Targeting the JIIM Way
A More Inclusive Approach

By John Bilas, Scott A. Hoffman, John S. Kolasheski, Kevin Toner, and Douglas Winton

Consider two scenarios. The International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and international community decide to more effectively and efficiently organize their resources and activities to tackle the Afghan opium trade, leading to a significant reduction in opium production. At the same time, a U.S. Army brigade defeats an insurgent cell in Kandahar City without firing a single shot. Yet despite a systematic focus on joint doctrine and a whole-of-government approach to address these scenarios, neither achievement is attributable to following formalized doctrinal guidance on how best to “target” problems preventing the achievement of desired outcomes or effects.

While Joint Publication (JP) 3-60, Joint Targeting, dated January 31, 2013, provides a rather comprehensive approach to targeting, it does not adequately address all the joint, interagency, intergovernmental, and multinational (JIIM) considerations required to synchronize activities and achieve desired effects. JP 3-60 requires further

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refinement as it fails to guide either commanders or staffs to examine the process for adequately including nonlethal activities and interagency, intergovernmental, and multinational capabilities. This article offers several ways to improve the joint targeting process in a JIIM environment by reviewing how joint doctrine discusses JIIM considerations and showing how JP 3-60 remains too focused on “lethal” activities, recommending a new cognitive model to help commanders achieve their desired endstates, providing examples of successful targeting across JIIM, and recommending a more broadly acceptable name for the process.

Joint Doctrine
Joint doctrine is the body of basic principles that guide the employment of U.S. military force in synchronized, coordinated action toward common goals and objectives. It readily recognizes the need for both coordination and unity of effort between the military and other U.S. Government agencies. In addition, joint doctrine rightfully acknowledges that achieving national strategic, theater strategic, and operational desired conditions requires more than just military instruments of national power. Indeed, as clearly expressed in JP 5-0, Joint Operation Planning, during Phase 0 (shape the environment) the diplomatic, informational, and economic instruments of national power have primacy, with military support in activities such as military-to-military engagements and foreign internal defense (FID) training. While military activities typically have precedence during Phases I, II, and III (deter the enemy, seize the initiative, and dominate the enemy), primacy reverts to the other instruments of national power in Phases IV and V (stabilize the environment and enable civil authority). Critically, stakeholders will achieve greater and more enduring effects by coordinating and synchronizing military and nonmilitary efforts throughout all phases.

Assessing operations over the last decade, the imperative of JIIM planning to meet and/or promote national interests and strategic objectives becomes readily apparent. Since 2001 joint doctrine has evolved to incorporate interagency, intergovernmental, and multinational actors into military plans and operations, but it still fails to address how best to involve all JIIM partners in targeting. A quick review of current joint doctrine illustrates this point. Comparing the instances of the use of the word interagency in joint publications, the disparity between planning and executing JIIM activities becomes evident (see table 1).

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JP 5-0 states, “Achieving national strategic objectives requires effective unified action resulting in unity of effort. This is accomplished by collaboration, synchronization, and coordination in the use of the diplomatic, informational, military, and economic instruments of national power” and throughout all phases in a joint campaign. It outlines how the joint force commander should apply joint functions to joint targeting and describes how consensus building among JIIM partners is essential to meeting both national and strategic objectives. The resulting unity of effort creates a commonality of purpose between the military and the other instruments of national power. JP 5-0 further describes how JIIM organizations can be involved throughout joint planning and assessment processes to ensure that command relationships, objectives, and other planning considerations are understood. In turn, this enables JIIM organizations to provide timely and effective feedback and pertinent input into the planning process.

JP 3-0, Joint Operations, discusses the importance of synchronizing plans and operations with interagency, intergovernmental, multinational, and partner entities, but it too fails to address fully how these parties should be included in targeting or focused operations to achieve desired effects throughout a joint campaign.

