

Draft MC 0422/6

NATO MILITARY POLICY FOR INFORMATION OPERATIONS

WORKING VERSION AS OF 11 SEP 18

**NATO MILITARY POLICY FOR INFORMATION OPERATIONS**References:

- A. SH/SAG/OACM/17-TT-319567, Report on the Refinement of the Outline Adapted NATO Command Structure, 15 Dec 17.
- B. MC 0411/2 (Final), NATO Military Policy on Civil-Military Cooperation (CIMIC) and Civil-Military Interaction (CMI), 12 May 14.
- C. MC 0133/4 (Final), NATO's Operations Planning, 7 Jan 11.
- D. MC 0628 (Final), NATO Military Policy on Strategic Communications, 26 Jul 17.
- E. PO(2009)0141, NATO Strategic Communications Policy, 29 Sep 09.
- 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. C-M(2008)0029-COR1, Proposal on a Way Ahead on Comprehensive Approach, 2 Apr 08.
- I. PO(2010)0143-FINAL, Comprehensive Approach Report, 12 Nov 10.
- J. PO(2011)0141, Political Military Framework for Partner Involvement in NATO-Led Operations, 13 Apr 11.
- K. AJP-3.10, Allied Joint Doctrine for Information Operations, 7 Dec 15.

**GENERAL**

1. In an increasingly networked world, NATO needs to adapt to a global strategic environment drastically evolved, where both state and non-state actors are able to employ conventional, unconventional and hybrid methods, and are empowered to shape the narrative within a continuous information cycle. In this context, the Alliance will need to integrate, adapt and enhance the speed, connectivity and effectiveness of its overall Strategic Communications (StratCom) effort. The role of digital media and the accessibility of information systems have created a situation in which no Alliance decision or action should be taken without considering its potential impact on the Information Environment (IE) and its audiences. The ubiquitous nature of information and the potential strategic ramifications of tactical actions add to the challenge faced by NATO Commanders.

2. NATO's approach to communication has to ensure coherence of actions, images and words in peacetime, crisis and conflict. **Analysis, planning, execution and assessment of information activities (IA) designed to create effects in the IE are essential to the Alliance's success. These [...] IE related effects and supporting IA must be integrated with other Alliance (and National) effects and activities to achieve commanders' objectives (Reference A).** In this context, StratCom aims to ensure coherence of the overall communication effort.

3. Information Operations (Info Ops), as part of the Communication Directorate (or similar staff element), provide the Commander with an analysis and/or assessment of the IE and a mechanism to plan, [...] synchronise, **integrate and coordinate IA on a continuous basis (in peacetime, crisis and conflict) to achieve effects in support of NATO's aims and objectives.** At the Political-Military (Pol-Mil)

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level, the North Atlantic Council (NAC) provides mission-specific strategic and political guidance for NATO IA and its approved audiences.

4. Info Ops [...] is a **staff function integrated within** the joint function “Information”. This joint function is grouped within joint action alongside fires, manoeuvre and Civil-Military Cooperation (CIMIC) and Civil-Military Interaction (CMI) (Reference B).

5. NATO IA are coordinated through the Information Activities Coordination Board (IACB). There are interdependent relationships between the IACB and Joint Targeting Boards [...]. Communication Director’s Direction and Guidance (D&G) ensures coherence of all information and communication activities.

6. The analysis of the IE by Info Ops staff is an integral part of the StratCom contribution to the NATO planning process. The continuous understanding of the IE requires a close cooperation and coordination amongst several resources such as J2/Intelligence, Psychological Operations (PSYOPS), Civil-Military Analysis (CMA), Military Public Affairs (Mil PA), CMI/CIMIC, **new media, Cyber ops, Cultural Advisor** and POLAD. The resulting analysis of the IE constitutes the basis for the planning and execution of IA.

