0411/2 FINAL	<i>NATO Military Policy on Civil-Military Cooperation (CIMIC) and Civil-Military Interaction (CMI)</i>
MC 0422/6 FINAL (INV)	<i>NATO Military Policy for Information Operations</i>
MC 0457/3 FINAL	<i>NATO Military Policy on Public Affairs</i>
MC 0458/4	<i>NATO Military Policy on Education, Training, Exercises and Evaluation</i>
MC 0628 FINAL	<i>NATO Military Policy on Strategic Communications</i>
MC 0665 FINAL	<i>Military Vision and Strategy on Cyberspace as a Domain of Operations</i>

### Allied joint publications

AJP-01	<i>Allied Joint Doctrine</i>
AJP-2	<i>Allied Joint Doctrine for Intelligence, Counter-intelligence and Security</i>
AJP-3	<i>Allied Joint Doctrine for the Conduct of Operations</i>
AJP-4	<i>Allied Joint Doctrine for Logistics</i>
AJP-5	<i>Allied Joint Doctrine for the Planning of Operations</i>
AJP-6	<i>Allied Joint Doctrine for Communication and Information Systems</i>
AJP-2.9	<i>Allied Joint Doctrine for Open-Source Intelligence (OSINT)</i>
AJP-3.1	<i>Allied Joint Doctrine for Maritime Operations</i>
AJP-3.2	<i>Allied Joint Doctrine for Land Operations</i>
AJP-3.3	<i>Allied Joint Doctrine for Air and Space Operations</i>
AJP-3.5	<i>Allied Joint Doctrine for Special Operations</i>
AJP-3.6	<i>Allied Joint Doctrine for Electronic Warfare</i>
AJP-3.9	<i>Allied Joint Doctrine for Joint Targeting</i>
AJP-3.10.1	<i>Allied Joint Doctrine for Psychological Operations</i>
AJP-3.10.2	<i>Allied Joint Doctrine for Operations Security and Deception</i>
AJP-3.19	<i>Allied Joint Doctrine for Civil-Military Cooperation</i>
AJP-3.20	<i>Allied Joint Doctrine for Cyberspace Operations</i>
AJP-10.1	<i>Allied Joint Doctrine for Information Operations</i>

### Allied administrative publications

APP-11	<i>NATO Message Catalogue</i>
AAP-47	<i>Allied Joint Doctrine Development</i>
AAP-77	<i>NATO Terminology Manual</i>

**Other NATO references**

PO(2018)0047 *NATO Joint Air Power Strategy*

*NATO Strategic Communication Handbook* version 1.0 September 2017

Allied Command Operations (ACO) Directive AD 095-002, *ACO Strategic Communications*

NATOTerm, *NATO Glossary of Terms and Definitions*

*NATO Framework for Future Alliance Operations* (2018)

Allied Strategic Communications Publication-01, *NATO Strategic Communications Training Standards*

ACO *Comprehensive Operations and Planning Directive*

Allied Command Transformation Directive 95-2, *Military Public Affairs*

NATO/EAPC Policy on Women, Peace and Security (2018)

Bi-Strategic Command Directive 040-001, *Integrating Gender Perspective into NATO Command Structure*

*NATO Gender-Inclusive Language Manual*

## Table of contents

<b>Summary of changes</b>	vii
<b>Related documents</b>	ix
<b>Preface</b>	xvii
 <b>Chapter 1 – NATO strategic communications</b>	 1
<b>Section 1 – Introduction</b>	1
<b>Section 2 – The global security environment</b>	2
<b>Section 3 – Operating environment</b>	5
<b>Section 4 – Information environment</b>	7
Multi-domain operations	9
<b>Section 5 – Audiences</b>	10
<b>Section 6 – NATO approach to strategic communications</b>	11
The strategic communications mindset	12
Main elements of strategic communications	12
<b>Section 7 – NATO strategic communications process</b>	13
NATO audiences approval	14
<b>Section 8 – Strategic communications principles</b>	14
<b>Section 9 – Strategic communications characteristics</b>	15
<b>Section 10 – Narratives</b>	16
<b>Section 11 – The relationship with military strategy</b>	17
<b>Section 12 – The relationship with command and control</b>	19
<b>Section 13 – Joint and multinational operations</b>	20
Operational art	20
Principles of joint and multinational operations	21
Joint function framework	22
<b>Section 14 – National sovereignty</b>	24

<b>Chapter 2 – Roles and responsibilities</b>	25
<b>Section 1 – Political-strategic level</b>	25
NATO Public Diplomacy Division	25
Military Committee	27
<b>Section 2 – Allied Command Operations</b>	28
Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe	28
Joint force commands and Joint Support and Enabling Command	28
Component commands	29
NATO force structure	30
<b>Section 3 – Allied Command Transformation</b>	30
Headquarters Supreme Allied Command Transformation	30
Subordinate and external organizations	32
<b>Chapter 3 – Operationalizing strategic communications</b>	33
<b>Section 1 – Setting the context</b>	33
<b>Section 2 – Processes</b>	34
Strategic communications processes at NATO Headquarters	34
Strategic communications processes at Allied Command Operations	35
Strategic communications processes at joint forces command	35
Strategic communications processes at component command	36
Operations planning process	36
Battle rhythm	37
Joint effects and joint targeting	38
Counter-hostile information and disinformation	38
<b>Section 3 – Understanding</b>	39
Information environment assessment	39
<b>Section 4 – Planning and execution</b>	41
<b>Section 5 – Monitoring and assessment</b>	43
Attitudes and behaviour	43
Information fusion	44
Process evaluation	44



<b>Section 6 – Education and training</b>	45
Policy and governance	46
Responsibilities	46
<b>Chapter 4 – The communications directorate</b>	47
<b>Section 1 – Introduction</b>	47
<b>Section 2 – J10-Strategic Communications staff functions</b>	47
<b>Section 3 – Structure</b>	48
<b>Section 4 – Responsibilities</b>	51
Director of communications	51
Chief Public Affairs Officer	51
Strategic communications disciplines	52
Functional responsibilities	55
<b>Section 5 – Information staff function and communications capabilities</b>	55
Information operations	55
Military public affairs	56
Psychological operations	56
<b>Section 6 – Products</b>	57
<b>Annex A – Understanding narratives</b>	A-1
Developing narratives	A-1
Developing themes and messages	A-2
Narrative approval	A-3
A strategic approach to narratives	A-3
<b>Annex B – Strategic communications direction and guidance</b>	B-1
Strategic communications frameworks	B-1
Tier 1 NATO strategic communications frameworks	B-1
Tier 2 Allied Command Operations strategic communications frameworks	B-1
Tier 3 strategic communications frameworks	B-2
Framework structure	B-2
Strategic communications implementation guidance	B-4
Guidance structure	B-4

Integrated communications plans	B-4
Plan structure	B-5
Annex SS – Strategic Communications	B-5
<b>Annex C – The operations planning process</b>	C-1
<b>Annex D – Boards and working groups</b>	D-1
Working groups and board examples that require director of communications or J10-Strategic Communications staff participation	D-1
Working groups and board examples that are chaired/conducted by director of communications or J10-Strategic Communications	D-2
<b>Annex E – Effect, task and action verbs</b>	E-1
<b>Lexicon</b>	Lex-1
<b>Part 1 – Acronyms and abbreviations</b>	Lex-1
<b>Part 2 – Terms and definitions</b>	Lex-3
<b>List of figures</b>	
Figure 1.1 The what, how and why of NATO strategic communications	2
Figure 1.2 The continuum of competition	4
Figure 1.3 The information environment	8
Figure 1.4 The three categories of audiences: public, stakeholders and actors	10
Figure 1.5 Audiences in the operating environment	11
Figure 1.6 NATO strategic communications process	14
Figure 1.7 Example of a J10-Strategic Communications directorate within a joint task force	20
Figure 1.8 The joint function framework	22
Figure 3.1 Information environment assessment	40
Figure 3.2 Methods and sources for information environment assessment	41
Figure 4.1 J10-Strategic Communications staff functions	48
Figure 4.2 Example of a generic J10-Strategic Communications directorate	50
Figure 4.3 Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe Communications Division	50

Figure 4.4	Joint Force Command – Communications Directorate (example model)	51
Figure A.1	Example of a generic narrative template	A-2
Figure C.1	Example of J10-Strategic Communications directorate input to the planning process	C-2

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## Preface

### Context

1. NATO military authorities operate in an international security environment where both state and non-state actors pose conventional, unconventional and hybrid threats against a backdrop of a constant contest across the continuum of competition; a continuum that sees information activities directed at the Alliance within a continuous global information confrontation cycle<sup>1</sup>. NATO military strategic communications (StratCom) is critical to the strategic relevance and mission success of NATO operations. StratCom contributes to the implementation of political guidance through military-strategic direction and Alliance joint operations. Coherent StratCom ensures NATO's actions, images and words are consistent with its narrative<sup>2</sup>, across the continuum of competition.

### Scope

2. Allied Joint Publication (AJP)-10, *Allied Joint Doctrine for Strategic Communications* is the keystone NATO doctrine for StratCom and all information and communication related activities. AJP-10 introduces StratCom as the primary function for ensuring all NATO activities are conceived, planned and executed with a clear understanding of the critical importance of informing and influencing the perception, attitudes and behaviours of audiences to achieve objectives to attain the end state.

### Purpose

3. AJP-10 provides guidance to NATO commanders and their staff at all levels of command. It enables the staff to contribute to the understanding and shaping of the information environment, in support of Alliance aims and objectives. It explains the principles of StratCom and how they can be integrated into planning, execution and assessment. AJP-10 outlines the roles and responsibilities at all levels of command and details the relationship of military StratCom with the information staff function (for information operations) and the communication capabilities (for military public affairs and psychological operations).

### Application

4. AJP-10 is primarily for use by NATO commanders and their staff at the military-strategic and operational levels, but has equal relevance at the strategic and tactical levels. It is also an important reference for Alliance and partner nations at all levels because it offers a useful framework for operations, missions and tasks conducted by a coalition of NATO partners, non-NATO nations and other organizations. It provides a reference for NATO and non-NATO actors.

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<sup>1</sup> Military Committee (MC) 0628 FINAL, *NATO Military Policy on Strategic Communications*.

<sup>2</sup> See Chapter 1, Section 10 and Annex A for further details on narratives.

## Linkages

5. The principal enabling document for AJP-10 is Military Committee (MC) 0628 FINAL, *NATO Military Policy on Strategic Communications*. MC 0628 is nested beneath PO(2009)0141, *NATO Strategic Communications Policy*. AJP-10 builds on the principles described by AJP-01, *Allied Joint Doctrine*; it is adjacent to AJP-5, *Allied Joint Doctrine for the Planning of Operations* and AJP-3, *Allied Joint Doctrine for the Conduct of Operations*, on the Allied Joint Doctrine Architecture.

## Remarks

6. MC 0628 leaves commanders free to decide on the most appropriate nomenclature for their communications directorate. In AJP-10, the communications directorate is designated J10-Strategic Communications directorate (J10-StratCom). StratCom is the staff function; communication is the activity.

# Chapter 1 – NATO strategic communications

## Section 1 – Introduction

1.1 Strategic communications (StratCom) is the command group function responsible for understanding the information environment across all relevant audiences and, based on that understanding, using all means of communication – comprising actions, images and words – to appropriately<sup>3</sup> inform and influence an audience's attitudes and behaviours through a narrative-led approach in pursuit of the desired end state. StratCom is used by all levels of command. More practically, it provides the focused conception, planning, execution and evaluation of information and communication activities and support to wider activities to maintain or change attitudes and behaviours of selected audiences to attain the Alliance's end state. This is enabled by a comprehensive understanding of audiences and how they exist in a contested information environment. The StratCom function is defined in NATO as:

**In the NATO military context, the integration of communication capabilities and information staff function with other military activities, in order to understand and shape the information environment, in support of NATO strategic aims and objectives.**

1.2 The StratCom function ensures that all NATO activities are conceived, planned and executed with consideration of their desired outcome in the cognitive dimension of the engagement space. Actions, images and words are coordinated to carry a clear narrative in support of NATO's military and political objectives. The narrative explains and supports Alliance objectives to a range of audiences to achieve the desired political-military outcome. NATO StratCom is committed to maintaining strategic relevance in all NATO activities by keeping the NATO narrative (see paragraph 1.44) aligned within the force throughout the continuum of competition. Figure 1.1 illustrates the concept and essence of NATO StratCom.

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<sup>3</sup> This term corresponds to the complementary 'inappropriately' in Military Committee (MC) 0628, *NATO Military Policy on Strategic Communications*, Section 21, and thus sets the framework for the consideration.



**Figure 1.1 – The what, how and why of NATO strategic communications**

## **Section 2 – The global security environment**

1.3 NATO is a political and military alliance of countries with a purpose to safeguard its members and, as such, it is confronted with a constantly evolving and changing strategic situation that presents a challenge to its aims, objectives and end state. Constant exposure to foreign information and communication activities, demonstrations of power, and military and foreign policy is resulting in a wide spectrum of confrontational action, to which NATO needs to respond. Potential adversaries may assume different identities and operate outside the accepted sociocultural patterns (such as the legal, ethical and moral norms), public opinion and media scrutiny that apply to Alliance members. As an alliance of nations dedicated to the rules-based international order (RBIO), NATO needs to protect its credibility and its strategic centre of gravity, which is achieved through Alliance cohesion.<sup>4</sup>

1.4 An increasingly interconnected world, which is providing easy access to technology, offers the ability to deliver real time, audience-tailored communication to report, command, inform, persuade, confuse, coerce, distract or deceive. The speed and scale by which the information environment may be affected by anyone, on any level, are factors that create threats and/or opportunities to exploit vulnerabilities. Critical issues such as climate change, (irregular) mass migration, pandemic outbreaks, sexual violence campaigns, major social unrest, expansion of authoritarian nationalism and nuclear proliferation<sup>5</sup> create an environment within which it is easy to create and foster hostile information and disinformation to manipulate public opinion.<sup>6</sup> Additionally, the relative ease with which elements of cyberspace can be manipulated (for example, blocking an Internet node, restricting access

<sup>4</sup> MC 0400/4 FINAL, *NATO Military Strategy*.

<sup>5</sup> The list of critical issues can be endless, however, for readability and focus, only a selection have been included here.

<sup>6</sup> Disinformation can be created by different toolsets, of which 'deepfakes' (who have the potential to confuse and deteriorate credibility) can be of a potentially destructive nature.



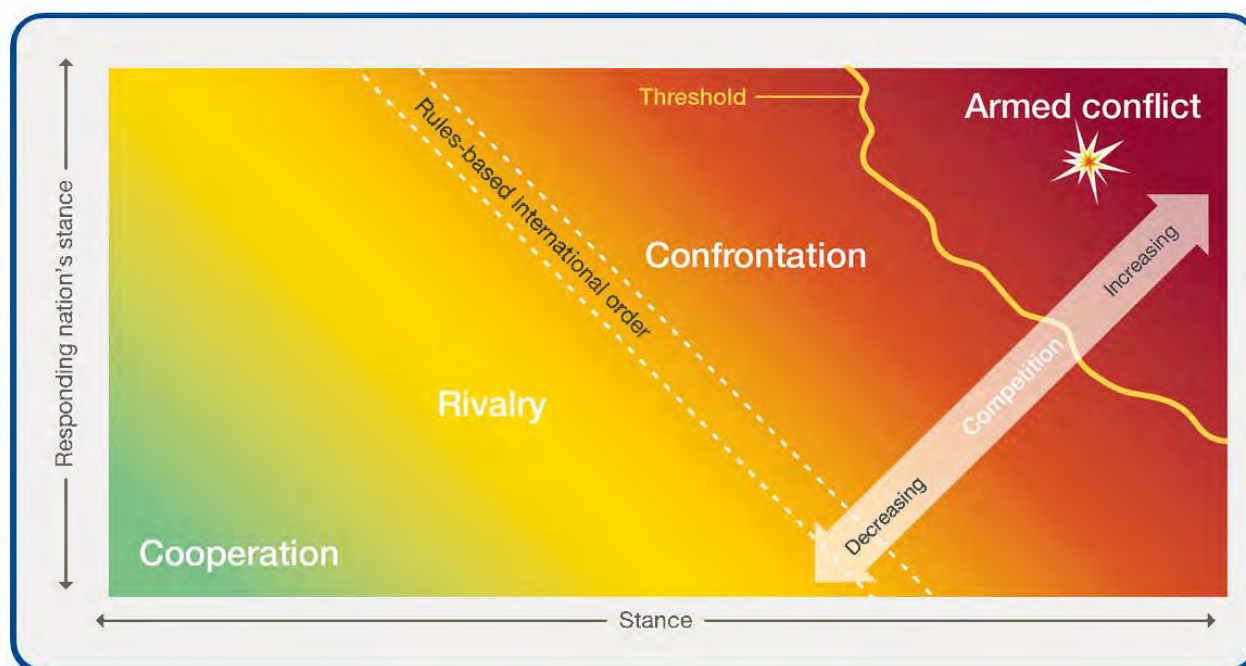
to a specific network/platform or software manipulation) provides unprecedented opportunities to influence behaviour (for example, by only having or giving access to specific or misrepresented information).

1.5 All of NATO's actions, images and words are observed, interpreted, packaged, redistributed and acted upon by different audiences, according to their perspective and desired objectives. An organization like NATO must amplify and contextualize its actions to audiences if there is a risk that others will also do so in their own way for their own ends.

1.6 For the military instrument of power, political will and the military capability to engage with and defeat an adversary on the battlefield is crucial, but it is equally important to recognize that the military instrument is only one part of a wider spectrum of efforts (see paragraph 1.10) necessary to prevent, and if required prevail in, modern conflict. So, while it is critical for the military to maintain its ability to conduct warfighting, it is equally vital to understand that the military contribution is ultimately aimed at a behavioural and attitude change of its audiences, which can be achieved in many different ways besides lethal action options. The military contribution to the information instrument of power is a cornerstone of NATO's deterrence posture. It is important to recognize how, where and which military activities are best conducted to support NATO objectives.

1.7 **The continuum of competition.** NATO StratCom is not limited solely to resolution of conflict. The Alliance is an entity of the international rules-based system and is in a state of permanent strategic competition on behalf of the collective will of its member states. Within this competition, the Allies' democratic values and support for the RBIO is constantly challenged by actors with alternate ideologies. Part of these alternate ideologies are portrayed via hostile information, disinformation and misinformation activities. These activities aim to undermine Alliance cohesion, legitimacy, stability and readiness, which will ultimately adversely affect its reputation.

1.8 The continuum of competition, as illustrated in Figure 1.2, is a model depicting the attitude and behaviour of international relations. The continuum depicts four types of relationships in which states/groups of people may participate: cooperation, which represents a state of peace, through rivalry to confrontation and, ultimately, to armed conflict. The boundaries between cooperation, rivalry, crossing the RBIO to confrontation, and the threshold between confrontation and armed conflict are complex and dynamic; the progression between each is neither linear nor easily defined. The majority of sub-threshold activity is covertly orchestrated by state and non-state, including proxy, adversaries seeking to undermine NATO's and its partners' security, the integrity of its democracies, its public safety, reputation or economic prosperity. Sub-threshold activity is particularly prevalent in the information environment where information and communication activities with hostile intent are widely used along with malicious cyberspace activity and targeted campaigns to sow distrust and potentially exacerbate turmoil amongst different audience groups.



**Figure 1.2 – The continuum of competition<sup>7</sup>**

1.9 NATO uses the framework of peace, crisis and conflict to describe NATO's situation, posture and activities. This framework correlates with the continuum of competition through peace within the rivalry zone, crisis within the confrontation zone and conflict within armed conflict zone. For the rest of this document the term 'continuum of competition' includes peace, crisis and conflict.

1.10 **Comprehensive approach.** A comprehensive approach guides the commander on how to operationalize the whole-of-Alliance and partners coalition. It enables the staff to orchestrate and integrate political, diplomatic, military and civilian actions, through all levels of activities, to influence audiences and achieve a unified outcome.<sup>8</sup> To be effective, a comprehensive approach requires a well-defined, politically directed outcome supported by clear objectives, a strategic narrative that explains and supports those objectives, and coherent StratCom guidance and efforts across all instruments of power. This enables the narrative to be communicated to a range of audiences through coherent actions, images and words. Implemented correctly, StratCom ensures that all NATO activity – irrespective of whether conducted in peace, crisis or conflict – is planned and executed with consideration for its effects (desired or undesired) across all domains of the operating environment. Furthermore, it ensures that the broad narratives and messages across these strategic areas and efforts are aligned and complementary.

<sup>7</sup> Allied Joint Publication (AJP)-01, *Allied Joint Doctrine*.

<sup>8</sup> AJP-01, *Allied Joint Doctrine*.

**1.11 Instruments of power.** National strategy directs the coordinated use of four instruments of power – diplomatic, information, military and economic – to achieve national aims.<sup>9</sup> Nations use their instruments of power to gain advantage and achieve their aims. The concept of advantage is not that a nation has to excel in using an instrument of power, but just needs to be slightly better than their competitor. At the political-strategic level, effective StratCom requires that the information instrument informs the actions of the military, diplomatic and economic instruments and then leverages those activities for information effect.

a. **The information instrument.** The recognition of information as a separate instrument of power recognizes that audience centrality, public perception and information's influence on decision-makers are central to understanding and decision-making. It recognizes that the information environment cannot be wholly controlled, and planned information and communication activities must concentrate on what they intend to communicate and to whom.

b. **The military instrument.** NATO StratCom harnesses military activity to amplify the strategic narrative and contribute to the information instrument of power.

### Section 3 – Operating environment

**1.12 Environments and systems.** An environment describes the system surrounding an activity. A system is a functionally, physically or behaviourally related group of regularly interacting or interdependent elements. A group of systems is a network. There are multiple types of environment, both physical and non-physical, and commanders use many terms to describe them. Examples include (but are not restricted to): operating environment, information environment, maritime environment, urban environment, political environment and human environment.

**1.13 Operating environment.** The operating environment provides the surroundings of a mission and combines all the conditions, circumstances and influences of applicable factors that affect a commander's decision-making in accomplishing their mission. We can understand the operating environment as a global set of complex, dynamic and interrelated political, military, economic, social, infrastructure and information systems, each exerting pressure and influence on the others. Understanding the operating environment aids the commander and staff's understanding of the mission and their force's part of the overall strategy.

**1.14 Engagement space.** The terms 'engagement space' and 'battlespace' are synonyms. The engagement space is a global operations space that combines multiple environments with their system of elements and the electromagnetic spectrum and acoustic spectrum to provide the settings for the planning and conduct of operations. The varying degrees of relevance that geography has in space, cyberspace, information environments

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<sup>9</sup> AJP-01, *Allied Joint Doctrine*.

and the electromagnetic spectrum means that a geographically bounded engagement space is not always suitable.

**1.15 Operational domains.** Operational domains are specified spheres of capabilities and activities that are applied in the engagement space. The five operational domains that military and non-military actors integrate their capabilities through are maritime, land, air, space and cyberspace. The term ‘operational’ does not reflect the operational level of operations, it reflects operations and engagement space activity. Multi-domain operations combine the domain actions in a manner that both amplifies and orchestrates the sum of its parts.

**1.16 Effect dimensions.** Effect dimensions are expressed in a framework that arranges the engagement space into a network of physical, virtual and cognitive systems to understand the purpose and consequences of actions. Effect dimensions highlight the interdependencies of the engagement space. The elements that constitute dimensions are as follows.

- a. The physical dimension relates to consequences on the audiences, the sub-surface, surface, airspace and space areas where all physical activities take place, and where audiences live, including all physical objects and infrastructure that support them.
- b. The virtual dimension relates to the consequences of activity on the storage, content and transmission of analogue and digital data and information, and all supporting communication and information systems and processes.
- c. The cognitive dimension relates to the consequences on the audiences’ perceptions, beliefs, interests, aims, decisions and behaviours. It encompasses all forms of interaction between them (such as economic and political).

**1.17** The electromagnetic and acoustic spectrums are not considered domains or dimensions in themselves. However, they are strongly connected to both and activities in the electromagnetic and acoustic spectrums should be considered when seeking effects in the cognitive dimension.

