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EUROPE**

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**TO:** See Distribution

**SUBJECT: NATO MILITARY POLICY ON STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS**

**REFERENCES:** A. PO(2009)0141, NATO Strategic Communications Policy, dated 29 September 2009.  
B. 2070/SPSSTC/ML/12-TT282960, ACO Directive (AD) 095-002 - ACO Strategic Communications, dated 21 May 2012.

1. For your action, please find at Enclosure 1 the NATO Military Policy on Strategic Communications (MC 0628) which has now been approved by both the Military Committee (MC) and the North Atlantic Council. This policy, while remaining coherent with the overarching NATO HQ Strategic Communications (StratCom) guidance (Reference A) and existing ACO Directive (Reference B), represents a major step forward in the development of NATO's military StratCom. It sees StratCom moving from a purely advisory/coordination function to that of holding the Commander's delegated authority and ensuring it is fully integrated with other activities.

2. The original MC task called for a forward-leaning policy that created a more integrated StratCom approach and reflected the developments in the international security environment. This new policy meets these requirements by directing the grouping of communication capabilities, the creation of a Military Committee Working Group (MCWG) for StratCom, and generating better understanding of the security environment through more systematic assessment of the Information Environment.

3. Under this policy, the communication capabilities and the information staff function (StratCom, Mil Public Affairs (PA), Info Ops, PSYOPS) are to be grouped together under a Chief StratCom/Director of Communications (or similar title). This individual will have coordination and integration authority, in accordance with the Commander's Intent, to issue appropriate Direction and Guidance in order to ensure StratCom's integration within every aspect of the HQ's activities. The particular requirements of each communication capability and information staff function will still be met through retention of their functional responsibilities and where appropriate dual-hatting. Additionally, the Chief Public Affairs Officer (CPAO)/Spokesperson retains the independent advisory role and direct access to the commander on PA matters, as well as responsibilities for engagement with the media.

4. The specific ACO responsibilities are outlined within paragraph 37 of the policy and the organisational guidelines within paragraph 12 and 13. The new policy and associated changes have been extensively discussed with all the nations, with strong support and involvement from

ACO as a whole, and the SHAPE Command Group in particular. This outcome is very much what ACO has sought and I look for your full support in implementing what nations have agreed. In line with the requirement in MC 0628 to group communication capabilities and information staff functions, all NCS HQs are to introduce integrated structures that will be applicable during peace, crisis and conflict. Similarly, to support interoperability and exchange of information, the NATO Force Structure (NFS) HQs that do not already reflect such organisational principles are expected to adopt similar structures. SHAPE is already well down the road with these changes and, with the strong support of the Command Group, will shortly stand-up its new Communications Division.

5. This new policy will initiate further work in a number of areas, principally the review of Military PA, Info Ops and PSYOPS related doctrine and policies and the development of enhanced Information Environment assessment capabilities. More information on these aspects will be forthcoming and they will be central discussion points at the NATO Information and Communications Conference in Valencia next month.

6. This new policy represents a step-change in NATO's approach to StratCom. After a process lasting two years the debate over the way ahead is now over, enabling us to focus on implementing an exciting phase in the development of Alliance adaptation to the new security environment.

7. My primary Point of Contact (POC) for all related queries will be the Chief of the new Communications Division at SHAPE, Mark Laity (Email: mark.laity@shape.nato.int, NCN: 254 4513 or +32 65 44 4513). I recommend your staffs work closely with him in introducing the changes required by the new policy.

FOR THE SUPREME ALLIED COMMANDER, EUROPE:



Markus Kneip  
General, DEU A  
Chief of Staff

ENCLOSURE:

1. MC 0628 (Final), Final Decision on MC 0628 - NATO Military Policy on Strategic Communications, dated 26 July 2017.

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**NORTH ATLANTIC MILITARY COMMITTEE**  
COMITÉ MILITAIRE DE L'ATLANTIQUE NORD



26 July 2017

MC 0628 (Final)

**FINAL DECISION ON MC 0628****NATO MILITARY POLICY ON STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS**

1. On 19 Jul 17, the North Atlantic Council endorsed MC 0628 (Military Decision). PO(2017)0351-AS1 refers.

**FOR THE MILITARY COMMITTEE:**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'E. Siegmann'.

E. SIEGMANN  
Major General, DEUAF  
IMS Director  
Policy and Capabilities Division

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jan Broeks'.

for Jan Broeks  
Lieutenant General, Royal Netherlands Army  
Director General  
International Military Staff

NOTE. This Final Decision Sheet shall now be attached to MC 0628 as the top sheet. Page numbering of the complete document when this decision is attached is as follows:

|                             |            |
|-----------------------------|------------|
| MC 0628 (Final)             | - Page 1   |
| MC 0628 (Military Decision) | - 1 page   |
| MC 0628                     | - 21 pages |

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**NORTH ATLANTIC MILITARY COMMITTEE**  
COMITÉ MILITAIRE DE L'ATLANTIQUE NORD



10 July 2017

MC 0628 (Military Decision)

SECRETARY GENERAL, NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION

**MILITARY DECISION ON MC 0628**

**NATO MILITARY POLICY ON STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS**

1. On 28 Jun 17, the MC agreed MC 0628 which is now forwarded for endorsement by the NAC.
2. This document clears IMSWM-0348-2016(INV) and all SDs thereto.

**FOR THE MILITARY COMMITTEE:**

A blue ink signature, likely of Jan Broeks, written in a cursive style.

