

Insights and Best Practices

Focus Paper



Communication Strategy and Synchronization

**Deployable Training Division
Joint Staff J7**

May 2016

Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited

This is the First Edition of the Insights and Best Practices Focus Paper on “*Communication Strategy and Synchronization*.” It is written by the Deployable Training Division (DTD) of the Joint Staff J7 and released by the J7 Deputy Director for Joint Training.

First Edition: May 2016

Scope of paper: Focused at the Combatant Command and JTF HQs

- Reinforces importance of integrating lethal and nonlethal activities to achieve effects.
- Centered on information-related actions to educate, inform, and influence select audiences.
- Addresses development of a nested narrative, compelling themes, and focused messages.
- Shares aligning, synchronizing, directing, and assessment insights and best practices.
- Brings out HQ organization insights.
- Addresses the public affairs officer and information operations officer roles.
- Does not address information assurance, electronic warfare, military deception, and cyberspace activities. Cyberspace is the topic of a future focus paper.

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Related papers: Recommend the focus papers titled “*Integration of Lethal and Nonlethal Actions*” and “*Design and Planning*” for related discussion. These and other DTD focus papers are accessible at the website below. Also recommend Joint Doctrine Note 2-13 (Commander’s Communication Synchronization), JP 3-13 (IO), and JP 3-61 (PA); these are very informative. Additionally, recommend review of DoD Principles of Information (DODD 5122.05).

Terminology and Acronyms: Numerous military acronyms and organizational names are used in this paper. They are defined in the glossary to increase readability for the intended readership.

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Disclaimer: The insights in this paper are based on DTD observations and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of the Joint Staff, DoD, or the United States Government.

PREFACE

Today's information environment complicates the security environment and affects the way we operate. It is a decisive realm of competition for us and for our adversaries in the fight for legitimacy and influence. This has amplified the importance and urgency by which we plan and how we align and synchronize our actions and words to educate, inform, and influence different audiences and engage the media.

"It's easier to kill a bad man than a bad idea."

- Senior Flag Officer

This paper shares insights and best practices to leverage the information environment in support of mission accomplishment. The paper includes numerous senior flag officer insights from across the force.

This paper may be beneficial to three main audiences (in addition to commanders):

- CCMD and JTF Chiefs of Staff as they determine how to organize staff efforts.
- Joint Public Affairs and Information Operations staffs to integrate their efforts.
- The J2, J3, J5, and JFE to leverage the cross-functional strengths within the HQ.

Five key insights underlie the paper:

- ***We are in a continuous competitive fight with adversaries for legitimacy, credibility, trust, and influence.*** Engaging is essential. Proactivity, speed, and agility are keys to success.
- ***Understand the environment,*** the different audiences, and higher direction. The military supports and must be nested within a much broader strategic communication effort.
- ***Determine who on the staff will help the Commander lead the communication effort*** in developing a communication strategy and synchronizing activities to create synergy.
- ***Leverage all capabilities*** to educate, inform, and influence - not just key leader engagement and the more commonly known public affairs and information operations capabilities. These include activities such as force employment and physical attack.
- ***Continually assess the environment*** and audiences to deepen understanding and refine your approach.

This paper builds upon joint doctrine and the existing body of focus papers developed by the Joint Staff J7 Deployable Training Division (DTD). Two papers: "*Integration of Lethal and Nonlethal Actions*" and "*Design and Planning*" provide amplifying information. These unclassified papers are approved for public release and found on the site noted on the inside front cover.

We want to capture your thoughts, solutions, and best practices as you think, plan, and work your way through operational challenges. Please pass your comments to DTD's POC, COL (Ret) Mike Findlay. Email: js.dsc.j7.mbx.joint-training@mail.mil.



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1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY. Success in military operations can often be achieved or lost based on how regional, international, and domestic audiences perceive our words and actions. Gaining the support of these audiences and the defeat of the adversary’s message is often the critical battle – the one in which we must be engaged and the one that has to be won for any lasting success.

