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ALLIED TACTICAL DOCTRINE FOR MILITARY SEARCH

ATP-3.12.2

Edition A, version 1

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NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANIZATION

ALLIED TACTICAL PUBLICATION

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NATO LETTER OF PROMULGATION

19 October 2021

1. The enclosed Allied Tactical Publication ATP-3.12.2, Edition A, version 1, ALLIED TACTICAL DOCTRINE FOR MILITARY SEARCH, which has been approved by the nations in the Military Committee Land Standardization Board, is promulgated herewith. The agreement of nations to use this publication is recorded in STANAG 2283.
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Major General, GRC (A)
Director, NATO Standardization Office

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RELATED DOCUMENTS

-	NATO's <i>Joint Air Power Strategy</i>
MC 0656	<i>MC Policy for Force Protection for Alliance Forces</i>
AJP-01	<i>Allied Joint Doctrine</i>
AJP-2	<i>Allied Joint Doctrine for Intelligence, Counter-Intelligence and Security</i>
AJP-3	<i>Allied Joint Doctrine for the Conduct of Operations</i>
AJP-3.2	<i>Allied Joint Doctrine for Land Operations</i>
ATP-3.2.1	<i>Allied Land Tactics</i>
AJP-3.14	<i>Allied Joint Doctrine for Force Protection</i>
AJP-3.15	<i>Allied Joint Doctrine for Countering Improvised Explosive Devices</i>
ATP-3.18.1	<i>Allied Tactical Doctrine for Explosive Ordnance Disposal</i>
ATP-3.12.1	<i>Allied Tactical Doctrine for Military Engineering</i>
AAP-03	<i>Directive for the Production, Maintenance and Management of NATO Standardization Documents</i>
AAP-06	<i>NATO Glossary of Terms and Definitions (English and French)</i> <i>(See NATOTerm NSO protected website)</i>
AAP-15	<i>NATO Glossary of Abbreviations Used in NATO Documents and Publications</i>
AAP-39	<i>NATO Handbook of Land Operations Terminology</i>
AAP-47	<i>Allied Joint Doctrine Development</i>
AlntP-10	<i>Technical Exploitation</i>
MC 0560	<i>Military Committee Policy for Military Engineering</i>
AJP-3.12	<i>Allied Joint Doctrine For Military Engineering</i>

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PREFACE

1. The physical operating environment (POE) is inherent to all military activities at the tactical level. Military search is able to help control and shape this environment by locating objects that are of value to the military mission. Military search can be applied in future operating environments providing the principles of military search are applied.
2. Allied studies suggest that military activities are increasingly likely to take place in urban areas and other complex physical environments¹. These environments are difficult to control and offer plentiful opportunities for an adversary to hide resources or to target allied forces through e.g. the emplacement of explosive charges. The military search capability can help control these environments and enable military activities to be conducted with lower risk and with more direction.
3. Military search crosses the traditional land/maritime/air boundaries; for example, air includes airfield infrastructure and aircraft whilst maritime includes dockyard infrastructure and waterborne vessels inside, outside and underneath either at sea or alongside.
4. Military search has the ability to make contributions across the spectrum of conflict, from warfighting to stability operations. It also has potential for national operations, even though this falls outside the scope of this publication.
5. ATP-3.12.2(A) describes the military search capability and its contribution to tactical activities and thus give a common understanding of the capability. It is intended primarily for tactical level North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) commanders and staffs with military search capabilities. It also provides guidance for all levels of command and is instructive for coalition and NATO partners.
6. POC for ATP-3.12.2(A) is SO2 Doctrine, DEODS, Comm.: +44 (0) 1264 886 845, Email: ArmySplInteg-DEODS-Doctrine-SO2@mod.gov.uk

¹ See *Framework for Future Alliance Operations 2018 Report*

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CHAPTER 1 – MILITARY SEARCH FUNDAMENTALS