**1.18** Effective orchestration of activity across the continuum of competition to affect audiences’ perceptions, beliefs, interests, aims, decisions and behaviours is supported by StratCom. This happens through operationalization of the following tenets.

- a. **Audiences.** Understanding the audiences is crucial. This includes being able to identify the types of audiences – public, stakeholders and actors – combined with an understanding of how they receive, filter and process information. Understanding the affected audiences must include understanding their diversity,<sup>10</sup> their cultural and social expectations, their ethical frameworks and their biases. This understanding will

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<sup>10</sup> Diversity includes different nationality, race, ethnic origin, gender, age, religion or belief, cultural background, sexual orientation or disability.

shape the messaging to ensure it has the desired effect on the audiences' perceptions and actions.

b. **Information itself and information flow.** Understanding how information enters the information environment of an audience and, once within that information environment, how it circulates is essential. It needs to be understood that the medium is part of the message; the two are symbiotically linked. We need to understand what helps the message gain or lose credibility and so impact its ability to alter or reinforce the cognitive and behavioural norms of the audience.

c. **Cognitive and behavioural changes.** Understanding how to monitor the relevant information environment to detect changes to the information inputs, conversation and behaviour of an audience is crucial. Cognitive effect is not directly observable but manifests in behavioural changes in the physical and virtual dimensions by apparent changes within the information (by messages people share) and the physical environment (by the behaviours they exhibit). It is essential to be able to interpret those changes and present them clearly and coherently to inform decision-making and operational assessments. This is key for commanders to change or amend their set objectives to attain the desired end state.

## Section 4 – Information environment

1.19 The way people interact with the world around them has changed fundamentally. Information flows through formal and informal networks at unprecedented speed. Digital platforms enable individuals and groups to mobilize in a manner never seen before. For the majority of audiences, traditional media is no longer the only source of mass communication. They interact with and via social media, and their messages can be reflected upon and criticized there. Concurrently, an information revolution has ushered in an age of decision-making assisted by information and communications technology.

1.20 The information environment is a diverse global environment comprised of the physical, virtual and the cognitive dimensions where humans and automated systems observe, orient, decide and act on data, information, knowledge and experience, both consciously and unconsciously. Effective StratCom requires a detailed understanding of this information environment to inform the conception, planning, execution and assessment of all operations, missions, tasks and activities. In the context of NATO, the information environment is defined as:

**An environment comprised of the information itself, the individuals, organizations and systems that receive, process and convey the information, and the cognitive, virtual and physical space in which this occurs.**

1.21 Activities in the engagement space create effects in the cognitive dimension as audiences observe and interpret them. These changes in the perceptions and attitudes of audiences will affect their decision-making and, ultimately, behaviour. It is acknowledged that

the speed at which information is shared, made available, and is interpreted contributes to an unpredictability in human behaviour. It is also acknowledged that the information environment is not a static, stable structure, but is defined by constant movement and change.

1.22 Figure 1.3 illustrates the layers within the information environment in relation to the effect dimensions. This understanding of the information environment is central to NATO's behaviour-centric approach and its use of the effect dimensions to provide a framework for understanding the purpose, consequence and measurement of military activities. In the information environment, humans, partly automated systems and artificial intelligence track, collect, disseminate, receive, interpret and process information to create knowledge and beliefs, and the interrelationships between them.

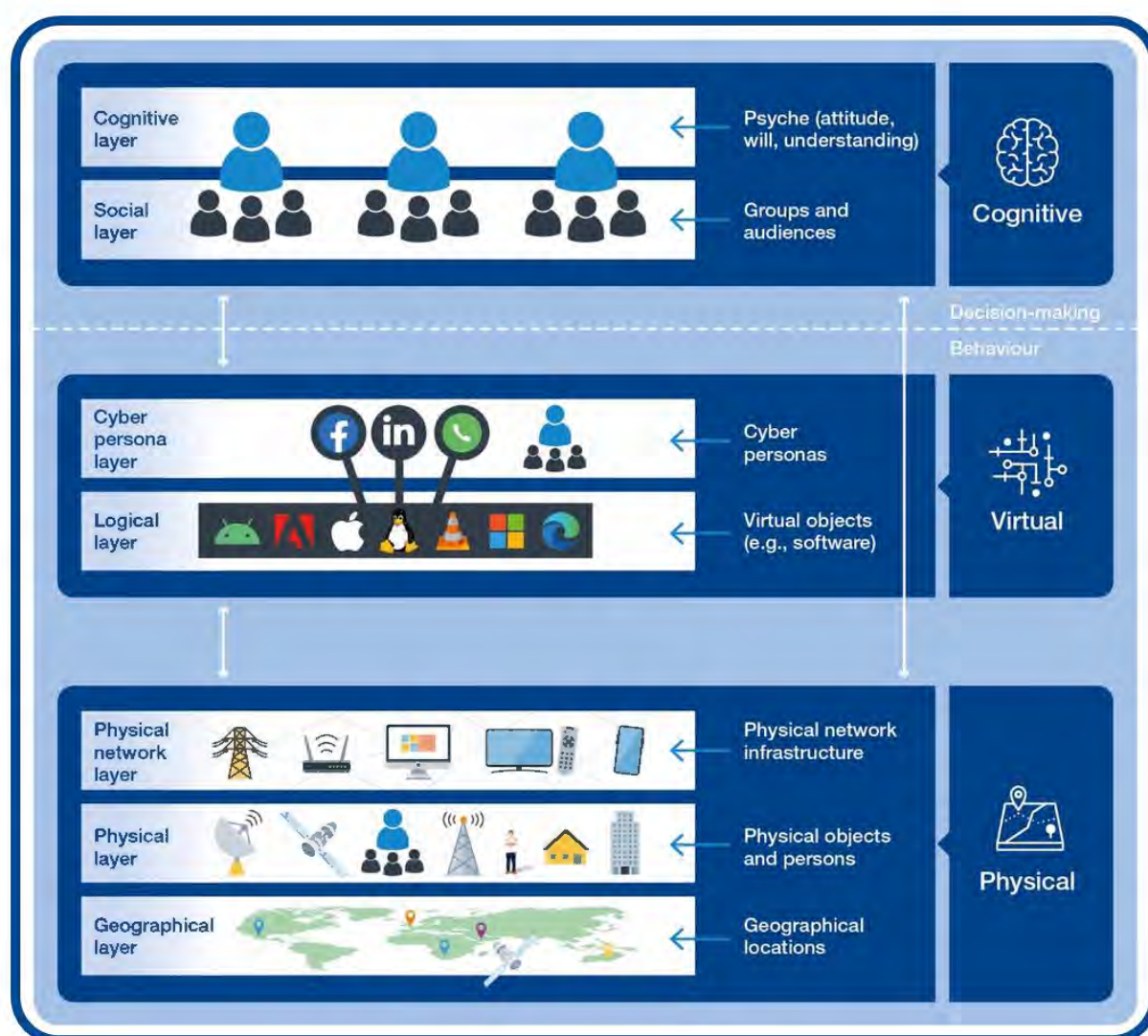


Figure 1.3 – The information environment

1.23 NATO needs to be consistent if it is to compete effectively in the information environment – in everything it says or does not say, in any way it acts or does not act, and everything it shows or does not show. All NATO activities should take place having considered the public opinion and pluralistic public debate and how the audiences' perceptions, attitudes and behaviours could be affected by NATO's actions.

1.24 Agility and proactive action in the information environment is critical to success. This success depends upon the synchronization of activities to understand and create an effect (or effects) in the information environment upon the intended audience (or audiences). The information environment assessment (IEA)<sup>11</sup> is the process NATO uses to understand and respond to threats in the information environment, and evaluate the effectiveness of NATO's own communications. The IEA identifies audiences and their cultural narratives, existing perceptions and attitude, and the linguistic nuances they use to communicate with each other. The Alliance endeavours to know how they receive and process information, how that information circulates within the audience, and what their ability is to impact the desired outcomes we are seeking. StratCom's IEA is fused with other assessments through the comprehensive understanding of the operating environment (CUOE).<sup>12</sup>

1.25 The CUOE is the primary and continuous process through which the joint commander's staff manages the analysis and development of products that help the commander and key staff understand the operating environment. The CUOE's methodology fuses operational assessments from across the functions, for example, joint intelligence preparation of the operating environment and IEAs. It aims to give a comprehensive understanding of the operating environment to the best extent in the time available.

### **Multi-domain operations**

1.26 The comprehensive approach supports multi-domain operations by combining political, military and civilian capabilities whose activities and actions can be orchestrated and integrated across the five operational domains. This approach also coordinates complementary actions by actors who are not part of the force conducting multi-domain operations but who are working towards a unified outcome or common narrative. Therefore, it is essential that NATO understands its audiences and their perception of the operating environment. Communications Division or J10-Strategic Communications directorate (J10-StratCom) staff are constantly monitoring and analyzing the information environment to identify relevant actors, systems, themes and media and their interdependencies to support the decision-making process. This enables the information environment to be scoped, visualized and operationalized. Allied Joint Publication (AJP)-3, *Allied Joint Doctrine for the Conduct of Operations* notes that actors' perceptions are dependent upon the information

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<sup>11</sup> IEA is explained in more detail in Chapter 3, Section 3 and in AJP-10.1, *Allied Joint Doctrine for Information Operations*.

<sup>12</sup> More detail can be found in AJP-01, *Allied Joint Doctrine* and Allied Command Operations (ACO) *Comprehensive Operations Planning Directive* (COPD) Version 3.

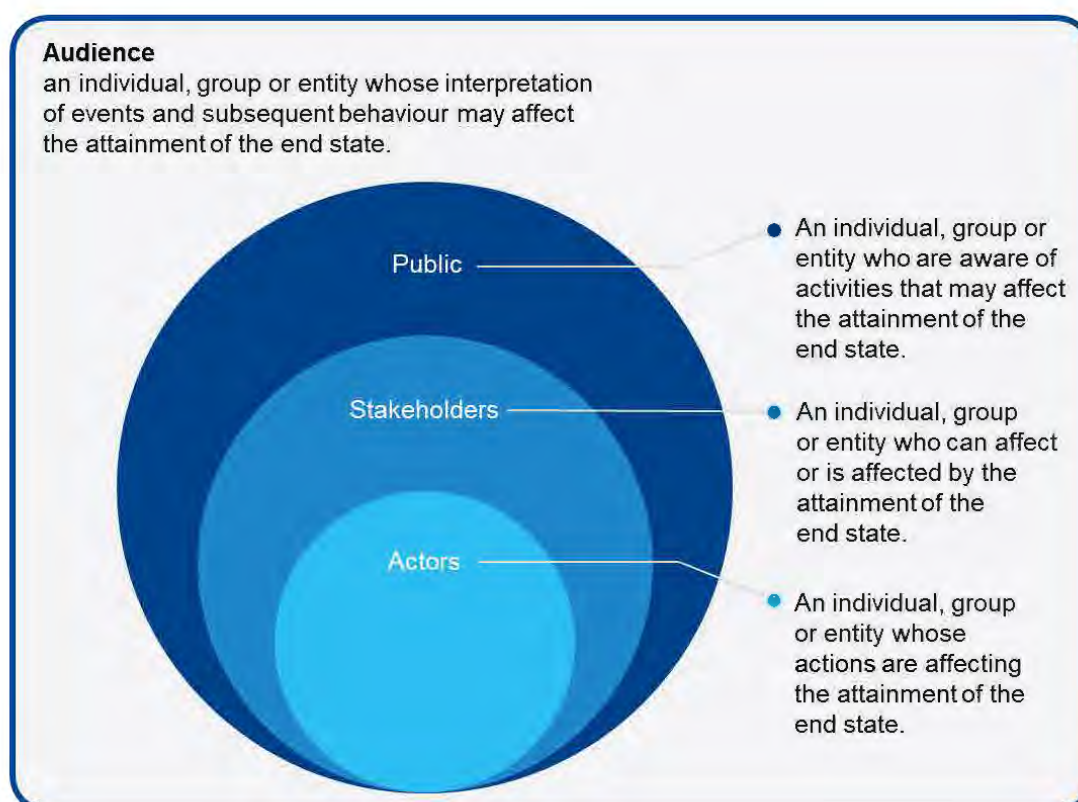


available to them and that agility and proactive action in the information environment is critical to success.

## Section 5 – Audiences

1.27 As described in AJP-01, *Allied Joint Doctrine*, the behaviour-centric approach, manoeuvrist approach, comprehensive approach and mission command are the four key tenets of doctrine. They apply through all levels of operations and any situation that the military instrument is used.

1.28 The behaviour-centric approach recognizes that people's attitude and behaviour are central to attaining the end state, and the Alliance has to take account of a much broader audience than simply the 'enemy or adversary'. This approach uses narrative-led execution to converge effects from all levels of operations and from across the coalition to preserve or change their attitude and behaviour. Audiences are segmented into three general categories – public, stakeholder and actor – depending on their ability to affect the end state, as depicted in Figure 1.4.



**Figure 1.4 – The three categories of audiences: public, stakeholders and actors**

1.29 NATO engages with audiences to inform, to generate understanding, and to appropriately influence their perceptions, attitudes and behaviour in support of Alliance



objectives and desired outcomes. In the context of NATO military, audience is defined as: 'an individual, group or entity whose interpretation of events and subsequent behaviour may affect the attainment of the end state.' Audiences range from global audiences to immediate participants.

1.30 Stakeholder audiences form the base from which actors emerge. There is a wide spectrum of actors<sup>13</sup> (alliance, partner, neutral, rival, adversary and enemy) and they include NATO's forces and allies, as well as others who are friendly, supportive, neutral, unsupportive or hostile. Audiences are not constrained geographically, but tactical actors are primarily concerned with changing or maintaining the behaviour of actors within an operating environment, while promoting wider audience consent. As individuals and groups' perceptions, attitudes and behaviours change, so will their audience classification (note: individuals can be part of more than one audience). Figure 1.5 illustrates the audiences in the operating environment.

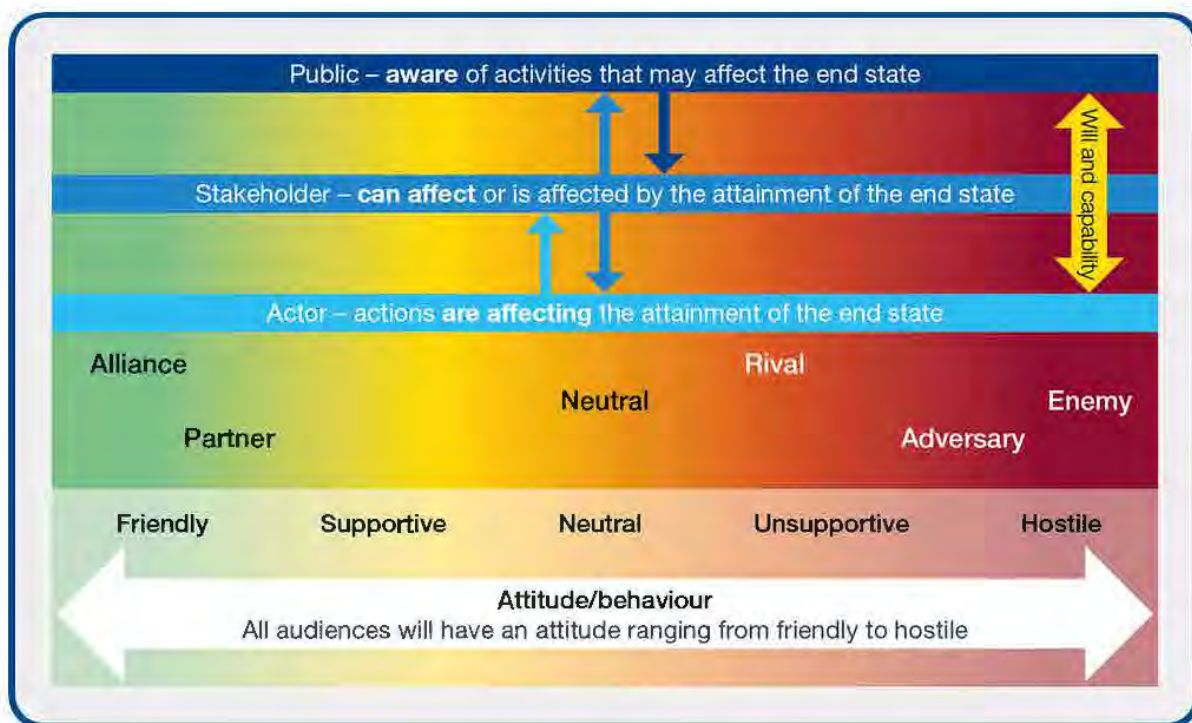


Figure 1.5 – Audiences in the operating environment<sup>14</sup>

## Section 6 – NATO approach to strategic communications

1.31 Everything NATO and its partners say and do, or omit to say and do, has intended and unintended consequences. Every action, word and image sends a message, and every

<sup>13</sup> See AJP-01, *Allied Joint Doctrine*, Chapter 4 for a detailed description of the 'spectrum of actors'.

<sup>14</sup> AJP-01, *Allied Joint Doctrine*.

member of the military is a messenger, from the individual soldier in the field to the theatre commander.

1.32 At and above the operational level, military success is almost always reliant on the creation of effects in the cognitive dimension. NATO understands that audience perceptions are dependent upon the information available to them, so agility and proactive action in the information environment is critical to operational success.<sup>15</sup> NATO StratCom supports the attainment of the end state by providing the broad narratives, frameworks and messaging that frame operational- and tactical-level planning and operations. It directly guides the tactical-level application of actions in the information environment for military public affairs (Mil PA), psychological operations (PsyOps) and civil engagements through integration and synchronization by the information staff function of information operations (Info Ops). It also provides guidance to other tactical operations (for example, manoeuvres, targeting and fires) to ensure their effects are in line with the narratives and messages. It seeks to ensure harmonization of cognitive effects in the engagement space to support NATO objectives.

### **The strategic communications mindset**

1.33 In the context of this publication, the term 'StratCom mindset' is used to describe an individual's understanding of how military capabilities and activities are an effective means of communication in themselves. It recognizes that all military activities should be conceived, planned and executed being mindful of their effect on diverse audiences; the logical conclusion of this mindset is that cognitive effects are the primary outcome of military activities and that the military activity is not an end in itself. In other words, combat operations, and the threat of combat operations, may often be conducted to create cognitive effect as the primary outcome, which aligns with the manoeuvrist approach.

1.34 When conceived, planned and executed with a StratCom mindset, all military activity – from the strategic to the tactical – becomes aligned to effective Alliance strategy. This is a strategy that places the creation of effects in the cognitive dimension at its heart.

### **Main elements of strategic communications**

1.35 Recognizing that, in the modern operating environment, success can only be achieved as part of a comprehensive approach in which NATO's military activity is coherent with its political and diplomatic efforts – and those of the member states – NATO's approach to StratCom consists of three main elements.

- a. **Understanding.** Decisions and actions are based on a thorough knowledge of audiences (public, stakeholders and actors) and their perspective of the information environment. This requires a developed understanding of the differing segments, cultural narratives, existing perceptions, attitudes and the linguistic nuances used in communication. This is achieved through continuous research, analysis and assessment in the information environment. It is important to know how information

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<sup>15</sup> AJP-03, *Allied Joint Doctrine for the Conduct of Operations*.

is perceived and processed, and how it circulates within an audience. Understanding audience networks, communication channels and behavioural drivers is also key to a comprehensive understanding. Finally, it is vital to understand the audience's ability to impact the desired outcomes NATO is seeking.

b. **Integrated planning.** NATO's activities are planned being mindful of the behaviour-centric approach. Understanding and awareness of what will be communicated by our actions, images and words, and how this might be interpreted by the various audiences, is a leading element in planning. It includes anticipating and mitigating second and third order effects in the cognitive dimension and seeks to recognize how best to engage audiences to support achieving the commander's intent.

c. **Narrative-led execution.** Narrative-led execution uses the narrative as an overarching expression of the whole-of-Alliance strategy to influence audiences and gives context to the campaign, operation or situation. It is conducted with the same behaviour-centric mindfulness as our planning. NATO must demonstrate consistency in its actions, images and words, ensuring they reflect the narrative at all times, and so pre-empting any attempts to exploit gaps between what NATO does, shows and says. The narrative-led execution places the responsibility on all personnel to proactively empower the narrative, rather than act and then manage the consequences.

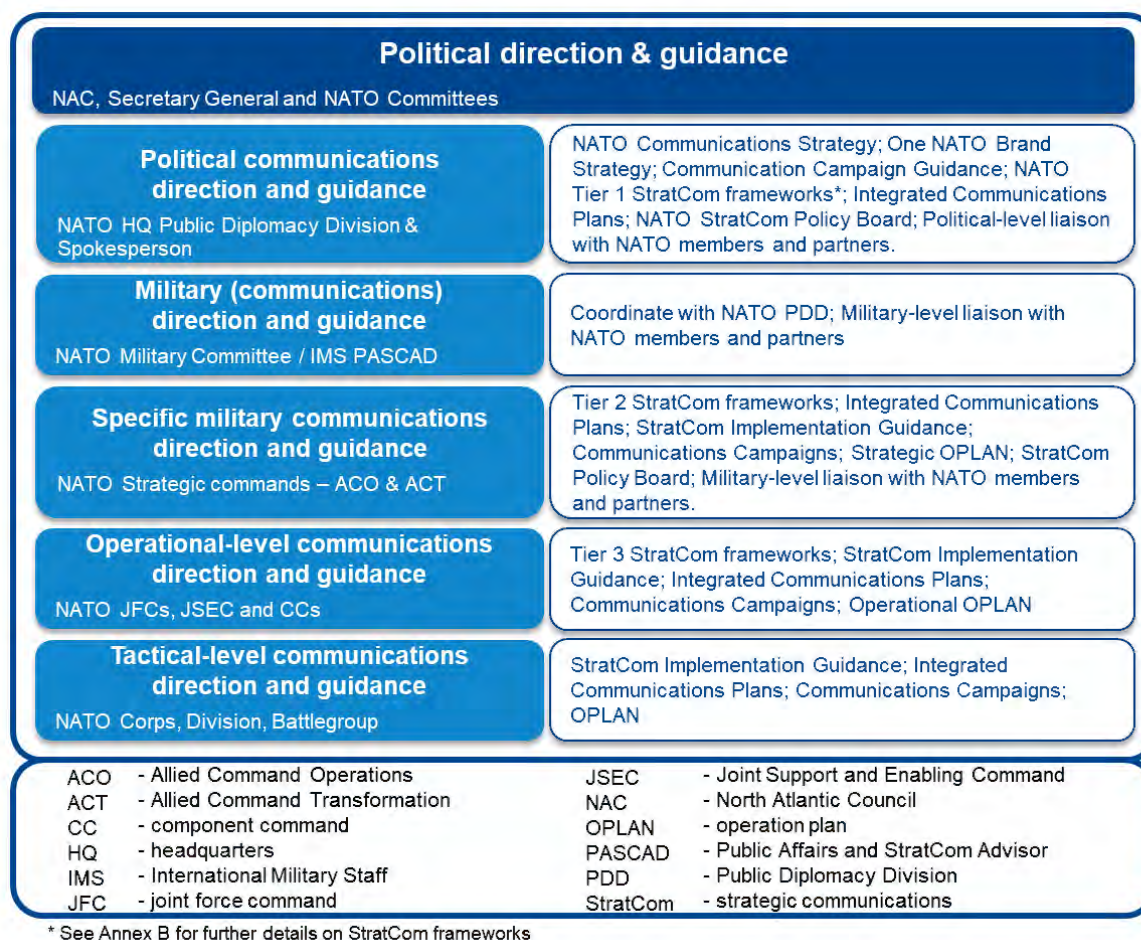
1.36 To be effective, NATO's approach to StratCom requires clear political direction and guidance – consisting of a defined outcome, clear objectives and a coherent strategic narrative – driven from the top and executed by commanders at all levels through mission command. It also requires us to have innovative working processes conducted at the speed of relevance and responsive to a fluid and dynamic environment.

## Section 7 – NATO strategic communications process

1.37 NATO instils its StratCom mindset in the planning, execution and assessment of all activities and has a StratCom process in place to provide coherence in communicating and messaging actions, images and words. This coherence-providing process is employed from top-level political direction to tactical implementation.