“The political object is the goal, war is the means of reaching it, and the means can never be considered in isolation from their purposes.”
- Carl von Clausewitz

The paper elaborates on the following insights in subsequent sections:

- **Environment.** Commanders and staff work to understand the many audiences within the operational area, across the broader region, and even around the world in order to develop a compelling narrative and tailor messages in the fight for legitimacy, credibility, and influence.
- **The Narrative.** We have seen value in CCMD and Operational-level HQs developing compelling narratives, themes, and messages fully nested with the strategic narrative to advance the legitimacy of the mission while countering that of the adversary. A compelling narrative guides planning, targeting, and execution, and can help prevent the “say-do” gap in which our actions and words conflict in the eyes of the audience.
- **Aligning and Synchronizing Activities.** The narrative provides the overarching vision for employment of information-related capabilities (IRCs). The communication strategy is part of the Commander’s overall strategy and guides and regulates communication efforts as an integral part of the design and planning effort. The Communication Synchronization process synchronizes and directs actions during planning, targeting, and execution across the three event horizons (current operations, future operations, and future plans).
- **Engagement.** Mapping the human networks, and planning, executing, assessing, sharing, tracking, and refining engagements can help identify, inform, and influence key personalities.
- **Assessment.** Informs decision making. Key to assessment is Commander’s guidance, which focuses the staff and subordinates, helps frame subsequent Commander’s personal assessments, communications, and testimony, and informs planning and decision making.
- **HQ Organization.** The entire staff has a role in planning, directing, and assessing words and actions. Do not simply delegate this to a single staff. However, assigning an individual or staff organization such as a Deputy, IO officer, or PAO with responsibility for overseeing the Commander’s communication strategy and synchronization can facilitate synergy of action.

The paper brings out the different perspectives and roles of CCMD and JTF level HQs:

- CCMDs retain an AOR-wide messaging focus and set conditions for subordinates by providing intelligence, communication guidance, and information-related capabilities and authorities. They interact with numerous intelligence communities to better understand the environment and relevant audiences. CCMDs interact with the JS, OSD, and numerous stakeholders to nest narratives, themes, and messages. They resource subordinates and request necessary authorities.
- JTFs are often the “hub” that connect tactical actions with global or national messaging activities. They execute within guidance and authorities. These operational level HQs align and synchronize information-related capabilities to achieve effects beneficial to mission objectives and strategic guidance. JTFs plan and execute a variety of activities, tasks, missions, and operations that vary in purpose, scale, risk, and lethality. The Commander and staff focuses on aligning words, actions, and images to achieve desired effects. They use specific battle rhythm events and defined processes to synchronize these words, actions, and images in support of the narrative and tactical action to create synergy.

2.0 ENVIRONMENT AND AUDIENCES.

Environment. Commanders and staff attempt to understand the many audiences within the operational area, across the broader region, and around the world in order to develop a compelling narrative and deliver messages using the appropriate means to educate, inform, and influence those audiences. Each audience has its own beliefs and perspectives which affect how it perceives our actions and words, often in ways we may not anticipate. Audience perceptions and outlooks may also change based on our actions or external influences. Each audience receives information differently – whether by word of mouth, written texts, internet (and social media), radio, or television.

“The information environment is really about a Cognitive Domain”
- Senior Flag Officer

A well-developed Joint Intelligence Preparation of the Operational Environment (JIPOE) process and associated system analysis can help provide some degree of understanding of *adversary* beliefs,

Understanding the Information Environment

CENTCOM and CJTF-OIR leverage partner nations, USG agencies, and the Intelligence community to gain better insights on the many audiences and stakeholders affected by ISIL. They incorporate this understanding into both their words and actions to better achieve their objectives in support of the broader strategic objectives.

- DTD observation

perceptions, and likely reactions. They can also provide an appreciation of *non-adversary* audiences. Effective units focus on both audiences and reach out to their HHQ, the broader intelligence community, regional partners, and even academia to achieve this more comprehensive understanding.

While communication strategies tend to address several audiences, a different and important fight within the information environment is also focused on adversary decision makers to make them do or not do something (resulting in favorable terms/outcomes for the mission). Thus we find there are five primary areas in the information environment in which the JIPOE and systems analysis can provide insights:

- Identification of the various audiences, their beliefs, and relationships to others.
- The friendly audiences that we need to inform and how to best inform them.
- Adversary’s supporters or potential supporters and how to influence them.
- The adversaries’ narratives and how to contest their messages, and affect their leaders.
- The adversaries’ critical capabilities and vulnerabilities, and how to attack them.

