

The USEUCOM Strategic Effectiveness Process

By WILLIAM E. WARD

Convoy leaves Kharwar, Afghanistan, following medical and veterinary service



55th Signal Company (Joey, L. Suggs)



DOD (Karleszn Wechorn)

GEN Ward discusses USEUCOM cooperative security via videoconference at George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies

General Smith favors the looser term *effects-based approach* and stated that an effects-based tool “might be most useful on a strategic level at top headquarters, where commanders must integrate military operations with U.S. political and economic objectives.”²⁴ U.S. European Command (USEUCOM) has developed just such a tool: the Strategic Effectiveness Process.

Effects-Based Defined

J.P. Hunerwadel lamented that there are “as many opinions about what [effects-based operations are] as there are people who have written on the subject.”²⁵ To apply any concept effectively, it is first necessary to establish a workable definition. After examining the broad range of arguments on effects-based operations, USEUCOM planners decided to apply effects-based thinking to enhance (but not replace) the traditional military decisionmaking process by linking objectives to tasks through a set of desired effects on the environment.

While the debate over effects-based operations raged in professional publications, USEUCOM planners and leaders quietly went to work to find the best way to apply effects-based *thinking* in the real world. The product of their efforts is the command’s Strategic Effectiveness Process, a broad strategic framework for the command that:

- establishes the commander’s *desired endstate* for the theater, defined by a set of overarching strategic objectives and effects
- prioritizes resource requirements by identifying tasks necessary to achieve the effects and capabilities needed to perform those tasks

The terms *effects-based operations* (EBO) and *effects-based approach to operations* are two of the most controversial topics in modern joint warfighting. A recent article broke the controversy into two camps. Proponents of EBO “seek greater efficiency and less destruction in combat by linking each use of military force, down to the most tactical levels, to overarching, strategic effects or objectives.”²¹ But critics argue that it remains “virtually impossible to reliably identify the effects of an operation when facing . . . complex adaptive . . . targets like . . . insurgent groups in Iraq” and that effects-based thinking “can lead to potentially dangerous self-delusion about the capacity to control outcomes.”²²

In an interview soon after taking charge of U.S. Joint Forces Command, General Lance Smith, USAF, acknowledged that there are “legitimate concerns out there [about] people, including some in Joint Forces Command, that try and make this whole thing too prescriptive. . . . I refuse to use a term of ‘EBO’ that means . . . different things to different people.”²³

DOD (Robert D. Ward)

SPECIAL FEATURE



GEN James L. Jones, USMC, Supreme Allied Commander Europe, and Commander, USEUCOM, briefs press on international deployments of NATO troops



This article is a condensed version of General Ward’s original submission. A more technical essay with embedded graphics is highly recommended for operations and plans officers and is available at ndupress.ndu.edu by clicking on *JFQ* issue 44.

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■ prioritizes information requirements for the daily Joint Control Board and other decisionmaking players by linking priority information requirements/commander's critical information requirements to the strategic objectives and effects

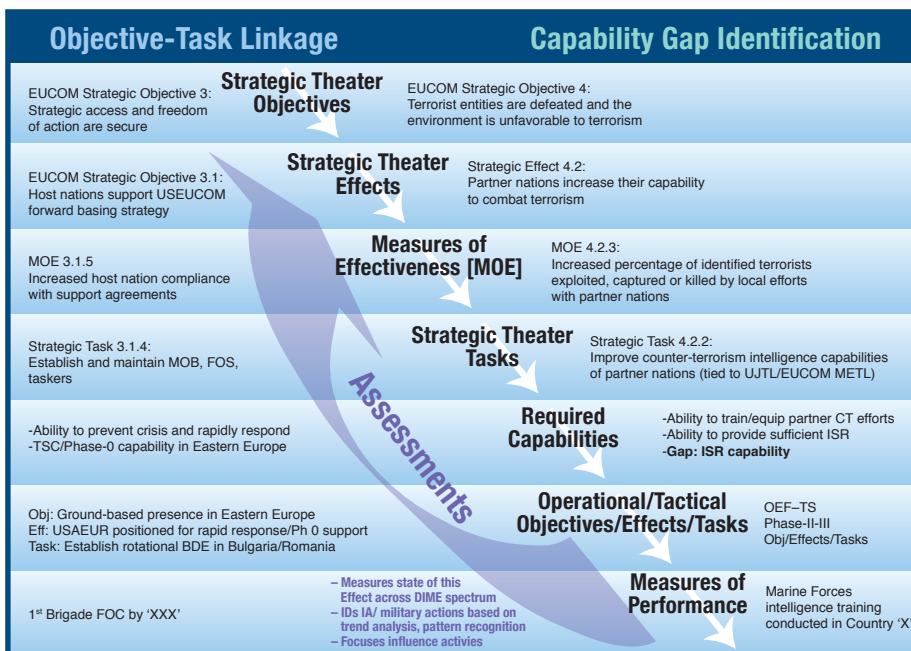
■ assesses the success or failure of the command's efforts to achieve the strategic effects, using the expertise of USEUCOM system-of-systems analysts (SOSAs), and provides regular reports to the command's leadership.