#### **AIM**

7. To provide a policy for NATO military application of Info Ops within the Alliance structure at all levels.

#### **SCOPE**

8. It provides military direction for implementation of Info Ops within NATO military structures. It provide the direction to analyse **and/or assess** the IE, to plan and synchronise and evaluate IA and to create desired effects. It establishes the links required for Info Ops to be integrated effectively within the NATO Command and Force Structure. It specifically addresses the following aspects:

- a. Definitions.
- b. Info Ops Processes and Tools.
- c. Counter-Propaganda.
- d. Intelligence and Targeting.
- e. Info Ops Coordination/Synchronisation and Key Relationships.
- f. Non-NATO Entities and Partner Involvement.
- g. Exercises and Training.
- h. Responsibilities.

## DEFINITIONS

9. [...] Info Ops [...] **is** a staff function to analyse the IE, plan, synchronise and assess IA to create desired effects on the will, understanding and capability of adversaries<sup>1</sup>, enemies and NAC-approved audiences in support of Alliance mission objectives.

10. The 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.

11. IA are actions designed to affect [...] **the IE [...]** or **the** information systems. They can be performed by any actor and include protection measures.

## INFO OPS PROCESSES [...]

12. At the strategic level, the NAC and the NATO MC **ensure the harmonisation of IA amongst Alliance Members and with Partners. Moreover** provide guidance to SACEUR regarding IA including approved audiences and general themes through the Operations Planning Process (OPP) and StratCom guidance documents (References C and D). Through SHAPE's Comprehensive Operations Planning Directive, NATO Info Ops operationalises this guidance at all levels in accordance with the Commander's objectives.

13. NATO StratCom directs, coordinates and synchronises the overall communication effort **of the Alliance** and ensures coherence across the communication capability of **Mil PA** and [...] **the Info Ops** staff function, **which is responsible for the integration of IA into the planning process**. Under Communications Directorate (or similar staff element) direction and guidance, Info Ops ensure the coordination of IA on the operational and tactical levels in accordance with the Commander's operational objectives. The synchronisation of IA occurs through the regular conduct of coordination boards (**mainly the IACB**) and working groups to ensure that the communication disciplines are effectively harmonised and mutually reinforcing, **and coordinated with IA achieved by other functions and means (EW, Cyber, fires, manoeuvre)**.

14. Info Ops focus on preserving and protecting alliance activities in the IE at all times. During military operations, the primary focus will be to affect the will, understanding and capabilities of NAC-approved audiences. As part of the operational and tactical planning, Info Ops staff plans and synchronises IA to reinforce or affect changes in behaviour, influence the will, shape perceptions, improve or degrade capabilities, and affect [...] **IE** and information systems, **support countering propaganda and command and control function**.

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<sup>1</sup> NATO Term defines an adversary as potential hostile and against which the legal use of force may be envisaged.

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15. Info Ops is comprised of three inter-related IA areas focusing on:
- a. Preserving and protecting the Alliance's freedom of action in the IE at all times. This is achieved by defending the data and information that supports [...] **Alliance decision-makers and decision-making processes.**
  - b. Behaviours, perceptions and attitudes of NAC-approved audiences as part of Alliance military operations to induce, reinforce, convince or encourage them in support of NATO objectives.
  - c. Countering adversary's propaganda and their command and control functions and capabilities that support its opinion forming and decision-making processes.
16. Use of IA for preservation and protection of Alliance freedom of action in the IE requires no special authorisation; however, the latter two areas may only take place within the framework of an approved operations plan towards, or against, NAC-approved audiences.
17. The effective execution of IA requires appropriate and collectable Measures of Effectiveness (MOE<sup>2</sup>) to ensure that the creation of desired effects is properly assessed. Info Ops personnel will plan, synchronise, monitor and assess these measures as an integral part of their role in planning and coordinating the execution of IA.

## **COUNTERING PROPAGANDA**

18. The IE is saturated by propaganda activities that potentially influence attitudes, **perceptions** and behaviour of audiences. In the broader context of countering hostile influence, counter-propaganda has an important role to play. [...] **Countering propaganda** is a multidiscipline effort [...] **guided and directed by StratCom.** Info Ops [...] **is responsible for conducting a continuous Information environment assessment (IEA), including detection and reporting of propaganda.** NATO PSYOPS forces and assets, supported by other functions, take a lead role in the **profound** analysis of [...] propaganda and support a variety of IA to counter it.