Jan Broeks  
Lieutenant General, Royal Netherlands Army  
Director General  
International Military Staff

Enclosure:

1. MC 0628, NATO Military Policy on Strategic Communications.

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**MC 0628**

**NATO MILITARY POLICY ON STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS**

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## **NATO MILITARY POLICY ON STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS**

### **References:**

- A. PO(2015)0673, Strategy on NATO's Role in Countering Hybrid Warfare to Foreign Ministers, 26 Nov 15.
- B. IMSM-0504-2015, Framework for Future Alliance Operations – Release to Nations, 25 Aug 15.
- C. IMSM-0194-2015, NATO Military Committee Policy on Strategic Communications – Tasking to Strategic Commands, 28 Apr 15.
- D. PO(2009)0141, NATO Strategic Communications Policy, 29 Sep 09.
- E. MCM-0085-2010 (Rev 1), Military Concept for NATO Strategic Communications, 11 Aug 10.
- F. MC 0457/2 (Final), NATO Military Policy on Public Affairs, 8 Feb 11.
- G. MC 0402/2 (Final), NATO Military Policy on Psychological Operations, 3 Oct 12.
- H. MC 0422/5 (Final), NATO Military Policy for Information Operations, 11 Feb 15.
- I. MC 0411/2 (Final), NATO Military Policy on Civil-Military Cooperation (CIMIC) and Civil-Military Interaction (CMI), 12 May 14.
- J. MCM-0145-2015 Change 1, NATO Strategic Communications Strategic Training Plan, 4 Apr 16.

### **GENERAL**

1. The global strategic environment has dramatically evolved since the end of the Cold War and will continue to do so. A networked world has rendered both state and non-state actors capable of employing conventional, unconventional and hybrid methods, and empowered them to shape the narrative within a continuous and global information cycle. In this environment, the Alliance will need to adapt and enhance the speed, connectivity and effectiveness of its Strategic Communications (StratCom) efforts. As a part of this change, decision-making systems as well as perceptions, attitudes and behaviours of groups and individuals are being continually influenced. Relations in the global environment are also affected by existing or emerging ideologies from which derive competing narratives; these in turn influence the way people assess the legitimacy of global or regional actors in the accomplishment of their aims and strategies, including understanding and supporting NATO military policies and operations. Information technology and applications are now so accessible that everyone has the ability to monitor, capture, display and communicate about NATO activities, whether accurately or inaccurately, in order to promote their own viewpoints including misrepresentation.

2. A significant aspect of these changes has been the use of hybrid warfare (Reference A) where the information revolution has been used to transformative effect by adversaries. Future challenges to NATO will include both conventional and unconventional threats, hybrid warfare methods and influential non-state actors all

striving to shape the Information Environment (IE)<sup>1</sup> influencing public perception, attitude and behaviour, slowing and disrupting political decision-making and undermining the credibility of the Alliance. It will be essential for the Alliance to monitor and analyse messaging and narratives in order to contribute to the early network of indications and warnings to help recognise, characterise, attribute and mitigate emerging threats (Reference B).

3. Within the contemporary IE coherent and timely application of StratCom is critical to overall success, particularly when confronting threats including those posed by hybrid warfare. In order to succeed, the Alliance must become more agile and proactive within the IE such that the communication capabilities and information staff function<sup>2</sup>, and all other staff functions reinforce each other, making best use of scarce resources. The nature of modern conflict blurs lines on traditional definition of peace and conflict and therefore StratCom must be organised and active in a way that is effective across peacetime, crisis and conflict. This will require changes in both policy and organisation to improve how the Alliance plans, coordinates and executes its communication activities. Processes need to be more integrated, simpler and quicker in order to ensure that information and communication aspects are at the core of all levels of policy, planning and implementation and fully integrated with other operational effects (Reference C).

4. This policy facilitates the changes within NATO's Command Structure (NCS), NATO Force Structure (NFS) and on NATO Missions and Operations required to achieve success within the IE. Consequently at the national level, Nations are not tied by its contents and so remain open to apply the structures and approaches appropriate to their requirements. It represents a step change in NATO's approach to communication in that it sees StratCom moving from a purely advisory/coordination function (Reference D) to that of exercising the commander's authority to ensure coherence of NATO actions and words. In this context, StratCom is not a stand-alone function, but it ensures the coherence and effectiveness of existing capabilities. This model is most appropriate to the full range of activities covering peacetime, crisis and conflict in the modern security environment.

## **AIM**

5. To provide a policy for NATO military application of Strategic Communications (StratCom).

## **SCOPE**

6. This document provides the policy for the implementation of StratCom within NATO military structures, on military operations and other activities. It provides direction towards a more integrated and simpler approach of all NATO military communication and the full integration of communication and information aspects in

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<sup>1</sup> The Information Environment (IE) is comprised of the information itself, the individuals, organisations and systems that receive, process and convey the information, and the cognitive, virtual and physical space in which this occurs.

<sup>2</sup> Communication capabilities and information staff function: The force capabilities and information staff function the primary role of which is to execute communication management tasks, to conduct communication and information activities to create Information Effects.



planning and execution of all NATO activities. This policy takes into consideration the evolving nature of the IE and the different perceptions, approaches and capabilities of the Nations. It specifically addresses the following areas:

- a. Definition.
- b. StratCom Principles.
- c. Organisational and Structural Guidelines.
- d. Relationships and Linkages.
- e. StratCom Process and Tools.
- f. Exercises and Training.
- g. Roles and Responsibilities.
- h. Implementation

## **DEFINITION**

7. StratCom, in the context of the NATO military, is the integration of communication capabilities and information staff function with other military activities, in order to understand and shape the Information Environment (IE), in support of NATO aims and objectives.

