

Chapter 8

Assessment

8-1. Assessment precedes and guides the other activities of the operations process. It is also part of targeting. In short, assessment occurs at all levels and within all operations and has a role in any process or activity. The purpose of assessment is to improve the commander's decision making and make operations more effective. Assessment is a key component of the commander's decision cycle, helping to determine the results of unit actions in the context of overall mission objectives. Assessment provides information about the current state of the operational environment, the progress of the operation, and recommendations to mitigate or overcome discrepancies between actual and predicted progress. It also reveals how specific capabilities, such as IRCs, contribute to this progress. Commanders adjust operations based on assessment results to ensure objectives are met and the military end state is achieved.

ASSESSMENT PRIORITIZATION

8-2. Assessment has little value unless it meets the needs of its users. It does this by supporting two critical aspects of mission command: shared understanding and decision making. When prioritized and resourced adequately, assessment facilitates a more detailed shared understanding among the commander, staff, and other stakeholders about how the operation is progressing. Regardless of the level or frequency of assessment data collection, staffs will provide the commander ongoing assessment updates.

8-3. Staff assessments, along with those received from higher headquarters or unified action partners, combine with the commander's personal assessment to create an overall assessment, which informs the commander's subsequent decisions. The commander may decide to stay the current course or to issue a FRAGORD to reprioritize missions or tasks, terminate or initiate activities, or redirect resources or the allocation of forces to achieve overall mission objectives. The commander can also direct the development of a new operational approach or plan, if necessary.

8-4. IO contributes to overall operations assessment by examining efforts in and through the information environment. IO-focused assessment is an integral part of the unit's assessment plan, which is discussed broadly in ADRP 5-0 and in detail in FM 6-0. ADRP 5-0 provides overarching guidance on assessment; however, there are unique considerations to the assessment of IO that commanders and staffs take into account.

ASSESSMENT RATIONALE

8-5. Assessment or evaluation is a judgment of merit of an action or operation as to whether it achieved its intended outcome(s). It supports planning, improves effectiveness and efficiency of operations, and enforces accountability. These three purposes correspond to three types of evaluation: formative, process, and summative.

8-6. Formative evaluation supports planning by examining whether an operation or program is being designed to meet its intended purpose. In terms of IO, it involves testing messages, determining baselines, analyzing audiences, and developing the logic by which the operation will create influence.

8-7. Process evaluation occurs primarily during execution and serves to enhance effectiveness and efficiency, as well as facilitate in-process decision making. In terms of IO, it assesses whether the scheme of IO is being executed as planned. If the scheme is not going as planned, process evaluation facilitates decisions that lead to corrective action.

8-8. Summative evaluation occurs post-execution and supports decision making and accountability. While process evaluation supports decisions that adjust activities or efforts as the operation unfolds, summative evaluation supports decisions about the overall operation and whether it achieved the commander's intent. It

leads to the determination of those aspects of the operation to sustain and those to eliminate or curtail should a similar operation be undertaken in the future.

8-9. In addition to supporting users such as the IO officer, the IO working group, IRC managers, other staff sections, and the commander, operations assessment feeds higher headquarters assessment and, oftentimes, external entities, such as governmental leadership. IO efforts, in particular, often elicit congressional scrutiny and commander-led assessment ensures units are ready to demonstrate the effectiveness of their influence efforts.

8-10. Assessment is most valuable when operations or operational efforts are not working as planned because it helps the commander and staff figure out why and take corrective action. Units should avoid using assessment to justify decisions already made or merely to check the box. Assessment without the intent to employ its results is a waste of time and resources.

PRINCIPLES THAT ENHANCE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF IO ASSESSMENT

8-11. Assessment effectiveness is enhanced when it adheres to the following principles or best practices:

- Uses clear, realistic and measurable objectives.
- Begins with planning.
- Employs an explicit logic of the effort.
- Is continual and consistent over time.
- Is iterative.
- Is prioritized and resourced.

8-12. Assessment is more effective when IO objectives are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound. Creating clear, realistic, and measurable objectives can be challenging early on, as initial guidance from higher might lack clarity. The IO officer asks clarifying questions but also proactively establishes the most specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound objectives possible and provides them to higher headquarters for review and refinement. The IO officer also tests its objective statements with relevant stakeholders, most especially the IRCs that contribute to the attainment of these objectives.

8-13. Because IO creates effects in and through the information environment to influence, disrupt, corrupt, or usurp threat and other audience behavior and decision making, it is necessary to understand what the desired behavior looks like. This understanding drives the planning necessary to achieve the desired outcome. In other words, effective planning for IO cannot occur unless assessment is part of the operations process from the beginning.

8-14. Unlike fires, whose effects are rapidly discernable, effects in the information environment may not be immediate and their causality can be difficult to determine. An essential part of planning and assessing IO is the need to develop an explicit logic of the effort for each objective or effect. The logic of the effort makes explicit how specific efforts lead to the attainment of objectives. The value of this logic is that its assumptions are made explicit and can become hypotheses that can then be tested and, if necessary, refined. Figure 8-1 on page 8-3 provides a simple example of a logic statement and how it evolves when its hypothesis is tested. More complex examples would include additional threat counter-measures that would test each successive hypothesis and the refinement of the IRC mix necessary to create as foolproof a logic as possible, balanced against risk, available assets, time, and cost.