## **INTELLIGENCE AND TARGETING**

19. A close relationship with Intelligence is fundamental for Info Ops. IA are based on a comprehensive and systemic understanding of the IE across the PMESII spectrum<sup>3</sup>. This includes All Source Intelligence from a wide variety of military and

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<sup>2</sup> A criterion used to assess changes in system behaviour, capability, or operational environment, tied to measuring the attainment of an end state, achievement of an objective, or creation of an effect.

<sup>3</sup> The understanding of the operating environment requires a comprehensive understanding of all factors and actors relevant to the crisis. Modern crises are characterised by complex combinations of historical, political, military, social, cultural, and economic issues. The operating environment can

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civilian sources, and the subsequent assessment of actors and audiences, their social context and bias, objectives, Centres of Gravity (COG), critical themes, capabilities, vulnerabilities, information systems and media. The analysis and assessment of the IE is an integral part of the Info Ops function and should be continuously updated and refined to ensure that the effectiveness of IA can be gauged and maximised. Intelligence may also provide insight into MOE that may not be visible in the public IE.

20. Info Ops has a key role in supporting the full spectrum approach to targeting. Info Ops personnel are embedded in the planning and targeting process to identify early in the Course of Action development and throughout the process, where IA could be applied to achieve desired effects, and ensure appropriate capabilities are matched against target sets. Info Ops personnel also play a vital role in advising the Commander and targeting team of the potential secondary and undesired effects of operations on the IE and ways to mitigate them.

### **INFO OPS COORDINATION/SYNCHRONISATION AND KEY RELATIONSHIPS**

21. The outcome of the continuous analysis of the IE, assessment of effects, and planning and synchronisation of IA must be integrated early and conducted continuously throughout all NATO activities, which will be conducted in close coordination with [...] **other HQs processes (planning, targeting...)**. It is essential that required **and appropriate** resources and capabilities are identified early in the planning process **to perform all necessary activities**.

22. The planning and synchronisation of activities, including IA, to create Joint Effects should be seen as a continuum, in which their considered application throughout the full spectrum of operations will help to shape and define the conduct of the military mission. Info Ops staff must be embedded within the operations, planning and targeting functions and Joint Effects to ensure early and continuous coordination.

23. StratCom. StratCom, in the context of the NATO military, is the integration of communication capabilities and Info Ops with other military activities, in order to understand and shape the IE. It ensures coherence between Alliance actions and messages. StratCom will direct, coordinate and synchronise the overall communication effort and will ensure coherence across Info Ops, Mil PA, PSYOPS and related capabilities and functions. It delivers the StratCom Framework<sup>4</sup>. In line with overarching StratCom approach, Info Ops at the operational and tactical level ensures that all military IA, **in liaison with Mil PA**, are properly coordinated as well as integrated into the operational planning process.

24. NATO Military Public Affairs (Mil PA). Mil PA and Info Ops are separate but related functions within the Communication directorate (or similar staff element).

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be initially viewed through the following six aspects: political, military, economic, social, infrastructure, and information system commonly known as by the acronym PMESII.

<sup>4</sup> This includes Aim, Narrative/Core Message, StratCom Objectives, StratCom Themes, Focus Topics and Coordination.

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NATO Mil PA is the function responsible for promoting NATO's military aims and objectives by communicating accurate information in a timely manner to various audiences. This is in order to enhance awareness and understanding of the military aspects of the Alliance's role, aims, operations, missions, activities and issues, thereby enhancing organisational credibility (Reference C). StratCom will direct, coordinate and synchronise the overall communication effort and will ensure coherence across the communication capabilities and information staff function. The Chief Public Affairs Officer (CPAO) supports the Commander's StratCom process by ensuring that Mil PA actions, plans and objectives are coordinated as part of the broader StratCom effort. The StratCom structure will not alter the direct link of the Spokesperson or the CPAO to the Commander, nor modify the inter-relationships between the different information disciplines, as stated in the NATO StratCom Policy (Reference E) and the respective MC policies governing StratCom (Reference D), Mil PA (Reference F), Info Ops and PSYOPS (Reference G).