## **STRATCOM PRINCIPLES**

8. StratCom principles are overarching and apply equally for activities and actions, both kinetic and non-kinetic, which have an effect within the IE. They have particular importance to the communication capabilities of Military Public Affairs (Mil PA) and Psychological Operations (PSYOPS) and the staff function of Information Operations (Info Ops). StratCom implementation requires unity of effort and relies on the following:

- a. All activity is founded on NATO's values.
- b. Activity is driven by objectives derived from Narrative, Policy and Strategy issued within a framework of political-military direction.
- c. Credibility and trust are vital attributes and must be protected.
- d. Words and actions must be aligned.
- e. The IE must be understood.
- f. Communication is a collective and integrated effort.
- g. Focus is on achieving (a) desired effect(s) and outcome(s).
- h. Communication is empowered at all levels.

## ORGANISATIONAL AND STRUCTURAL GUIDELINES

9. Command Responsibility. StratCom in NATO is a command responsibility that spans all levels. Successful implementation requires clear direction and guidance (D&G) incorporating the commander's intent into all aspects of staff activities, especially in the operational planning process and during the conduct of operations (Reference E).
10. Mission Command. Mission Command is essential to effective and timely StratCom and requires the empowering of each level to adapt, integrate and implement appropriately to their circumstances in order to achieve the desired effect.
11. Unity of Effort / Purpose. Unity of Effort describes the ways and means by which the effort is organised among the staff to realise objectives and applies to StratCom as an integral part of this effort. To determine how best to achieve this, all must understand the commander's Direction and Guidance (D&G) and the role and place of StratCom through a common appreciation and thorough understanding of the mission, the IE, and the impact it has on all activities.
12. Authority. Chief StratCom/Director of Communications (or similar title) issues D&G to communication capabilities and information staff function to ensure their integration within the HQ's operations analysis, planning, execution and assessment in accordance with the Commander's Intent. StratCom will direct, coordinate and synchronize the overall communication effort and will ensure coherence across the communication capabilities and information staff function, which retain their functional responsibilities. With regard to Mil PA, the Chief Public Affairs Officer (CPAO)/Spokesperson retains the independent advisory role and direct access to the commander on PA matters, as well as responsibilities for engagement with the media.
13. Organisation – Integrated Structures. Efficiency and unity of effort dictate that the communication capabilities and information staff function should be structurally grouped together. 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. The communication capabilities and information staff function will be responsible for execution of information activities, but StratCom/Director of Communications (or similar title) will have coordination and integration authority, supported by appropriate structures, to direct coherent communication planning towards aligned outcomes. With regard to Mil PA the CPAO/Spokesperson, retains the independent advisory role and direct access to the commander on PA matters, as well as responsibilities for engagement with the media. StratCom in the military context draws primarily from existing communication capabilities and information staff function. This organisation will be effective in peace, crisis and conflict, taking into account the limitations on the use of PSYOPS & Info Ops. When deployed, StratCom may be supported by additional resources.
14. Effects Based. StratCom is about creating effects in the IE. Each of the communication capabilities and information staff function will support this effort in a manner consistent with their policies (References F, G, H). It does this on a

continuous basis in support of Alliance aims and is a primary tool of the commander to appropriately inform and influence audiences through actions and words.

15. Understanding. In order to achieve situational awareness and communicate effectively, NATO must first understand the IE on a continuous basis through peace, crisis and conflict. In order to understand, investment is required in research and analysis to appreciate the IE in which communication and information activities are conducted, and the motivation of the various audiences and their decision-making processes. Analysis of the IE equally benefits planning in the physical domain and supports a comprehensive appreciation of the operational environment. Consequently a mechanism is required to harness IE analysis and assessment that fully utilises existing organisations at all levels. This will enable comprehensive understanding while ensuring responsibilities are understood which will eliminate duplication and maximise efficiency (Annex D).

16. Adaptability and Responsiveness. The nature of modern information gathering demands more flexible and responsive structures that can take all sources of information and then fuse, analyse and distribute it for timely and appropriate use for communication and information activities. This will require coordinated effort from across the headquarters and timely access and engagement with decision makers enabling the command to act in an effective manner.

17. Resourced – Trained and Professional. Effective implementation of StratCom is a whole of force effort, but those directly involved in planning and achieving information effects need to be thoroughly trained, experienced and equipped. Lack of training and experience across all communication capabilities and information staff function represents a strategic risk. Managing the communications and information processes in a complex, evolving and technically difficult IE requires a range of specific skills including communications specialists, planners, researchers and analysts.

18. Sustained Effort. Given the constantly evolving IE and the increasing 'weaponisation' of information, an organised and codified approach to monitor, assess, understand and act is required on a continuous basis. Efforts to undermine NATO or challenge its aims will be carried out continuously, either overtly or covertly. To preserve the credibility of and trust in the organisation, the communication capabilities and information staff function must be adequately resourced, aware and active to meet such challenges in peace time, crisis or conflict.

## **RELATIONSHIPS AND LINKAGES**

19. Political Dimension. The North Atlantic Council (NAC) provides overall guidance and direction to NATO StratCom efforts, as well as mission-specific strategic and political guidance for NATO information activities. The Secretary General (SG) provides specific direction and guidance on StratCom to all NATO civilian and military bodies and commands. The SG is the principal spokesperson for the Alliance. This guidance is taken forward by NATO HQ Public Diplomacy Division (PDD). The Assistant Secretary General (ASG) for the PDD oversees the coordination of all StratCom activities across all NATO civilian and military bodies and commands, and also directs all public diplomacy activities (except press and

media, which are directed by the NATO Spokesperson on behalf of the SG). The NATO Spokesperson, on behalf of the SG, provides day-to-day direction of all Headquarters media activities, including messaging, and offers guidance to military PA to ensure that all NATO messages and communications are consistent with political direction and decisions. This guidance will be developed and taken forward in consultation with the International Military Staff (IMS). The BiSC will support NATO HQ in developing such guidance and ensure maximum engagement to inform the process. Detailed information on StratCom roles and responsibilities within NATO HQ organisation are stated in reference D.