Objectives and Effects

As an initial step, the chief of staff convened a planning team comprised of representatives from all directorates of the headquarters, plus all the subordinate headquarters.⁶ They operated as a traditional operational planning team, with all stakeholders having a hand in shaping the objectives. After getting feedback from general and flag officers, seven theater strategic objectives were presented and approved by the USEUCOM commander:

1. the Nation and its citizens and interests are secure from attack
2. success across the range of military operations is ensured
3. strategic access and freedom of action are secure
4. terrorist entities are defeated and the environment is unfavorable to terrorism
5. security conditions are conducive to a favorable international order
6. strong alliances and partnerships effectively contend with common challenges
7. transformation leads evolving challenges.

Once the theater strategic objectives were approved, the planning team developed strategic effects describing specific conditions that will lead to accomplishing the objectives. To use more traditional military decisionmaking language, if the objectives represent the commander's desired endstate for his theater, the effects articulate his intent (how he intends to achieve the endstate). Effects describe the behavior or state of some environmental element (political, military, economic, social, infrastructure, or information) and can be measured to determine whether U.S. Government actions are helping achieve the desired effects. Based on the assessments, leaders can then decide whether to stay the course or change course to support the desired effects.



USEUCOM planners and leaders quietly went to work to find the best way to apply effects-based thinking in the real world

While developing the effects, the commander directed that the team depart from historical effects-based thought processes in one area regarding the effects themselves: he stated that at the theater strategic level, there are key effects to be achieved in the operational environment that are purely within the control of the U.S. Government, such as gaining resource support or influencing force allocation and transformation processes. Objectives 2 (success across the range of military operations is ensured) and 7 (transformation leads evolving challenges) primarily describe conditions of, or actions by, Federal entities (for example, the Services, Congress, and interagency partners). Interestingly, the commander made this decision in 2004 to deviate from the then-commonly accepted definition of an *effect*. This approach has since been incorporated into new guidance from the Joint Warfighting Center. In the recently published *Commander's Handbook for an Effects-Based Approach to Joint Operations*, effects are described as being "stated in the form of behaviors and capabilities of systems within the [operational environment]—friendly, neutral, or adversary behavior."⁷

To support the 7 strategic objectives, the team developed measures of effectiveness (MOE) and strategic theater tasks. The MOE and tasks are essential pieces of effects-based

language for planners. Continuing through the process, the team then engendered descriptors for the effects, measures of effectiveness, and theater tasks. The descriptors provide essential effects-based language for planners writing any supporting plan. Figure 1 shows the hierarchy from theater strategic objectives all the way to tactical level tasks.

While the process of developing theater strategic objectives, effects, and tasks was significant, it was not an end in itself. The real benefit to the command (and potentially to other commands) is the way USEUCOM is using these objectives and effects within the Strategic Effectiveness Process to guide planning, prioritize resources and information, and assess effectiveness of command programs as a whole.

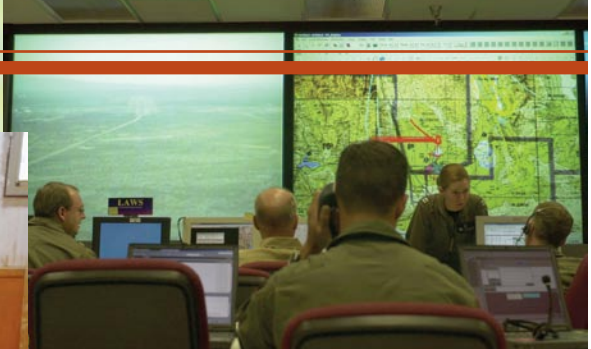
Guide Planning

In determining the best way to apply effects-based thinking in the command's area of responsibility (AOR), the team was sensitive to the ongoing controversy over effects-based operations and made a critical recommendation to the commander: USEUCOM should apply its effects-based process at the theater strategic level without mandating a standardized effects-based approach at the operational and tactical levels. In doing so, the

RADM Michael Lyden, USN, signs Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement with Secretary General of Ministry of Defense of Mali



557 Signal Company (Michael A. Abney)



1st Combat Camera Squadron (John Houghton)

Warfighters at Integrated Battlespace Arena watch real-time pictures of theater air assets from Predator unmanned aerial system

each of the components would implement effects-based thinking in accordance with Service-specific guidance because it is not yet joint doctrine

(J-5) has integrated the new objectives and effects into the Theater Security Cooperation Regional Strategies and Country Campaign Plans, and the USEUCOM Plans and Operations Center (J-3) has done the same with the Counterterrorism Campaign Plan. Both Naval Forces, Europe, and U.S. Air Forces in Europe have begun including USEUCOM's strategic effects in their plans in the course of normal review/revision timelines.