Section 1 – Definition and description of military search

1.1 Military Engineering. NATO defines MILENG as “a function in support of operations to shape the physical operating environment”. It achieves desired objectives by enabling or preventing manoeuvre or mobility; developing, maintaining and improving infrastructure and supporting the survivability and sustainability of forces. MILENG incorporates five areas of expertise: engineering, explosives ordnance disposal, environmental protection, military search and management of infrastructure, including contracted civil engineering. MILENG also makes a significant contribution to C-IED, protecting the force and providing life support. Military Search significantly contributes to enabling manoeuvre or mobility, supporting the survivability of forces and also contribute to C-IED and Force Protection.

1.2 Military search.² The management and application of systematic procedures and appropriate equipment to locate specified targets in support of military operations³.

1.3 Description. Military search contributes to shaping and controlling the environment where military activities take place. Military search is the capability to detect and locate specific search targets⁴ such as persons, information and material resources in the physical environment⁵. Search activities enhance force protection (FP) and maintain initiative and freedom of manoeuvre⁶. The appropriate level of search capability depends on the threat from the target, the risk of the environment and the level of assurance needed. The military search capability is built around five core disciplines: person, vehicle⁷, building, route and area search.

1.4 Coordination. MILENG is responsible for coordinating military search within NATO⁸.

Section 2 – Military search and the joint functions

1.5 The military search contribution. Military search is widely applicable in all frameworks (operational, functional or effects) and can contribute to the majority of the combat functions⁹ and is thus widely applicable.

- a. **Command.** The MILENG staff will provide advice to enable the commander to make informed decisions about how to best utilize the available military search

² A proposed updated definition will be staffed 'Military search is the planning and application of appropriate procedures and techniques to confirm the presence or absence of specified targets in support of military activities'.

³ Specified targets may include people, information and material resources employed by an adversary.

⁴ Search targets are the specified item or items to be located. It may include explosive devices, weapons, adversary resources specified in the mission. Resources could include funds, drugs, information carriers, valuable items etc.

⁵ Gather information and material for exploitation, to deprive an adversary resources and to secure Devices, Material, Artefact and Traces (DMAT) for possible future evidential value.

⁶ Support civil authorities or military operations with the applications of protection of planned events, protection of critical infrastructure and Force Protection.

⁷ A self-propelled, pushed, or towed conveyance for transporting a burden on land, water or through air or space, or to which a particular mission may be assigned.

⁸ See AJP-3.12.1 *Tactical Doctrine for Engineering*.

⁹ See ATP-3.2.1 *Allied Tactical Doctrine for Land Tactics*.

capability to counter potential threats linked to the physical environment and deny enemy resources.

- b. **Manoeuvre.** Military search supports manoeuvre through the enablement of mobility for forces where threats exist in the physical environment. It can also provide support by locating and denying adversary resources thus restricting their influence and ability to limit friendly force manoeuvre.
- c. **Intelligence.** The military search capability can be considered an ISTAR asset in its own right and contributes to the collect element of the intelligence cycle¹⁰. The capability can be requested for the intelligence collection plan. All materiel collected by military search has potential for inclusion in the intelligence cycle.
- d. **Information activities.** The military search capability can contribute to information activities by influencing perceptions through the positive results of search operations.
- e. **Protection.** Military search can contribute to FP of own forces through direct support to combat elements facing hidden threats, the protection of locations and the protection of lines of communication. The capability contributes to the protection of elements outside the force that are of interest to the commander, such as infrastructure, people and other objects. A well-integrated military search capability will reduce the impact of attacks and can deter the adversary from their preferred course of action. Military search also contributes to host nation capability building through the development of local search capability.

The utility of military search is also not confined to one area of the battlefield as it is able to contribute in the deep¹¹, close and rear areas of the battle space.

Section 3 – Risk management

1.6 Factors in military search risk management. Military search risk management is comprised of three factors: the threat of the target, the threat from the environment and the level of assurance required. Other risks inherent to military operations should also be considered but are not included in this publication.