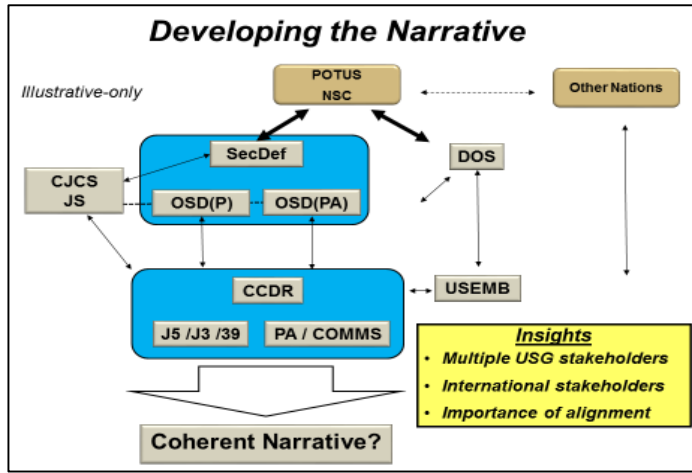
Audiences. Audiences include the U.S. populace, regional parties, allies, NGOs, IGOs, private sector, adversaries, and potential adversaries. Each audience views words, images, and deeds through their cultural lens and local environmental conditions. Each uses trusted communication mediums to receive, process, and disseminate information. This informs the joint force’s planning to *educate, inform, and influence* targeted audiences, recognizing the responsibility to provide factual information, particularly to U.S. and friendly audiences. Common questions are:

- What are the audience’s rules, customs, norms, beliefs, and motivations?
- What linkages and relationships exist within the audience for us to leverage?
- What are the trusted mediums (conduits) through which the audience receives information (governmental, academic, cultural, and private enterprise) and by what means (internet/social media, radio, face-to-face, television)?
- How can effects be observed/measured (assessments)?

“It is crucial for commanders to articulate to their J2s what they need to know to have awareness of in their Information Environment in order to determine (1) who's shooting at them, (2) what's being shot, (3) is it significant enough to fire back (i.e., do I care/should I ignore it).”
- Senior Information Operations Officer

3.0 THE NARRATIVE. We have seen value in CCMD and Operational HQs developing compelling narratives and messages fully aligned with the strategic narrative to advance the legitimacy of the mission while countering that of the adversary. Key to communicating their narrative is understanding regional and mission partner sensitivities. A compelling narrative guides planning, targeting, and execution, and can help prevent the “say-do” gap in which our actions and words conflict in the eyes of the audience.

For every military operation, the President or NSC staff may create the national/strategic *narrative to explain events in terms consistent with national policy*. The end result should be a military plan that ***aligns both operations and communications*** with the national strategy and is consistent with the national narrative.
- JP 3-61, Public Affairs



Every HQs is engaged in an ongoing “Battle of the Narrative” - a *cognitive* contest between competing nations, entities, and ideologies. They focus on diminishing and *supplanting* the appeal of the adversary’s narrative while explaining and increasing the legitimacy of our mission and actions. The above figure depicts some of the key stakeholders at the higher strategic level that influence both the CCMD and JTF level narratives. We have found that Commanders and staff who understand this broader construct develop more compelling

narratives, themes, and messages that can withstand the day-to-day challenges of the competitive nature of the information environment.

“Nest your cognitive narrative.”
- Senior Flag Officer

The narrative is relatively enduring and establishes context, reason/motive, and desired results. Themes are distinct, unifying ideas or intentions that support the narrative. These narratives and themes enable the development of discrete messages and ideas targeted at specific audiences and delivered through words, actions, and images.

Development and refinement of a narrative, themes, and messages are *Commander-driven*, much like the design effort. They must often compete with adversary narratives that may be unrestrained by the truth. Success requires a compelling story and a highly proactive approach to counter adversary efforts.

One Combatant Commander shared three key insights on the Commander’s role in the content of the narrative and his messages (see figure):

- Importance of nesting the narrative with higher direction and other key stakeholders.
- The narrative and messages are more than words – they include words and actions.
- Importance in thinking through how the narrative and messages will be perceived by the different audiences.

**The Narrative:
 Message Filters for the Operational Commander**

How will the things that I am doing or saying:

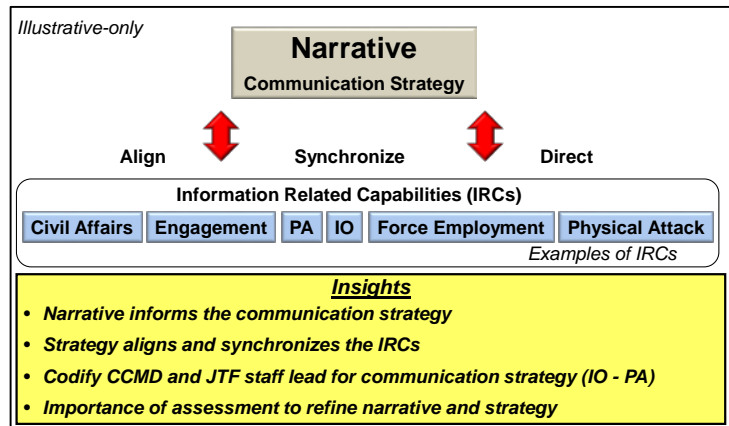
- Be understood or manipulated by my adversary?
- Be understood by my coalition partners?
- Nest with POTUS’s schedule and what he is saying?
- Nest with SecState, SecDef, & CJCS schedules & messages?
- Nest with my boss’ (or bosses’) schedule and policies?
- Be perceived in NSC Deputies/Principals Committees?
- Play in our allies’ capitals?
- Read on the front page of the *New York Times*?
- Read on the front page of the newspaper in my region?