Prioritizing Resource Requirements

This new effects-based process has had a major impact on the development of USEUCOM's integrated priority listing (IPL) and programming objective memorandum inputs. In a theater such as U.S. European Command, where most activities center on security cooperation, it is challenging to define requirements in a capabilities-based manner. Capabilities needed to fight conventional conflicts are easy to identify: to control airspace, a combatant commander must request air defense forces; to control shipping lanes, he should request surface combatants. But what capabilities should a combatant commander request to train and equip partner-nation security forces or conduct intelligence sharing?

USEUCOM's standing concept and functional plans do not cover security cooperation activities, and they are not written in enough detail to lead directly to capabilities requirements. Accordingly, planners developed a list of

tasks (using plain language) that describe what USEUCOM had to do to achieve the desired strategic effects throughout the theater. Once the tasks were defined, the team linked them to the joint mission essential task list, focusing

on tasks at the strategic and operational levels. They also crosswalked the strategic tasks to the joint capabilities areas outlined in the Functional Capabilities Board Process (Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Instruction 3137.01C).

Once the list of strategic tasks was complete, the Operations Research Branch (J-8) staff compared all the tasks for each effect against the full list of joint capabilities areas. Then, with the help of the components, they determined which tasks could be performed based on resources in the theater. The planners identified capabilities that were missing but that were required to perform essential tasks supporting the strategic effects and highlighted them as gaps to be included in the IPL development process.

As an example, strategic objective 4 states that "terrorist entities are defeated and the environment is unfavorable to terrorism." Supporting this objective is strategic effect 4.2, "Partner nations increase their capability to combat terrorism." Strategic task 4.2.2 states, "Improve [counterterrorism] intelligence capabilities of partner nations." This task is associated with a number of joint mission essential tasks.

Task 4.2.2 can be performed by any component with the capability to train or equip partner nation counterterrorist intelligence forces. It also requires the capability to provide some counterterrorist intelligence information to partners. USEUCOM planners determined that sufficient intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) capability did not exist in any of the components to accomplish this task throughout the AOR; therefore, the latest IPL reported this capability as a gap requiring

team acknowledged that each of the Service components would implement effects-based thinking and operations in accordance with Service-specific guidance because it is not yet joint doctrine.

Instead of directing the components to implement effects-based operations in a rigid, proscribed manner, the command's strategic objectives and effects provide broad guidance to anyone building a plan for execution within the USEUCOM AOR. They help define the "left and right limits" for any planning efforts, clearly stating the commander's desired end-state and intent and making it easy for the subordinate or supporting command or agency to produce supporting or complementary plans. The objectives and effects and their descriptors are not written in complicated military jargon, making them easier to use with interagency partners in collaborative planning sessions.

While there is no easy way to inject such a new thought process into an ongoing planning cycle, USEUCOM made progress in a relatively short time by manning the strategic planning team with representatives from all directorates and components. Over time, as the team developed the effects and supporting information, members shared them with the staff and components so all could begin integrating the new language into their own plans. To date, the Strategy, Policy, and Assessments Directorate

Sailors from USS Carr assist boat in distress off Sierra Leone

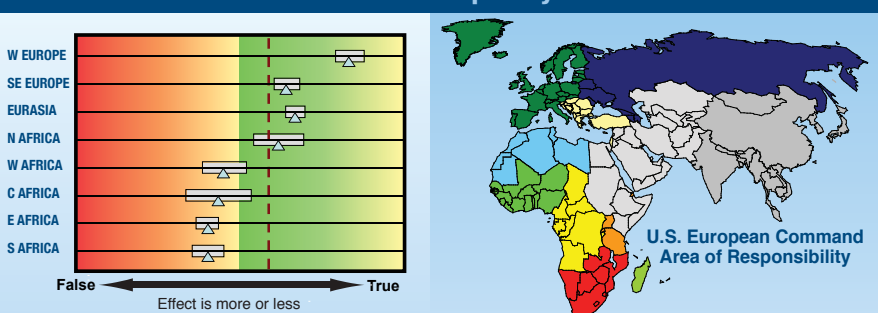
U.S. Navy

FEATURE

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additional resources. The justification for the requirement was clear: it was tied directly and specifically to a theater strategic effect. In addition to supporting USEUCOM IPL inputs, this process aids the components when they seek resources through their parent Service budgeting cycles because it gives them clear justification for requesting a capability (in this case, ISR collection) in support of joint theater strategic objectives.