a. While coordination is essential, Mil PA and Info Ops are separate, but related functions, with separate lines of authority. In order to maintain credibility, the Chief StratCom/Director of Communications (or similar title) will ensure Mil PA will **have a coordinating and de-confliction role in planning or executing PSYOPS [...]** deception operations. [...] This coordination and de-confliction is essential in maintaining the integrity and consistency of Alliance narratives and messages, and helps prevent information fratricide.

b. At the operational and tactical level the coordination is advanced through specific StratCom and IA working groups (WG) and coordination boards. The chairmanship for these bodies is stipulated by the Commander.

25. PSYOPS. PSYOPS staff elements are part of the communications directorate (or similar staff element), retaining their functional responsibilities for products and activities. **In relation with Info Ops**, this essentially includes full participation to IACB, Information Activities Working Group [...] or equivalent bodies' work, and implementation of a specific approval process. StratCom **through Info Ops** will direct, coordinate and synchronise the overall communication effort and will ensure coherence across the communication capabilities and information staff function.

26. CMI/CIMIC. As with all NATO activities, CIMIC sends direct and indirect messages to audiences, internally within the Joint Operations Area (JOA) and externally to the wider international community. While it is not the primary purpose of CIMIC, these activities present an avenue to directly inform leaders and organisations regarding NATO's activities, goals and objectives in order to minimise friction between organisations. Often these leaders and organisations have access to key host nation audiences with whom they have established credible communications. For these reasons, CIMIC is a capability that is relevant to [...] **achieve effects in the IE** and will closely align, [...] coordinate **and support** their activities with the full spectrum of communication and information activities, through Info Ops.

## **NON-NATO ENTITIES AND PARTNER INVOLVEMENT**

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27. Following relevant political decisions, NATO Nations established and updated tasks for the implementation of the Comprehensive Approach Action Plan (References H and I). Taking this into account, NATO commanders will conduct IA in an increasingly complex IE with a variety of local key leaders, opinion makers, International Organisations (IO) and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO), all of which may be addressing many of the same audiences. Recognising that these persons and organisations may have channels to audiences that NATO does not possess, Info Ops shall coordinate messaging with other actors in the JOA when common goals and objectives exist. The sharing of classified and non-classified information will be in accordance with extant NATO Security and Information Management Policies, approved supporting documents and information sharing agreements.

28. NATO has set out procedures for formally recognising partners and their involvement in the decision-making process (Reference J). **Through CIMIC**, Info Ops will maintain appropriate contacts with all operational partners that may be affected by IA. Additionally, partners will be included as appropriate in coordination boards and working groups in accordance with the governing principles, procedures and mechanisms (Reference J).

## **EXERCISE AND TRAINING**

29. The Info Ops staff function requires dedicated and appropriately trained personnel, who can effectively plan, coordinate and oversee the integration of IA within an operation. Consequently, prior to taking an Info Ops position, personnel will be qualified [...] **according to a specific training programme attained to the position/title assigned** and/or through a national training programme that provides an understanding of the differences between national and NATO doctrine as well as tactics, techniques and procedures in place for the planning, conduct and coordination of NATO communication and information activities.

30. Info Ops personnel are to be integrated into NATO military training and exercises based on the Allied Joint Doctrine for Information Operations (Reference K), to ensure that commanders and staffs are aware of the requirement and procedures to integrate IA into planning and conducting operations, the effects of those integrated operations on the IE, and the negative consequences of not integrating operations.

## **RESPONSIBILITIES**

31. The MC. The specific responsibilities of the MC for Info Ops are:

- a. To agree and maintain an effective Info Ops policy and ensure that Info Ops aspects are included in other MC policy documents.
- b. To provide military guidance for Info Ops including operations, exercises, capabilities and training.
- c. To promulgate, monitor, coordinate and contribute to the development



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of Info Ops doctrine via the MC Joint Standardisation Board (MCJSB).

d. To develop, maintain and disseminate information essential for the identification and protection of critical NATO information by appropriate organisations.

e. To develop and maintain Info Ops related Crisis Response Measures (CRM).

f. To direct the SCs as required.

g. To consider adjustments to NATO Info Ops guidance to reinforce NATO goals in supporting allied and partner operations outside of NATO's area of operation.

h. To ensure that StratCom direction and guidance is provided to subordinate units in a timely manner.