You are the most sensitive filter on your staff.

4.0 ALIGNING AND SYNCHRONIZING ACTIVITIES. The narrative provides the overarching vision for employment of information-related capabilities (IRCs). Most organizations use some form of a *communication strategy* to align and nest efforts and a *communication synchronization process* to synchronize and direct IRCs. The term IRC is broad; some of the commonly used IRCs include PA, MISO, Engagement, Civil Affairs, and Cyber. However, many actions and activities are potential IRCs, including force employment and physical attack. They all create effects. This is why coordinating and synchronizing IRCs is so important.



A **communication strategy** is *Commander-Centric*. It aligns IRCs with force employment, targeting, engagements, and other actions. The communication strategy is part of the Commander's overall strategy and guides and regulates communication efforts, not as a separate or parallel effort, but rather as an integral part of the design and planning effort. The strategy coordinates and aligns the thoughtful use of spoken and written words in concert with the deliberate application of lethal and other nonlethal actions. These words and actions are directed at specific audiences to achieve specific effects both within and beyond the joint operations area (JOA). The strategy considers both friendly and adversary communication efforts. It advocates our narrative and outlines deliberate actions to counter adversary narratives and impact their efforts to communicate.



Information-Related Capabilities
Tools, techniques, or activities employed within a dimension of the Information environment that can be used to create effects and operationally desirable conditions.
- JP 3-13, IO

Insights and Best Practices:

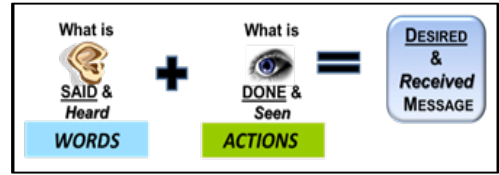
- We see the greatest utility of the communication strategy within the future planning horizon, sharing the Commander's identification of military objectives, the operational approach, the narrative and overarching themes, and Commander's intent for the synchronization of words, actions, and images. This strategy is often subsequently refined in the FUOPS and CUOPS event horizons.
- The communication strategy for an operation contains at least the narrative, themes, messages, visual products, supporting activities, and key audiences. It normally clarifies the key leader and staff element responsibilities for overall lead within the HQ for communications. The Commander may designate a Deputy Commander with authority for oversight and also identify a staff lead – often a staff element in the J3 (either the J35 or the J3IO) or the Public Affairs officer as the staff OPR for communication synchronization.
- A communication strategy includes required authorities, permissions, and capabilities.

“Small things (actions or words) can derail the broader narrative.”
- Senior Department of State Officer

“Messaging is not a one-off attempt to create a desired effect, but a long term, cumulative effort to change perceptions. Coordination and synchronization of messaging is meaningless without ensuring alignment of actions with words and images.”
- Senior Flag Officer

The Communication Synchronization process synchronizes and directs words with actions. It has both organizational and process aspects. We address the organizational aspects of this synchronization process in section 7 (HQ Organization).

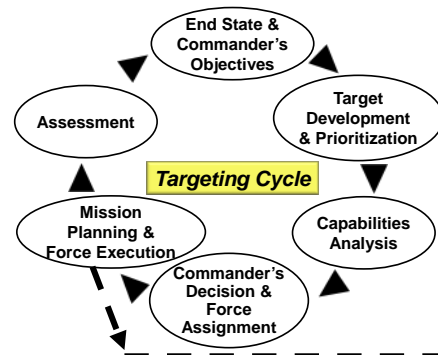
- **Synchronization across the three event horizons.** The designated communication staff lead aligns and synchronizes communication efforts with planning, targeting, and execution across the three event horizons.