- a. **Threat from the target.** The search target itself may pose a threat. This may be the case with explosives or other targets that are inherently dangerous.
- b. **Threat from the environment.** The environment may include a number of hazards. A hazard is considered to be an indiscriminate danger within the environment where the search is taking place. Most common examples are confined spaces, working at height and unstable structures, but also environments where toxic chemicals or CBRN threats are present.

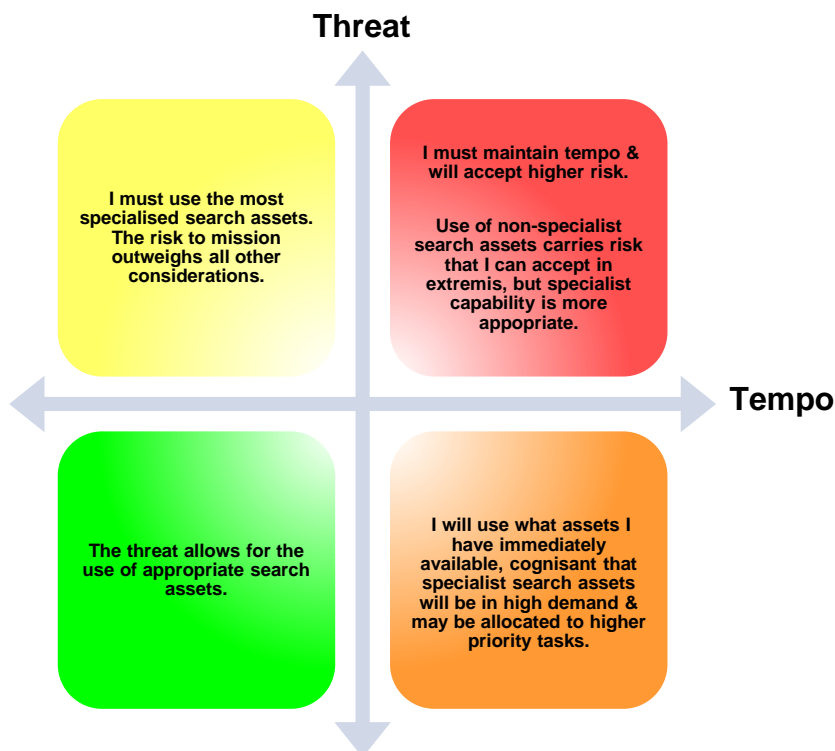
¹⁰ See AJP-2 Allied Joint Doctrine for Intelligence, Counter-Intelligence and Security.

¹¹ Military Search support to SOF operations and planning.

- c. **Level of assurance required.** Assurance is the level of confidence given to a commander that a search target is present or absent in a specific location. The level of assurance required is linked directly to the consequences of a failed search operation.

1.7 Commander's Risk management. Once the level of threat is understood, careful consideration of the key determinants of risk appetite¹², operational effect required and tempo, will better inform decision-making and enable it to become more adaptive. To assist the decision-making process the commander should refer to the risk management chart at Figure 1.

Figure 1 – Commanders risk management chart.



The chart assesses the threat against operational tempo and represents a top-down overlay of attitude to casualties and collateral damage (i.e. the risk appetite) at any given point, and the tempo needed to achieve a mission. Using it, along with search advice, to determine an overall course of action to respond to the threat will enable the commander to provide subordinates with a framework to guide their subsequent responses.

Section 4 – Legal considerations

1.8 Military search activities must be authorised and carried out within the legal framework governing the operation. This framework may include, be drawn from, or refer to, information from: Memorandum of Understandings (MoUs), Military Technical Agreement (MTA), Rules of Engagement (RoE), Standing Operating Procedures (SOPs), Fragmentary Orders (FRAGOs), international, host nation and national law, directives and orders, and environmental regulations. National contingents planning for military search must be aware

¹² i.e. casualties sustained and collateral damage

that teams from other nations may have laws, directives and RoE that are different from their own. Furthermore, the handling of evidence and recovered material must be in accordance with this framework.