1.38 Political and military StratCom policies are approved by the North Atlantic Council (NAC) and, together with its subordinate committees, it is also responsible for generating StratCom direction and guidance to support specific areas of NATO policy and issues of political interest or implication. The NATO StratCom process supports this by providing direction and guidance from NATO political level all the way down to NATO tactical level. The StratCom direction and guidance helps to foster vertical harmonization of narratives, frameworks and messages throughout all levels of command. It is an iterative and circular process, where lower-level planning can/will inform higher-level direction and guidance, and

vice versa. The process is illustrated in Figure 1.6 and explained in more detail in Chapters 2 and 3.



**Figure 1.6 – NATO strategic communications process**

## NATO audiences approval

1.39 It is important to recognize that audiences are approved by the NAC through a range of means. The term 'NAC approval' was originally focused on audiences approved as part of an operation plan. However, as NATO is adjusting to deal with persistent competition across the continuum of competition, there are a number of documents that identify audiences for engagement, which include the NATO Communications Strategy, Communications Campaign Guidance, StratCom frameworks, integrated communications plans and others, in addition to operational staff work.

## Section 8 – Strategic communications principles

1.40 The principles of NATO StratCom are overarching and apply equally to all military activities across the continuum of competition. They are:

- **values-based** – all activity is founded on NATO's values;
- **objective-driven** – activity is driven by objectives that are derived from policy, strategy and narrative, and issued within a framework of political-military direction, and they must be measurable for assessment;
- **credible** – credibility and trust are vital attributes and must be protected;
- **aligned** – actions, images and words need to be aligned;
- **informed** – the information environment must be understood;
- **integrated** – communication is the collective and integrated effect of our activities, images and words;
- **empowered** – communication is empowered at all levels of command; and
- **focused** – the focus of activities is on desired effects and objectives.

## Section 9 – Strategic communications characteristics

1.41 When the principles of NATO StratCom are integrated into the conception, planning and execution of Alliance military activities, those activities should reflect the following characteristics.

- a. The activity has a clearly defined strategic outcome supported by a coherent strategic narrative.
- b. StratCom direction and guidance is provided through a StratCom framework developed at the highest level responsible for the activity.
- c. Micro narratives to be used at the operational and tactical level are nested beneath, and are coherent with, the strategic narrative.
- d. An understanding and baselining of the relevant information environment underpins the direction, planning, execution and assessment of all activities.
- e. StratCom considerations apply continuously throughout the continuum of competition.
- f. At every level, the commander's direction and guidance is informed by the desired strategic outcome, the strategic narrative and StratCom framework.
- g. The information environment will be continuously monitored and assessed to enable refinement of plans and effects.
- h. The information environment is contested and the Alliance has to strive for gaining and maintaining information superiority and shaping the information environment at all times by the coherence and credibility of our actions, images and words.



## Section 10 – Narratives

1.42 The narrative<sup>16</sup> provides the framework to cohere all political, military and civilian personnel's activities, instruments of powers, levels of operations, operational domains and joint operation areas. If the Alliance and its partners are acting coherently, it provides repeating visual proof that deeds match the narrative in the perception of audiences.

1.43 In the context of NATO StratCom, narratives explain the rationale for conducting an activity and the outcome sought, in a short, memorable manner, to build understanding, support and perceptions of legitimacy (See Annex A for more information on narratives). A narrative is a basic depiction of the situation, the purpose and the objective of an organization expressed in a story arc (a common thread communicated through individual stories, images or actions). It contextualizes the strategic planning, furthers the cohesion within the organization and is used to develop culturally acceptable communications to address identified audiences to promote its objectives and aims.

1.44 Narratives stem from both the historical and contemporary context of the situation that is unfolding and should be developed based on the values and/or norms acceptable to the key stakeholders. NATO's institutional and long-term narrative is derived from the Alliance's historical (as stipulated in the 1949 North Atlantic Treaty) purpose and mission. This needs to be applied to the contemporary context of a situation that is unfolding for strategic or micro narratives. The core tenets of NATO's narrative are embodied in the preamble of the North Atlantic Treaty.

*"The Parties to this Treaty reaffirm their faith in the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and their desire to live in peace with all peoples and all governments. They are determined to safeguard the freedom, common heritage and civilization of their peoples, founded on the principles of democracy, individual liberty and the rule of law. They seek to promote stability and well-being in the North Atlantic area. They are resolved to unite their efforts for collective defence and for the preservation of peace and security."*

### Preamble of the North Atlantic Treaty, Washington 1949

<sup>16</sup> A narrative is defined as: 'a spoken or written account of events and information arranged in a logical sequence to influence the behaviour of a target audience'.

1.45 There are three distinct types of narratives of relevance to NATO. These are: institutional narrative, strategic narrative and micro narrative.

a. **Institutional narrative.** Every entity creates an institutional narrative through the process of its establishment. Even though the narrative may not be explicitly communicated, it can be derived from words, actions and other forms of communication within the information environment. NATO's institutional 'core' narrative: 'a democratic, multinational alliance uniting across borders to guard, with courage and competence, against threats to our homes', is rooted in the North Atlantic Treaty. It is propagated through all Alliance activity and focused communications campaigns nested within a communications strategy. Whilst an institutional narrative is generally enduring, it may evolve over time according to changes in the organization and the environment in which it operates.

b. **Strategic narrative.** The strategic narrative explains an organization, institution or group's rationale for conducting a set of activities and the strategic outcome sought. It will be developed at the highest level responsible for the activity as an essential input to the planning process. In the context of NATO, it is important that Allies' narratives for an activity cohere and resonate with the NATO narrative and do not undermine it. It is also important that strategic narratives align with the institutional narrative.

c. **Micro narrative.** Organizations develop micro narratives to support mid-term operational, or short-term tactical objectives. They are highly targeted to specific key stakeholders but must still align with the institutional and strategic narratives of a higher organization. It is also important to ensure that they also align with other micro narratives from the same organization to avoid the accusation of saying one thing to one audience and something else to another.

## Section 11 – The relationship with military strategy

1.46 Military activities strive to be coherent with StratCom direction and guidance. They should reinforce the strategic narrative to support achieving the commander's intent.

1.47 Information and communication activities are integrated and coordinated from the earliest stages of planning and throughout the operations planning process to ensure synchronization, sequencing and deconfliction. Information and communication activities take place within the engagement space and may create effects within the physical and virtual dimensions to ultimately, or directly, create effects within the cognitive dimension in support of the commander's intent, mission objectives and desired end state.

1.48 **Political direction.** The authority for initiating NATO operations, missions and tasks is the NAC. The NAC provides political guidance and, through the NATO Headquarters staff, defines the desired end state, agrees the strategic narrative and identifies the audiences. StratCom direction and guidance is compiled from written and verbal direction and guidance

from the Secretary General, the NAC and its subordinate committees. All subsequent NATO activities are planned and conducted in accordance with that political direction and are subject to oversight by the NAC and thus, ultimately, by Allies. The NAC is advised by the Military Committee, which provides NATO military policy governing the StratCom disciplines.

**1.49 Assurance.** The authority of the NATO military to act comes from Allies and their public. Support of our home audiences is dependent on our ability to hold their trust and confidence. Not only must we assure them of our ability to maintain a safe and secure environment within which they can live their lives, we must also assure them that we will do so, and will continue to do so, in line with their values and the standards they expect of us.

**1.50 Deterrence.** As a defensive alliance, NATO's primary contribution to peace and security lies in deterrence. The Alliance's military posture, when combined with political communications underlining the Allies' commitment to collective defence, delivers a strong deterrence message. Embedding NATO StratCom direction and guidance into the planning for activities carried out by forces under Alliance command and control will ensure a coherent deterrent. Effective deterrence is dependent on five essential principles:

- credibility – the will to act;
- cognition – awareness of own and hostile strengths, weaknesses and limitations;
- capability – the ability to act;
- competition – degrading the will to compete via contesting successfully; and
- communication – ensuring other actors are aware of our capability and credibility.

**1.51 Operations, missions and tasks.** When deterrence fails or is challenged, or a crisis develops, the political decision for NATO to act is addressed through the NAC. The output of the NAC represents the broad consensus between all member states as to what can realistically be achieved, by whom and in what time frame. The planning process should specify clearly the desired behaviours and/or attitudes of audiences (of public, stakeholders and actors). Initial strategic determinations are to be made to guide the military planning process. The NAC's goals are then translated into a firm intent or end state, by way of the operation plan.

**1.52 Force structure.** During crisis escalation, an IEA will allow the planners to understand how audiences are expected to respond to the use of the instruments of power. This will enable the NATO Military Committee, in consultation with Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE), to determine the most appropriate force structure and its presence, posture and profile. The identified force structure should be the one that is most likely to influence the key audience into adopting the desired behaviour. The identified force structure will enable early coordination with member states to determine the availability of such forces.



## Section 12 – The relationship with command and control

1.53 Successful StratCom begins with clear intent and guidance that are considered in the operations planning process. Military planners, and their commanders, focus on cognitive effects of activities in the engagement space during military operations, which is the essence of the manoeuvrist approach. Commanders, exercising mission command, ensure that staff and subordinate headquarters understand the overall intent and associated (micro) narrative, and can manoeuvre within the information environment to achieve their objectives.

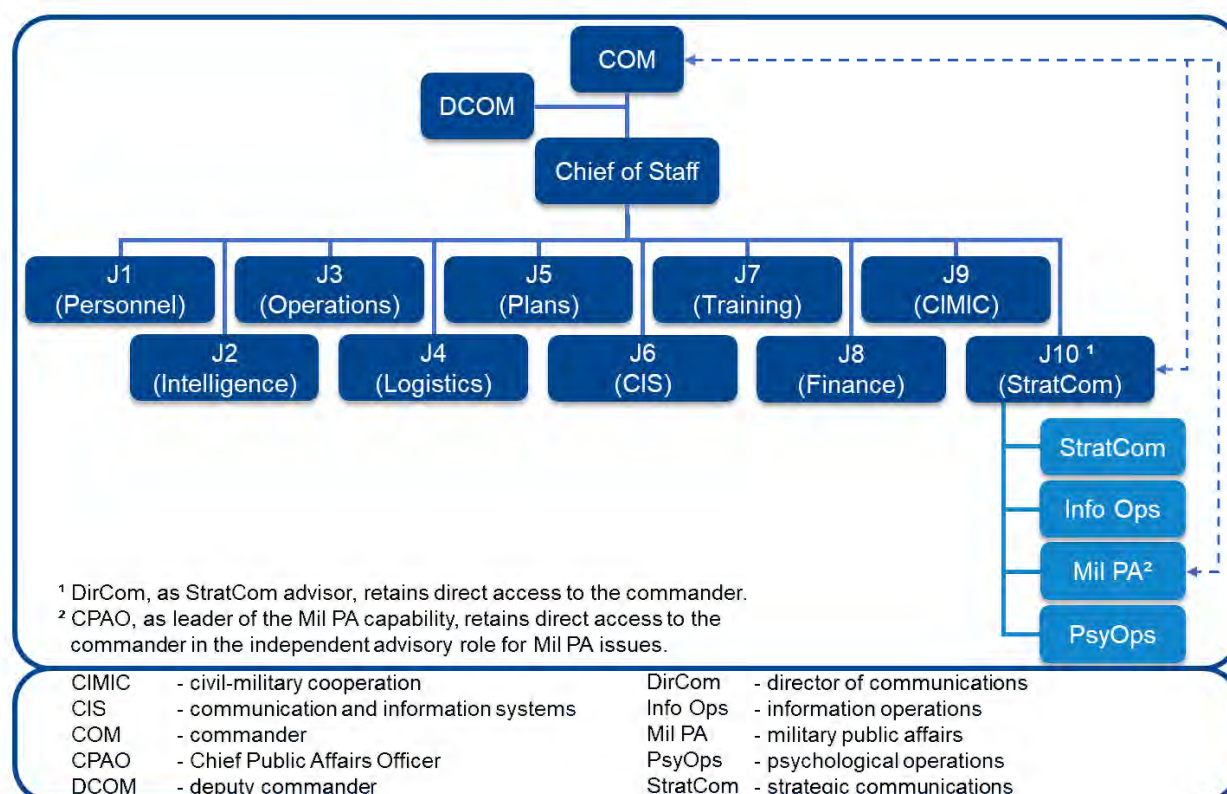
1.54 Awareness of the strategic narrative justifying and guiding the mission, and the resulting commander's intent is key to aligning actions, images and words. The narrative and the commander's intent drive the planning of all activities through the joint functions to ensure that there will be no 'say-do' gap. StratCom can, therefore, provide a consistent link between strategy and tactics, and establishes the first and last reference of mission command. StratCom thus helps enable the operational art, through the information staff function, by ensuring actions support strategic narratives and messages and tactical actions support strategic objectives.

1.55 Having a StratCom mindset is a key aspect of command and control. By acknowledging that every action has a communicative effect, commanders are even more empowered when applying mission command. Decentralized decision-making, reinforced by the practice of informed initiative from subordinate commanders, is how NATO forces in multi-domain operations will keep the balance of power tilted in their favour. This approach promotes initiative, freedom and speed of action to generate agility and tempo.

1.56 All NATO Command Structure and NATO force structure headquarters, from the highest tactical level upwards, need to adopt a StratCom mindset and should structurally organize communication and information staff functions together in a communications directorate (or similar staff element), reporting directly to the command group.<sup>17</sup> Figure 1.7 provides an example of such a structure. As stated in the preface, for the purposes of this publication the communications directorate is designated J10-StratCom.

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<sup>17</sup> MC 0628, *NATO Military Policy on Strategic Communications*.



**Figure 1.7 – Example of a J10-Strategic Communications directorate within a joint task force**

1.57 J10-StratCom is custodian of the StratCom function on behalf of the command group. It provides StratCom support to the other staff directorates and functions. J10-StratCom is responsible for ensuring StratCom factors and considerations are integral to the concept, planning and execution of all operations, missions, tasks and activities. Further detail on the StratCom directorate can be found in Chapter 4.

## Section 13 – Joint and multinational operations

### Operational art

1.58 Operational art is outcome-focused, influencing the right set of audiences by making use of the full set of multi-domain capabilities at the Alliance's disposal. By being outcome-focused, the Alliance will be able to orchestrate its activities more strategically, be increasingly comprehensive in its approach and more effective across the continuum of competition. As a conceptual framework, operational art integrates ends (strategic and/or operational objectives), ways (design, organization, integration and conduct) and means (strategies, campaigns, major operations and battles) and has the creation of effects to achieve objectives as its focus. StratCom assists in developing the broad vision required to support the development of the operations design, course of action development, course of action selection, development of the plan, and operations management processes.

## Principles of joint and multinational operations

1.59 NATO's approach to joint and multinational operations is behaviour-centric and recognizes the contest of wills between the Alliance and its public, stakeholder and actor audiences. StratCom is instrumental in ensuring joint and multinational operations address audiences effectively, to ensure the required maintenance, or change, in perceptions, attitudes and behaviours.

1.60 The mutually supporting principles of joint and multinational operations guide commanders and their staff in planning and conducting campaigns and operations across the continuum of competition. Commanders should strive to achieve these principles, and concurrently seek to deny or degrade the ability of the adversary to do the same. The list of principles is not exhaustive, and their application requires judgement, common sense and intelligent interpretation. Underpinned by the tenets of doctrine, they represent enduring principles; the relative importance of each may vary according to context and the means available to commanders. The principles are:

- unity of effort;
- definition of objectives;
- maintenance of morale;
- initiative;
- freedom of action;
- offensive spirit;
- concentration;
- economy of effort;
- security;
- surprise;
- flexibility; and
- sustainability.

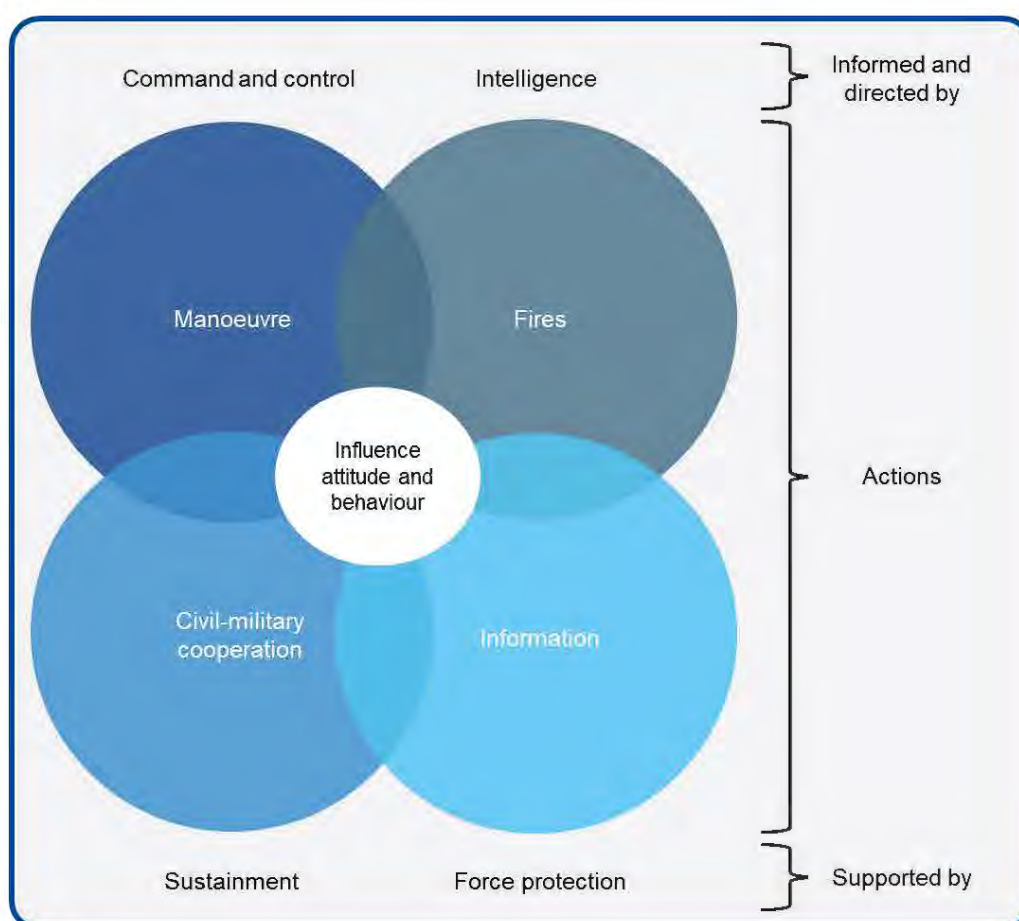
1.61 As the principles guide the commanders and staff, it is equally important to recognize that StratCom planning and narrative formation is an effective means of building cohesion across joint and multinational operations – not just in aligning purpose across such operations, but by demonstrating that the Alliance is mounting a coordinated and cohesive response to its adversaries. Hence, all activities must be coherent with the NATO StratCom frameworks and narratives.<sup>18</sup> This applies throughout the continuum of competition and will enable NATO to maintain a freedom of manoeuvre within the information environment.

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<sup>18</sup> AJP-3.9, *Allied Joint Doctrine for Joint Targeting*.

## Joint function framework

1.62 The joint function framework is a conceptual framework for force integration and synchronization and assists commanders to integrate political, military and civilian actions through the operational domains. The joint functions describe the detailed capabilities of the force. In any operation, these joint functions are to be considered, although the individual functions' contributions, significance and demands will vary. The framework uses a combination of manoeuvre, fires, information and civil-military cooperation (CIMIC) to affect the audience's attitude and behaviour. It is 'informed and directed by' the joint functions of command and control and intelligence, and 'supported by' the joint functions of sustainment and force protection, as shown in Figure 1.8.<sup>19</sup>



**Figure 1.8 – The joint function framework**

1.63 J10-StratCom supports the conceptual framework by providing the information staff function and communications capabilities, and applying the institutional, strategic and micro narratives to ensure a coordinated and coherent joint forces effort that is focused on

<sup>19</sup> AJP-3, *Allied Joint Doctrine for the Conduct of Operations* contains further details.

audiences and their behaviour. The relationship of StratCom and the joint functions are described in more detail below.

- a. **Manoeuvre.** Gaining a positional advantage in respect to the opponent can be done in many different ways. The effects of the disposition of forces, as well as the force capability and posture in the physical and virtual dimensions, are strong means to shape perceptions and create the ultimate effect of breaking the adversary's will to fight. Manoeuvre must therefore reflect the strategic narrative and, where appropriate, be reinforced by effective information activities.
- b. **Fires.** The StratCom process and commanders' (micro) narrative drive the joint targeting process. This process will determine the bearing and scale for planning, execution and evaluation of joint fires to accomplish the commander's intent.
- c. **Information.** Holding responsibility for both the StratCom and information staff functions, and the communication capabilities of Mil PA and PsyOps, J10-StratCom is a key enabler of the information joint function, ensuring information and communication activities are integrated with the operations planning process and are coherent and consistent with the information strategy that conveys the narrative. This is an important relationship in generating coherence of joint force activity. The joint operational planning group addresses StratCom and its associated staff function and capabilities via the information joint function.
- d. **Civil-military cooperation.** CIMIC and civil-military interaction supports StratCom. CIMIC contributes/enables a comprehensive StratCom mindset, which takes into account desired and undesired effects of the second or third order on audiences affected directly or indirectly by joint force action.
- e. **Command and control.** Command and control encompasses leadership, decision-making and coordinating the activity that enables execution of intent. Within the parameters of the StratCom framework, and supported by J10-StratCom, the commander's intent is complemented with a (micro) narrative and is coordinated and integrated through the information staff function to create effects in the cognitive dimension.
- f. **Intelligence.** NATO intelligence is primarily focused on the actor audience category and specifically the adversary and enemy. The process of understanding audiences is derived from the IEA and fused in a headquarters with the joint intelligence preparation of the operating environment and an assessment of the missions and tasks assigned as part of the CUOE.<sup>20</sup> It is at this point that a

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<sup>20</sup> ACO's COPD, Version 3, states that the terms CUOE and comprehensive preparation of the operating environment (CPOE) are often used synonymously. CPOE has traditionally been used to describe the appreciation of an environment, however, CUOE with the use of the word 'understanding' better implies the need to acquire the knowledge and then interpret or comprehend its significance with regard to the crisis.

commander is able to fuse the understanding with analysis of missions and tasks to determine the effects required to attain the end state.

g. **Sustainment.** StratCom is both an enabler for, and is enabled by, sustainment. The use of information activities reinforces sustainment by projecting the credibility and capability of the force; the credibility and capability of a sustained force reinforces the narrative.

h. **Force protection.** StratCom should guide the application of force protection by considering audiences and their perceptions, and by recognizing that information activities can be used to help preserve and protect the force.

## Section 14 – National sovereignty

1.64 NATO is an intergovernmental organization in which member states retain their full sovereignty and independence. As the Alliance operates by consensus, Alliance strategy is bound by the extent of the collective will of Alliance members.

1.65 NATO StratCom strives to ensure Alliance message cohesion; national communications should reinforce NATO StratCom wherever possible. Nations interpret political objectives to facilitate the development of military-strategic objectives and to sustain operations. Political and military-strategic coordination will take place among Allies to ensure that Alliance intent and objectives are deconflicted with national communication activities. This will occur at all joint force levels of command in coordination with respective senior national military representatives.

1.66 Many NATO activities occur as activities of NATO member states. NATO Headquarters acts upon consent with national governments and ministries of defence on any communication or information activity focused on Allied populations. Allies will, at all times, retain primacy with regards to NATO information and communication activities directed specifically at all, or part, of their population.

## Chapter 2 – Roles and responsibilities

### Section 1 – Political-strategic level

2.1 The North Atlantic Council (NAC) provides overall guidance and direction to NATO strategic communications (StratCom) efforts, as well as mission-specific strategic and political guidance for NATO information activities. The Secretary General provides specific direction and guidance on StratCom to all NATO civilian and military bodies and commands. The Secretary General is the principal spokesperson for the Alliance.

2.2 The specific direction and guidance on StratCom is issued by the private office of the Secretary General for onward distribution to the International Military Staff (IMS). The IMS will then pass on the direction and guidance to Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR) and Supreme Allied Commander Transformation (SACT).