Effect 4.2: Partner nations increase capability to combat terrorism



Pattern Recognition

- Europe: capabilities significant, CT cooperation improving, but partners are vulnerable
- Balkan CT capability undercut by inter-ethnic political and social conflict
- Africa: CT capabilities undercut by persistent political, economic, and social weaknesses
- Not all partner nations have the same understanding of the CT problem

Strategic Focus Area

- Address gap between TSC and CT strategies through strategic and fiscal alignment (Title 10/22)
- Capability doesn't always translate into national political will
- Effective CT programs require more than building tactical military capability
- Need to improve shared understanding and recognition of evolving terrorist threat
- USEUCOM's primary roles—info sharing with partner nations and improving partner nations CT capabilities

Prioritize Information

Prioritizing the information presented to the commander is critical in any headquarters, and USEUCOM planners identified a key issue when developing the strategic objectives: some information flowing into the headquarters was relevant to operational decisionmaking—commander's critical information requirements (CCIR). This information was frequently time-sensitive. However, other information was more relevant to strategic decisionmaking and usually *less time-sensitive*. There was also a danger that information of little current relevance could have strategic significance as the reflection of a trend or emerging issue, while information with little strategic impact might be critical to an ongoing contingency. Both types are important and could drive a commander's decision, but in different ways and on different timelines.

The strategic theater objectives and theater effects led to a new category of information need—a so-called strategic information requirement—that is used to evaluate data and determine whether it is relevant to a contingency or to overall strategic effectiveness. This requirement is composed of questions that focus on long-lead-time decisions. These questions are answered by analyzing measures of effectiveness through required reporting or independent research by the SOSAs. They might lead only to a decision to begin

planning or consultation with interagency partners to develop an integrated diplomatic, information, military, and economic response to this situation before it becomes a crisis. CCIRs, which are fed by more traditional intelligence channels, support current operations and crisis/contingency decisionmaking.

Assess Strategic Effects

The foundation of the ongoing Strategic Effectiveness Process is the Effects Assessment Cell and the process it uses to assess the command's activities. The cell provides the commander the information to make decisions and shift resources or effort as necessary to support the desired theater effects. If the effects are being achieved, the command is supporting the endstate defined by the strategic objectives.

Assessing effectiveness at the strategic level primarily involves pattern recognition. Because the strategic effects are long-time-horizon concepts, it is unrealistic to report them as successful or unsuccessful in a short-term update. The cell analyzes the environment and determines whether the trends in the theater are leading in the right or wrong direction over time. For example, is the statement "Terrorists do not have freedom of action" (effect 4.1) becoming more or less true since the last update? There are two noteworthy aspects of USEUCOM's effects assessment process: the regional approach

do not have freedom of action" for the entire area of responsibility, so the assessment cell conducts its analysis in regional divisions based on theater organization: Western Europe, Southeast Europe (including the Balkans), Eurasia (Russia and former Soviet republics), North Africa, West Africa, Central Africa, Southern Africa, and East Africa. The cell conducts assessments by region in an annual cycle, presenting updates on two or three regions roughly every other month. The goal is to update the commander on each region twice a year.

As the planning team began examining ways to conduct strategic assessment, members quickly realized that the expertise of the SOSAs was the key to developing the analytical engine of the effects assessment cell. These experts, one each to analyze the political, military, economic, social, informational, and infrastructure systems within the regions of interest, came to USEUCOM as part of the Standing Joint Force Headquarters (SJFHQ) established in 2004. They performed operational net assessment in support of SJFHQ operations, but lessons learned from multiple exercises showed that it was extremely difficult to perform these assessments full-up on more than one country in the AOR with such a small team—and totally impossible to assess even the most important challenges for all 92 countries.

When the need arose to conduct analysis on a broader scale in support of strategic effects, the deputy commander shifted the SOSA team from the USEUCOM Plans and Operations Center (the command's SJFHQ)

the strategic theater objectives and theater effects led to a new category of information need—a so-called strategic information requirement

to the J-8 Operations Research division and tasked them to do the analytical work necessary to drive the strategic effectiveness process.