CHAPTER 2 – LEVELS OF SEARCH

Section 1 – Levels of military search

2.1 Within NATO the level of military search capabilities is defined by the level of training in combination with the capabilities of the available equipment. Military search is conducted at three levels: basic, intermediate and advanced. The most appropriate level required to support the operation is determined by the threat of the target, threat from the environment and the level of assurance required, see Figure 2 below. Also considered is the consequence of a failed search operation and the quantity of available search capabilities.

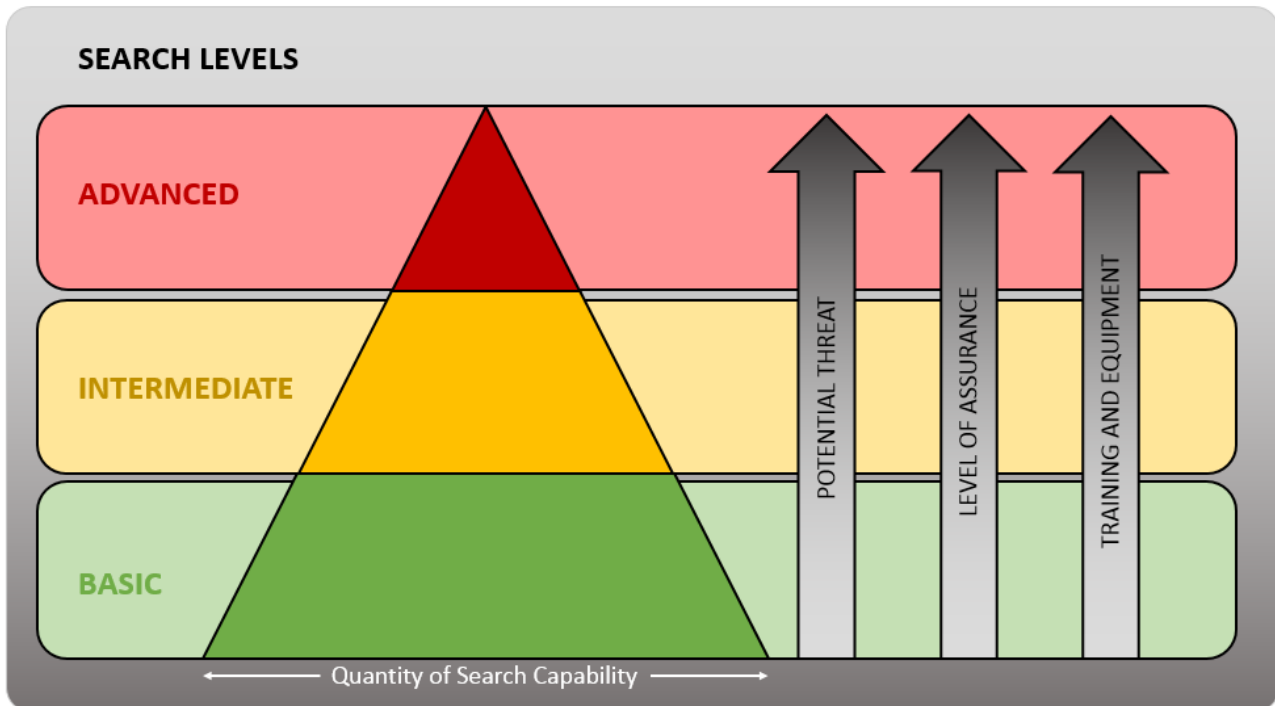


Figure 2 - Diagrammatic representation of levels of threat and assurance versus training and equipment.