32. The SCs. Specific responsibilities of the SCs for NATO Info Ops are:

a. To form Info Ops working group that will operate under the Terms of Reference (Annex A).

b. To liaise, advise and coordinate with NATO HQ on a regular basis.

c. To consider Info Ops resource requirements, effects, and audiences at the earliest possible time to enable MC and NAC consideration and approval.

d. To integrate IE analysis and assessment of effects as core part of the planning process, throughout the continuum of planning and execution of operations.

e. To designate staff and mechanisms to integrate Info Ops doctrine/plans with other Joint Effects at the strategic level and to ensure that subordinate commanders assign responsibilities as necessary.

f. To develop and/or improve capabilities, techniques and security guidance within their commands, including incorporating Info Ops into their lessons learned process, ensuring their adequacy to conduct IA in support of operational objectives.

g. To integrate Info Ops into existing and future operational planning documents in agreement with the guidance of the MC.

h. To advise IMS on the requirements for IA and associated resources in support of effects.

i. To review, and as required, request approval of Info Ops related CRM.

j. To ensure IA of subordinate commands (Joint Forces Commands/Single Service Commands/NATO Rapid Deployable Corps) are coordinated and consistent with the approved mission specific strategic guidance.

k. To develop training standards and integrate Info Ops into training, exercises and evaluations in representative environments.

l. To provide guidance for instruction on Info Ops in NATO military educational institutions.

m. To ensure Info Ops is integrated within Joint Effects.

33. NATO Nations. The specific responsibilities of NATO Nations for Info Ops are:

a. To consider Alliance Info Ops requirements during the NATO Defence Planning Process and implement these requirements as appropriate into national planning.

b. To develop Info Ops procedures within the framework of this document, and provide the necessary capabilities for their personnel working under NATO Commands.

c. To provide the required national capabilities, including intelligence support to IA, in order to support NATO Info Ops in all applicable NATO activities.

d. To implement standards and procedures to ensure that interoperability is taken into consideration during development and procurement of capabilities to plan, conduct, and assess IA.

e. To include Info Ops in training and exercises.

f. To provide resources and trained personnel to source NATO requirements and execute NATO Info Ops in operations and exercises.

g. To consider possible effects on NATO military capabilities and operations resulting from national information activities.

h. As appropriate, to contribute personnel and other means, to counter information activities conducted against NATO, NATO Nations, NATO partners and Troop Contributing Nations (TCN) at the strategic level.

**i. To include Info Ops staff/cell in Brigade (and above) task organisation.**

34. Joint Forces Commands, Joint Task Forces and Single Service Commands. The specific responsibilities for Info Ops are:

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a. To ensure proper Info Ops planning and execution, as well as assessment of communication and information activities by organising the staff with appropriate, trained personnel.

b. To ensure timely integration, situational awareness, and coordination of all communication and information activities with other Joint Effects.

Annexes:

A. Terms of Reference for the Information Operations Working Group at SC-level.

B. Lexicon of Terms.

**TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE INFORMATION OPERATIONS WORKING  
GROUP AT SC-LEVEL****INTRODUCTION**

1. In an evolving security environment, Information Operations (Info Ops) requires constant re-examination. Directives, doctrine and guidance must be policy compliant and require co-ordination within the Alliance.

**AIM**

2. The aim of the NATO Info Ops Working Group (Info Ops WG), at SC-level, is to ensure that the Alliance maintains an effective Info Ops function by:

- a. Providing military advice to the NATO Military Committee (MC) on resource requirements, objectives, and audiences to enable early and robust conduct of Info Ops.
- b. Developing and examining all Alliance Info Ops issues.
- c. Reviewing and seeking approval for NATO military policy on Info Ops.
- d. Monitoring and supporting development of NATO Info Ops doctrine.
- e. Examining Info Ops requirements for both operations and exercises/training.
- f. Monitoring the lessons learned process for Info Ops.