To accomplish this, the team submits data calls to the components and headquarters directorates, conducts independent research, analyzes the data, and prepares graphic presentations for the headquarters leadership. Through 2005 and 2006, the cell conducted a series of “quick look” assessments of each effect, establishing the baseline from which future deviations will be measured. This required pulling voluminous data from the components, country teams, and other staff directorates.

To ease this process in the future, the Operations Research Branch is developing assessment tools that will rely primarily on other preexisting reporting requirements to provide data to the effects assessment cell, including Joint Staff war on terror assessments and Office of the Secretary of Defense security cooperation assessments. The vision for the effects assessment is that the process will become more passive as the command’s plans and component plans are written and executed using effects-based methods and language. Data collection for assessments will then simply involve reviewing routine reports rather than additional data calls. Even if the subordinate actions are not conducted by interagency partners according to effects-based processes, the reports and results from these activities will easily feed the strategic assessment process as long as they are working in some way toward the theater strategic effects. As stated earlier, USEUCOM planners wrote the tasks and measures of effectiveness that support the desired strategic effects in plain English, not military jargon, in order to facilitate application by interagency partners or other nonmilitary organizations.

Strategic effectiveness assessments are currently reported at bimonthly meetings of the Strategic Effectiveness and Communications Council, a forum of USEUCOM staff and component senior leaders chaired by the chief of staff. When the council meets, action



U.S. Air Force (Dawn M. Price)

Major General Bronislaw Kwiatkowski, Polish Army, Commander, Multinational Division Central South Iraq, addresses assessment conference on regional security

as assessments get beyond the baseline stage, the intent is to elevate the presentations to the deputy commander and commander level

officers brief senior leaders about all strategic communications and information operations occurring in the regions of interest for that particular meeting, showing the results of the latest strategic assessment for the same regions.

The chief of staff, directors, and component headquarters representatives review the effects assessment and discuss options for adjusting the direction of the command’s activities to reinforce success or prevent failure to move in the right direction. As the process matures and the assessments get beyond the baseline stage, the intent is to elevate the presentations to the deputy commander and commander level, as the chief of staff occasionally directs now.

As Lieutenant General David Deptula, USAF, said, “EBO is not a framework, a system, or any organization . . . rather it is a methodology or a way of thinking . . . it encourages merging all of our national security tools and thus has application across the spectrum of conflict.”⁸ USEUCOM leaders and action officers are applying this methodology and way of thinking to a wide range of programs and processes throughout the headquarters.

It is impossible to develop and implement a new process as significant as this overnight. The command’s Strategic Effectiveness Process has been under construction since 2004 and is being implemented using a phased approach.

The first two phases of implementation focused on educating the staff and component staffs on effects-based language and processes and adding this education to current planning and other activities in a reactive manner. These phases also included the “quick look” effects assessments. As of fall 2006, the command will complete these assessments and begin looking for the long-term changes that will tell the commander if he is achieving his desired

effects as well as adding effects-based language and assessment practices into new command activities in a more proactive manner. The current goal is to use effects-based assessments for all theater strategic activities by early 2007.

The controversy over effects-based operations may rage on, and academics may continue to debate an exact definition. In the meantime, U.S. European Command is moving out, applying an effects-based approach to operations throughout the theater and proving that effects-based thinking is the best methodology for synchronizing the complex and varied elements of national power at work in a geographic combatant command. **JFQ**

NOTES

¹ Elaine M. Grossman, “A Top Commander Acts to Defuse Military Angst on Combat Approach,” *Inside the Army*, April 24, 2006, available at <http://www.insidedefense.com/secure/defense_docnum.asp?f=defense_2002_ask&docnum=ARMY-18-16-16>.

² Ibid.

³ General Lance L. Smith, USAF, quoted in Grossman.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ J.P. Hunerwadel, “The Effects-Based Approach to Operations: Questions and Answers,” *Air and Space Power Journal* 20, no. 1 (Spring 2006), available at <www.airpower.maxwell.af.mil/airchronicles/apj/apj06/spr06/hunerwadel.html>.

⁶ These include U.S. Army, European Command; Naval Forces, Europe; U.S. Air Forces in Europe; Marine Corps Forces, Europe; and Special Operations Component, U.S. European Command.

⁷ Joint Warfighting Center, *Commander’s Handbook for an Effects-Based Approach to Joint Operations* (Norfolk, VA: U.S. Joint Forces Command, 2006), I-4.

⁸ Lieutenant General David A. Deptula, USAF, “Foreword: Effects Based Operations,” *Air and Space Power Journal* 20, no. 1 (Spring 2006), available at <www.airpower.maxwell.af.mil/airchronicles/apj/apj06/spr06/deptula.html>.

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