2.3 The NATO Public Diplomacy Division (PDD) and IMS Public Affairs and Strategic Communications Advisor (PASCAD) advise the private office of the Secretary General as well as the IMS on StratCom direction and guidance. It is important that commanders at all levels understand and incorporate this strategic direction and guidance into their thinking and planning. It should be manifest in the direction and guidance commanders provide to their staff and subordinates.

#### NATO Public Diplomacy Division

2.4 NATO PDD supports the NAC and the Secretary General in setting overarching Alliance communication objectives and helps to draft StratCom direction and guidance, linked to clear policy objectives. This direction and guidance is developed in close coordination and cooperation with Allies, International Staff divisions, the IMS, Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE), and Headquarters Supreme Allied Command Transformation (HQ SACT).

2.5 The key products through which the StratCom direction and guidance is issued are the *NATO Communications Strategy*, *One NATO Brand Strategy*, *Communications Campaign Guidance*, NATO StratCom frameworks and Integrated Communications Plans, which are compiled from direction and guidance received primarily from the NAC and the Secretary General. This enables commanders at every level to employ mission command to plan and conduct activities that support the higher commander's intent and help achieve the desired outcomes. NATO PDD and IMS PASCAD ensure the StratCom direction and guidance is shared with Allies to encourage a coherent approach to national communications strategies.

- a. ***NATO Communications Strategy***. The *NATO Communications Strategy* is the core guiding document outlining communications priorities. The Strategy provides clear direction and guidance for Alliance-wide communication activities that will contribute to the achievement of Alliance objectives. The development of the *NATO*

*Communications Strategy* is led by the NATO PDD at NATO Headquarters in close coordination with International Staff divisions, IMS and both SHAPE and HQ SACT.

b. **One NATO Brand Strategy.** In a dispersed and crowded information space, public awareness and understanding of NATO must be increased by generating familiarity with, and trust in, the NATO brand. This can help sustain high public support for the Alliance and build resilience against hostile information and disinformation. Brand unity, coherence and consistency are required. The *One NATO Brand Strategy* provides strategic direction and guidance on how to achieve this across the whole of NATO, including the NATO Command Structure, NATO force structure (NFS), NATO agencies and other associated entities. All NATO entities reporting to the Secretary General, SACEUR and SACT must adhere to the *One NATO Brand Strategy* and *NATO Brand Identity Manual*. NATO-affiliated entities, such as national delegations and military representations, agencies, the NFS, and nationally led NATO entities, such as NATO schools and NATO Centres of Excellences, are encouraged to follow the guidance in the *NATO Brand Identity Manual* to help reinforce brand coherence and consistency across the Alliance.

c. **Communications campaign guidance.** Communications campaign guidance is issued by NATO Headquarters PDD and it outlines channels, themes and branding to be followed by staff within subordinate headquarters for the execution of communications campaigns. The guidance provides overarching parameters to engage with specific audience subgroups outlined in the *NATO Communications Strategy*. Within this guidance, subordinate commands can develop their own communication activity. Campaigns guidance informs issue-specific StratCom frameworks and integrated communications plans that cover specific themes and events.

d. **Strategic communications frameworks.** StratCom frameworks are designed to be shared through all levels of command and should be supported at each level by StratCom implementation guidance. This guidance is developed by StratCom staff to assist the headquarters and subordinate levels of command to identify roles and opportunities. Frameworks will often support a dedicated communications campaign. Frameworks are supported by an integrated communications plan on certain themes, or to support specific events, to synchronize information and communication activities and enable effective assessment. StratCom frameworks may be created by subordinate headquarters, provided they are consistent with and nested within NATO Headquarters' frameworks. See Annex B for further information on the framework approach.

e. **Integrated communications plans.** Integrated communications plans are developed in support of StratCom frameworks to specify execution of the StratCom direction and guidance. The integrated communications plans provide the J10-Strategic Communications directorate (J10-StratCom) staff with a comprehensive communications overview of all aspects of the planning, conduct and



assessment of information and communication activities. It should be developed as a whole force process to identify significant activities that can support the achievement of the aims, objectives and desired end state, and record agreed responsibility for the amplification of those activities across the command. It should also provide guidance on how the success, or otherwise, of the activities will be measured. Integrated communications plans are underpinned by an evolving information environment assessment (IEA) function conducted within the J10-StratCom.

2.6 There are some actors within NATO PDD that have a key role in StratCom direction and guidance. They are as follows.

- a. **Assistant Secretary General for Public Diplomacy.** The Assistant Secretary General for Public Diplomacy (ASG PDD) oversees the coordination of all StratCom activities across all NATO civilian and military bodies and commands. They also direct all public diplomacy activities except for press and media.
- b. **NATO Spokesperson.** The NATO Spokesperson, on behalf of the Secretary General, provides day-to-day direction of all headquarters media activities, including messaging. They also offer guidance to military public affairs (Mil PA) to ensure NATO messages and communications are consistent with political direction and guidance.<sup>21</sup>
- c. **NATO Strategic Communications Policy Board.** The NATO Strategic Communications Policy Board, chaired by ASG PDD, is the designated directing body for NATO StratCom.

## Military Committee

2.7 As NATO's highest military authority, the Military Committee, is the primary source of consensus-based military advice to the NAC regarding military policy and strategy. The Military Committee provides direction and guidance to the two strategic commanders, SACEUR and SACT. The Military Committee is supported by the IMS, within which the office of the IMS PASCAD has the lead for StratCom-related matters. Within the IMS, the following have specific StratCom responsibilities.

- a. **Chair of the Military Committee.** The Chair of the Military Committee (CMC) is the principal military advisor to the Secretary General. CMC is NATO's most senior military officer and acts as the senior military spokesperson for the Alliance. The CMC is the conduit through which advice from the nations' chiefs of defence is presented to the political and military decision-making bodies, and also through whom direction and guidance is issued to SACEUR, SACT and the Director General of the IMS.

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<sup>21</sup> MC 0457/3, *NATO Military Policy on Public Affairs*.

b. **Public Affairs and Strategic Communications Advisor.** The IMS PASCAD provides public affairs and StratCom support to the CMC, the deputy CMC, and Director General of the IMS. IMS PASCAD is Chair of the Strategic Communications Military Committee Working Group (MCWG (StratCom)) and has responsibility for developing military policies for StratCom, Mil PA, information operations (Info Ops) and psychological operations (PsyOps). In addition, they advise and support PDD in the development of StratCom direction and guidance and IEA development. They are the IMS coordination point for military StratCom-related work.

## Section 2 – Allied Command Operations

### Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe

2.8 SHAPE is responsible for the conduct of all NATO military operations and has command of all forces assigned to Allied Command Operations (ACO). SHAPE is structured with a Communications Division (ComDiv) reporting directly to the command group. The SHAPE ComDiv groups together all StratCom, Info Ops, Mil PA and PsyOps personnel, functions, capabilities and assigned force elements in line with MC 0628, *NATO Military Policy on Strategic Communications*. SHAPE ComDiv may develop Tier 2 StratCom frameworks to support specific activities. Within SHAPE the following job positions play a key role in StratCom.

- a. **Supreme Allied Commander Europe.** SACEUR is responsible for ensuring NATO StratCom direction and guidance is considered in all ACO direction, planning, execution and assessment of operations and activities.
- b. **Chief of Staff.** Chief of Staff (COS) SHAPE is responsible for ensuring NATO StratCom direction and guidance is considered in all SHAPE direction, planning, execution and assessment.
- c. **Director of Communications.** SHAPE's Director of Communications (DirCom) is responsible to the command group for SHAPE ComDiv and is a member of SACEUR's advisory group. DirCom is appointed by SACEUR as the requirements authority for StratCom education and training.
- d. **Chief Public Affairs Officer.** The Chief Public Affairs Officer (CPAO) SHAPE is the branch head Mil PA within J10-StratCom. The CPAO is a member of SACEUR's advisory group and has direct access to SACEUR for Mil PA matters.

### Joint force commands and Joint Support and Enabling Command

2.9 Joint force commands (JFCs) and the Joint Support and Enabling Command (JSEC) are responsible for planning, conducting and sustaining Alliance military activities across the continuum of competition. Within each JFC headquarters and the JSEC headquarters, J10-StratCom (or a similar structure) will advise the commander and provide planning

expertise as well as an IEA to support planning and targeting, ensure the integration of information activities and conduct communication activities.

2.10 All Allied Command Operations JFC and JSEC headquarters must have a J10-StratCom reporting directly to the command group. This directorate groups together all StratCom, Info Ops, Mil PA and PsyOps personnel, functions, capabilities and force elements, in line with MC 0628. JFC and JSEC headquarters may develop Tier 3 StratCom frameworks<sup>22</sup> to support specific activities. Within the JFC and JSEC, the following job positions play a key role in StratCom.

- a. **Commander.** The commanders of JFC and JSEC are responsible for ensuring NATO StratCom direction and guidance is considered in all their direction, planning, execution and assessment of operations.
- b. **Director of Communications.** Within JFC and JSEC, the DirCom (or a similar position) is responsible to the command group for StratCom. The DirCom is a principal advisor to the commander, as well as the head of J10-StratCom. As a principal advisor, with direct access to the commander, DirCom should be mindful of staff processes and planning requirements outlined in AJP-3 *Allied Joint Doctrine for the Conduct of Operations* and AJP-5 *Allied Joint Doctrine for the Planning of Operations*.
- c. **Chief Public Affairs Officer.** The CPAO is the Mil PA Branch Head within J10-StratCom and is a member of the commander's advisory group. The CPAO is a principal advisor and has direct access to the commander for Mil PA matters. As a principal advisor, with direct access to commander, CPAO should be mindful of staff processes and planning requirements outlined in AJP-3, *Allied Joint Doctrine for the Conduct of Operations* and AJP-5, *Allied Joint Doctrine for the Planning of Operation*.

## Component commands

2.11 Component commands are responsible for supporting the joint commands in the planning, execution and assessment of activities. Additionally, component commands will develop and execute component-specific information and communication activities to support Alliance StratCom objectives.

2.12 All ACO component command headquarters are to be structured with a J10-StratCom (or a similar structure) reporting directly to the command group, which groups together all StratCom, Info Ops, Mil PA and PsyOps personnel, functions and force elements, in line with MC 0628. Additionally, all ACO component commands should ensure that the J10-StratCom director (or similar function) reports directly to the command group.

2.13 ACO component command headquarters may develop Tier 3 StratCom frameworks to support specific activities. The job positions of the key actors (Commander, DirCom and

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<sup>22</sup> See Annex B for more information on StratCom frameworks.

CPAO) are similar in a component command headquarters to that of their JFC and JSEC equivalents.

## **NATO force structure**

2.14 Each headquarters is uniquely structured to meet the national direction and guidance of their framework nation and the NATO role they are fulfilling. However, when committed to NATO operations, each headquarters will adapt its organization to operate in line with the doctrine set out in this publication and efficiently embed themselves within the NFS headquarters staff functions and processes.

## **Section 3 – Allied Command Transformation**

### **Headquarters Supreme Allied Command Transformation**

2.15 HQ SACT provides military advice on StratCom-related education and training, concept, capability and doctrine development. This is carried out in consultation with ACO and the NATO Standardization Office (NSO). Within HQ SACT, the following positions play a key role in StratCom.

- a. **Supreme Allied Commander Transformation.** SACT is the authority leading the development of StratCom structures, forces, capabilities and military doctrine, to ensure the StratCom discipline is aligned with and supports the Alliance's operational requirements.
- b. **Chief of Staff.** COS SACT is responsible for overseeing the development of StratCom capabilities. Communications Branch Head ACT reports directly to the COS, and also has direct access to SACT and Deputy SACT as an advisor for communications requirements, in line with SACT communications advisor.
- c. **Deputy Chief of Staff Joint Force Development.** Deputy Chief of Staff (DCOS) Joint Force Development (JFD) directs and coordinates all NATO education and training activities. DCOS JFD is functionally responsible for:
  - global programming;
  - individual education and training requirements;
  - supporting ACO with collective training and exercises;
  - establishing the governance framework;
  - maintaining the StratCom structure; and
  - oversight of the StratCom Department Head function.
- d. **Deputy Chief of Staff Capability Development.** DCOS Capability Development (CapDev) directs and coordinates CapDev for the Alliance. DCOS CapDev provides the StratCom/IEA CapDev team within its joint effects section. This

section is supported by the operational experimentation branch within the JFD directorate. This team is responsible for liaising with the StratCom staff in NATO Headquarters PDD, IMS PASCAD, SHAPE ComDiv and other StratCom key personnel within NATO. To develop cutting-edge NATO capabilities, the CapDev directorate collaborates with industry and the science and technology community to infuse innovative ideas and transformative principles into the StratCom developmental process.

e. **Chief Communications Branch.** The ACT Communications Branch, led by Chief Communications Branch, is responsible for developing the ACT strategic vision and messaging. A special organizational feature of ACT is that the ACT Communications Branch also oversees Mil PA and corporate communications sections.<sup>23</sup> They have a focus on the coordination of StratCom activities with NATO Headquarters, ACO, subordinate commands and ACT teams, in accordance with the roles and responsibilities stated in the MC 0628. They also need to liaise with HQ SACT StratCom/IEA CapDev teams and key StratCom staff within NATO Headquarters, PDD, IMS PASCAD, and SHAPE to synchronize and coordinate StratCom efforts and activities.

f. **Chief Public Affairs Officer.** The CPAO for ACT directs, plans and executes strategic-level Mil PA in support of NATO transformation activities under SACT's direction and responsibility. CPAO ACT is Deputy Chief Communications Branch and has direct access to SACT and Deputy SACT as an advisor on Mil PA matters. CPAO guides the communications work of the ACT sub-centres.

g. **Capability Development, Joint Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance and Joint Effects Branch.** Joint Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance and Joint Effects (JISR&JE) Branch Head has the following responsibilities:

- NATO Enterprise and Alliance capability programme planning, coordination, and monitoring, across all policy and doctrine, organization, training, materiel, leadership development, personnel, facilities and interoperability (DOTMLPFI) lines of development throughout the life cycle for StratCom capabilities and information staff function;
- leading node for safeguarding the topicality and timeliness of principal documents;
- capabilities project coordination to plan, coordinate and monitor CapDev; and
- operational subject matter experts in StratCom capabilities and information staff functions.

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<sup>23</sup> This feature of ACT does not create a precedent for other organizations.

## Subordinate and external organizations

2.16 SACT is supported in their responsibilities for NATO StratCom by a number of subordinate and external organizations. The primary organizations are as follows.

- a. **The Joint Warfare Centre.** The Joint Warfare Centre provides NATO's training delivery focal point for full-spectrum, joint, operational-level warfare. They ensure that NATO collective training exercises deliver SACT's StratCom training requirements, as set out in SACEUR's guidance on exercises.
- b. **The Joint Force Training Centre.** The Joint Force Training Centre supports SACT through training and capability building. They ensure that NATO training activities meet the SACT StratCom training requirements.
- c. **The Joint Analysis and Lessons Learned Centre.** The Joint Analysis and Lessons Learned Centre performs analysis of operations, training, exercises and experiments. They facilitate the exchange of StratCom lessons learned in support of the transformation and modernization of NATO forces and capabilities.
- d. **The Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence.** The Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence (SCCOE) is the nominated external Department Head for NATO StratCom education and training development. SCCOE manages StratCom individual and collective education and training requirements. SCCOE is supported by the NATO School Oberammergau as part of the global programming approach to NATO education and training.

## Chapter 3 – Operationalizing strategic communications

### Section 1 – Setting the context

3.1 The hyper-connected global information environment has fundamentally changed the way in which people communicate, share data and information, and consume media. More than ever before, desired outcomes at and above the operational level require the ability to influence the perception, attitudes and behaviours of relevant actors.

3.2 NATO activity, as in demonstration of military capability or measured power projection, contributes to deterrence and is the most powerful form of sending a message. However, such action can also be perceived as escalatory and provocative if not put in context. NATO must therefore clearly communicate the rationale and context for any new action that is undertaken, adjusting routine activities, and consequently the messages (visual and verbal), as required. The latter is equally important for any action not undertaken.

3.3 Creating effects in the cognitive dimension is the primary consideration for the planning and conduct of all activities. Synchronized messaging is required to ensure that NATO objectives and NATO's actions are understood by audiences as intended. To operationalize NATO strategic communications (StratCom), the following considerations need to be kept in mind.

- a. Mission success is attained by influencing the perception, attitudes and behaviours of relevant actors to achieve objectives. Military activities, including successful combat engagements, are only advantageous insofar as they contribute to achieving those objectives.
- b. All activities of NATO forces, both inside and outside of missions and operations, shall remain coherent with the Alliance's narrative, aims, objectives and values.
- c. J10-Strategic Communications directorate (J10-StratCom) derives the commander's (micro) narrative from higher headquarters StratCom direction and guidance and provides advice to the commander on how to align the actions, images, words and deeds of the forces under their command to support the desired strategic outcome.
- d. The commander's direction, guidance and intent is informed by, and is consistent with, the narrative and, if issued, by the respective higher headquarters StratCom framework.
- e. The design, planning, execution and assessment of activities need to be based on a thorough understanding of all relevant audiences and include possible limitations for their engagement. Prioritization of stakeholders is a command responsibility.

f. The design, planning, execution and assessment of activities requires an understanding of the information environment as it relates to the relevant audiences; it encompasses how information enters, circulates and affects the public, stakeholders or actors.

g. Possible second and third order effects on other audiences need to be considered, identified and, if required, mitigated to prevent undesirable outcomes.

h. Consideration needs to be given to how NATO's actions, images and words might be misrepresented by an adversary to undermine the Alliance narrative or reinforce their own.

3.4 NATO's StratCom framework hierarchy (see Annex B) provides standing direction and guidance for the activities of forces under Alliance command and control. In particular, the deterrence and security framework and military posture framework govern how NATO military forces routinely conduct their activities. These frameworks are regularly reviewed to ensure alignment with North Atlantic Council (NAC) and Secretary General guidance. Changes in military posture may be directed by the NAC as a political response to significant geopolitical changes, or by Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR) and subordinate commanders within current military posture direction and guidance.

## Section 2 – Processes

### Strategic communications processes at NATO Headquarters

3.5 **Direction and guidance.** The NATO Assistant Secretary General for Public Diplomacy (ASG PDD) leads the NATO Strategic Communications Policy Board, which is the primary body overseeing NATO StratCom direction and guidance.

3.6 **Planning.** The *NATO Communications Strategy* is the primary means of disseminating NATO StratCom direction and guidance. This is supported by StratCom frameworks and integrated communications plans developed by NATO Public Diplomacy Division (PDD) staff in consultation and coordination with the International Military Staff (IMS) Public Affairs and Strategic Communications Advisor (PASCAD). Allied Command Operations (ACO) and Allied Command Transformation (ACT) will support NATO Headquarters in developing such documents.

3.7 **Coordination.** NATO PDD liaises with nations to ensure coherence of NATO and its Allies' messaging at the political level. IMS PASCAD liaises with nations at the military-strategic level.

3.8 **Execution.** NATO PDD plans and executes NATO StratCom at the political level. IMS PASCAD ensures that the StratCom direction and guidance documents are passed down to the military chain of command.



3.9 **Assessment.** NATO PDD, aided by IMS PASCAD, provides StratCom assessments to the Secretary General and the NAC.

### **Strategic communications processes at Allied Command Operations**

3.10 **Direction and guidance.** The SACEUR-led ACO Strategic Communications Coordination Board is the primary body overseeing ACO StratCom direction and guidance.

3.11 **Planning.** The ACO StratCom framework is the primary means for disseminating SACEUR's StratCom direction and guidance. This is supported by ACO integrated communications plans and StratCom implementation guidance. They are developed by Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE) Communications Division (ComDiv) in consultation and coordination with NATO Headquarters IMS PASCAD and the J10-StratCom directorates of the joint force commands (JFCs) and Joint Support and Enabling Command (JSEC). SHAPE ComDiv plans ACO communication activities.

3.12 **Coordination.** SHAPE ComDiv liaises with nations through the SHAPE national military representatives to ensure dissemination of NATO and Allies' messaging to military forces assigned, or likely to be assigned, to NATO command and control.

3.13 **Execution.** SHAPE ComDiv executes ACO communication activities and has oversight on the execution of ACO information activities.

3.14 **Assessment.** SHAPE ComDiv provides information environment assessment (IEA) reports to SACEUR.

### **Strategic communications processes at joint forces command**

3.15 **Direction and guidance.** The JFC commander approved StratCom framework is the primary publication for providing StratCom direction and guidance to the headquarters.

3.16 **Planning.** The annual JFC StratCom framework and implementation guidance is the primary means for disseminating JFC commander StratCom direction and guidance. This is supported by respective StratCom integrated communications plans. JFC J10-StratCom develops the aforementioned documents in consultation and coordination with JFC headquarters staff, SHAPE ComDiv, subordinate units' and other NATO force structure (NFS) units' headquarters J10-StratCom staff in a joint operations area. JFC J10-StratCom, through the StratCom Working Group (SCWG) and Information Activities Coordination Board (IACB),<sup>24</sup> plans, coordinates and synchronizes JFC information and communication activities in a joint operations area.

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<sup>24</sup> This can be an Information Activities Working Group (IAWG) as appropriate in some headquarters.

3.17 **Coordination.** JFC J10-StratCom liaises with SHAPE ComDiv, subordinate units' and other NFS units' headquarters J10-StratCom staff, as well as NATO entities (partners) in a joint operations area to ensure coherence and dissemination of NATO messaging.

3.18 **Execution.** JFC J10-StratCom executes communication activities in its joint operations area. The IACB ensures that information activities are coherent and synchronized with other actions in the joint operations area.

3.19 **Assessment.** JFC J10-StratCom provides IEA reports to SHAPE ComDiv.

### **Strategic communications processes at component command**

3.20 **Direction and guidance.** The component command commander-led Strategic Communications Coordination Board is the primary body for providing StratCom direction and guidance to the headquarters.

3.21 **Planning.** The annual JFC StratCom framework and implementation guidance is the primary means for disseminating component command commander StratCom direction and guidance. This is supported by respective StratCom integrated communications plans. Component command J10-StratCom develops the aforementioned documents in consultation and coordination with JFC J10-StratCom and subordinate units' headquarters J10-StratCom staff (and other NFS units' headquarters J10-StratCom staff if required) in an area of operations. Component command J10-StratCom, through the SCWG and IACB, plans coordinates and synchronizes component command information and communication activities in an area of operations.

3.22 **Coordination.** Component command J10-StratCom liaises with JFC ComDiv and subordinate units' headquarters J10-StratCom staff (and other NFS units' headquarters J10-StratCom staff and NATO entities/partners if required) in an area of operations to ensure dissemination of NATO messaging.

3.23 **Execution.** Component command J10-StratCom executes communication activities in its area of operations. The IACB ensures that information activities are coherent and synchronized with other actions in the area of operations.

3.24 **Assessment.** Component command J10-StratCom provides IEA reports to JFC J10-StratCom and/or SHAPE ComDiv.

### **Operations planning process**

3.25 An essential part of NATO StratCom is formulating StratCom objectives<sup>25</sup> that support achieving desired end states. They should be clearly defined and attainable goals. Derived from objectives, and in support of them, respective desired effects should be created.

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<sup>25</sup> See Annex B, paragraph B.10.e for more details on StratCom objectives.

When setting objectives and planning effects, the following principles need to be observed. They should be:

- **legitimate** – they should respect the values of a pluralistic public debate and intellectual self-determination of the audience and the freedom of the media of democratic states;
- **realistic** – they should take into account the complexity and multiple interdependencies of the information environment; and
- **measurable** – they should describe the attainment of a measurable outcome within defined periods of time.

3.26 StratCom assessment criteria seek to evaluate whether and to what extent its intended effects have been achieved. Indicators need to be identified and quantified at the beginning of the operations planning process and referenced throughout execution to show if and when success has been achieved.

3.27 Effects in the physical and virtual dimensions can have cognitive effects, either positively by closing the 'say-do' gap to our advantage, or negatively by contradicting our own information and communication activities. Therefore, StratCom objectives need to be considered at every stage of conception, direction, planning and execution for an activity.