Section 2 – The three levels of military search

2.2 Basic search. Basic search delivers the largest quantity of the overall search capability. It requires a minimum amount of training and is not reliant on equipment. Basic search will have a general knowledge of person, vehicle, building, area and route search procedures. It is primarily delivered at an all arms level and primarily contributes to overall FP.

- a. Threat of the target: There is a low threat from the target and the personnel have a basic understanding of the adversary threat and methods of attack.
- b. Threat of the environment: Due to the minimum amount of training and the lack of specialist equipment, personnel may not be capable of identifying and dealing with the threat of hazardous environments, except for specialist units who are trained to operate in specific hazardous environments.

- c. Level of assurance: It provides the lowest level of assurance that a target is present or absent and can be considered in operations with low threat(s).

2.3 Intermediate search. Intermediate search provides an enhanced capability compared to basic search. It primarily contributes to pre-planned operations. It is delivered by units who receive additional training and equipment, enabling them to conduct intermediate search tasks in conjunction with their primary role. It delivers a limited quantity of the overall search capability.

- a. Threat of the target: There is a moderate threat from the target and the personnel have a good understanding of the adversary threat and methods of attack.
- b. Threat of the environment: The additional training of intermediate search personnel makes them capable of identifying the threat of the environment, but not necessarily capable of dealing with this threat.
- c. Level of assurance: With the additional training and access to search equipment¹³, intermediate search provides a higher level of assurance that a target is present or absent.

2.4 Advanced search. Advanced search is the highest level of military search. It is delivered by a limited amount of specialist search units which have a high standard of training and have access to specialized equipment.

- a. Threat of the target: Advanced search can be tasked in a situation where intelligence has identified a high threat from targets. It is capable of identifying and understanding the adversary method of attack, their TTPs, and implementing procedures in order to counter the threat.
- b. Threat of the environment: Advanced search is regularly trained to operate in all environments. This could include hazardous or complex environments. It is capable of identifying, understanding and mitigating associated threats of each environment.
- c. Level of assurance: Advanced search provides the highest level of assurance that a target is present or absent, and thus should be used where the highest level of assurance is required.

¹³ Specialist equipment is not required for all intermediate search tasks.

CHAPTER 3 – THE MILITARY SEARCH CAPABILITY

Section 1 – Military Search Within NATO Levels of Operation

3.1 Overview. Military search spans from individual search teams through to operational commands. The EOD Co-ordination Cells (EODCC) found within the MILENG Branch at formation HQs should provide search advice¹⁴ to commanders during the planning cycle. The locations of the Multi-national EODCC and the Formation EODCC will be decided by the type and scale of operation. Figure 3 depicts the relationships and the responsibilities at each level of operation.