On the other hand, JP 3-08, Interorganizational Coordination During Joint Operations, provides both guidance and best practices for conducting either interorganizational or interagency coordination to achieve unity of effort and common understanding and to ensure a whole-of-government approach toward joint operations. JP 3-08 explains the challenges of achieving JIIM unity of effort, but it is focused more on planning than execution.

As a result, the Joint Interagency Coordination Group (JIACG) developed a combatant commander’s resource to better assist and coordinate operations. Published in 2007, the Commander’s Handbook for the Joint Interagency Coordination Group serves as a bridging reference between the JIACG’s ad hoc processes and procedures and the development of formal written doctrine. It offers useful ideas to improve JIIM planning but is silent on interagency participation in targeting as a mechanism to overcome the strategic factors that might be preventing the achievement of desired outcomes. As described in this handbook, “the JIACG is a fully integrated participant on the [combatant commander’s] staff with a daily focus on joint strategic planning,” lacking the mechanisms inherent in the targeting process to synchronize fully interagency efforts. Current doctrine encourages military targeting to achieve military objectives with a subsequent coordination in the JIACG.

Because “many national strategic objectives require the combined and coordinated use of the diplomatic, informational, military, and economic instruments of national power supported by and coordinated with that of our multinational partners and various intergovernmental organizations,”
[nongovernmental organizations], and regional security organizations,” we propose updating joint targeting doctrine to include these participants. The current JP 3-60 defines targeting thusly:

Targeting systematically analyzes and prioritizes targets and matches appropriate lethal and nonlethal actions to those targets to create specific desired effects that achieve the Joint Force Commander’s . . . objectives, accounting for operational requirements, capabilities, and the results of previous assessments.10

While this description appears to suggest targeting as a comprehensive, systematic, and inclusive process, a closer examination of the document reveals that interagency, intergovernmental, and multinational considerations receive little attention. Instead, it mostly describes how these organizations can inform the intelligence and assessment processes the joint force commander uses when developing targeting plans. It does not illustrate how these same organizations inform the planning and execution of targeting operations.11

A further comparison within JP 3-60 provides a similar narrative regarding the terms lethal and nonlethal. The word lethal appears 30 times while nonlethal appears 41 times. Based on this simple examination of the document, one could conclude that the two activities earn roughly equal discussions, but a more thorough inspection indicates otherwise. Of the 41 nonlethal entries, 7 are about nonlethal weapons while 12 (30 percent) occur on just two pages (II-15 and II-16). JP 3-60 wisely includes examples to help commanders better understand the targeting process. However, all four examples discuss only lethal activities to attack enemy capabilities (destroying enemy air defenses; disrupting the enemy petroleum, oil, and lubrication infrastructure; defeating the enemy air force; and destroying two bridges).

Joint targeting doctrine has certainly matured over the last decade to capture the real-world experiences of commanders and staffs continuously operating jointly. However, it does not yet recognize the full potential of all the JIIM actors during conflict. The existing model’s efficacy is proven and useful during Phases II and III but becomes less instructive as operations transition to Phases IV and V. Similar to Phase 0, these latter phases require even greater coordination and synchronization with interagency, intergovernmental, and multinational partners as demands for their unique capabilities grow.

A New Cognitive Model

The references above demonstrate that the joint force values building unity of effort with the military’s JIIM partners; however, the doctrine does not extend to execution via the joint targeting process. The following offers an updated model for joint targeting, which all JIIM actors can easily use across the range of military operations.

Considering the numerous joint activities across the range of military operations during all phases, only a small fraction pertains to killing the enemy. Currently, however, JP 3-60 heavily emphasizes lethal employment and is disproportionately enemy-focused. Therefore, the first step to creating a more expansive cognitive model of targeting is to erase the terms lethal and nonlethal from the lexicon since they confuse analysis and encourage stovepipe thinking. Organizing the targeting staff into lethal and nonlethal cells, as is common, decreases effectiveness and efficiency because of the duality of effort and high probability that the efforts themselves could become desynchronized. Indeed, JP 3-60 implies such a staff organization, noting that, “There is typically a parallel lethal/nonlethal effort at the working group level, due to time and SME availability. In some cases, an additional [Joint Targeting Working Group] may be required to process, deconflict, and prioritize all nominated targets.”12