We noted earlier that the communication strategy helps align activities within the future planning event horizon. The J35 focuses on the future operations horizon and drives planning efforts that

encompass both lethal and nonlethal activities - often for named operations. FUOPS also provides the planning guidance and desired effects that inform targeting. The Joint Fires Element uses this FUOPS guidance to further synchronize lethal and nonlethal targeting efforts. At times lethal actions such as physical attack will support a communication/message; in other cases, messaging will support and amplify physical attack or force employment. Lastly, within the current operations event horizon, we find the J33/JOC director synchronizing operations – lethal and nonlethal.

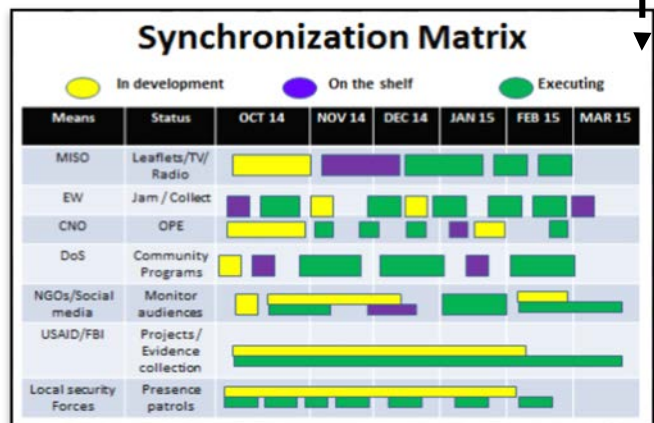
“Have a plan for what to discuss and what NOT to discuss.”
- Senior Flag Officer



- **Use of a targeting methodology.** Most HQs we observe use a targeting cycle methodology coupled with some form of synchronization matrix to synchronize and direct the various IRCs (during the mission planning and force execution phase - see figures). This further enables early-on synchronization of the more traditional IRCs with their more lethal-oriented counterparts (e.g., physical attack) in time, space, and purpose.
- **Anticipation and Agility.** Every HQs addresses the requirement to anticipate and adapt to changing conditions at the speed of the problem. Communication synchronization processes allow the HQ to rapidly preempt misinformation and counter adversary communication efforts. They are also flexible enough to quickly adapt if they are not having the desired effect.
- **IO and PA.** Leverage your IO and PA unique roles and skill sets. Integrate, but don't *over-engineer* synchronization of their efforts.

Insights and Best Practices¹:

- Integrate communication targeting processes as part of the HQ targeting function.
- Clarify staff lead for communications.
- Use mission type orders to speed execution. Recognize that an operational-level synchronization matrix cannot and should not attempt to synchronize all efforts down to tactical level: this impinges agility at echelon.
- Use fragmentary orders (FRAGOs) to direct tasks in execution.



¹ For doctrinal definition excerpts of communication strategy, narrative, themes, and messages, refer to Section 8.0 Appendix.

5.0 ENGAGEMENT – ONE INFORMATION-RELATED CAPABILITY. The past years of operations stress the importance of human relationships and the importance of investing the time, personnel, and resources to engage host nation local, provincial, and national leaders and influencers. These relationships are increasingly important “pacing” items for joint commanders.² We find two key implications for joint commanders: relevant human networks must be mapped; and targeted engagements must be determined, planned, executed, tracked, assessed, and shared. There are several potentially relevant networks – local populace and governance, HN Government and Security Institutions, and regional stakeholders. Mapping these networks require the help of U.S. and partner intelligence organizations, and other stakeholders.

We have found that commanders and their staffs realize the importance of engagement, and often include inform and/or influence targets in their definition of targets. However, they often classify friendly and neutral audiences only as audiences – not “*target* audiences” to avoid any lethal-related targeting associations. However, most still use a targeting methodology to logically plan how to best inform and/or influence them. Many HQs often review engagements early on during the planning process to ensure that the task (e.g., collect intelligence, educate, inform, or influence) and level of engagement are appropriate for the specific audience. The review of these nonlethal engagements can be similar to lethal targeting reviews under Law of War and ROE, but may include different domestic and international laws more applicable to nonlethal engagements.

We have seen several organizational constructs to plan, track, and assess engagements. Regardless of the option, the entire staff has a role in helping to map the different networks and assist in the planning and assessment. Engagement is an operation; we normally find the planning, tracking, and assessment occurs in the J3 with a *dedicated full-time* cell and *deliberate processes*, often under staff oversight of the J3IO. The narrative, themes, and messages discussed earlier provide direction to much of the engagement efforts, however specific messaging is dependent on the target network/audience. Detailed planning of engagements often occurs in different staff areas based on the audience and purpose (i.e., educate, inform, or influence). For example, the Commander’s Action Group (CAG) will often develop talking points to support the commander for fact-based educate and inform tasks with friendly audiences. The CAG will also support other engagements where the Commander desires to inform or influence a local/regional audience/military commander. Tracking results of engagements is also important to support assessments and to inform subsequent engagements and inform follow-on rotational HQs. Most HQs maintain an engagement database on a classified network to record and share results of engagement.