### **Battle rhythm**

3.28 For all activities across the continuum of competition, appropriate information and communication activities should be identified, planned, executed and/or integrated with other activities to create, mitigate and/or avoid certain effects in the three effect dimensions – physical, virtual and cognitive – of the information environment. This requires pan-headquarters integrated planning. See Annex C for the StratCom contribution to the operations planning process.

3.29 The pan-headquarters integrated planning requires synchronizing strategic, operational, and tactical processes, to ensure mission planning, preparation, and execution. This process, called battle rhythm, is a routine cycle of command and staff activities intended to synchronize current and future operations. This battle rhythm is created and outlined in individual headquarters' standard operating procedures.

3.30 While there are some typical battle rhythm events like a commander's brief or Joint Coordination Board, the headquarters battle rhythm should also facilitate NATO StratCom-related working groups and boards to support implementation and coordination vertically and horizontally. While individual headquarters adopt their own battle rhythm, boards and working groups, Annex D outlines considerations for possible working groups and boards to be facilitated or attended by J10-StratCom.

## Joint effects and joint targeting

3.31 Joint effects is a developing function based on current joint targeting practices; integration across disciplines is critical to success. The StratCom function contributes by ensuring joint effects is conducted being cognisant of extant StratCom direction and guidance. The joint effects function is further explained in AJP-3.9 *Allied Joint Doctrine for Joint Targeting*.

3.32 Joint targeting is a component of the joint effects function that manages the process of selecting and prioritizing adversary targets with a view to creating desired effects in the physical, virtual or cognitive dimensions in accordance with the commander's objectives. Through the information staff function, J10-StratCom is responsible for identifying and proposing information activities as part of the joint targeting process. The joint targeting function is further explained in AJP-3.9, *Allied Joint Doctrine for Joint Targeting*. The information staff function is further explained in AJP-10.1, *Allied Joint Doctrine for Information Operations*.

3.33 Recognizing that all actions and non-actions in the operational domains will ultimately have effects in the physical, virtual and cognitive effect dimensions, the alignment of our 'actions, images and words' with the narrative is essential both for coherent StratCom and successful joint effects. The result of all effects across the dimensions can be intended or unintended. Intended refers to those effects for which the activity was primarily conducted to achieve. Unintended refers to consequential effects that were not the primary purpose of the activity.

## Counter-hostile information and disinformation

3.34 Counter-hostile information and disinformation, also known as countering propaganda, is a multi-discipline effort. It is guided and directed by J10-StratCom and coordinated by the information operations (Info Ops) staff to deliver agility and proactiveness within the information environment. The continuous IEA conducted by J10-StratCom-led Info Ops IEA cell is complemented by military public affairs (Mil PA) and psychological operations (PsyOps) specialists. The latter has a leading role in the analysis of hostile information and disinformation and support to counter-hostile information activities during operations. They focus specifically on analysis of adversary information activities, their source, content, intended audience, media selection and effectiveness.

3.35 The role of PsyOps specialists comprises analysis, advice, prevention and crisis management across the continuum of competition to mitigate and counteract the use of adversary hostile information activities and develop Allied options and opportunities for employment of their own PsyOps. Identified themes in adversary's hostile information activities can be countered by information and communication activities through coordination by J10-StratCom, as required. It remains the responsibility of Allies and their entitled bodies to decide how and if they counter/respond to hostile information activities in their respective countries.

## Section 3 – Understanding

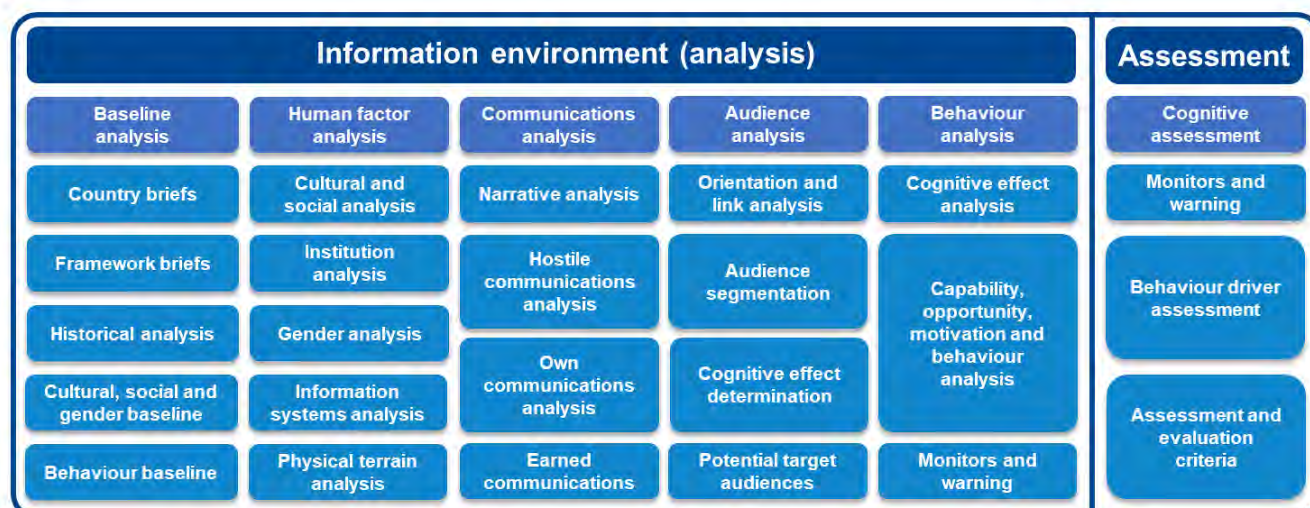
3.36 Understanding the information environment is a vital prerequisite to planning, conducting and assessing NATO activities. It comprises research, analysis and assessment of the information environment as part of the IEA and is fused, with the joint intelligence preparation of the operating environment (JIPOE) and an assessment of the missions and tasks assigned, to form the comprehensive understanding of the operational environment (CUOE). The CUOE allows a commander and their staff to understand the physical, virtual and cognitive elements of the system within the engagement space that can be used or targeted to create effects in the effect dimensions.

### Information environment assessment

3.37 The IEA pursues understanding of the information environment by identifying the parameters that can be used to generate a realistic picture of the relevant audiences and their respective communication processes and the technological equipment used. Monitoring and assessment of the information environment provides an indication of changes within the information environment to inform future planning and execution. As the environment evolves, the IEA needs to continue to be fully integrated into a headquarters' wider understanding, encompassing all levels of the military command structure. This will ensure commanders have a common understanding of the information environment.

3.38 The IEA provides the ability to analyze, assess, evaluate and visualize the information environment and is comprised of people, processes and technology to support understanding, decision-making and the application of capability in the engagement space. It can be broken into two main elements: analysis and assessment. IEA activity begins with identifying audiences – benchmarking their attitudes, perceptions and behaviour – and the information and communication processes, systems (including their characteristics and components), and equipment that support and feed their understanding. This is followed by monitoring and assessing the information environment to identify changes that affect NATO missions, NATO operations or NATO as a whole, positively or negatively, and inform future planning and execution of information and communication activities. Within J10-StratCom, the information staff function will be responsible for the IEA process, assisted by numerous stakeholders who will provide specialist input and analysis.

3.39 The IEA is the foundation for the planning and execution of all information and communication activities and can be broken down into several analysis and assessment processes. This is illustrated in Figure 3.1.



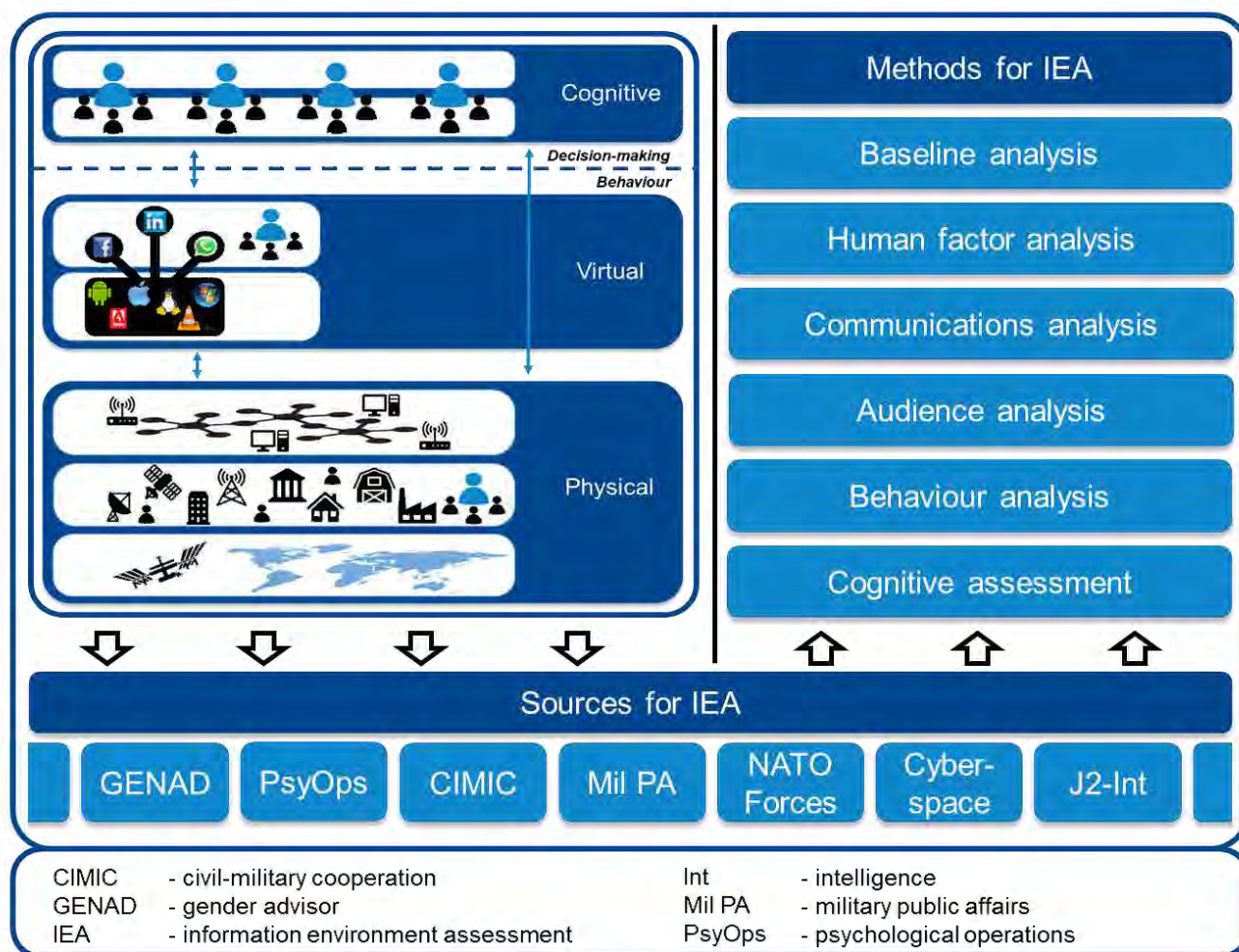
**Figure 3.1 – Information environment assessment**

3.40 The IEA provides the ability to comprehensively understand the dynamics of the information environment to better operate within it, assessing the effects of own and hostile information and communication activities, as well as assessing earned communications (as illustrated in Figure 3.1). It supports StratCom decision-making seamlessly at the political-strategic, military-strategic and operational levels. IEA requires:

- **people** with technical and analytical skills;
- **processes** that are predictable, repeatable methods applicable and relevant at multiple levels; and
- **technology** tools that provide a common digital environment – an environment enabled by a range of data sources and services, working with speed, aggregation of content and access to a wide range of disaggregated advanced analytic packages and visualization.

3.41 The introduction of IEA is designed to provide a holistic understanding of the information environment to better support decision-making. However, it is not intended to be a stand-alone function. It must be flexible to meet the future cross-functional needs of other communities of interest. IEA is most effective when integrated into, and informed by, other functions and processes, receiving and providing adapted products to support planning and conduct of activities.<sup>26</sup> Figure 3.2 illustrates the methods and some of the sources used for IEA.

<sup>26</sup> See AJP-10.1, *Allied Joint Doctrine for Information Operations* for further information on IEAs.



**Figure 3.2 – Methods and sources for information environment assessment**

3.42 The IEA considers the information environment in terms of all sources of data and publicly available information. There are occasions when analysis or insights generated through the IEA process are required to contribute to analysis conducted at more classified levels, normally conducted by communities outside the StratCom disciplines, for example, J2-Intelligence directorate.

## Section 4 – Planning and execution

3.43 The planning and conduct of NATO activities across the continuum of competition should be carried out in accordance with the commander's direction and guidance. The operation plan should specify the audiences to be informed and influenced, the effects required/desired and the rationale. J10-StratCom is responsible for supporting this planning by sharing and integrating the expertise of its functions and capabilities through coordination, meetings, working groups and boards.



**3.44 Intent.** The purpose of Alliance information activities is to maintain or change perceptions, attitudes or behaviours to support the desired end state through the coordinated, combined and synchronized use of a variety of means. It is essential that commanders receive, and give, clear direction and guidance; there should be a continual assessment of progress towards the achievement of objectives. The commander's intent is complemented by the commander's (micro) narrative. The intent and associated (micro) narrative drive the planning and conduct of all activities. The head and director of communications (DirCom) of J10-StratCom supports the development of the commander's (micro) narrative and provides advice to the commander on how to align the actions, images, words and deeds of the forces under their command.

**3.45 Ends, ways and means.** An assessment of how (ways) and with what (means) should only occur at the stage where the desired outcomes (ends) are known, and the information environment is understood. Much can be considered in advance, but the NFS need to be tailored to the mission to meet the requirement. It can be a mistake to take available military formations and then try to fit them to a problem they are not structured to resolve, purely because they are available. Direction from the NATO Military Committee on the composition of forces for operations forms only part of the NATO toolset for sending a message. Direction on desired audience behaviour and attitude will be wrapped into military-strategic objectives, along with direction on the broader messages to be delivered to a wider range of secondary audiences.

**3.46 Direction.** Capabilities and activities communicate; what they communicate is shaped and amplified by communication activities and information activities. Thus, presence, posture and profile and the disposition of forces should be designed considering the intended effect in the information environment. All capabilities contribute to the communication effort and StratCom helps the commander to maintain the strategic and tactical relevance of this effort. StratCom attaches equal relevance to all NATO capabilities regarding their respective contribution to the overall communication effort.

**3.47 Balancing desired and undesired effects.** The use of military assets is a powerful tool to send a message. However, it is extremely difficult to create the intended perceptions in audiences to generate the required behaviour, while simultaneously avoiding unintended and unhelpful effects. Negative impacts to external stakeholders and the public should be considered and mitigated during risk analysis. StratCom contributes to the successful application of operations design by assessing the positive and negative perceptions that might be generated by various courses of action and determining which course of action might offer the most advantageous likely outcome.

**3.48 Strategic communications direction.** Military action alone does not resolve crises in the contemporary global security environment. It can, however, enable support and set the conditions for resolution by other actors, and other instruments of power provided by NATO member states and/or other international organizations. Following the political direction of the NAC, NATO Headquarters issues StratCom direction and guidance to the military-strategic level through the NATO Headquarters PDD and IMS PASCAD. All military activities are



planned and executed in accordance with NATO Headquarters political-strategic direction. PDD also provides the coordinating function for the other instruments of power exercised by individual member states. NATO StratCom direction and guidance includes the following.

- a. **Strategic narrative.** This provides the activity-specific historical and contemporary context for the operation and the desired end state. The strategic narrative will guide planning and provide meaning to NATO's actions.
- b. **StratCom framework.** This provides the necessary StratCom factors, considerations and approach for the conduct of the operation. This supports commanders at all levels to use mission command to contribute to achieving the desired end state. Within NATO there are three tiers of StratCom framework. The direction and guidance contained in each framework is consistent with the direction and guidance provided in the framework issued from the higher level of command. See Annex B for further detail on StratCom frameworks.
- c. **Integrated communication plan.** This provides the necessary direction and guidance for the conduct of communication activities. This ensures coherence of messaging across and through the multiple layers of command.

3.49 **Working groups and boards.** Operations require strategic, operational and tactical processes to be synchronized to ensure mission planning, preparation and execution will be successful. This process is a routine cycle of command and staff activities intended to synchronize current and future operations planning in accordance with the headquarters' decision cycle. J10-StratCom contribute their subject matter expertise in different working groups and boards that are part of the routine cycle within the headquarters. They should make sure that the cycle contains working group and board meetings that support the StratCom efforts. See Annex D for more details on StratCom-related working groups and boards.

## Section 5 – Monitoring and assessment

3.50 There needs to be a continual assessment of progress towards achieving the military-strategic objectives and understanding how military activities are impacting audience perceptions, attitudes and behaviours. This requires an effective assessment process that uses a combination of assessment criteria to determine the effects of our actions on audiences' perceptions, beliefs, interests, aims, decisions and behaviours.<sup>27</sup> Since military activities are not an end in themselves, they should only be undertaken where they will support the attainment of the end state.

### Attitudes and behaviour

3.51 If a NATO end state is to be attained and maintained over time, an understanding of what will change attitudes – perceptions and beliefs – and behaviour is essential. Equally, an

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<sup>27</sup> See AJP-10.1, *Allied Joint Doctrine for Information Operations* for further information.

understanding of what might maintain and reinforce those traits is also necessary. It is important to understand that changes may be long term as a result of persuasion, or short term as a result of coercion.

3.52 Similarly vital for this understanding is assessing the factors that impact perception and beliefs (environment, motives and values), which may shape behaviour. The formulation of measures of effectiveness (MOE)<sup>28</sup> should focus on two related questions.

- a. **What is the audience saying?** This might indicate changes in attitude or identify evolving conditions required for behaviour to change.
- b. **What is the audience doing?** This will confirm the creation of effects with regard to desired changes in behaviour and might indicate changes in attitudes.

3.53 In addressing the questions of what the audience is saying and doing, freedom of speech, or lack of it, should be taken into account. Additionally, the overt expression of opinion can require much more commitment than anonymously expressing an opinion. Equally, what people say anonymously does not have to reflect their overt actions. People behave and speak differently online and offline. When confirming the creation of desired effects, both short-term behaviour change and longer-term changes in behaviour should be considered.

### Information fusion

3.54 A true understanding of the information environment requires the fusion of the results of overt and covert collection methods, which may be classified. It is important for commanders and analysts to have access to any additional classified information that may affect their decision-making. J10-StratCom personnel involved in the understand function must work closely with J2-Intelligence through an agreed information fusion process, including direct access to the intelligence functional systems, to ensure the commander has the best picture available.

3.55 While J2-Intelligence focuses on adversary-centric information collection while conducting the JIPOE, J10-StratCom should focus on broader audience-centric information analysis to provide cognitive orientation of public, stakeholders and actors towards concerned themes, institutions, groups, key influencers and communicators.

### Process evaluation

3.56 The IEA is an evolving functional area that operates within an evolving environment. This makes capturing lessons identified and lessons learned critical to its effective development. Where StratCom-enabled activities prove to be ineffective at generating

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<sup>28</sup> The MOE should take into account the requirements of contemporary international professional standards such as the Integrated Evaluation Framework of the International Association for the Measurement and Evaluation of Communication (AMEC).

desired changes, an analysis of the situation, supported by polling of the parties (perhaps years later) will help us to understand why something did or did not work. The lessons identified should be examined to determine whether they indicate that wider systemic issues need to be addressed or point solely to errors in conducting the activities.

- Was the audience analysis incomplete?
- Was a vital factor missed?
- Was the execution of the activity poor?

3.57 History has demonstrated that some almost insignificant actions or decisions have had significant impacts on the course of events. Therefore, a continuous process of learning from experience is essential to understand what constitutes the most efficient way NATO can operate and communicate with audiences.

## Section 6 – Education and training

3.58 Effective StratCom requires trained and experienced communication practitioners. NATO Allied Strategic Communications Publication (ASCP)-01, *NATO Strategic Communications Training Standards* defines the minimum level of proficiency for all personnel assigned to NATO J10-StratCom positions. This should ensure Allies, who are diverse in their national approaches to the concepts of StratCom, Mil PA, Info Ops and PsyOps, understand and agree the competency and experience standards required of individuals assigned to serve in NATO StratCom positions. Its implementation will also support a more effective overall Alliance response through individual Allies' national responses to an adversary strategy. ASCP-01 has five aims.

- a. To establish a minimum standard of competency for individuals assigned to NATO peacetime establishment and crisis establishment StratCom positions.
- b. To establish a minimum collective training standard for the StratCom capabilities identified in the NATO capability codes and capability statements.
- c. To enable NATO to better manage and deliver the education and training needed to meet the NATO-specific requirements.
- d. To define the responsibility for education and training between nations and the Alliance.
- e. To provide nations bidding for positions within NATO StratCom disciplines with the detail needed to ensure that the individuals assigned to the positions meet the minimum competency standards required.

3.59 ASCP-01 defines the cross-cutting core competency areas for the StratCom disciplines and defines the minimum core competency requirements for each area. It also sets out the key roles and responsibilities for NATO StratCom education and training,

enabling Allies to adapt and develop their national training programmes to better support interoperability.

## Policy and governance

3.60 Military Committee (MC) 0458/4, *NATO Military Policy on Education, Training, Exercises and Evaluation*<sup>29</sup> provides the framework for governance and uses the global programming methodology to assess operational requirements against training delivery. The key elements are:

- StratCom strategic training plan, which establishes StratCom as the overarching authority on training for StratCom, Mil PA, Info Ops and PsyOps;
- ASCP-01, *NATO Strategic Communications Training Standards*;
- training requirements analysis;
- training needs analysis;
- annual discipline conference; and
- StratCom discipline alignment plan.

## Responsibilities

3.61 **Allies.** Allies are individually responsible for ensuring personnel assigned to NATO J10-StratCom and DirCom positions meet the defined and agreed pre-assignment education and training competency standards and the required experience, as set out in ASCP-01.

3.62 **NATO.** The NATO requirements authority is responsible for defining NATO competency standards for personnel assigned to NATO J10-StratCom positions.

3.63 **Director of communications.** DirCom is responsible for ensuring all J10-StratCom job descriptions accurately reflect the role and responsibilities of the post holder.

3.64 **ACT Joint Force Development.** ACT Joint Force Development through the StratCom discipline Department Head and ACT Officer of Primary Responsibility and Education and Training Facilities, are responsible for ensuring the quality of instruction, course content and speakers for all NATO-approved StratCom courses to meet the education and training competency levels set by the Requirements Authority and as set out in the Annual Discipline Alignment Plan.

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<sup>29</sup> Bi-SC Directives 75-2, 75-3 and 75-7 are the principle documents that NATO personnel should reference to illustrate how NATO policy should be applied within NATO command and force structures.

## Chapter 4 – The communications directorate

### Section 1 – Introduction

4.1 The introduction of MC 0628, *NATO Military Policy on Strategic Communications* represented a fundamental shift in NATO's direction and guidance for strategic communications (StratCom). It was developed in response to the demand from the Military Committee for a forward-leaning policy that created a more integrated StratCom approach and reflected the developments in the international security environment.

4.2 MC 0628 also recognizes the need for NATO to continuously adapt and enhance the speed, connectivity and effectiveness of its information and communication activities. It requires the Alliance to be agile and proactive within the information environment and to be organized and active in a way that is effective in peace, crisis and conflict.

4.3 In line with MC 0628, each NATO military headquarters must have a communications directorate (or similar title) led by a director of communications (DirCom), reporting directly to the command group, for the execution of the encompassing tasks. This directorate groups together, as a minimum, the information staff function (information operations (Info Ops)), communications capabilities (military public affairs (Mil PA) and psychological operations (PsyOps)) to provide an organizational structure that coordinates and synchronizes information and communication activities with other military activities; this enables and maximizes their utility across the continuum of competition. The particular requirements of each communication capability and information staff function must still be met through retention of their functional responsibilities and, where appropriate, dual-hatting.

4.4 MC 0628 provides commanders the freedom to decide on the most appropriate nomenclature for their communications directorate. However, to avoid confusion and as indicated in the preface, for the purposes of this publication the communications directorate is designated J10-Strategic Communications (J10-StratCom).