Since killing is rarely the expressed intent across the range of military operations, what then is “lethal”? Joint forces often characterize security force assistance (SFA) or FID in “lethal targeting.” On closer examination, neither of these joint force activities focuses primarily on the delivery of a lethal effect, but rather on how a country can protect itself from internal and external security threats. While it is true the “assistance” will instruct other security forces on how to kill, among other skills, there is little to no lethal activity occurring. In reality, most SFA and FID involves teaching logistics, command and control, and the staff functions necessary to recruit, man, train, equip, and sustain host nation security forces—hardly lethal.

This lethal/nonlethal dichotomy hinders the commander’s ability to visualize the full expanse of the operating environment, creates the strong potential to overlook opportunities, and can reduce staff efficiency since, as stated earlier, staffs often organize into separate lethal and nonlethal targeting cells. This inherently decreases efficiency as it stovetpipe information, creates unnecessary hindrances to information flow among staff sections, and all but eliminates synergistic effects among targeting cells. Rather, individual targeting cells focus on distinct problems and the application of distinct lethal or nonlethal activities. Instead of synchronizing efforts after the fact, we recommend a single targeting cell and single targeting approach. Such an approach is more efficient, more comprehensive, provides greater synergy, better synchronizes activities resource allocation, and organizationally requires a smaller staff.

In an ideal setting, targeting is a continuous process to assess the operating environment (OE) in order to identify strategic factors and determine the activities necessary for achieving operational objectives, develop courses of action (COA) to overcome the strategic factors, allocate resources, assign tasks, and reassess the OE to evaluate the effect of the activity or identify additional strategic factors that might provide new opportunities and/or challenges precluding the organization from achieving its desired outcomes. Since targeting should be tied to a higher headquarters plan, the commander’s operational approach must inform the targeting process to bring activities to bear that transform the OE from current to desired conditions. Subsequently, targeting synchronizes
the activities across JIIM organizations to achieve the intermediate military objectives or, equally important, the objectives/goals of JIIM partners beyond merely military objectives. This helps inform the development of the Commander’s Critical Information Requirements, which seek to answer not only questions on the effective implementation of the operational approach but the targeting process as a whole.

Targeting is the process of addressing the strategic factors that prevent progress from current to desired conditions. The strategic factors will vary across OEs but might include challenges and opportunities such as corruption, security sector capacity, black market economies, resource scarcity, ethnic conflict, and urbanization. The targeting process synchronizes “short-term” activities to achieve the supporting objectives.

JP 5-0’s “operational approach” clearly illustrates how lines of effort (LOEs) extend beyond the scope of only the military instrument of power to include, for example, education, infrastructure, and economic development. A line of effort is a conceptual category that allows an organization to unify the efforts of all participants toward a common purpose. Usually LOEs are closely related but need not be sequential in nature.13 Hence, optimally applied targeting will best achieve synchronization of efforts when it includes all JIIM stakeholders. While ideal, we acknowledge the inherent difficulty and sensitivity in bringing multinational partners and/or host nation individuals into the process.

Organizing the Staff
Just as commanders must routinely adjust task organization to meet environmental and operational changes, they must also consider staff changes to ensure the appropriate integration of JIIM partners throughout all phases of an operation. As noted above, many joint force organizations at strategic through tactical levels have reflexively split their targeting staffs into lethal and nonlethal cells. This dubious bifurcation tends to result in stovepiped analysis and recommendations that pit the “meat-eaters” against the “leaf-eaters.” Too often, this results in nonlethal plans...
that are inadequately integrated with the overall plan, inadequately resourced, and inadequately executed leaving commanders and lethal staffs frustrated at the lack of nonlethal progress.