**MEETINGS, RECORDS and COMPOSITION**

3. The WG Chairperson and Secretary is provided by HQ SACT. The WG will meet as required/requested, but at least once per year. **The Chairperson reports to the MCWG(StratCom) on its discussions. The chairperson of this WG is a standing member of the MCWG(StratCom).**

4. For the benefit of the participants, the Info Ops WG and the PSYOPS WG should meet during the same timeframe and location whenever possible. The Chairperson will ensure that a summary record of each meeting, including decisions taken and actions pending, is prepared and distributed to all members and participants. Members and national representatives are responsible for informing their respective chains of command.

5. The Chairperson will issue a proposed agenda for each meeting. WG members and national representatives may propose items for discussion as additions to this agenda. Following the meeting, the WG Secretary will prepare the summary record and action list for review by the Chairperson and approval by the WG members

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5. The NATO Info Ops WG membership consists of one representative from each of the NATO Nations, ACT and ACO as well as other NATO Commands as appropriate. The national representative is normally the senior Info Ops military official. The Chairperson and ACO/ACT representatives of the MCWG(StratCom) are standing members of the Info Ops WG. The ACO/ACT representative is the senior Info Ops officer in that command. Observers from non NATO Partners and Troop Contributing Nations (TCN) may be invited to attend on a case-by-case 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 proposals will be obtained from the Nations through the normal staffing process.

7. Activities of the WG are focused on the tasks described below in support of the MC. The SCs are encouraged to support initiatives to further develop broader issues related to Info Ops such as advances in the science and technology of communications, social network analysis, Military Deception in the current IE, Allied IA capabilities and organisations, or other areas.

## **TASKS**

8. The Info Ops WG will:

- a. Examine all aspects of NATO Info Ops.
- b. Support the MC in the development of military advice for the MC's approval covering Info Ops planning in particular in terms of resource requirements, objectives, and audiences as required.
- c. Adopt and review Terms of Reference for the WG.
- d. Review and advise the MC on actions required to develop and maintain Info Ops related CRM.
- e. Monitor development of other policies and doctrine relevant to Info Ops, **providing recommendations coherent with Info Ops policy and doctrine.**
- f. Review and make recommendations for updating and revising all NATO and ACT/ACO Info Ops policies, directives, doctrine, and procedures.
- g. Ensure that Nations and Commands are kept informed of all developments and that their concerns are adequately addressed in the deliberations of the WG.

h. Discuss Info Ops requirements and make proposals for force standards and capabilities.

i. Develop, coordinate, promote and provide NATO Info Ops training guidance in cooperation with the Nations.

j. Initiate requests for scientific research and development for the improvement of Info Ops related techniques, methods as well as tools including methodologies, planning, synchronisation and assessment of IA.

## LEXICON OF TERMS

Civil-military Interaction (CMI): A group of activities, founded on communication, planning and coordination, that all NATO military bodies share and conduct with international and local non-military actors, both during NATO operations and in preparation for them, which mutually increases the effectiveness and efficiency of their respective actions in response to crisis.

Civil-military Cooperation (CIMIC): A joint function comprising a set of capabilities integral to supporting the achievement of mission objectives and enabling NATO Commands to participate effectively in a broad spectrum of CMI with diverse non-military actors.

Information Activities (IA): [...] **Actions designed to affect information environment and/or information systems.** They can be performed by any actor and include protection measures.

Information Effects: A desired condition created in the information environment as a result of information activities. Information Effects should be measurable in order to enable analysis, planning, execution and assessment of related actions and the effects [...] **themselves.**

Information Environment (IE): 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.

Information systems: An assembly of equipment, methods and procedures and, if necessary, personnel, organised to accomplish information processing functions.

[...]

Message: Any thought or idea expressed briefly in plain, coded, or secret language, prepared in a suitable form for transmission by any means of communication. **It supports a specific theme and is tailored to a specific audience.**

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

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.

Theme: The unifying subject or idea that guides message development by communications functions in support of **a Narrative in** achieving the StratCom objectives/effects.