Insights and Best Practices:

- Have patience developing relationships and trust before attempting to inform or influence.
- Leverage the IC to map relevant networks to focus planning and targeting of engagements.
- Establish a dedicated engagement cell, preferably in the J3IO to orchestrate engagement.
- Develop clear processes within a targeting methodology for engagement.
- Delineate “spheres of influence” to reduce engagement fratricide.
- Plan engagements and frequency of touches to prevent “engagement-overload” of key partners.
- Be proactive in identifying and developing new engagement “targets” to support the mission.
- Be sensitive to engage U.S. audiences solely in the educate and inform role.
- Decentralize detailed engagement planning and execution. Leverage the CAG.
- Record and report engagements to support assessment and subsequent engagement planning.

² Major Arnel David, Relevance of Human Networks, Civil Affairs Issue Papers, US Army War College Press.

6.0 ASSESSMENT.

Assessment informs decision making. Assessment helps:

- Deepen understanding of the operational environment.
- Depict progress toward accomplishing the mission.
- Inform Commander's intent, guidance for design and planning, prioritization, and execution.

Assessment helps answer the questions *what happened, why and so what, and what do we need to do*. Assessment is particularly important - and difficult- in the information environment. We noted earlier that each audience has its own beliefs and perspectives which influence how they perceive our actions and words, often in ways we may not anticipate. Audience perceptions and outlooks may also change based on our actions or other external influences. Assessment efforts in the information environment can help provide better awareness of relevant audience beliefs, perceptions, and likely reactions.

Several activities enable effective assessment. The most important is Commander's guidance. This focuses the staff and subordinates, frames the Commander's personal assessment, communications, and testimony, and enriches subsequent decision making. The J2 supports with analysis of both open and classified sources to determine audience perspectives and reactions. Engagements with the various audiences by the Commander, staff, subordinates, and mission partners also provide useful feedback. Normally both the PA and J3IO staff have analysis capabilities that perform assessment. In addition, surveys, both those orchestrated by the HQ and other stakeholders such as the State Department, media, the host nation, and mission partners, can provide quality feedback. The staff has the responsibility to assimilate all of these inputs to provide useful assessment products supporting the Commander.

Insights and Best Practices:

- Use Commander's guidance to focus assessment.
- Recognize the need for operational patience in the nonlethal area to produce desired effects.
- Plan for assessment, including determination of MOPs and MOEs and collection means.
- Use information-centric CCIR to prioritize monitoring, collection, analysis, and assessment to enrich guidance and sharpen direction.
- Leverage other partners, HQs, agencies such as DIA, and private organizations. They have unique expertise and perspectives.
- Codify responsibilities for information environment-focused assessments as part of the overall assessment process. Gain efficiencies through leveraging other capabilities resident in the HQ (e.g., operations research analysts and contracting experts).
- Use caution when determining cause and effect. Recognize the risk in drawing erroneous conclusions particularly in the case of human behavior, attitudes, and perception. Provide confidence levels of the assessments and potential risk of implementing recommendations.
- Assess the effects of adversary communications on the mission and operations and recommend how to counter those effects.
- An effective way to assess the open source media environment is the acronym "ABC" (Accuracy, Balance, and Context). This provides a better understanding of current media trends and of actions the Commander may opt to take in response to media trends or activity.
- Guard against the tendency to immediately trumpet success.
- Anticipate likely adversary actions and gain response-and-release authorities to rapidly respond in the "battle of the narrative."

7.0 HQ ORGANIZATION³.

CCMD HQs and JTF HQs are organized differently based on the scope, focus, and duration of their respective missions. We address these differences further below.

First, we address some organizational insights and best practices common to both.