The commander should overcome this divide by organizing the staff around the various lines of effort. Because doctrine cannot anticipate every LOE for which an organization might operate, it cannot prescribe the staff organization that is optimal for every scenario. The commander or his designated representative should consider individual skills and attributes more than Service, branch, or rank. Traditional training and professional military education are often insufficient to produce the skills and attributes that yield excellence in analysis and planning along a nontraditional line of effort. Officers and senior noncommissioned officers with unique experiences or education may generate the best ideas. Indeed, each cell will require officers and senior noncommissioned officers who fully understand their targeting roles and how the process contributes to operational success. In a complex and dynamic JIIM environment, finding the right person for the right position will rely on intuition and judgment that can only be marginally informed by traditional staff structures and grade plates.

Organizing the staff into LOE cells with the right people does not guarantee the staff will overcome the stovepiping tendency. Once the correct cells have been established, they must coordinate their efforts and provide input into other working groups (WGs). Our recommended staff targeting process is designed to develop synergy across the staff to produce fully integrated operations. Additionally, this recommendation provides an institutional access point and incentive for our interagency, intergovernmental, and multinational partners to participate since it improves communication among stakeholders, provides a venue for positions to be heard, and ensures that initiatives are better conceived, integrated, and synchronized.

Staff Targeting Process

Physical organization of the staff is just the beginning; inevitably the people who form the staff will separate into various working groups to address the problems at hand. Figure 1 depicts a staff process that might typically lead
to getting a commander’s decision on recommended courses of action and/or the allocation of resources.

Working groups and boards exist in doctrine and in many headquarters to address the first two steps of the targeting process: assess the OE to identify strategic factors, and develop COAs to overcome the factors. However, little practical or applicable work is accomplished within the groups; rather, in practice, the staff sections often work independently of one another outside the respective working group meetings to identify challenges and concomitant solutions. Hence, working group meetings often become merely informational briefings. Staffs must avoid this tendency. Effective JIIM organizations will establish an environment in which the staff purposefully discusses ideas at the working groups. Effective JIIM targeting requires a battle rhythm event specifically dedicating time for the staff to focus on the OE and the targeting process. An enforced battle rhythm also provides the often less-resourced JIIM actors the necessary predictability to contribute. The resulting working group products should organize the discussion, capture and share information across the staff, and help subordinate units parallel plan and not simply brief the meeting’s chairperson.

The entire targeting staff gathers to assess the effects of the previous targeting cycle’s engagements and the overall OE at the start of each targeting cycle. With an agreed-upon and comprehensive assessment in hand, the LOE WGs meet to assess in more detail and develop COAs to overcome the strategic factors. The Concept of Operations WG is another gathering of the entire targeting staff in which the LOEs present their COAs to the group for consideration and input and ultimately for approval by the meeting’s chair. The final Joint Targeting Coordination Board provides the commander or designee the opportunity to approve the COAs and provide guidance for the next targeting cycle. The length of targeting cycles depends on the OE and often the phase. Phase II and III cycles may only be days long while the Phase 0, IV, and V cycles may be months.

Finally, figure 2 provides a new targeting model that works throughout the range of military operations, does not separate lethal and nonlethal, and is useful to all JIIM actors. This cognitive model is designed to help stakeholders think through options to address strategic factors throughout the continuous targeting process in order to generate comprehensive and synchronized solutions.

The steps are as follows: 1) determine the desired effect to overcome a strategic factor(s), 2) determine the resources and activities needed to achieve the effect, and 3) identify the positive and negative influencers who have a stake in both the problem and the solution. This cognitive model overcomes the inherent tendency of staffs to see only limited solutions within the lethal and nonlethal realms. Just as one can defeat an enemy cell nonlethally by removing a reason to fight, one can also strengthen governance lethally by killing or capturing those creating instability in a designated operating environment. A stovepiped organization, or an organization whose activities are synchronized after the fact, severely limits the staff’s ability to identify the full scope of the problem and/or identify comprehensive solutions.