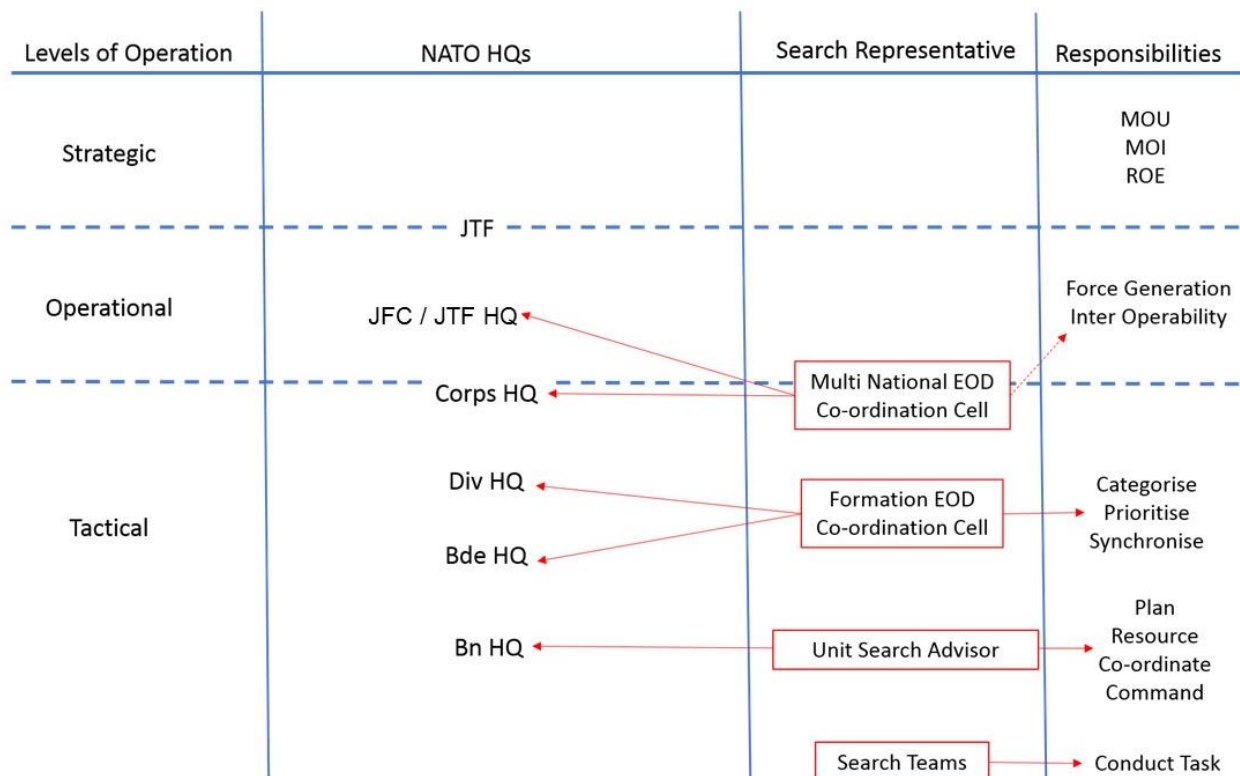


Figure 3. Military search within NATO levels of operation.

Section 2 – Functional Elements

3.2 The Search Advisor. The search advisor conducts detailed planning of search tasks. The search advisor may have command and control of search elements, and acts as the bridge between higher formation planning and functional elements.

3.3 Search team. Whilst the search advisor normally plans a search and provides advice to the commander, the search team conducts the actual search. It is composed of the following three functions as a minimum:

¹⁴ Where possible this individual should be search trained.

- a. **Command function.** The search team leader provides the command and control of the team in the execution of a search task.
- b. **Detect function.** The process of utilizing a combination of searchers, procedures, equipment and sensors to confirm the presence or absence of search targets.
- c. **Recording function.** The process of recording the search conduct and results for further exploitation¹⁵.

Section 3 – Supporting elements

3.4 Supporting functions. Search planning and risk assessment related to a specific search task may identify the need for other supporting elements. Examples of these are:

- a. Military working dogs (MWDs).
- b. Explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) assets.
- c. Military divers.
- d. Electronic warfare (EW) and electronic counter measures (ECM).
- e. Intelligence, surveillance, target acquisition and reconnaissance (ISTAR) assets.
- f. Chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) assets.
- g. Civilian law enforcement.
- h. Military police (MP).
- i. Exploitation assets.
- j. Interpreters.
- k. FP assets.
- l. Environmental SMEs.

¹⁵ Military search reports are found in *AEngrP-2 Land Forces Combat Engineer Messages, Reports and Returns*

CHAPTER 4 – MILITARY SEARCH DISCIPLINES

Section 1 – Introduction

4.1 Overview. Military search is grounded in basic principles that can be adapted to suit the tactical situation, environment and operational tempo. The five core search disciplines are person, vehicle, building, route, and area. They may be conducted at basic, intermediate, or advanced levels.

Section 2 – Core search disciplines

4.2 Person search. Person searches ensure that concealed materials such as weapons, ammunition, or any other exploitable items are found, to deny resources and freedom of action to adversaries.