8-15. Since IO objectives are primarily articulated in terms of a change in one (or more) dimensions of the information environment, a baseline is required to assess progress toward or attainment of the objective. A baseline captures the current state of a person, place, or thing.

8-16. Because evaluation is essential to planning, operational effectiveness and efficiency, and decision making and accountability, it is continual. More important for IO assessment is the fact that objectives are often measured in terms of patterns or trends in behavior. If assessment is not continual and consistent, these patterns or trends become difficult or impossible to detect and measure.

8-17. IO assessment is iterative because, in most instances, IO is iterative. Rarely does a single capability produce a singular and decisive effect that is readily and fully measurable. Effects in the information environment take time to unfold and become fully visible. Indicators are used to show progress towards the desired cumulative outcome, but because progress takes time, things change. The environment changes, the logic of change changes, and the indicators of progress change. In the face of these changes, measures are iteratively refined, corrected and reapplied.

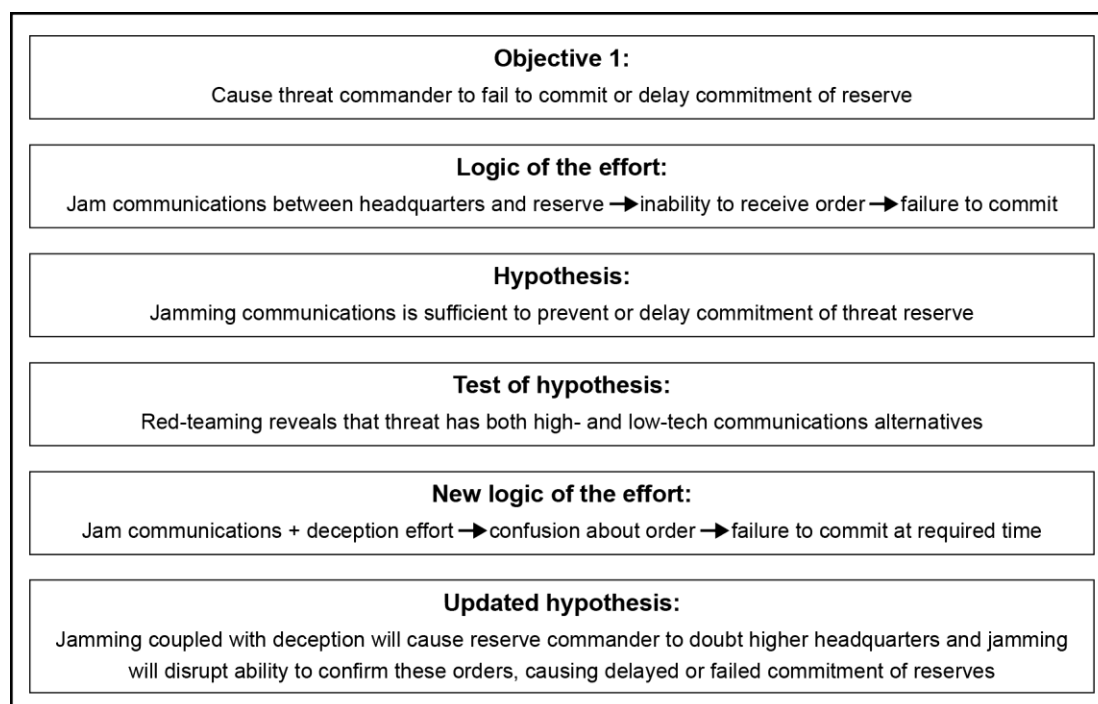


Figure 8-1. Logic of the effort example

8-18. To be effective, assessment requires commander emphasis, prioritization, and allocation of resources. This requirement does not mean that every activity, event, or operation requires an equal investment in or level of assessment. Through their guidance and direction, commanders make clear their assessment priorities and ensure that IO assessment receives due emphasis and support.

IO ASSESSMENT CONSIDERATIONS

8-19. Assessment of IO in general and of specific effects in the information environment require careful development of measures of effectiveness and performance, as well as identification of indicators that will best signal achievement of these measures and desired outcomes. Assessment in the information environment is not easy and adherence to the following considerations will aid in making IO assessment more effective.

MEASURES OF EFFECTIVENESS

8-20. A *measure of effectiveness* is a criterion used to assess changes in system behavior, capability, or operational environment that is tied to measuring the attainment of an end state, achievement of an objective, or creation of an effect (JP 3-0). Measures of effectiveness help measure changes in conditions, both positive and negative. They are commonly found and tracked in formal assessment plans.

8-21. Time is a factor when assessing IO and developing measures of effectiveness. The attainment of IO objectives leading to the commander's desired end state often requires days or months to realize. It is essential, therefore, to have a baseline from which to measure change and also to time-bound the change. Time-bounding makes clear how long it will take before the change is observed. It helps to set necessary expectations, foster patience, and avoid a rush to judgment. If a behavioral objective is anticipated to take

considerable time, assessment planning may choose to break the objective into smaller increments, each with more immediate observable outcomes. Finally, it is also important to analyze and understand the cultural relevance of time in the area of operations and account for and adapt to it.