20. Command. As both an advisor to the commander and exercising the commander's authority for the communications directorate (or similar staff element), the Chief StratCom/Director of Communications (or similar title) reports directly to the Command Group on the combined efforts of communication and information activities.

21. Military Public Affairs (Mil PA). Mil PA are part of the communications directorate or similar staff element, retaining their functional responsibilities for PA as described in Reference F, and with respect to the Chief Public Affairs Officer (CPAO)/Spokesperson, retains the independent advisory role and direct access to the commander on PA matters. Mil PA will remain the lead function responsible for the External Communication as defined in Reference F. StratCom will direct, coordinate and synchronize the overall communication effort and will ensure coherence across the communication capabilities and information staff function. Noting credibility will be damaged if there is a perception that through PA activities NATO is attempting to inappropriately influence audiences or the media, the Chief StratCom/Director of Communications (or similar title) will ensure, in line with NATO policies (Reference D), Mil PA will have no role in planning or executing PSYOPS, Info Ops or deception operations. This does not prohibit the coordination and de-confliction of all communications activities by StratCom staff. This coordination and de-confliction is essential in maintaining the integrity and consistency of Alliance narratives and messages, and helps prevent information fratricide.

22. Psychological Operations (PSYOPS). PSYOPS staff elements are part of the communications directorate or similar staff element, retaining their functional responsibilities for products and activities (Reference G). This essentially includes full participation to Information Activities Coordination Board (IACB), Information Activities Working Group or equivalent bodies' work, and implementation of a specific approval process. StratCom will direct, coordinate and synchronize the overall communication effort and will ensure coherence across the communication capabilities and information staff function.

23. Information Operations (Info Ops). Info Ops is part of the communications directorate or similar staff element focusing on analysis, planning, assessment and integration of information activities as part of the overarching StratCom effort (Reference H). Specific links and procedures between Info Ops and intelligence, operation and planning branches, as well as any targeting structure, will be secured/maintained, in order to allow the Info Ops core integrating function of IA (within the HQ on a daily basis). StratCom will direct, coordinate and synchronize the

overall communication effort and will ensure coherence across the communication capabilities and information staff function.

24. Civil Military Interaction/Civil Military Cooperation (CMI/CIMIC). CMI/CIMIC will closely align and coordinate their activities with StratCom. Liaison and engagement are key elements of CMI, and StratCom will advise and guide these tasks to ensure StratCom effect is maximised and any useful information is captured as part of the information fusion effort. On operational deployments commanders may consider placing CMI/CIMIC within a wider communications directorate or similar element (Reference I).

25. Intelligence. A comprehensive understanding of the operating environment is central to effective StratCom. Effective execution of communication and information activities requires access to a wide range of detailed and often highly classified intelligence. Intelligence, together with information from other sources, including military sources, will provide a deeper and richer understanding of the capabilities, interactions and influences of all key actors across a much broader operating environment. A close relationship with Intelligence staff is therefore fundamental to ensure the Commander's Critical Information Requirements in respect to StratCom are both understood and afforded an appropriate level priority. Open Source Information is becoming increasingly important, particularly for StratCom, and therefore StratCom needs Intelligence support in exploiting these sources of information. As recent operations have clearly demonstrated, the timely release of relevant information and imagery plays a significant role in shaping the IE and is critical when countering the propaganda and narrative of potential adversaries, particularly in the context of hybrid warfare. Intelligence could support this by declassifying relevant information and intelligence for StratCom purposes, including imagery from weapons sensors. A mechanism to support this effort is therefore required, while respecting Nations' interests and sovereignty.

26. Operations. Close coordination at all levels is vital in order to ensure an understanding and implementation of StratCom as part of achieving overall success. All actions, kinetic and non-kinetic, have an effect on the IE, either in a positive manner by closing the say-do gap, or negatively through contradicting our own communication and information activities. StratCom is therefore to be included at every stage of operational planning, synchronization and execution. The following inter alia remain under the responsibility of their own branches: capabilities involving physical destruction, electronic warfare, cyberspace operations, and special capabilities. The StratCom Directorate (or similar title) will provide input to the planning and use of those capabilities.

27. Planning. At all levels it is vital that StratCom considerations are integrated into all aspects of policy and planning from the start. It is important that NATO's communication and information-related effects in support of strategic, operational and tactical objectives, and NATO's Narrative are integral to the Operational Plan (OPLAN) and reflected in the Commander's Intent and the operational design.

28. Targeting. Currently, communications and information activities seek to create and/or avoid information effects, whereas kinetic targeting focuses on physical effects. Therefore a mechanism is required to guarantee an integrated process

between existing targeting bodies and future possible communications and information ones<sup>3</sup>. Noting the responsibilities for capabilities outlined in paragraph 26, the StratCom Directorate (or similar title) will provide input to the planning and use of those capabilities.

29. Assessment. StratCom will work in close coordination with the Joint Assessment Section (or equivalent) in order to support the assessment process to evaluate communication and information effects. Clearly defined StratCom metrics are to be developed to support assessment of StratCom effectiveness.