### Section 2 – J10-Strategic Communications staff functions

4.5 J10-StratCom enables a commander to understand audiences and shape the information environment continuously in support of NATO's aims and objectives. It is organized to fulfil three primary staff functions across the continuum of competition, as illustrated in Figure 4.1.

- a. **Understand and assess.** NATO's behaviour-centric approach to operations uses the information environment assessment (IEA) to help determine the effects required to achieve the desired behavioural and attitudinal changes to support the Alliance's objectives. J10-StratCom needs to be able to conduct audience research to support recommendations for the planning and conduct of activities. It should also develop appropriate baselines to enable effective assessment of all activities, which

will track and measure behavioural and/or attitude change to inform and guide a commander.

b. **Plan and integrate.** Planning and execution of activities must be carried out mindful of the potential effects in the information environment. J10-StratCom will plan and integrate information activities to create the desired effects, and should inform and support headquarters-wide activities to ensure it remains aligned with the Alliance StratCom direction and guidance and is coherent with the strategic and/or micro narrative.

c. **Communicate.** The planning and integration for communication activities will be conducted within J10-StratCom and executed by the J10-StratCom communications capabilities. It is primarily informed by the integrated communications plans that ensure their activities are coordinated and synchronized to support the wider StratCom intent, whilst retaining the separation of functions required by their respective Military Committee policies. The Chief Public Affairs Officer (CPAO), who is the lead for internal and external communications, will maintain a direct advisory function to the commander.

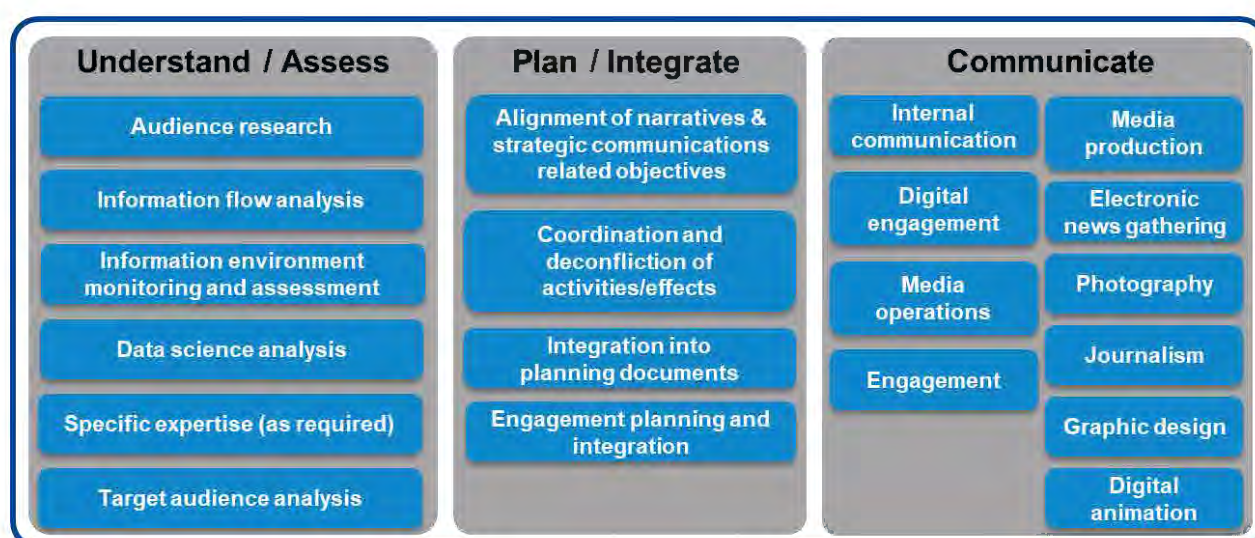


Figure 4.1 – J10-Strategic Communications staff functions

## Section 3 – Structure

4.6 All headquarters and formations under Allied Command Operations' (ACO) command and control are required to have a J10-StratCom that groups together all StratCom, Info Ops, Mil PA and PsyOps personnel, functions and their assigned force elements in line with MC 0628. When placed under NATO command, NATO force structure (NFS) headquarters should be structured with the same J10-StratCom (or similar organization), reporting directly to the command group. To minimize changes when an NFS headquarters comes under ACO

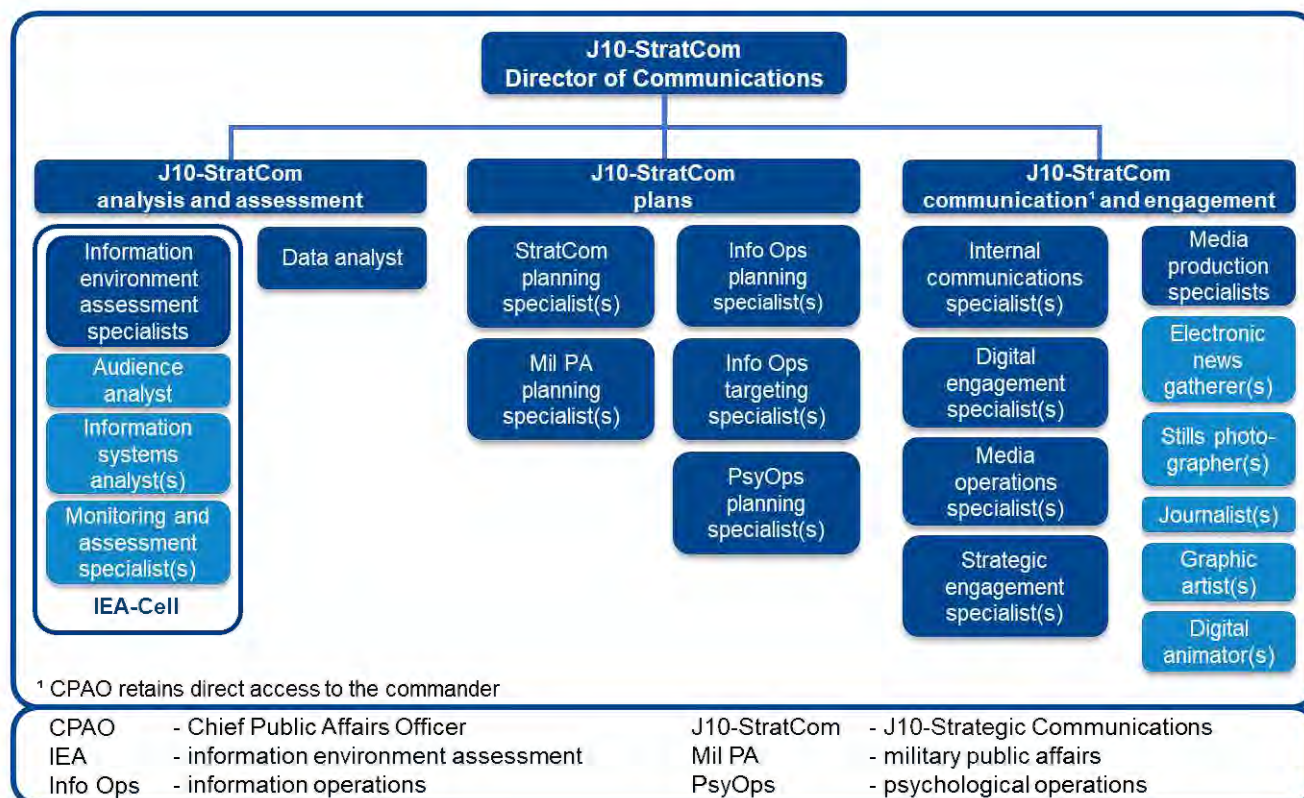
command, it is recommended that the NFS headquarters maintain an MC 0628-compliant structure at all times.

4.7 Individual DirCom need to ensure their J10-StratCom structure enables adaptation and enhances the speed, connectivity and effectiveness of its information and communication activities. They are free to internally structure and name their J10-StratCom to meet the specific requirements of their commander and their headquarters. The following principles apply.

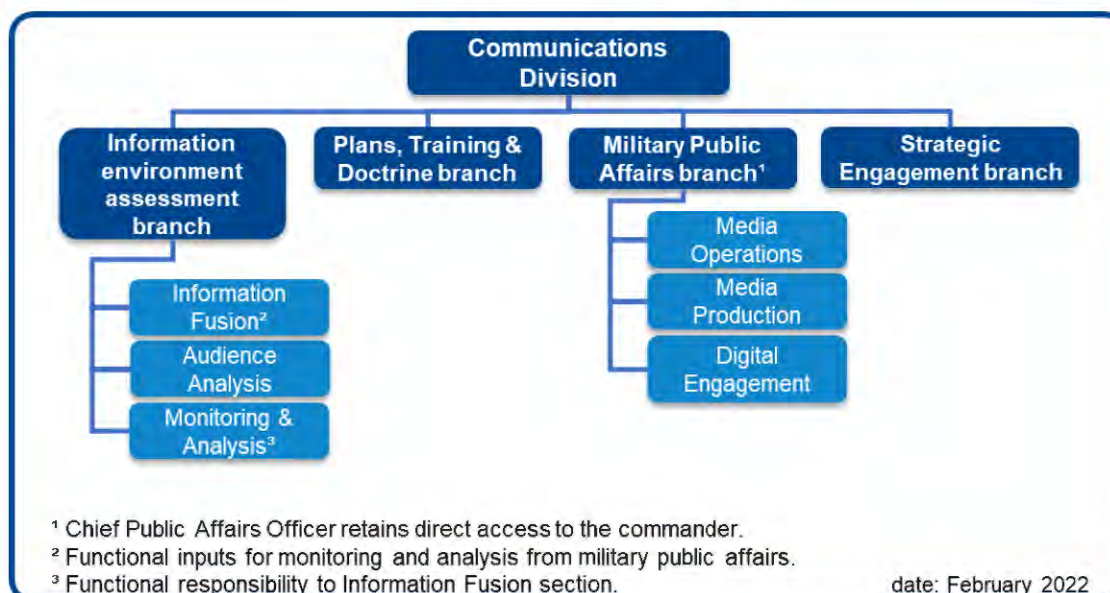
- a. DirCom holds the commander's delegated authority for J10-StratCom.
- b. DirCom reports directly to the command group and is not to be further subordinated.
- c. J10-StratCom groups together all StratCom, Info Ops, Mil PA and PsyOps personnel and their assigned force elements.
- d. Where a joint headquarters has been formed to specifically conduct an operation, mission or task, that headquarters is to adopt the same construct by establishing a J10-StratCom staff element.
- e. DirCom is responsible for the direction, planning, execution and integration of all information and communication activities.
- f. DirCom is responsible for the StratCom function, including assuring all force activities are conceived, planned and conducted mindful of the narratives and extant StratCom direction and guidance.

4.8 The structures outlined in Figures 4.2, 4.3 and 4.4 are offered as a guide for evaluating the best structure for a headquarters and its J10-StratCom. Figure 4.2 is a model that exemplifies the approach of cross-sectional competences and does not touch on functional responsibilities as defined in MC 0628, MC 0457/3, *NATO Military Policy on Military Public Affairs*, MC 0422/6, *NATO Military Policy for Information Operations* and MC 0402/3, *NATO Military Policy on Psychological Operations*. Figure 4.3 displays the Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE) Communications Division and Figure 4.4 is showing an example of a communications directorate structure at Joint Force Command level.



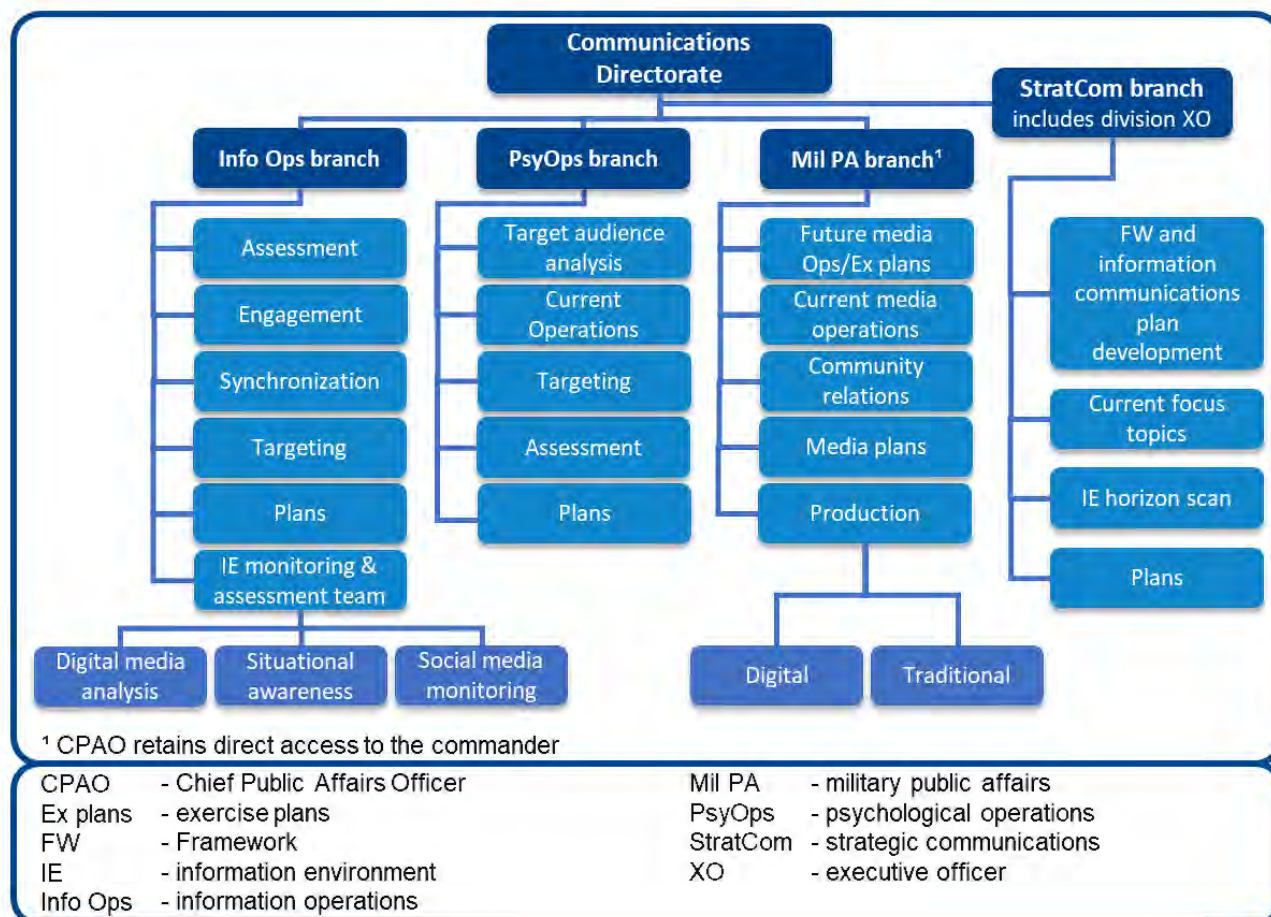


**Figure 4.2 – Example of a generic J10-Strategic Communications directorate**



**Figure 4.3 – Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe Communications Division**





**Figure 4.4 – Joint Force Command – Communications Directorate (example model)**

## Section 4 – Responsibilities

### Director of communications

4.9 DirComs are responsible to their command group for the communications directorate. They have the day-to-day oversight of the StratCom function.

4.10 The DirCom is responsible for ensuring effective planning, coordination and synchronizing of information and communication activities that are designed to amplify Alliance activities. The DirCom is a member of the commander's advisory group and reports directly to the respective command group. DirCom holds the commander's delegated authority for the J10-StratCom and, to ensure coherence of actions, images and words, they act as advisor to the commander in all functional matters related to StratCom.

### Chief Public Affairs Officer

4.11 The CPAO advises the commander and command group on public affairs matters and accordingly has direct access to the commander in an independent advisory role. Due to the

dual characteristics of Mil PA, the CPAO retains the combined designation of supervisor of the Mil PA staff within J10-StratCom and the lead for all matters regarding the execution of public affairs activities.

## Strategic communications disciplines

4.12 For J10-StratCom to fulfil the three primary staff functions of understand and assess, plan and integrate, and communicate, the following StratCom disciplines will contribute.

a. **Strategic communications.** The StratCom staff provides the central staff for J10-StratCom. They support DirCom by carrying out the StratCom function, including developing StratCom direction and guidance – narrative development, framework management and implementation guidance – for the headquarters and its subordinates. This direction includes, on behalf of the commander, drafting, releasing, implementing and approving:

- StratCom frameworks;
- StratCom implementation guidance;
- integrated communications plans;
- mission-specific strategic and micro narratives;
- StratCom annex, (including related disciplines appendices) to the operation plan (OPLAN).

b. **Information operations.**<sup>30</sup> The Info Ops staff provides DirCom and the commander with an analysis and assessment of the information environment as part of the comprehensive understanding of the operational environment (CUOE), and plans, synchronizes and continuously integrates information activities to create effects in support of NATO's aims and objectives. The Info Ops staff within J10-StratCom retains its functional responsibilities for developing and updating planning products in support of J3-Operations and J5-Plans staff branches. The Info Ops staff provides six distinct functions within the J10-StratCom directorate.

(1) **Information environment assessment.** The Info Ops IEA staff direct and lead the IEA process and provide audience research and monitoring and analysis products. The Info Ops IEA staff can be both stand alone or act as part of the J10-StratCom contribution to the wider headquarters and Alliance understand function.

(2) **Information operations planning.** The Info Ops planning staff plan, synchronize and coordinate information and communication activities, and develop Info Ops appendices to the StratCom annex within operational staff

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<sup>30</sup> For further information, see: MC 0422/6, *NATO Military Policy on Information Operations*; and AJP-10.1, *Allied Joint Doctrine for Information Operations*.

work. The Info Ops planning staff act as part of the J10-StratCom contribution to the operations planning process (OPP).

(3) **Information activities synchronization and integration.** The Info Ops staff synchronizes and integrates information activities in coordination with other headquarters staff elements through the Information Activities Coordination Board (IACB) or Information Activities Working Group (IAWG).

(4) **Strategic engagement.** The Info Ops staff is the lead function for strategic engagement, including liaising with the civil-military interaction (CMI)/civil-military cooperation (CIMIC) staff, and briefing and preparing personnel for engagement activity.

(5) **Contribution to joint targeting.** The Info Ops targeting staff produce and submit information activities as targets to the joint targeting process. They make sure information activities are synchronized and advise on anticipated second order effects on the behaviour and/or attitude of audiences as a result of planned targeting activity and subsequent consequence management post activity.

(6) **Counter-hostile information and disinformation.** This is a multi-discipline effort. Within J10-StratCom, it is led and coordinated by the Info Ops staff, in collaboration with the Mil PA and PsyOps staff, to deliver agility and proactiveness within the information environment.

c. **Military public affairs.**<sup>31</sup> The Mil PA staff within J10-StratCom provide support to DirCom and CPAO and provide advice and guidance on the media and public perception implications of activities, both proactively and reactively. As a command responsibility, and a lead function responsible for the external and internal communication, Mil PA is key for understanding the information environment and planning communication activities. It provides unique media competence in planning, analysis and assessment and it develops the Mil PA appendices to the StratCom annex within operational staff work. The Mil PA staff provide six distinct functions within the J10-StratCom directorate.

(1) **Media operations.** The media operations staff plan and conduct media relations activities, including briefing and preparing non-StratCom directorate personnel for media engagements.

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<sup>31</sup> For further information, see: MC 0457/3, *NATO Military Policy on Public Affairs*; AJP-X, *Allied Joint Doctrine for Military Public Affairs* (under development); and ACO Directive (AD) 095-002, *ACO Strategic Communications*.

(2) **Internal communications.** The internal communications staff plans and conducts communications focused on the staff of the headquarters and subordinate formations/units.

(3) **Strategic engagement and outreach.** The strategic engagement and outreach staff, plans and supports engagement activities with other stakeholders/influencers able to support Alliance communications as subject matter experts and advocates. They are the lead function for liaising with J9-CIMIC, and briefing and preparing non-StratCom directorate personnel for engagement activity.

(4) **Digital engagement.** The digital engagement staff plans and conducts Mil PA communication activities and engagement with audiences through digital platforms and channels.

(5) **Media production.** The media production staff plans, drafts and generates audio, video and printed products.

(6) **Media monitoring and analysis.** The media monitoring and analysis staff maintains situational awareness of the relevant information environment and analyzes changes within it. They are an integral part of the Info Ops IEA function but it is the decision of the DirCom whether they are teamed with or subordinated to that function.

d. **Psychological operations.**<sup>32</sup> NATO PsyOps are based on true and factual information attributed to NATO or a concurring Ally, partner nation or organization. The PsyOps staff within J10-StratCom exist only at and below the operational level and contribute to the commander's decision-making process. They advise on feasible PsyOps communication activities, the psychological impact of planned actions, and operations on audiences within the engagement space. The PsyOps staff can recommend information and communication activities to be performed by PsyOps and non-PsyOps personnel and units to create effects in the information environment. Within J10-StratCom, the PsyOps staff provides five distinct functions.

(1) **Audience analysis.** The PsyOps staff provides audience research and target audience analysis to the IEA. They are an integral part of the Info Ops IEA function, but it is the decision of the DirCom whether they are teamed with or subordinated to that function.

(2) **Psychological operations planning.** The PsyOps staff provides specialist PsyOps advice to the planning process and develops the PsyOps appendices to the StratCom annex within operational staff work.

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<sup>32</sup> For further information, see: MC 0402/3, *NATO Military Policy on Psychological Operations*; and AJP-3.10.1, *Allied Joint Doctrine for Psychological Operations*.

(3) **Counter-hostile information and disinformation.** The PsyOps staff supports counter-hostile information and disinformation activities through their contribution to the IEA function and coordination with the Info Ops staff. They can also plan and supervise the execution of counter-hostile information activities as part of an operation or a coordinated communications campaign. Where activities to analyze counter-hostile information and disinformation activities are conducted and recommendations are given in peacetime, or with audiences approved outside of an OPLAN, approval from DirCom is required and communications must be clearly identified as NATO.

(4) **Web operations.** The PsyOps staff can plan and execute focused digital engagement activities with approved audiences as part of a coordinated communications campaign. When web-based analysis is conducted in peacetime, or with audiences approved outside of an OPLAN, approval from DirCom is required and communications must be clearly identified as NATO.

(5) **Combined joint psychological operations task force headquarters.** At the operational level, the PsyOps staff should be prepared to support the formation of a combined joint psychological operations task force (CJPOTF) by augmenting it with headquarters and/or PsyOps personal. Close engagement between the CJPOTF and Info Ops staff is required to ensure that PsyOps is considered at the onset of any planning activity.

### **Functional responsibilities**

4.13 Within J10-StratCom, the particular requirements of each communication capability and information staff function must still be met through retention of their functional responsibilities and, where appropriate, dual-hatting. J10-StratCom has to ensure that all StratCom disciplines are coordinated and deconflicted on the one hand, but, on the other, Mil PA will have no role in planning or executing PsyOps.

## **Section 5 – Information staff function and communications capabilities**

### **Information operations**

4.14 Info Ops is the staff function that coordinates and integrates the StratCom direction and guidance. It is comprised of four components, which are: analyze, plan, integrate and assess. It leads in the understanding of audiences, through the IEA, to identify effects within the different effect dimensions – physical, virtual and cognitive – to target audiences, which will be planned as information and communication activities (See Annex E for a list of effect, task and action verbs that can be used during the planning, execution and assessment phases.) Info Ops focuses on three interrelated areas.

- a. Preserving and protecting the Alliance's freedom of action by defending the data and information that supports Alliance decision-makers and decision-making

processes and by detecting, monitoring and mitigating an adversary's hostile information activities.

- b. Understanding behaviours, perceptions and attitudes of audiences as part of Alliance military operations to induce, reinforce, convince or encourage them in support of NATO objectives.
- c. The adversary's command and control functions and capabilities that support its opinion forming and decision-making processes, as part of the Alliance's military operations.

## **Military public affairs**

4.15 Mil PA is a unique capability within the joint force that has the ability to contribute to shaping the engagement space and consequently the information environment. It is an organic headquarters capability that promotes NATO's military aims and objectives by communicating accurate information in a timely manner to various audiences. Mil PA is responsible for all media activities, internal communication, outreach activities and community relations, and it conducts digital media activities and media monitoring and analysis to create its effect.