4.3 Vehicle search. Land, water, or air vehicles are searched to mitigate the threat of vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices as well as to find and deny enemy resources including weapons, ammunition, or any other material that an adversary has attempted to conceal.

4.4 Building search. Buildings are searched to deprive the adversary of resources, gain intelligence, and secure materials for evidential value. Buildings can also be searched to mitigate threats including explosive ordnance (EO).

4.5 Route search. Friendly forces are often forced to use defined, recognized routes, including roads, tracks, railway lines, and inland waterways. Route search is the means by which the EO threat is mitigated in order to enable friendly freedom of manoeuvre.¹⁶

4.6 Area search. Area search is usually used to find hidden resources in order to deny the enemy materials and freedom of action within a specified area.

¹⁶ See *Allied Tactical Doctrine for Route and Area Clearance ATP-3.12.1.3*.

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CHAPTER 5 – SEARCH PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

Section 1 – Introduction

5.1 Search support to activities. Planning for any search task is driven by both the commander's overall intent and the effect required from the operation. When planning is in its early stages, a detailed understanding of how and where military search can support and contribute, assists in focusing staff effort. Integrating MILENG planners, advisors and SMEs early is a fundamental aspect of the planning process.

Section 2 – Planning factors

5.2 Intelligence. Military search success is enhanced through the provision of actionable intelligence.

5.3 The search response. The search response can be described as the capability required to achieve the desired endstate, including the level of search required. Risk from the search target, risk from the target environment, and consequences of failure must be considered.

5.4 Support to the search response. Search operations are seldom conducted in isolation and supporting assets must be identified and integrated at the earliest possible stage.

5.5 Synchronization of search assets. Thorough planning requires an appreciation of the time it takes to complete a search task so the effects of search assets can be synchronized with those of other units. This will be achieved through detailed understanding of the search target and environment. Every effort must be made to obtain this information to enable the most accurate time appreciation. This detail will support the commander's decision regarding the level or limitations on the employment of search assets.

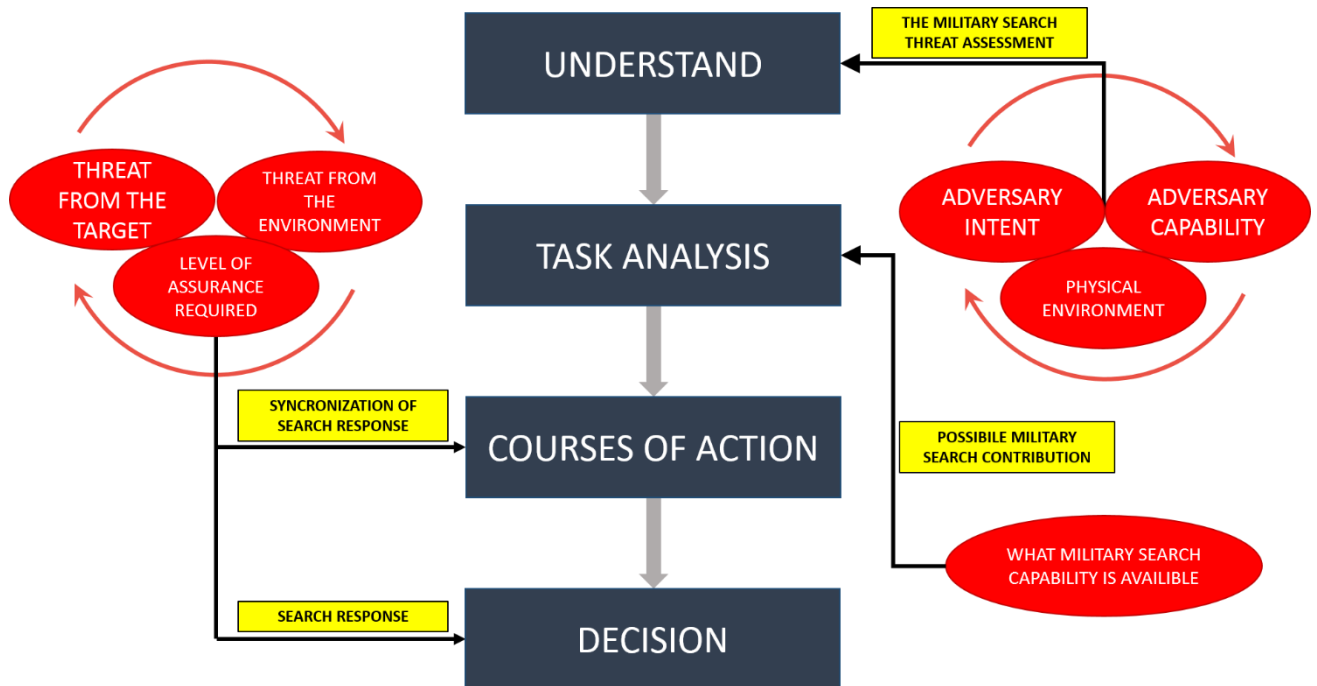
Section 3 – Military search within planning models