## **STRATCOM PROCESS AND TOOLS**

30. StratCom must be a vital and integral part of the overall planning process and NATO's effort to understand and shape the security environment. It is a political-military process that requires continuous engagement and analysis to ensure timely and coherent action in the IE. In so doing the following areas are of particular importance:

a. Political Direction and Guidance. NATO Military Authorities (NMAs) translate political guidance, direction or intent into staff activities or actions as required. As such the primary catalyst of StratCom action originates from the political level.

b. Understanding. In order to inform all planning and activity, including StratCom, the need for a comprehensive approach in generating understanding of the constantly evolving IE is crucial. Therefore, an organised and codified approach to monitor, collect, assess, evaluate and share information is required. This requires the fusion of all source intelligence and information in order to understand the IE. StratCom-related assessments add a particular and valuable perspective to overall situational awareness of the IE (Annex C).

c. Narrative. Sustainable support for any institution or campaign is founded on logic, instinct and emotion which itself is derived from a society's history and culture. This cognitive process in turn generates narratives. To operate in the IE, consistent strategic narratives must be constructed that are culturally attuned, appreciating existing narratives in the IE, in order to resonate with various audiences, balance opposing ones, and align words and actions. Narrative must therefore inform planning and execution of all activities and operations.

d. Planning and Direction. StratCom must be at the heart of all planning and at the forefront of the staff's considerations from the beginning. At all levels, planning will inform coherent and coordinated activity and integrate messaging that contributes to achievement of NATO's end state while reflecting the Commander's Intent. The StratCom function must ensure that the operational design is consistent with NATO's narrative and that all staff, including the communication capabilities and information staff function are

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<sup>3</sup> As an evolution to current Joint Targeting Coordination Board (JTCB) and Information Activities Coordination Board IACB.

aligned. StratCom Frameworks are an important part of this process (Annex C).

e. Orientation. As well as the formal planning products, StratCom will lead the development of StratCom Frameworks that are the primary communications and information activities guidance tool for ensuring the leadership's objectives are promulgated and fulfilled in terms of communications and information related effect. Frameworks exist outside formal operational plans and provide overarching guidance that is designed to be interpreted and implemented by all staff appropriately at each level. StratCom Frameworks concerning major political-military issues will be issued at political level with appropriate approval, and be titled NATO StratCom Frameworks. However, where NATO HQ chooses not to issue a framework, it can be developed and approved by the Strategic Commands (Bi-SC) with an appropriate title indicating the issuing authority. At all times frameworks will be generated in line with overarching political-military guidance. The processes and generic structure of the recommended StratCom Framework is described in Annex C.

f. Execution. Acknowledging that all actions and activities communicate messages, then it can be understood that StratCom is executed by every part of the force. This requires that everyone understands the effect of their actions in terms of what those actions communicate to various audiences: how those actions are perceived and understood. The communication directorate or similar staff element provides the necessary guidance for the effective achievement of information effects. Within the communications directorate or similar staff element each of the communication capabilities and information staff function retains their responsibility for the production and dissemination of their products and activities. Chief StratCom/Director of Communications (or similar title) has the authority for ensuring the effectiveness and coherence of the products of the communication capabilities and information staff function. StratCom will be integrated into all aspects of planning and execution in order to ensure communications D&G is acted upon in line with the operational design and Commander's Intent. This will include involvement in all targeting processes.

g. Assessment and Review. Measuring effects in this area will always be a challenge given the difficulty of assessing behaviour and what influences it, but effective StratCom requires ongoing and accurate assessment of effects using a clear baseline. The process should be a mixture of deliberate and dynamic assessments in order to adjust ongoing communication and information activities, detect unexpected trends and inform guidance. The results of such analysis will inform both StratCom and the wider planning and operational process.

h. Digital Media. Digital Media permeates all communication and information activities and has the potential to be 'weaponised' by adversaries. It requires a continuously adaptive approach to dealing with audiences. Within digital media, there is a vast amount of un-mediated content including actual and purported eye-witness testimony. This can contain much of value

or conversely create problems, and therefore in either case this requires situational awareness and assessment. For coherence, StratCom is responsible for the development of directives that guide the overall StratCom approach to, and use of, digital media. This will be done in coordination with other relevant disciplines in order to ensure deconfliction.

i. Documentation. Externally, individuals or groups can often seek to tell, through misrepresentation of that material, the NATO story from their point of view. NATO must accurately document its own activities and operations to serve as a historical record, aid institutional memory and provide a source for the active distribution of releasable information to media, as well as responding to erroneous information. StratCom should be an advocate for the development and management of systematic processes by which imagery and other material is collected, distributed and archived to enable time-sensitive release, rebuttal and exploitation to shape the IE.

j. Engagement. Face-to-face communications is an effective means of communication. Key leader and other engagements must be planned, well executed and evaluated for maximum effect. StratCom provides the guidance for the development and management of systematic processes by which engagements are conducted in line with and contributing to achieving NATO's overall objectives.

## **EDUCATION AND TRAINING**

31. ACO develops the requirements and ACT provides the training solution for an education and training (E&T) system that contributes to NATO's ability to operate effectively across the IE. The key aspect to StratCom training at all levels is to integrate flexible and adaptive systems that allow, firstly, for change as StratCom related policy, doctrine, standards and procedures continue to evolve, and secondly, to establish enduring processes that address long term education and training needs within an institutionalised approach.