- **Oversight.** The commander drives the communication process in both. We have found that assigning a staff member or organization responsibility for overseeing Commander’s communication strategy and synchronization facilitates efficient and effective execution.
- **Organization.** Commanders typically organize to leverage the information environment in two ways, either within a traditional staff structure or as a separate directorate. The traditional staff structure approach assigns responsibility to an existing staff officer - typically the information operations (IO) chief or PAO. This approach is the least manpower-intensive, but may have impact on the assigned staff director’s ability to balance the broader communications charter with their primary duties. (The IO chief may be better trained and resourced to do this). The directorate option (e.g., Communication Directorate) normally consists of a director, MISO, PA, Assessments, and KLE (engagements), with IO elements of EW, MILDEC, and Cyber remaining in the J3. We have found this approach to be effective in coordinating some IRCs, but can be manpower intensive, duplicative of other staff efforts, and perceived as removing the PAO’s direct linkage to the Commander for public affairs efforts.
- **Staff integration mechanisms.** HQs often use some form of communication-related working group to integrate and guide the functional-level working groups (e.g., information operations working groups (IOWG), public affairs working groups (PAWG), and engagement working groups (EWG)) to support planning and targeting across current operations, future operations, and future plans. This organizational construct does not encroach on normal staff oversight responsibilities for specific functions (e.g., J3 retains responsibility for IO while PA remains responsive to the Commander). However, the working groups do coordinate staff-wide communication-related actions, linked with planning, targeting, and the joint operations center, and include supported and supporting organizations and other stakeholders.
- **Inclusion with stakeholders/mission partners.** Stakeholders often have limitations or sensitivities that prevent or drive action. Understanding mission partner communication limitations or sensitivities can ensure a more effective communication effort. Failure to understand or coordinate with stakeholders or to include key staff such as the Foreign Policy Advisor, can result in military communication actions that conflict with national policy, Country Teams, the Host Nation (HN), or other mission partners. To mitigate this friction, most HQs use integrating staff processes such as working groups within the established battle rhythm to facilitate effective crosstalk and coordination with mission partners.

“PAO and IO in the same room to synch and gain understanding is a good thing.”
- Senior Flag Officer

“Clear your PA officer for everything you are doing.”
- Senior Flag Officer

Combatant Command HQ Organization. CCDRs integrate their command’s communication activities with USG Strategic Communication activities and the other instruments of national power. They use communication activities to build and maintain relationships, shape the theater, and support current operations. CCDR involvement is key to deciding, guiding, coordinating, and conducting communications activities. CCDRs often designate a senior communication-oriented

³ This topic is further addressed in other DTD focus papers, specifically: *Integration of Lethal and Nonlethal Actions*.

staff director to closely align, nest, and integrate communication activities with higher authorities and mission partners. We have seen the value of the POLAD as well as the J9 and J5 in coordinating with other government agencies and country teams.

Joint Task Force HQ Organization. JTF Commanders inform and are informed by higher-level guidance to develop their communication strategy and may often support the communication efforts of a lead federal agency (LFA). Combatant command level strategies provide communication guidance for the entire area of responsibility as well as tailored guidance for specific regions or key issues coordinated with the Country Teams. This guidance is not prescriptive, but empowers subordinates’ shared understanding of the information environment, Commander’s intent, constraints, and restraints. As noted earlier, JTFs are often the “hub” that connect tactical actions with global or national messaging activities. They execute within guidance and authorities. These operational level HQs focus efforts on aligning and synchronizing information-related capabilities. JTF HQs often organize by J-Dir staffs, may assign a Deputy Commander with overall communication lead, and use staff integration mechanisms such as the above noted working groups to synchronize IRCs.

Insights and Best Practices:

- Ensure there are clear approval processes for the narrative, themes, and messages. Codify who approves and in what venue/decision board.
- The entire staff has a role within the communication realm to support the Commander. See figure below for a simplified depiction.
- A communication-related WG integrated with the targeting process and linked to a decision board enables effective synchronization.
- Leverage a near and current-term synchronizing process to integrate communications processes in both targeting and on the JOC floor. This will help ensure actions match words and avoid what some call "effects fratricide."
- Designate an Office of Primary Responsibility (OPR) for communication.
- Assign staff responsibility for planning, coordinating, preparing, monitoring, post-engagement debriefs, database structure, recording, dissemination, and follow-up actions.
- Integrate the planners, targeting office, CAG, J9, and Foreign Policy Advisor.
- Establish and coordinate release authorities and responsibilities early on to speed the response in crisis situations.
- Decentralize communication-related actions where possible to achieve agility while recognizing the likelihood of limited decentralized authorities.