5.6 The majority of search planning is likely to take place at the tactical level. The military search advice should integrate into the overall planning process and the search advisor should be available to provide advice to the commander and staff throughout the planning process. Most planning models are built around four basic elements:

- a. **Understand.** The situation is assessed and the intelligence that is available is analysed.
- b. **Task analysis.** Assessment of what needs to be done to achieve the desired endstate.
- c. **Development of courses actions.** The development of courses of action that can lead to the desired endstate.

- d. **Decision.** A course of action is chosen and orders are prepared and issued.

Figure 3 (below) visualizes how military search can contribute to and integrate into the four elements. As more information becomes available and the planning progresses, each area should be reviewed as needed.



This approach to integrating military search can be used for both individual activities, but also for baseline orders covering for example an entire deployment.

ANNEX A - LEXICON

Part 1 – Acronyms and abbreviations

CBRN	chemical, biological radiological and nuclear
ECM	electronic counter measures
EW	electronic warfare
EO	explosive ordnance
EOD	explosive ordnance disposal
ISTAR	intelligence, surveillance, target acquisition and reconnaissance
MILENG	military engineering
MP	military police
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
SME	subject matter expert
VOIED	victim operated improvised explosive device

Part 2 – Terms and definitions

detection

The discovery by any means of the presence of a person, object or phenomenon of potential military significance.

(NATO agreed)

equipment

All non-expendable items needed to outfit/equip an individual or organization.

(NATO agreed)

intermediate search

Intermediate search provides an enhanced capability compared to basic search. It primarily contributes to pre-planned operations. It is delivered by units who receive additional training and equipment, enabling them to conduct intermediate search tasks in conjunction with their primary role. It delivers a limited quantity of the overall search capability.

military search

Military Search is the planning and application of appropriate procedures and techniques to confirm the presence or absence of specified targets in support of military activities.

(This is a new definition and will be processed for NATO agreed status)

operational level

The level at which campaigns and major operations are planned, conducted and sustained to accomplish strategic objectives within theatres or areas of operations.

(NATO agreed)

route

The prescribed course to be travelled from a specific point of origin to a specific destination.

(NATO agreed)

search advisor

The search advisor conducts detailed planning of search tasks.

tactical level

The level at which activities, battles and engagements are planned and executed to accomplish military objectives assigned to tactical formations and units.
(NATO agreed)

target

In the context of military search the target is the physical object that is to be located.

tempo

The rate of military action relative to the enemy.
(NATO agreed)

threat

Measure of the likelihood or probability of an attack being attempted against a particular target within a specified time frame.
(NATO agreed)

vehicle

A self-propelled, pushed, or towed conveyance for transporting a burden on land, water or through air or space, or to which a particular mission may be assigned.
(NATO agreed)

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