32. The communication capabilities and information staff function require dedicated and appropriately trained personnel who can effectively perform their specific tasks. Nations are responsible for providing fully trained and qualified personnel. Additional NATO specific training for StratCom (including Mil PA, PSYOPS and Info Ops) personnel will be offered at the NATO School in Oberammergau (NSO) or other designated facilities. This should be carried out prior to taking a NATO StratCom, Mil PA, PSYOPS or Info Ops position. Policies and doctrines for Mil PA, PSYOPS and Info Ops provide further guidance on training in their specific field of responsibility.

33. There is a degree of commonality in the skills required among the communication and information specialists and while individual skills must continue to be thoroughly trained, a more integrated and joint approach to training among the communication capabilities and information staff function will foster understanding and generate synergistic effects (Reference H).



34. Leaders and staff at every level must be trained or educated in StratCom to consider the impact on Alliance policies, plans and actions in the IE and how they may be communicated and perceived. This approach is founded on developing educated leaders and staff that understand the IE and StratCom in its broadest sense, and plan and act accordingly (Reference H).

## **ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES**

35. NATO HQ. The NAC, supported by the International Staff (IS), provides overall D&G to NATO-wide StratCom efforts. Thereafter, the IS, working under the authority of the Secretary General, is responsible for overall political D&G of StratCom as well as mission-specific strategic and political guidance for NATO Information Activities (Reference D). In promulgating this through the military Chain of Command, the IMS will work closely with Allied Command Operations (ACO) and Allied Command Transformation (ACT).

36. Military Committee (MC). The MC exercises its responsibilities for StratCom through a StratCom Working Group (MCWG(StratCom)). Mil PA, PSYOPS and Info Ops will form sub-working groups to this body at the Bi-Strategic Command (SC) level. The MCWG(STRATCOM) is used to provide expertise, working capacity and advice on NATO StratCom, particularly with regard to operations, policy and doctrine matters. The Terms of Reference (TOR) for this group are contained in Annex B. The specific responsibilities of the MC for NATO policy on StratCom are the following:

- a. To provide StratCom-related military advice to the NAC and seek its guidance.
- b. To maintain an effective MC StratCom policy and ensure that StratCom considerations are included in other MC policy documents.
- c. To provide military guidance for StratCom including operations, exercises, capabilities and training.
- d. To promulgate, monitor, co-ordinate and contribute to the development of StratCom doctrine.
- e. To develop and maintain StratCom related Crisis Response Measures (CRM).
- f. To ensure that StratCom guidance is provided to the SCs in a timely manner.

37. Strategic Commands (Bi-SC). Specific responsibilities of the SCs for NATO StratCom are as follows:

- a. To liaise, advise and coordinate with NATO HQ on a regular basis.
- b. To consider StratCom resource requirements, narrative, effects, and audiences at the earliest possible time to enable MC and NAC consideration and approval.

- c. To integrate StratCom related analysis and assessments as a core part of the planning process throughout the continuum of operational planning and execution.
- d. To designate staff and mechanisms to integrate StratCom doctrine/plans at the strategic level and to ensure that subordinate commands assign responsibilities as necessary.
- e. To develop and/or improve capabilities, techniques and security guidance within their commands including incorporating StratCom into their lessons learned process, ensuring their adequacy to conduct communication and information activities in support of operational objectives.
- f. To integrate StratCom into existing and future operational planning documents in accordance with the guidance of the MC.
- g. To advise the MC on the requirements for communication and information activities and associated resources in support of achieving effects.
- h. To review, and as required, request approval of StratCom related CRMs.
- i. To advise, provide direction as appropriate, guide, and mentor the StratCom community in the subordinate commands.
- j. To develop training standards and integrate StratCom into training, exercises and evaluations in representative environments in accordance with the NATO Strategic Communications Strategic Training Plan (STP) (Reference J).
- k. To provide guidance for instruction on StratCom in NATO military educational institutions.

38. Nations. Recognising that MC policy is relevant to NCS, NFS and NATO Missions and Operations and does not constrain Nations with regard to national approaches, the specific responsibilities for StratCom are as follows:

- a. To consider Alliance StratCom requirements during the NATO Defence Planning Process (NDPP) and implement these requirements as appropriate into national planning.
- b. To consider developing StratCom procedures within the framework of this document, and provide the necessary capabilities for their personnel working under NATO command.
- c. To consider providing adequate national capabilities, including intelligence, to support StratCom in all applicable NATO activities.

d. To consider the use of NATO StratCom Frameworks as an integral part of their own StratCom planning and implementation.

e. To develop personnel capable of augmenting StratCom/Communication Directorate posts across all StratCom disciplines; both through national and NATO training and participation in national and NATO exercises.

39. Joint Force Commands, Joint Task Forces and Single Service Command (JFC/JTF/SSC). The specific responsibilities for StratCom are as follows:

a. To organize and staff with sufficient, trained personnel to ensure proper StratCom planning and execution and assessment of communication and information activities.

b. To ensure timely integration, situational awareness, and coordination of all communication and information activities to support direct linkages between strategic, operational and tactical levels of StratCom execution.

## **IMPLEMENTATION**

40. Implementation. In enacting the key organisational and structural guidelines to group the communication capabilities and information staff function together in a single staff element carrying executive authority, the principle of mission command must be respected, giving commanders flexibility in how the overarching guidance is implemented. Existing military policies and doctrines related to StratCom may need to be reviewed to ensure coherence with this MC Policy. Future revisions of communications-related MC policy documents need to be carried out in a coordinated manner.