**Examples of Effective JIIM Targeting**

Following the joint doctrine methodology of providing examples to illustrate ideas and concepts, we offer an expansion on the two introduced at the beginning of this article. The first example is at the theater-strategic level whereby ISAF, the Afghan government, and international community employed a whole-of-government approach to synchronize Afghan counternarcotics efforts. The second is an example where this new cognitive model was successfully applied at the tactical level during a U.S. Army brigade’s deployment to southern Afghanistan in 2011–2012.

In the first example, ISAF and the broader international community developed programs and policies to confront Afghanistan’s opium trade. Although the approach did not formally use the targeting process explained here, the thinking involved with identifying strategic factors and courses of action to overcome them was similar.
Afghanistan is the world’s leading exporter of opium, an international trade economy that helps fund the insurgency. To reduce the ill effects of the drug trade, ISAF solicited the support of various JIIM actors inside and outside of Afghanistan: the joint military force, U.S. Government agencies, coalition governments, the United Nations, Afghan Ministry of Interior, and numerous Afghan provincial and district governmental agencies, to name a few.

Although ISAF’s support is primarily to provide cordon security, logistic assistance, medical assets, and specialist engineers for improvised explosive device clearance, it is clear the targeting of the narcotics trade in Afghanistan is a complex task requiring both lethal and nonlethal operations in order to provide the greatest effect. As the main focus of the counternarcotics effort is to attack the drug-trafficking organizations vice the individual farmer who may be forced by the insurgents to grow poppy, discernment on exactly what part of the network is to be targeted is complex and requires the expertise of outside agencies and individuals such as the Drug Enforcement Administration, United Nations, and Afghan leaders.

The operational approach and national policies have changed several times over the past decade as stakeholders have better understood the strategic factors involved in Afghanistan’s opium trade. Although the results on stemming the cultivation of poppy are mixed, there was a decrease in the number of metric tons of opium produced (see Table 2) because of a JIIM approach to targeting both poppy cultivation and more importantly opium production. This approach allowed ISAF and the Afghan government to succeed as they organized for operations and targeted one of the most wicked problems in Afghanistan, characterized by vying personal economic incentives, insurgent pressures, weather, government capacity, and individual and institutional will. Had the stakeholders not used a JIIM approach, the varying intricacies of the narcotics industry would not have been fully understood, opium production would have continued unabated, and insurgent funding would have remained undiminished.

The second example concerns a brigade in Kandahar City, which is the second largest city in Afghanistan and is located along key lines of communication that run throughout the country and into Pakistan. The brigade received intelligence that a city subdistrict was a bed-down location for a high-profile attack cell. There were more enemy initiated attacks in one subdistrict than in the other nine. Through the targeting process and running estimates of the situation, the staff discovered various strategic factors in the subdistrict that were contributing to instability: 1) the police were not patrolling often or not at all in the most contentious areas, 2) the subdistrict manager was not effectively connecting to his constituents, 3) Afghan government/ISAF promises for development projects were unfulfilled, and 4) unemployment was high. Further analysis by the staff and the U.S. Department of State District Support Team determined that: 1) the subdistrict police commander was related to the provincial chief of police and might have acquaintances in the attack network, 2) the manager was leery about traveling within the subdistrict as he had little to offer the people, and 3) the village elders were politically disaffected. From this analysis, the commander determined that the risk associated with maintaining the status quo coupled with the prospect that this instability might spread throughout the city was too great, and the brigade needed to reevaluate its approach to operations.

The brigade undertook a comprehensive targeting approach to improve security by resolving strategic factors that allowed the attack network to operate within the subdistrict while actively trying to remove the insurgents from the city. A series of synchronized key leader engagements from brigade to platoon occurred to address the police commander. The stability LOE cell reprioritized the brigade’s project list and won Regional Command support to expedite stalled projects. The communicating LOE cell encouraged the manager to invite media representatives to the project “groundbreakings” to help inform the local people of tangible progress. The security LOE cell prioritized intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance as well as time-sensitive operations to focus on the enemy cell operating there.