Staff Responsibilities

Responsibilities	Potential key players
Understanding the environment	J2, J3IO, J5, PA, IC, POLAD
Developing the narrative	J5, J9, J3IO, PA, POLAD
Leveraging all capabilities	J3, J3IO, PA, JFE, J9
Assessing effects	J2, J3, J3IO, J5, J8, J9, PA

8.0 APPENDIX: DECADE OF WAR STUDY - BATTLE FOR THE NARRATIVE.

The former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Martin Dempsey, directed a review of lessons learned from 10 years of conflict to “make sure we actually learn the lessons from the last decade of war.” In response to this directive, the Joint Staff’s Joint and Coalition Operational Analysis (JCOA) Division conducted a detailed and in-depth study culminating with the publication of *Decade of War, Volume I: Enduring Lessons from the Past Decade of Operations*, dated 15 June 2012. The scope of the report included operations in Afghanistan, the Philippines, Haiti, Pakistan, and the U.S. The eleven strategic themes outlined in the study were reviewed and refined by subject-matter experts from within and outside of DoD.

The “*Battle for the Narrative*” (some call it a race of the narratives) topic noted that leaders were slow to recognize the importance of information and the battle for the narrative in achieving objectives.

Some of the IRC-related challenges identified in the study are:

- The proliferation of information-related technology.
- Initial lack of leadership emphasis.
- Limited use of available resources.
- Lack of transparency that reduced external support.
- Challenges in matching words with deeds.
- Lack of proactiveness.

To mitigate these challenges, the study recommended:

- Tailoring a communication strategy to focus resources.
- Planning mitigating actions (consequence management) for the information environment.
- A coordinated approach with other stakeholders.
- Proactive messaging.
- Emphasis on being fast and not wrong.
- Reinforcement of words with deeds.
- Involvement early on of Commanders.
- Development of battle drills for use of IRCs.
- Incorporation of assessments that illustrate more than a red – amber – green indicator and that consider both friendly and adversary perspectives.

GLOSSARY: Abbreviations, Acronyms, and Definitions

ABC – Accuracy, Balance, and Context	IO – Information Operations
AOR – Area of Responsibility	IRC – Information-Related Capabilities
B2C2WG – Boards, Bureaus, Centers, Cells, and Working Groups	JEMSO – Joint Electro-Magnetic Spectrum Operations
CCDR – Combatant Commander	JFE – Joint Fires Element
CCIR – Commander’s Critical Information Requirements	JTCB – Joint Targeting Coordination Board
CCMD – Combatant Command	JTF – Joint Task Force
CJTF – Combined Joint Task Force	JTWG- Joint Targeting Working Group
CMO – Civil-Military Operations	KLE – Key Leader Engagement
CommSynch – Communication Synchronization	LFA – Lead Federal Agency
CS – Communication Strategy	MILDEC – Military Deception
CUOPS – Current Operations	MISO – Military Information Support Operations
DIME – Diplomatic, Information, Military, Economic	MOE – Measures of Effectiveness
DoD – Department of Defense	MOP – Measures of Performance
EW – Electronic Warfare	NGO – Nongovernmental organization
FPA – Foreign Policy Advisor	NSC – National Security Council
FRAGO – Fragmentary Order	OGA – Other Government Agencies
FUOPS – Future Operations	OPR – Office of Primary Responsibility
FUPLANS – Future Plans	OPT – Operational Planning Team
GCC – Geographic Combatant Commander	OSD – Office of Secretary of Defense
HN – Host Nation	PA – Public Affairs
HQ – Headquarters	POLAD – Political Advisor
IA – Information Assurance	SC – Strategic Communication
IC – Intelligence Community	SME – Subject Matter Experts
IGO – Intergovernmental Organization	STO – Special Technical Operations
	TA – Target Audience
	WG – Working Group
	WoG – Whole-of-Government

JP 3-0 Excerpts / Definitions:

The typical communications strategy for a specific operation contains at least a narrative, themes, messages, visual products, supporting activities, and key audiences. These elements, in conjunction with specific tasks in the plan or order, help guide and regulate joint force actions when communicating and interacting with the local populace, interorganizational partners, and the media, and they support other relevant objectives.

- The Narrative. This is the overarching expression of the context, reason, and desired results associated with the combatant Commander's (CCDR's) communications strategy or a specific joint operation. The narrative enables understanding for external stakeholders whose perceptions, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors are relevant to the operation.
- Themes. The communications strategy typically contains two or more themes, which are distinct, unifying ideas or intentions that support the narrative and are designed for broad application to achieve specific objectives. A subordinate joint force Commander's (JFC's) communications strategy themes normally nest under the geographic combatant Commander's (GCC's) communications strategy themes and support the overarching narrative.
- Messages. These are narrowly focused communications that support a specific theme. They are typically directed at a specific audience to create a specific effect.



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