### Annexes:

- A. List of Acronyms.
- B. MCWG(StratCom) TOR.
- C. StratCom Framework Template.
- D. The NATO IE Assessment Mechanism Concept

**LIST OF ACRONYMS**

|                |   |
|----------------|---|
| ACO            | Allied Command Operations                             |
| ACT            | Allied Command Transformation                         |
| AOI/AOR        | Area of Interest/Responsibility                       |
| ASG            | Assistant Secretary General                           |
| CMI/CIMIC      | Civil Military Interaction/Civil Military Cooperation |
| COE            | Centre of Excellence                                  |
| CPAO           | Chief Public Affairs Officer                          |
| CRM            | Crisis Response Measures                              |
| D&G            | Direction and Guidance                                |
| E&T            | Education and Training                                |
| IE             | Information Environment                               |
| IACB           | Information Activities Coordination Board             |
| IAWG           | Information Activities Working Group                  |
| Info Ops       | Information Operations                                |
| IMS            | International Military Staff                          |
| IS             | International Staff                                   |
| JFC            | Joint Force Command                                   |
| JISR           | Joint Intelligence Surveillance and Reconnaissance    |
| JTCB           | Joint Targeting Coordination Board                    |
| JTF            | Joint Task Force                                      |
| PA             | Public Affairs  |
| MC             | Military Committee                                    |
| MCWG(STRATCOM) | Military Committee Working Group (StratCom)           |
| Mil PA         | Military Public Affairs                               |
| NAC            | North Atlantic Council                                |
| NCS            | NATO Command Structure                                |
| NDPP           | NATO Defence Planning Process                         |
| NFS            | NATO Force Structure                                  |
| NMAs           | NATO Military Authorities                             |
| OPLAN          | Operational Plan                                      |
| PDD            | NATO HQ Public Diplomacy Division                     |
| PSYOPS         | Psychological Operations                              |
| SC             | Strategic Command                                     |
| SG             | Secretary General                                     |
| SSC            | Single Service Command                                |
| STP            | Strategic Training Plan                               |
| StratCom       | Strategic Communications                              |
| TA             | Target Audiences                                      |
| TOR            | Terms of Referenc                                     |

**TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE MILITARY COMMITTEE WORKING GROUP  
FOR STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS (MCWG(STRATCOM))****INTRODUCTION**

1. In an evolving security environment the area of Strategic Communications (StratCom) requires ongoing re-examination. Policies, directives and guidance require coordination within the Alliance.

**AIM**

2. The aim of the MCWG(StratCom) is to ensure the Alliance maintains effective StratCom by:

- a. Providing military advice to the MC on StratCom related issues.
- b. Reviewing and confirming NATO military policy on StratCom.
- c. Coordinating NATO StratCom doctrine.
- d. Examining StratCom requirements for activities, operations and exercise/training.
- e. Applying lessons learned.

**MEETINGS, RECORDS AND COMPOSITION**

3. The WG Chairperson is the Public Affairs and StratCom Advisor (PASCAD), Chairman of the Military Committee (CMC) Office, NATO HQ. The Secretariat is provided by Operations Division, International Military Staff (IMS). The WG will meet quarterly (or as required) with representatives from the military delegations. Additionally, the working group will meet as required/requested, but at least once per year, in a reinforced format with senior national Subject Matter Experts (SME) in the field/responsibility of StratCom.

4. The Chairperson will issue a proposed agenda for each meeting. WG members may propose items for discussion as additions to this agenda. The Chairperson will ensure that the agreed summary record of each meeting, including decisions taken and actions pending, is prepared and distributed to all members and participants. Members and representatives are responsible for informing their respective chains of command. Additionally, following reinforced sessions the chairperson will submit a formal report to the Military Committee (MC).

5. The MCWG (StratCom) membership consists of one representative from each of the NATO signatory Nations, ACT and ACO, as well as other NATO organisations as appropriate. The StratCom Centre of Excellence will have an observer status. The ACT/ACO representative is the senior StratCom officer from the respective SC. ASG PDD or his/her designated StratCom representative will be invited to attend on a non-voting basis.

6. Members representing ACT/ACO and representatives from other NATO bodies do not have a vote in proceedings nor the power of reservation. They do have an acknowledged right to express views in proceedings and have such views recorded if they so desire. National representatives are the voting members of the WG. WG members should come to meetings fully briefed and prepared to present national or HQ views. They are expected to participate in discussions on proposals with a view to reaching agreement. Final acceptance of agreed proposals will be obtained through the normal staffing process.

7. The MC remains the authority for Mil PA, PSYOPS and Info Ops and other related policies. To assist in this responsibility and ensure harmonisation with StratCom policy Mil PA, PSYOPS and Info Ops shall each form individual NATO working groups that each reports to the MCWG(StratCom) on its discussions. The chairperson for each WG will rest within the BiSC. The Chairperson of each WG will be a standing member of the MCWG(StratCom), and the chairperson and ACO/ACT representatives of the MCWG(StratCom) will be standing members of the Mil PA, PSYOPS and Info Ops WGs. The TOR for each WG are stated in the respective MC policies.

## **TASKS**

8. The MCWG(STRATCOM) will:

- a. Examine all aspects of Alliance StratCom.
- b. Support the MC in the development of military advice for StratCom.
- c. Examine and recommend resource requirements for StratCom.
- d. Adopt and review terms of reference for the working group.
- e. Review and advise the MC on actions required to develop and maintain the StratCom-related Crisis Response Measures.
- f. Co-ordinate StratCom doctrine in accordance with NATO Military Policy for StratCom.
- g. Review and make recommendations for updating and revising all NATO and ACT/ACO StratCom policies, directives, doctrine and procedures.
- h. Ensure that Nations and commands are kept informed of all developments and that their concerns are adequately addressed in the deliberations of the WG.