Upon assessing the Commander’s Critical Information Requirements, guided by developed measures of performance and effectiveness, the brigade discovered unintended consequences of its activities, but the comprehensive targeting process enabled it to make timely adjustments. First, the police commander accused the subdistrict manager of corruption and embezzlement. To resolve the issue, a series of battalion- and brigade-level key leader engagements influenced the police commander to either provide evidence or retract the accusations. As a result, he retracted the accusations. Second, the village elders were upset because the contractor hired workers from outside the village to build the projects, and they made a thinly
veiled threat of violence to the contractor. The contractor correctly explained that the villagers lacked the necessary construction skills. Therefore, the brigade placated the elders by coordinating vocational training for the village. Due to the visible drama surrounding these projects, the subdistrict manager did not want to invite the media to the groundbreakings. The brigade did not press him on that point. While local media coverage would have been helpful, it was not necessary to overcome the identified problem and therefore not worth derailing ongoing progress. In terms of security, the police increased their patrolling, and time-sensitive operations removed some of the enemy cell leaders and motivated others to depart the area. Overcoming the impeding strategic factors in this subdistrict required 2 months of innovative targeting that did not include any lethal activities. No shots were fired. This targeting effort helped reduce enemy violence by almost 60 percent from summer 2011 to summer 2012.14

JIIM Engaging

Finally, a term other than targeting might be necessary to synchronize JIIM efforts. Organizations outside the military abhor it as it implies lethal activities. Nonmilitary actors sometimes go so far as to say, “We don’t do targeting.” A more appropriate term is engaging, which more broadly addresses the numerous options for overcoming strategic factors. Engaging may involve lethal force, but it more commonly involves diplomacy and development. By accepting a new term for the process, nonmilitary JIIM actors would find themselves more amenable to joining the process. Hence, the doctrinal Joint Targeting Decision Board would become the Joint Engagement Decision Board, with the JIIM stakeholders collaborating to approve courses of action to synchronize the activities to achieve desired effects. The intrepid reader will reread this piece substituting the conjugation of “to target” for “to engage” and realize that more comprehensive options are available.

Conclusions

Throughout recent history, but particularly over the last decade, incorporating JIIM organizations into the planning process has been critical to achieving national and strategic interests. To provide basic guidance, various publications and joint doctrine have evolved to incorporate JIIM organizations into the military planning process. One positive example is JP 5-0, Joint Operation Planning. However, the current edition of JP 3-60, Joint Targeting, neglects to address all the JIIM considerations required to synchronize activities to achieve desired targeting effects. To provide the requisite guidance to commanders and staff on fully examining both lethal and nonlethal activities and incorporating all of the JIIM partners, JP 3-60 needs further revising. Furthermore, recognizing that doctrine is only as effective as the people who implement it, the U.S. military should engender greater cross-organizational exposure to interagency, intergovernmental, and multinational partners to include greater integration of professional development/education programs and training exercises. This increased exposure should result in more understanding, which can become the foundation for more trust, which is a critical ingredient for more effectiveness.

America’s military has an overwhelming advantage in planning and in the ability to incorporate JIIM actors into the planning process. While such collaboration is in the forefront of joint doctrine regarding planning, we fall short when planning meets execution. It is only when JIIM partners are fully synchronized in both planning and execution that we will realize the comprehensive effects necessary to achieve our national and strategic objectives. JFQ

Notes


2 JP 5-0, Joint Operation Planning (Washington, DC: Joint Chiefs of Staff, August 11, 2011), xiv.
3 Ibid., II-8.
4 Ibid., chapter II.
7 U.S. Joint Forces Command, Commander’s Handbook for the Joint Interagency Coordination Group (JIACG) (Suffolk, VA: Joint Forces Command, March 1, 2007), i.
8 Ibid., vi.
9 Ibid., II-1.
11 Ibid., III-19.
12 Ibid., III-3.
13 JP 5-0, III-15.