4.16 The Mil PA capability needs to be sufficiently staffed with trained and experienced personnel and resourced to meet the operational and routine tasking tempo of the headquarters and its activities. The minimum capability requirement includes plans and policies, media operations, media monitoring and analysis, and production (writing, imagery and digital media management). They should benefit from the productions collected as part of the IEA. Mil PA has the following key capability characteristics.

- a. It is the only staff communication capability internal to all NATO joint or component headquarters able to create effect in all phases within the continuum of competition.
- b. It is a well-established function that is publicly recognizable as the official voice of the organization.
- c. It provides direct and unfiltered advice to the commander and senior leaders on the public affairs implications of operations, activities and issues.
- d. It is the primary means of public communication for the delivery of factual and attributable information.

## **Psychological operations**

4.17 PsyOps is a joint force communication capability and, when provided or assigned, conducts information activities using different methods of communications and other means

directed at approved target audiences. The NATO PsyOps force elements that can be found as part of the NFS are a:

- Combined joint psychological operations task force (CJPOTF);
- PsyOps support element; and
- tactical PsyOps team.

4.18 The PsyOps capability needs to be sufficiently staffed with trained and experienced personnel and resourced to meet the operational and routine tasking tempo of the headquarters and its activities. PsyOps has the following key capability characteristics.

- a. It uses the full media spectrum to plan, prepare and conduct communication activities aimed at conflict prevention and crisis response.
- b. It is capable of providing support to other information and communication activities.
- c. It is a scalable capability to create effects in the information environment.
- d. It contains military trained professional competence in influence operations and campaigns.
- e. It is a force multiplier and enabler to reinforce NATO military activities and to enhance NATO military capabilities.
- f. It provides a means of delivering messages based on true and factual information and generally attributable to NATO or a concurring partner nation or organization.
- g. It has a target audience analysis capability.

4.19 PsyOps units are not precluded from supporting and providing technical assistance (for example, printing support, radio-broadcast equipment) to non-PsyOps activities such as CMI/CIMIC, troop information or Mil PA, which also have a responsibility to address audiences in the information environment. Deconfliction will be achieved internally in J10-StratCom and through the appropriate mechanisms (for example, IACB/IAWG), considering the effects to be created in priority order.

## Section 6 – Products

4.20 **Strategic communications direction and guidance.** J10-StratCom supports DirCom by developing StratCom direction and guidance for the staff and subordinate headquarters. This direction and guidance will be given by some key products (see Annex B) and include the following.

a. **Strategic communications frameworks.** J10-StratCom staff will develop StratCom frameworks to support the commander's intent where such frameworks have not been developed by a superior headquarters. Where such a framework already exists, J10-StratCom staff may develop a framework annex to provide more detailed direction and guidance for staff and subordinate headquarters.<sup>33</sup>

b. **Strategic communications implementation guidance.** NATO military headquarters at every level should issue StratCom implementation guidance to the staff and subordinate headquarters. In essence, this is a written extraction of orders document to focus the staff on StratCom factors; it supports planning and highlights key aspects of the framework relevant to the headquarters and its subordinates. The StratCom implementation guidance forms the basis for the Annex SS (Strategic Communications) to the OPLAN.

c. **Integrated communications plan.** Every StratCom framework, whatever the level of the issuing headquarters, should be supported by an integrated communications plan. The plan provides the following.

(1) Direction and guidance to the J10-StratCom staff and subordinate capabilities for the planning, conduct and assessment of communication activities as part of the StratCom effort.

(2) Identifies significant activities that can support the achievement of the objectives and attainment of the desired end state.

(3) Assigns responsibility to subordinate commands for required support to highlight and amplify activities.

(4) Guidance on how the success, or otherwise, of the activities will be measured.

d. **Approval authorities.** StratCom narratives and frameworks are approved by the commander. For all other communication products, the approval and release authority should be delegated to the lowest level appropriate. Approval processes and the release authority are as stated in the respective military policies, Allied joint publications or other relevant guidance.

**4.21 The operations planning process.** The J10-StratCom staff needs to actively participate in the OPP of the headquarters to ensure information and communication activities are coordinated. The StratCom framework and the narrative must be completed and endorsed prior to the conclusion of phase three of the strategic-level planning process and phase two of the operational-level planning process. The StratCom staff also needs to

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<sup>33</sup> See Annex B for further detail.



coordinate the completion of the Info Ops, Mil PA, PsyOps and other related information activities appendices of the OPLAN.

4.22 Annex C expands on the alignment of StratCom planning with the OPP in the context of the Allied Command Operation's *Comprehensive Operations Planning Directive*. The J10-StratCom Info Ops planner is involved in the OPP at all levels of command to ensure that StratCom plays a guiding role. StratCom inputs should encompass the following.

- a. **Strategic considerations.** Strategic considerations focus on the longer-term effects needed to deliver the strategic intent of the commander, which are achieved across multiple lines of effort and activities.
- b. **Operational considerations.** Operational considerations focus on the planning of medium-term activities that will contribute to strategic intent.
- c. **Tactical considerations.** These are the tactical activities conducted by the communication capabilities designed to amplify the effects of current activities.

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## Annex A – Understanding narratives

A.1 For the purposes of NATO strategic communications (StratCom), narratives seek to explain the rationale for conducting an activity and the outcome sought. They are expressed as a story arc; a common thread communicated through individual stories, images or actions. A narrative seeks to explain how we arrived at the current situation, defines that situation and expresses a desired end state acceptable in the context of the individual narratives of the key stakeholders.

A.2 The strategic narrative is a central means for developing and implementing a communications strategy for any activity or StratCom framework. The strategic narrative needs to be able to stand on its own as the principle context to planning. It is important that strategic narratives align with the institutional narrative.

A.3 Below the strategic narrative, micro narratives are developed to adapt the conversation for different audiences. Micro narratives need to be coherent with the strategic narrative to avoid dissonance and prevent them undermining the credibility of the Alliance; in other words, they say the same thing, just say it in a different way. A narrative should address three main aspects.

- a. **Where we come from?** An expression of the cultural and historical perception of the audience in the context of the current issue and desired outcome.
- b. **Where we are?** An expression of the current situation from the perspective of the audience.
- c. **Where we want to be?** An acceptable outcome to the current situation based on the aspiration expressed in the first element.

### Developing narratives

A.4 The narrative is developed using the narrative template; a structural guideline for capturing the core aspects a narrative should address. It consists of four strategic elements.

- a. **The current state** – a description of the wrong to be righted or the desirable condition to be retained.
- b. **The justification** – why the proposed change of state, or maintaining the status quo, is better than the alternatives: validating the pathway. The justification is usually woven into the other three elements.
- c. **The pathway** – how to get there.
- d. **The future state** – a description of the ends, be it maintaining the status quo or a transition.

A.5 The narrative template incorporates these elements with the pathway consisting of actions and objectives. Overall, the template resembles the generic strategic-operational design of a campaign with the added element of justification. Figure A.1 provides an example of a generic narrative template.



**Figure A.1 – Example of a generic narrative template**

A.6 The narrative template is to be used at the earliest stage of the planning process and be an instrument for the commander's initial planning. The completed template can ultimately be used to state the narrative in a written paragraph.

### **Developing themes and messages**

A.7 Narratives form a common thread through the stories we tell with our actions, images and words. These stories will be based on the themes and messages we identify as opportunities to form the base for those communications.

A.8 Multiple themes may be identified to support a single narrative. Themes such as host-nation support, protection of civilians, humanitarian assistance and legitimacy may all be derived from a narrative regarding a NATO-backed deployment. Subsequently, each of these themes may be communicated to different audiences through specifically tailored messages.

## Narrative approval

A.9 Commanders at every level are to ensure the activities of the forces under their command are consistent with the strategic narrative. The director of communications at each level of the chain of command is responsible for ensuring the implementation of, and compliance with, the strategic narrative on behalf of their commander and keeping it aligned with the institutional narrative, as discussed in paragraph 1.44.

A.10 **Strategic narrative.** To strive for success, it is essential that the strategic narrative is approved and endorsed at the highest level and that it is developed in conjunction with the overall communications strategy and StratCom framework. For NATO operations and missions, it is likely that the strategic narrative will be approved by NATO Headquarters or Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE).

A.11 **Micro narratives.** Micro narratives should be developed at the level requiring them, and be approved by the joint force command commander or the joint task force commander, with support of their respective J10-Strategic Communications directorates (J10-StratCom) using meetings, boards and working group processes.

## A strategic approach to narratives

A.12 A flawed narrative may resonate with a large number of people, but it may also provide the opportunity for unsupportive audiences and adversaries to attack the credibility of the communicator. A strategic approach to narratives goes beyond merely crafting the narrative and it should meet the following criteria.

- a. The strategic narrative should be stand-alone as the principle context to all planning and not be created to fit the perception of specific audiences.
- b. There should be no fundamental contradictions between the actions of the forces and the strategic narrative. However, if this does occur, the impact needs to be evaluated by J10-StratCom and, if required, updated information and communication activities created to avoid compromising the narrative and achieving objectives.
- c. The information and communication activities through which the strategic narrative is communicated are tailored to the focused audience.
- d. All narratives address the historical and cultural perspective of the audience, the current situation, desired outcome, pathway and justification.
- e. All micro narratives and related actions, images and words align with the strategic narrative.

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## **Annex B – Strategic communications direction and guidance**

B.1 Strategic communications (StratCom) direction and guidance exists at every level of command to support the planning and execution of activities in line with the narrative. The primary direction and guidance document is the StratCom framework, which can exist at many levels of command, and this is reinforced by a StratCom implementation guidance document to support planning and highlight the key aspects of the framework relevant to the headquarters and its subordinates. As planning matures, an integrated communications plan will be issued that identifies significant activities that can support the achievement of the objectives and attainment of the desired end state. The structure of these documents will be explained in this annex.

### **Strategic communications frameworks**

B.2 StratCom frameworks are the primary tool used by NATO to provide StratCom direction and guidance for the planning and execution of all activities. They are intended to ensure a consistent approach to the topic of the framework from all parts of the organization – diplomatic, military and agencies.

B.3 The overriding principle for StratCom frameworks is that they are issued at the highest level of the organization that declares an interest in the activity or topic. Within NATO, there are three tiers of StratCom framework. The direction and guidance contained in each framework must be consistent with the direction and guidance provided from their higher level.

### **Tier 1 NATO strategic communications frameworks**

B.4 Tier 1 frameworks are issued by NATO Headquarters under the authority of the Secretary General. NATO Tier 1 frameworks are the primary tool used by NATO to provide top-level political StratCom direction and guidance for the planning and execution of all activities. They enable decentralized planning and execution of activities in line with the strategic narrative and in support of the StratCom objectives. NATO Tier 1 frameworks are intended to ensure a consistent approach to the topic of the framework by all parts of the organization: diplomatic, military and agencies.

B.5 Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE) disseminates NATO Tier 1 frameworks to its subordinate headquarters and develops StratCom implementation guidance to support the planning, execution and assessment of StratCom activities and effects.

### **Tier 2 Allied Command Operations strategic communications frameworks**

B.6 If NATO Headquarters determines that no political- or strategic-level framework is required for a particular issue, SHAPE can initiate a Tier 2 Allied Command Operations (ACO)

StratCom framework. Tier 2 frameworks are issued by SHAPE under the authority of Supreme Allied Commander Allied Powers Europe (SACEUR).

B.7 SACEUR will also issue an annual ACO Tier 2 StratCom framework to provide direction and guidance on SHAPE's StratCom objectives and priorities for the coming year. ACO StratCom frameworks may also be issued for activities or issues where an ACO-wide consistent communication is required.

B.8 Where a Tier 1 framework exists, J10-Strategic Communications directorate (J10-StratCom) staff may develop a Tier 2 framework annex to provide more detailed direction and guidance. These need to be coordinated with NATO Headquarters' Public Diplomacy Division.

### **Tier 3 strategic communications frameworks**

B.9 NATO Command Structure and NATO force structure headquarters may generate their own Tier 3 frameworks to support specific activities or issues relevant only to their organization and its subordinates. A Tier 3 framework may only be issued if no Tier 1 or Tier 2 framework covers or exists for the specific activity that the command or force wants to conduct. Tier 3 frameworks need to be coordinated with SHAPE's Communications Division.

### **Framework structure**

B.10 The structure and content of a StratCom framework is dependent on the requirements of the operation or activity but it will routinely adopt the following format.<sup>34</sup>

- a. **Introduction/situation.** The introduction/situation provides a brief background to the issue, outlining the political and operational context in a couple of paragraphs. This section should also outline the future challenges from a StratCom perspective.
- b. **Aim.** The aim defines the purpose and duration of validity for the StratCom framework. The duration of validity may be time or activity bound, or simply until superseded by additional, or higher-level, guidance.
- c. **Narrative and/or core message.** A narrative or core message is to be provided as a result of a systematic assessment of the information environment. The narrative and/or core message and its themes and topics are to be developed in support of the objectives to be achieved.
  - (1) NATO Headquarters develops either a narrative or a core message as part of the Tier 1 framework. When a core message is provided it should underpin the StratCom approach.

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<sup>34</sup> Also see Annex C to both MC 0628, *NATO Military Policy on Strategic Communications* and ASCP-01, *NATO Strategic Communications Training Standards*.



(2) Whether a Tier 1 framework holds a narrative or core message, the Tier 2 and Tier 3 frameworks, as part of military direction and guidance, will provide a narrative or narrative statement.

d. **Audiences.** Define the audiences (public, stakeholders, actors) who may affect the desired objectives of the activity. These may include (amongst others):

- audiences within the joint operations area;
- Alliance publics; and
- the international community.

e. **Strategic communications objectives.** StratCom objectives focus on communication outcomes that will be achieved through the combination of actions, images and words. These objectives should be linked to the audiences identified above and developed using the 'SMART'<sup>35</sup> methodology, as far as possible, to enable the development of measures of performance and measures of effectiveness. There should be no more than five StratCom objectives.

f. **Strategic communications themes.** Three to six key themes of the narrative are to be identified and promoted in support of achieving the StratCom objectives. Themes are overarching concepts or intentions, designed for broad application. A theme should be brief and expressible; a couple of words backed by an explanatory paragraph. Themes differ from messages, which are a more narrowly focused communication directed at specific audiences.

g. **Focus topics.** Focus topics provide further guidance on the scope of communication activities, products and programmes. The focus topic is typically activity orientated to combine images and words with activities. They are designed to complement StratCom themes and to identify specific activities and calendar events, around which focused StratCom action could be considered.

h. **Coordination.** This provides an overview of the key roles and responsibilities of the headquarters tasked with delivering the StratCom framework-related communication activities. Coordination is to be upward, lateral and downward to subordinate headquarters where possible.

i. **Additional annexes.** Annexes can be attached as required to cover issues or elements of the framework. They should cover specific objectives, themes or topics.

(1) **Audience and effects.** This annex should identify the key public and stakeholder audiences, why they can affect the activity and the effects we desire to have on them.

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<sup>35</sup> Specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and timely and also legitimate in the sense of paragraph 3.25.

(2) **Risk management.** This annex should identify the key StratCom-related risks and appropriate actions for their treatment.<sup>36</sup>

### **Strategic communications implementation guidance**

B.11 NATO military headquarters at every level should issue StratCom implementation guidance to the staff and subordinate headquarters. In essence, this is a written extraction of orders document to focus the staff on StratCom factors; it supports planning and highlights key aspects of the framework relevant to the headquarters and its subordinates. The StratCom implementation guidance forms the basis for the StratCom annex to the operation plan (Annex SS).

### **Guidance structure**

B.12 The guidance will normally be developed by SHAPE, but in partnership with the primary headquarters responsible for delivering the communication effects. An integrated communications plan can be produced as an annex. The structure and content of a StratCom implementation guidance is dependent on the requirements of the operation or activity. However, the following format serves as a guide.

- Introduction
- Purpose and scope
- Context
- Narrative
- StratCom objectives
- Audiences and effects
- Effectors (key effectors are: Allied nation forces; partner nation forces; and host-nation authority)
- Coordinating instructions
- Additional annexes (for example, the integrated communications plan)

### **Integrated communications plans**

B.13 Every StratCom framework, whatever the level of the issuing headquarters, should be supported by an integrated communications plan. As an annex to the StratCom implementation guidance, the plan provides direction and guidance to the J10-StratCom staff and subordinate force elements with a comprehensive communications overview of all aspects of the planning, conduct and assessment of information and communication activities, as part of the StratCom effort.

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<sup>36</sup> See AJP-3, *Allied Joint Doctrine for the Conduct of Operations*, Annex D for more information on risk management.

B.14 The integrated communications plan should be developed as a whole force process to identify significant activities that can support the achievement of the objectives and attainment of the desired end state. It should record agreed responsibility for the amplification of those activities across the command and provide guidance on how the success, or otherwise, of the activities will be measured.

### Plan structure

B.15 The structure and content of the integrated communications plan is dependent on the requirements but it will routinely adopt the following format.

- a. **Situation.** The situation provides a background summary to the issue, outlining the operational context in a couple of paragraphs.
- b. **Mission.** The mission drafted from a StratCom point of view and states what the contribution is to the overall mission of the commander.
- c. **Intent.** This details three main sub-paragraphs focused on objectives, audiences and execution. The objectives focus on communication outcomes to be achieved through a combination of military activities and communications that contextualize and amplify those activities to selected audiences. These audiences are highlighted in a separate paragraph. The execution paragraph details the concept of operations, the campaign approach and the specific tasks to, for example, NATO Command Structure and NATO force structure elements, and requests to NATO Allies and NATO-affiliated organizations and institutes.
- d. **Coordinating instructions.** The instructions will focus on every topic that needs to be coordinated and can hold items like: NATO Headquarters direction, themes, focus topics, clusters, branding and hashtags, and resources.
- e. **Timings.** This paragraph can detail all timings considered necessary but mostly has emphasis on reporting of activities and monitoring and assessment.
- f. **Command and control.** This focuses on who is in the lead for the plan, who supports it, who is the point of contact for the plan and, if appropriate, mentions the direct liaison authority procedures and guidance.

B.16 When operational staff work has been published the StratCom plan is articulated as Annex SS to the concept of operations or operation plan and the narrative and StratCom concept of operations should be articulated in the main body of the orders.

### Annex SS – Strategic Communications

B.17 ACO's *Comprehensive Operations Planning Directive* provides guidance on operational staff work. The narrative and the StratCom concept of operations is provided in the main body of the operation plan and Annex SS is allocated to allow StratCom direction

and guidance to be articulated in detail including tasks for capabilities. Within Annex SS there are four appendices which are as follows.

- a. **Appendix 1 – Information Environment Assessment.** This appendix will provide further detail on the audience analysis from the IEA and its structure is covered in Allied Joint Publication (AJP)-10.1, *Allied Joint Publication for Information Operations*.
- b. **Appendix 2 – Information Operations.** This appendix will provide specific detail on the integration of information activities, the engagement plan and the assessment plan. The structure and guidance for this appendix is covered in AJP-10.1, *Allied Joint Publication for Information Operations*.
- c. **Appendix 3 – Military Public Affairs.** This appendix provides the military public affairs (Mil PA) plan and its structure will be covered in AJP-X, *Allied Joint Publication for Military Public Affairs*.
- d. **Appendix 4 – Psychological Operations.** This appendix provides the psychological operations (PsyOps) plan and its structure is covered in AJP-3.10.1, *Allied Joint Publication for Psychological Operations*.

B.18 Annex SS will evolve from the integrated communications plan as detail emerges from the operations planning process. The structure of this annex is shown below.

- Background
- Situation
- Mission
- Execution
  - Concept of operations, which includes:
    - information environment assessment;
    - information and communication activities (for example, Mil PA, PsyOps, strategic engagement); and
    - StratCom posture.
- Specified tasks
- Coordinating instructions (liaison, release authority, reporting)
- Synchronization
- Limitation
- Appendices

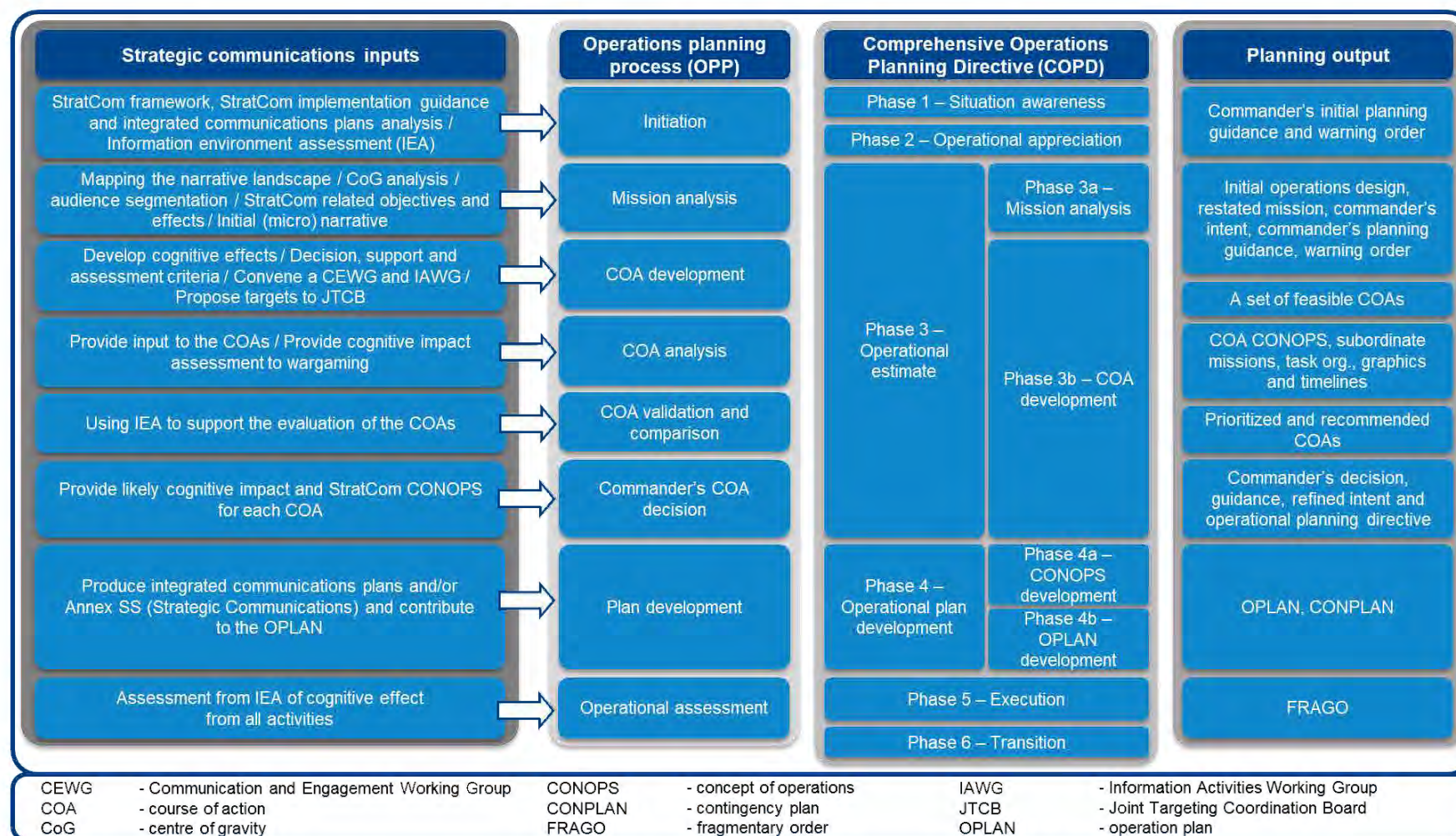
## Annex C – The operations planning process

C.1 Within a headquarters, planning is conducted for different time horizons. J5-Plans has a more strategic and longer-term planning horizon while J3-Operations planners conduct planning for the next operation or activity. However, J10-Strategic Communications directorate (J10-StratCom) planners need to support both planning teams to ensure there is a common understanding of the strategic situation, the impact short-term activities will have in the long run, and of the headquarters' role in achieving the strategic objectives.