- i. Discuss StratCom requirements and make proposals for force standards and capabilities.
- j. Develop, co-ordinate, promote and provide NATO StratCom training recommendations.
- k. Initiate requests for research and development for the improvement of StratCom related techniques and tools, including methodologies, planning and assessment.
- l. Provide a forum for the discussion and fulfilment of StratCom requirements for both operations and exercises/training.
- m. Ensure that StratCom considerations are coordinated with the appropriate StratCom bodies in NATO HQ/IS.

**STRATCOM FRAMEWORK TEMPLATE**

1. The purpose of a framework is to provide overarching guidance in order to generate a 'golden thread', linking top to bottom. For major activities NATO HQ will normally provide StratCom guidance through this means and each level of command will then create more specific messaging and implementation plans that are appropriate to their circumstances. For other operations, missions or activities, SHAPE will provide ACO-level frameworks and subordinate HQs can generate their own frameworks, provided they are coordinated with SHAPE StratCom. At all times frameworks will be generated in line with overarching political-military guidance. The exact content of the framework will be dependent on the specific requirements of the activity, but it will routinely adopt the following format:

- a. Introduction. This section provides a brief background to the issue providing political and operational context and outlining future challenges from a StratCom perspective.
- b. Aim. The scope and duration of validity for the StratCom Framework.
- c. Narrative and/or StratCom Core Message. A brief Narrative Statement as a result of a systematic assessment of the IE. Or if no Narrative could be agreed, a brief core message to underpin the StratCom approach to be adopted.
- d. StratCom Objectives or Effects. StratCom effects to be created are directly linked to the overall achievement of the leadership's strategic or operational objectives for missions, operations or activities. In some cases StratCom may define objectives which will refer and link to the effect we wish to achieve with friendly, neutral and adversary audiences.
- e. StratCom Themes. The (3-6) themes which guide message development by communications functions in support of achieving the StratCom objectives/effects. The themes are not messages but rather overarching and recurring thoughts, intended to promote understanding among audiences that NATO's integrated messaging and actions will seek to achieve.
- f. Focus Topics. Focus topics provide further guidance on the scope of communication activities, products and programmes. They are designed to complement StratCom themes and to identify specific activities and/or calendar events around which focused StratCom action should be considered.
- g. Coordination. An overview of the key roles and responsibilities of specified headquarters in delivery of the StratCom approach.

2. The above is a complete StratCom Framework, but additional annexes can be attached as required, concentrating, as highlighted above, on more specific issues, such as audiences and implementation. It must be understood that a framework is a catalyst for action and should be supported by follow-on implementation plans and action.



**NATO IE ASSESSMENT MECHANISM CONCEPT****INTRODUCTION**

1. Assessment of the IE is a requirement for planning and supports full integration of activities designed to inform and/or influence audiences. Critical information requirements relate to understanding and knowledge of culture, attitudes, beliefs, trends, stakeholders, audiences and evolving technical communications in a timely manner. Therefore NATO has to establish a mechanism that continuously assesses the IE with a focus on potential crisis areas (Reference D). Nations will have the opportunity to be engaged in the establishment of the IE assessment mechanism, ensuring any such mechanism maintains full respect for nations' sovereignty.

**SCOPE**

2. The IE assessment mechanism informs military strategic and operational level activities as well as political decision making processes if requested by NATO HQ. Nations may contribute to the fusion of information and will have access to the resulting IE products.

3. By fusing digital media analysis and open source information with classified information, the assessment mechanism shall contribute to situational awareness and Indicators and Warnings. The development and monitoring of indicators in combination with emerging research tools and trend analysis will further enhance NATO's situational awareness in the IE.

4. The mechanism will support Narrative development and evaluation at the strategic level.

5. The assessment of the IE will support the development of Centre of Gravity (CoG), Critical Vulnerabilities (CV), Critical Requirements (CR) of actors, and requirements for all military communication and information activities.

6. The IE is saturated by propaganda activities that potentially influence attitudes and behaviours of audiences. The assessment mechanism must be capable of monitoring and analysing relevant propaganda with potential impact on NATO activities.

## APPROACH

7. A holistic system of systems analysis approach will deliver information needed for effective StratCom planning and execution and be fully integrated into overarching intelligence and knowledge management systems.

8. Such a mechanism for NATO IE monitoring and assessment will be a strategic level asset directly linked to SHAPE. It will harness expertise in the following areas:

- a. Military INTEL/J2, Information fusion.
- b. Mil PA, PSYOPS and Info Ops.
- c. Traditional and Digital Media Analysis.
- d. IT.
- e. Audience Analysis.
- f. Political Science, International Relations.
- g. Social Science, Culture.
- h. Communication, Language and Literature.
- i. Marketing.
- j. Special regional knowledge.

9. It should establish a network with NATO Nations, partners and other organisations in order to collect, store and process relevant information. National assessment assets may contribute to the mechanism in a reach-back capacity as appropriate.

10. The IE is highly complex, dynamic, global and continuously evolving. Consequently, the mechanism must provide 24/7 operational capability for continuous situational updates.

11. The mechanism requires workstations and communication infrastructure certified to the appropriate level, a capable database system, and software collaboration tools that enable system of systems analysis.

12. Integral to the effective assessment of the IE will be a broad and timely distribution mechanism to ensure products are shared with all relevant stakeholders, within the NMAs, NATO HQ and NATO Nations.

13. To the maximum extent possible this mechanism shall utilize existing organizations, including the StratCom COE, systems and resources across the NATO Command and force structure, ensuring gaps are identified and duplication of effort is eliminated.