C.2 The guidance for NATO planning is found in Allied Joint Publication-5, *Allied Joint Doctrine for the Planning of Operations* and is referred to as the operations planning process (OPP). It covers the detailed sequencing of planning activities. The Allied Command Operations' *Comprehensive Operations Planning Directive* (COPD) is an addition to the OPP and used by many NATO organizations as the primary planning.

C.3 A summary of mission-relevant aspects of the information environment should be developed, which is supported by the information environment assessment, as part of the respective commander's operational estimate. Strategic communications (StratCom) considerations should shape the commander's advice to higher echelons.

C.4 Figure C.1 outlines an example of both planning processes, their common outputs and the J10-StratCom planning inputs to them. With reference to paragraph 4.22 of this publication, more detailed information on the J10-StratCom information operations planners' involvement in the OPP can be found in the Allied Joint Publication-10.1, *Allied Joint Doctrine for Information Operations*.



**Figure C.1 – Example of J10-Strategic Communications directorate input to the planning process**

## Annex D – Boards and working groups

D.1 Effective operations require synchronizing strategic, operational and tactical processes to ensure mission planning, preparation and execution. This process, called the battle rhythm, is a routine cycle of command and staff activities intended to synchronize current and future operations in accordance with the headquarters decision cycle.<sup>37</sup>

D.2 Directors of communications (DirComs) and their J10-Strategic Communications directorate (J10-StratCom) staff contribute their subject matter expertise in different working groups and boards that are part of the routine cycle within the battle rhythm. They also make sure that the battle rhythm contains meetings to support strategic communications (StratCom).

### Working group and board examples that require director of communications or J10-Strategic Communications staff participation

D.3 Whilst in most headquarters the chief of staff is responsible for setting up and maintaining the battle rhythm and incorporating the different meetings, it is to be expected that the following meetings, which can have different titles in different headquarters, will be part of a routine cycle of the commander and their staff.

- a. **Joint Coordination Board.** The Joint Coordination Board (JCB) is the commander's principal meeting. Its aim is to assist the macro aspects of joint force command/joint task force activity and effects synchronization, and it is specifically used to issue commander's priority guidance across the components and to resolve potential areas of conflict. As part of the minimum composition of this board, it is attended by both DirCom, as StratCom advisor, and Chief Public Affairs Officer, as public affairs advisor.
- b. **Joint Coordination Board Working Group.** This working group agrees options to be presented to the commander at the JCB. It is attended by DirCom, who has an active role in ensuring that options being discussed are coherent with the StratCom framework and they take into account aspects regarding the creation of effects in the cognitive dimension. They also provide recommendations on whether actions should be taken forward or suspended.
- c. **Joint Targeting Coordination Board.** The Joint Targeting Coordination Board (JTCB) is a functional board that synchronizes joint targeting activities to provide the optimum approach for creating the desired effects in support of operational objectives. The JTCB reviews the outputs from the Joint Targeting Working Group (JTWG) via the Joint Fires and Effects Working Group (JFEWG). It gathers inputs from the targeting community, effects subject matter experts and the Information

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<sup>37</sup> For more information on battle rhythm, boards and working groups see AJP-3, *Allied Joint Doctrine for the Conduct of Operations*.

Activities Working Group (IAWG) to prepare the target list for JCB review and the commander joint task force's approval. The board will validate changes to the targeting database; issue direction and guidance to coordinate target material production (including target audience analysis); update targeting guidance; approve the draft joint prioritized target list; and coordinate intelligence staff products to ensure intelligence gain/loss are accounted for. A member of J10-StratCom will represent and share the IAWG targeting outputs and consider the predicted cognitive impact of targets as well as providing the behavioural assessment of other activities.

d. **Joint Fires and Effects Working Group.** The JFEWG takes the output of the JTWG, IAWG and any other targeting working groups and ensures optimal effect capability selection and coordination to achieve the commander's objectives. Targeting staff will begin initial coordination of effect integration and synchronization. The JFEWG represents the final stage of target development prior to submission to the JTCB. Info Ops staff will represent and share the IAWG outputs and then consider proposals to achieve first order cognitive effects and assess second and third order cognitive effects resulting from other military activities.

e. **Assessment board.** The assessment board is a functional board where the operations assessment is presented to the commander. Its aim is to get endorsement of the assessment and to receive the commander's direction and guidance for subsequent planning. Assessment provides a common understanding and enables the commander to refine direction and guidance for achieving objectives. The assessment aspect of the information environment assessment will be a primary feed into the operations assessment cell, who have the lead on the assessment board. DirCom and/or J10-StratCom staff members provide advice on effects in the information environment and are focused on behavioural and attitudinal change in the audience analysis.

#### **Working group and board examples that are chaired/conducted by director of communications or J10-Strategic Communications**

D.4 The following StratCom-related meetings should take place as part of the regular battle rhythm, however, they might be named differently in different headquarters.<sup>38</sup>

a. **Strategic Communications Coordination Board.** The Strategic Communications Coordination Board (SCCB) is chaired by the chief of staff, but most often delegated to Director Communications Division (Dir ComDiv) or Chief Info Ops to direct the cognitive line of effort to support the strategic and/or operational objectives. It provides StratCom direction and guidance to the headquarters and specifically to the Info Ops staff to prioritise understanding analysis, approve and guide the planning, integration and assessment of information activities. It reviews the outputs from the IAWG and Communications Engagement Working Group

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<sup>38</sup> Details on draft agenda items and attendance are contained within the *NATO Strategic Communications Handbook*.



(CEWG) and approves what can be submitted to the JTCB as cognitive effect targets. It will also provide advice on possible effects in the information environment created by other military actions. The SCCB liaises with all functional areas (especially with J2, J3, J5, J9), the legal advisor and subordinate commands, as well as coordinating with outside agencies. The SCCB will prepare and approve the submissions to the JTCB, assessment board and the JCB. It normally meets weekly during operations and when required during peacetime to prepare information for the JCB.

b. **Strategic Information Activities Working Group.** The Strategic Information Activities Working Group (SIAWG) is a Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe level DirCom-led working group with subordinate headquarters. It coordinates and synchronizes all StratCom planning activities, assesses own and hostile narratives, and provides further StratCom direction and guidance. It normally meets weekly during operations and when required during peacetime to prepare information for the SCCB.

c. **Communications and Engagement Working Group.** The CEWG is a working group within a headquarters. It coordinates and synchronizes all information and communication activities, and engagements that use communication capabilities, and feeds into the SCCB. It normally meets daily during operations and when required during peacetime to prepare information for the SCCB.

d. **Information Activities Coordination Board.** The IACB provides a forum for approving, coordinating, deconflicting and monitoring all information environment-related plans and activities for submission to the commander for approval. It ensures that information activities are coherent and synchronized with other activities. Within the scope of its assigned functions, the IACB will initially coordinate target nominations related to information and information systems to facilitate subsequent harmonization at the JTCB. It will also provide advice on possible effects in the information environment created by other military actions. The meeting can be preceded or replaced, if a headquarters chooses not to convene an IACB, by a similar named working group called the IAWG.

e. **Information Activities Working Group.** The IAWG is a DirCom-led working group with other staff directorates and subordinate headquarters. In line with direction and guidance from the SCCB, it ensures that information activities are coherent and synchronized with the cognitive line of effort and other activities in the engagement space. The IAWG will approve the input from Info Ops staff to the planning process and will coordinate target nominations related to information and information systems to facilitate subsequent harmonization at the JTCB. The IAWG liaises with all staff directorates, principal advisors and with subordinate commands, as well as coordinating with non-military organizations. It normally meets daily during operations and when required during peacetime to prepare information for the SCCB. The IAWG is explained further in Chapter 4.

D.5 Depending on the headquarters, type of mission or operation, and individual commanders, other working groups and boards where J10-StratCom subject matter expertise is important can be part of the battle rhythm. In such circumstances, DirCom and the J10-StratCom staff have to assess the input to, and the output of, these meetings to understand their role, whether that is being an advisor, or chairing and/or leading the meeting on behalf of the commander or chief of staff.

## Annex E – Effect, task and action verbs

E.1 The following list of effect, tasks and action verbs should be used during planning, execution and assessment of strategic communications. Effects verbs are used to describe the desired effects of planned information and communication activities on intended audiences.

**advocate**

A person who publicly supports or recommends a particular cause or policy.  
(*Concise Oxford English Dictionary* (COED))

**amplify**

Make (a statement) more detailed.  
(COED)

**assess**

Evaluate or estimate the nature, value, or quality of.  
(COED)

**assure**

Tell someone something positively in order to dispel potential doubts.  
(COED)

**broadcast**

Transmit by radio or television.  
(COED)

**channel**

Direct towards a particular end.  
(COED)

**coerce**

Persuade (an unwilling person) to do something by using force or threats.  
(COED)

**collect**

Bring or gather together.  
(COED)  
In the context of this publication, this refers to the collection of information.

**communicate**

Share or exchange information or ideas.  
(COED)

**compel**

Force or oblige to do something.  
(COED)

**confuse**

Make (someone) bewildered or perplexed.  
(COED)

**contain**

To restrict an entity's freedom of movement to within a specified area.  
(NATO Agreed)

In the context of this publication, this refers to restraining the spread of information, a message, or an effect in a media or audience, or on an information system.

**convince**

Cause to believe firmly in the truth of something.  
(COED)

**co-opt**

Divert to a role different from the usual or original one.  
(COED)

In the context of this publication, this refers to convincing the target to agree to a specific action and/or agreement of your choosing.

**corrupt**

Made unreliable by errors or alterations.  
(COED)

**deceive**

To mislead an entity by manipulating its perceptions in order to induce it to react in a manner prejudicial to its interests.

(NATO Agreed)

In the context of this publication, this refers to the military activity of deception.

**degrade**

Cause to suffer a severe loss of dignity or respect; demean.  
(COED)

In the context of this publication, this refers to adversary command and control or communications systems, and information collection efforts or means. It also refers to morale, worth or the effectiveness of adversary decisions and actions. Damage is done to the entity, which still continues to operate but at a reduced effectiveness or efficiency.

**demonstrate**

To dissuade a hostile entity by a show of force, without seeking contact.  
(NATO Agreed)

**deny**

To prevent an entity from using specified people, space or infrastructure.

(NATO Agreed)

In the context of this publication, this means preventing someone from accessing and using critical information, systems and services.

**destroy**

To damage a target to such an extent that it is unable to fulfill its intended function without being reconstituted or entirely rebuilt.

(NATO Agreed)

In the context of this publication, this refers to physically damaging an enemy system, or entity, so badly that it cannot perform its function to create a psychological effect, or reducing adversary command and control capability.

**detect**

Discover or identify the presence or existence of.

(COED)

In the context of this publication, this includes adversary propaganda, entities on social media or intrusions into information systems.

**deter**

Discourage (someone) from doing something by instilling fear of the consequences.

(COED)

**diminish**

Make or become less.

(COED)

In the context of this publication, this includes the will, understanding or capability of an actor.

**discourage**

Cause (someone) to lose confidence or enthusiasm.

(COED)

**discredit**

Harm the good reputation of.

(COED)

In the context of this publication, this includes the reputation, credibility and authority of an actor or argument.

**dismay**

Consternation and distress.

(COED)

**dismiss**

Treat as unworthy of serious consideration.  
(COED)

**disrupt**

Disturb or interrupt.  
(COED)

In the context of this publication, this applies to using lethal and non-lethal capabilities to interrupt information flow (denial of service attacks, electronic warfare, destruction of broadcast facilities and command and control capability).

**disseminate**

Spread widely.  
(COED)

**dissuade**

Persuade someone not to take (a course of action).  
(COED)

**distort**

Give a misleading or false account or impression of.  
(COED)

**distract**

Prevent (someone) from concentrating on something.  
(COED)

**embolden**

Give courage or confidence to.  
(COED)

**empower**

Give authority or power to; authorize.  
(COED)

In the context of this publication, this means using information to promote confidence, authority, accountability and responsibility in an actor or group.

**encourage**

Give support, confidence or hope to.  
(COED)

**establish**

Achieve permanent acceptance or recognition for.  
(COED)

**exploit**

Make use of and derive benefit from (a resource).

(COED)

In the context of this publication, this means using information to take advantage of, or create, a favourable situation for tactical, operational or strategic purposes.

**expose**

Make (something) visible by uncovering it.

(COED)

In the context of this publication, this means revealing information that offers an advantage to the Alliance.

**facilitate**

Make easy or easier.

(COED)

**impose**

1. Force to be accepted, done, or complied with.

(COED)

2. Take advantage of someone.

(COED)

**indicate**

1. Point out; show.

(COED)

2. Suggest as a desirable or necessary course of action.

(COED)

**influence**

The capacity to have an effect on the character or behaviour of someone or something, or the effect itself.

(COED)

In the context of this publication, influence is an outcome and refers to effects on the perception, attitudes and behaviours of an audience. It may be achieved deliberately by information and communication activities, or as a second and third order effect of all activities.

**inform**

Give information to.

(COED)

**isolate**

Place apart or alone; cut off

(COED)

**manipulate**

Control or influence cleverly or unscrupulously.

(COED)

In the context of this publication, this means managing an actor to create friendly advantage often through persuasion, or deception.

**mask**

A disguise or pretence.

(COED)

In the context of this publication this means protecting information from individuals or groups until an appropriate moment for its release. This applies particularly to operations security and deception.

**misinform**

Give false or inaccurate information to.

(COED)

**mislead**

Cause to have a wrong impression about someone or something.

(COED)

**negate**

Nullify; make ineffective.

(COED)

In the context of this publication, this means countering the effects of adversary information activities or the information itself. It is particularly applicable to counter-propaganda and operational security.

**neutralize**

To render a hostile entity or materiel temporarily incapable of interfering with friendly forces.

(NATO Agreed)

In the context of this publication, this means countering the source of information rather than the effect; for example, by denial of service, electronic warfare or physical action.

**persuade**

Cause someone to do something through reasoning or argument.

(COED)

**prevent**

Keep from happening or arising.

(COED)

In the context of this publication, this means persuading an actor not to undertake a particular course of action by convincing them that it will be unsuccessful. It is less reliant on physical force than coercion.



**probe**

Enquire into closely.

(COED)

In the context of this publication, this means to closely examine, evaluate and test a system or entity (human or technological) to gain an understanding of its general layout or perception.

**promote**

Further the progress of; support or encourage.

(COED)

In the context of this publication, this means to advocate or advance positive awareness of an actor, organization or courses of action.

**protect**

Keep safe from harm or injury.

(COED)

In the context of this publication, this means protecting the joint force commander's freedom to operate in the information environment.

**publicize**

Make widely known.

(COED)

**reassure**

Allay the doubts and fears of.

(COED)

In the context of this publication, this means restoring confidence and dispelling fear through coordinated use of capabilities such as psychological operations and techniques such as key leader engagement and presence, posture and profile.

**reinforce**

Strengthen or support; give added strength to.

(COED)

In the context of this publication, this means using information to maintain and increase support for specific ideas, actors, organizations or activities.

**reveal**

Disclose (previously unknown or secret information).

(COED)

**sever**

Put an end to (a connection or relationship).

(COED)

**shape**

Develop in a particular way.

(COED)

In the context of this publication, this means preparatory work focused on actors' behaviours to cause them to conform to a particular pattern, prior to subsequent activities conducted by NATO forces.

**support**

Give assistance, encouragement, or approval to.

(COED)

**undermine**

Make less powerful or effective, especially in a gradual or insidious way.

(COED)

In the context of this publication, this refers to an actor's trust, credibility and loyalty by damaging reputation.

**unmask**

Expose the true character of.

(COED)

**usurp**

Take (a position of power) illegally or by force.

(COED)

In the context of this publication, this means establishing a position of authority within the information environment that means our ideas and arguments supplant those of our adversaries.

## Lexicon

### Part 1 – Acronyms and abbreviations

ACO	Allied Command Operations
ACT	Allied Command Transformation
AJP	Allied joint publication
AMEC	International Association for the Measurement and Evaluation of Communication
ASCP	Allied strategic communications publication
ASG PDD	Assistant Secretary General for Public Diplomacy
MCWG	
CapDev	capability development
CEWG	Communication and Engagement Working Group
CIMIC	civil-military cooperation
CJPOTF	Combined Joint Psychological Operations Task Force
CMC	Chair of the Military Committee
CMI	civil-military interaction
COED	Concise Oxford English Dictionary
ComDiv	Communications Division
COPD	Comprehensive Operations Planning Directive
CPAO	Chief Public Affairs Officer
CPOE	comprehensive preparation of the operating environment
CUOE	comprehensive understanding of the operating environment
DirCom	Director of Communications
Dir ComDiv	Director Communications Division
DOTMLPFI	doctrine, organization, training, materiel, leadership development, personnel, facilities and interoperability
HQ SACT	Headquarters Supreme Allied Command Transformation
IACB	Information Activities Coordination Board
IAWG	Information Activities Working Group
IEA	information environment assessment
IMS	International Military Staff
Info Ops	information operations
J10-StratCom	J10-Strategic Communications directorate
JCB	Joint Coordination Board
JFC	joint force command
JFD	Joint Force Development
JFEWG	Joint Fires and Effects Working Group
JIPOE	joint intelligence preparation of the operational environment

JISR&JE	joint intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance and joint effects
JSEC	Joint Support and Enabling Command
JTCB	Joint Targeting Coordination Board
JTWG	Joint Targeting Working Group
MC	Military Committee
MCWG (StratCom)	Military Committee Working Group Strategic Communications
Mil PA	military public affairs
MOE	measure of effectiveness
NAC	North Atlantic Council
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NFS	NATO force structure
NSO	NATO Standardization Office
OPLAN	operation plan
OPP	operations planning process
PASCAD	Public Affairs and Strategic Communications Advisor
PDD	Public Diplomacy Division
PsyOps	psychological operations
RBIO	rules-based international order
SACEUR	Supreme Allied Commander Europe
SACT	Supreme Allied Command Transformation
SCCB	Strategic Communications Coordination Board
SCCOE	Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence
SCWG	Strategic Communications Working Group
SHAPE	Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe
SIAWG	Strategic Information Activities Working Group
SMART	specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and timely
StratCom	strategic communications

## Part 2 – Terms and definitions

### **actor**

An individual, group or entity whose actions are affecting the attainment of the end state.  
(NATO Agreed)

### **attitude**

A settled way of thinking or feeling.  
(COED)

### **audience**

An individual, group or entity whose interpretation of events and subsequent behaviour may affect the attainment of the end state.

Note: The audience may consist of publics, stakeholders and actors.  
(NATO Agreed)

### **audience analysis**

The understanding and segmentation of audiences in support of the achievement of objectives.

(NATO Agreed)

### **behaviour**

The way in which someone behaves.  
(COED)

### **belief**

An acceptance that something exists or is true, especially one without proof.  
(COED)

### **civil-military cooperation**

A military joint function that integrates the understanding of the civil factors of the operating environment and that enables, facilitates and conducts civil-military interaction to support the accomplishment of missions and military strategic objectives in peacetime, crisis and conflict.

(NATO Agreed)

### **civil-military interaction**

Activities between NATO military bodies and non-military actors to foster mutual understanding that enhances effectiveness and efficiency in crisis management and conflict prevention and resolution.

(NATO Agreed)

### **communication activities**

Information activities performed by military public affairs and psychological operations capabilities.

(This term and definition only applies to this publication.)

**cyberspace**

The global domain consisting of all interconnected communication, information technology and other electronic systems, networks and their data, including those which are separated or independent, which process, store or transmit data.

(NATO Agreed)

**disinformation**

Information which is intended to mislead.

(COED)

**effect dimensions**

An analytical construct that translates actions in the engagement space into the physical, virtual and cognitive consequences that these actions may have.

(NATO Agreed)

**end state**

The political-strategic statement of conditions that defines an acceptable concluding situation to be attained at the end of a strategic engagement.

(NATO Agreed)

**engagement space / battlespace**

The part of the operating environment where actions and activities are planned and conducted.

(NATO Agreed)

**environment**

The surroundings in which an organization operates, including air, water, land, natural resources, flora, fauna, humans, and their interrelations.

(NATO Agreed)

**gender**

The social attributes associated with being male and female, learned through socialisation, that determine a person's position and value in a given context, including in the relationship between women and men and girls and boys, as well as in the relations between women and those between men.

Note: Gender issues do not equate to an exclusive focus on women.

(NATO Agreed)

**gender analysis**

The systematic gathering and examination of information on gender differences and on social relations between men and women in order to identify and understand inequities based on gender.

(NATO Agreed)

**hybrid threat**

A type of threat that combines conventional, irregular and asymmetric activities in time and space.

(NATO Agreed)

**information activities**

Activities performed by any capability or means, focused on creating cognitive effects.

(NATO Agreed)

**information environment**

An environment comprised of the information itself, the individuals, organizations and systems that receive, process and convey the information, and the cognitive, virtual and physical space in which this occurs.

(NATO Agreed)

**information operations**

A staff function to analyze, plan, assess and integrate information activities to create desired effects on the will, understanding and capability of adversaries, potential adversaries and audiences in support of mission objectives.

(NATO Agreed)

**information system**

An assembly of equipment, methods and procedures and, if necessary, personnel, organized to accomplish information processing functions.

(NATO Agreed)

**joint operations area**

A temporary area within a theatre of operations defined by the Supreme Allied Commander Europe, in which a designated joint force commander plans and executes a specific mission at the operational level.

(NATO Agreed)

**manoeuvre**

Employment of forces on the battlefield through movement in combination with fire, or fire potential, to achieve a position of advantage in respect to the enemy in order to accomplish the mission.

(NATO Agreed)

**measure of effectiveness**

A criterion used to assess changes in system behaviour, capability, or operating environment, tied to measuring the attainment of an end state, achievement of an objective, or creation of an effect.

(NATO Agreed)

**measure of performance**

A criterion that is tied to measuring task accomplishment in order to assess friendly actions.  
(NATO Agreed)

**message**

Any thought or idea expressed briefly in plain, coded, or secret language, prepared in a suitable form for transmission by any means of communication.

(NATO Agreed)

Note: It supports a specific theme and is tailored to a specific audience. (MC 0422/6)

**messaging**

The transfer of any thought or idea from one person or device to another, by using any medium of communication.

(NATO Agreed)

**military public affairs**

The strategic communications capability responsible for promoting military aims and objectives by communicating accurate and truthful information to internal and external audiences in a timely manner.

(NATO Agreed)

**misinform(ation)**

Give false or inaccurate information to.

(COED)

**narrative**

A spoken or written account of events and information arranged in a logical sequence to influence the behaviour of a target audience.

(NATO Agreed)

**operational domain**

A specified sphere of capabilities and activities that can be applied within an engagement space.

Note: There are five operational domains: maritime, land, air, space and cyberspace, each conditioned by the characteristics of its operating environment.

(NATO Agreed)

**operating environment**

A composite of the conditions, circumstances and influences that affect the employment of capabilities and bear on the decisions of the commander.

(NATO Agreed)



**operations security**

All measures taken to give a military operation or exercise appropriate security, using passive or active means, to deny an adversary knowledge of essential elements of friendly information or indicators thereof.

(NATO Agreed)

**perception**

A way of regarding, understanding, or interpreting something.

(COED)

**propaganda**

Information, especially of a biased or misleading nature, used to promote a political cause or point of view.

(NATO Agreed)

**psychological operation**

Planned activities using methods of communication and other means directed at approved audiences in order to influence perceptions, attitudes and behaviours, affecting the achievement of political and military objectives.

(NATO Agreed)

**public**

An individual, group or entity who is aware of activities that may affect the attainment of the end state.

(NATO Agreed)

**stakeholder**

An individual, group or entity who can affect or is affected by the attainment of the end state.

(NATO Agreed)

**strategic communications**

In the NATO military context, the integration of communication capabilities and information staff function with other military activities, in order to understand and shape the information environment, in support of NATO strategic aims and objectives.

(NATO Agreed)

**target**

An area, infrastructure, object, audience or organization against which activities can be directed to create desired effects.

(NATO Agreed)

**target audience analysis**

The focused examination of targeted audiences to create desired effects.

(NATO Agreed)

**theme**

The unifying subject or idea of a message or set of messages.  
(NATO Agreed)

**understanding**

The interpretation and comprehension of a particular situation in order to provide the context, insight and foresight required for effective decision-making.  
(NATO Agreed)

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