8-22. Developing informational, behavioral and sentiment baselines often requires significant time and resource investments. Sentiment baselines, such as those determined through surveys or interviews, may require contracted labor to accomplish. The IO officer must factor in the lead time necessary to contract a third-party, provide it time to develop the survey instrument, administer the survey, and tabulate and report on the results.

8-23. Commanders and staffs, particularly the IO officer, must account for the order of effects when assessing IO or, more broadly, any effect. For example, an effect in the physical dimension (1st order) can resonate in unexpected ways in the informational and cognitive dimensions (2nd and 3rd orders). During Operation Enduring Freedom, night raids, while operationally necessary to root out insurgents, caused significant backlash among the indigenous population, local leaders, and the national government. Part of the IO officer's task is to anticipate second- and third-order effects and conduct a risk analysis to determine if potential higher-order effects outweigh the benefits of achieving lower-order effects. The aim is to amplify intended consequences in all dimensions of the information environment, while mitigating unintended consequences.

8-24. Units must account for directness of effect and understand the difference between causational linkages and correlational ones. Certain effects, even desired ones, may not be directly tied to friendly efforts in the information environment; however, friendly forces may still be held accountable for these effects and must react appropriately. This fact underlines the importance of developing a logic of the effort for each IO objective. This logic explicitly states how synchronized IRCs will lead to the desired change expressed in the objective. The logic also differentiates planned activities from other possible contributing factors and articulates expected outputs and outcomes.

8-25. Effectiveness in the cognitive dimension typically requires variety and repetition. Rarely does a single tactic, task, method, action, or message change behavior. Assessment plans must therefore build in varied actions and repeated messages and measure their cumulative effect.

MEASURES OF PERFORMANCE

8-26. A *measure of performance* is a criterion used to assess friendly actions that is tied to measuring task accomplishment (JP 3-0). Measures of performance help answer questions such as "Was the action taken?" or "Were the tasks completed to standard?" A measure of performance confirms or denies that a task has been properly performed. Measures of performance are commonly found and tracked at all echelons in execution matrixes. They are also commonly used to evaluate training.

8-27. There is no definitive number of tasks to support a given objective; therefore, there is no definitive number of measures of performance to support any given measure of effectiveness. Again, variety and repetition necessitate that multiple tasks typically support each objective and the corresponding measure of performance is the means to confirm or deny that each task is executed in the first place and properly performed.

8-28. Delivery, especially means of delivery, is a critical consideration when developing IRC tasks and their associated measures of performance, particularly when it comes to message delivery. No matter how well-crafted the message, if delivery assets are unavailable or only available in insufficient number, the objective will likely not be achieved. Means of delivery should also be considered in terms of accessibility and acceptability to the target audience. For example, if only a small percentage of the population listens to radio or watches television then these means should not be the only means of delivery considered.

INDICATORS

8-29. An *indicator* is an item of information that provides insight into a measure of effectiveness or measure of performance (ADRP 5-0). Indicators take the form of reports from subordinates, surveys and polls, and information requirements. Indicators help to answer the question "What is the current status of this measure of effectiveness?" A single indicator can inform multiple measures of effectiveness.

8-30. Not everything observed is an indicator and not every indicator is a sign of progress. Indicators of psychological effects or changes in sentiment are not always easy to detect or may not be markers of the desired behavior change. The upshot of these facts is that establishing indicators requires rigorous effort in order to select those observable and measurable signs or signals that are reflective of changed behavior. Often behavior change is incremental and being able to detect the intervening steps to large-scale behavior change is essential to measuring progress. Again, in-depth knowledge is required of those targets or audiences for whom behavior change is required to achieve the commander's desired end state.

8-31. Measuring progress requires the ability to detect both micro and macro indicators simultaneously. The IO officer must, therefore, coordinate with the G-2 (S-2) in order to know what collection assets are available and the types of information that each provides and how this information helps create actionable knowledge. Soldiers are a vital collection asset. The IO officer should invest time to train all Soldiers on observation techniques that enable them to spot and discriminate meaningful indicators and ways to report what they see.

8-32. The IO officer should employ a variety of means to identify indicators, validate or corroborate conclusions about them, and measure progress. Some of the more commonly used sources are:

- Information collection assets
- Military Information Support Operations (MISO) teams
- Soldier and leader engagements
- Civil-military operations
- Polling and surveys (which primarily measure attitudes, not motivations)
- Media monitoring and analysis
- Patrol and spot reports
- Information sharing with unified action partners
- Conversations with local leaders, partners, and trusted agents
- Passive monitoring (atmospherics)

8-33. Figure 8-2 portrays the relationship between objectives (the change that needs to happen) and measures of performance, indicators, and measures of effectiveness. The logic of the effort is shown as a relationship between available, selected, and synchronized IRCs and the effects expected over time. While the figure suggests that this logic is generic, it is not. It is unique to every objective and combination of IRCs.

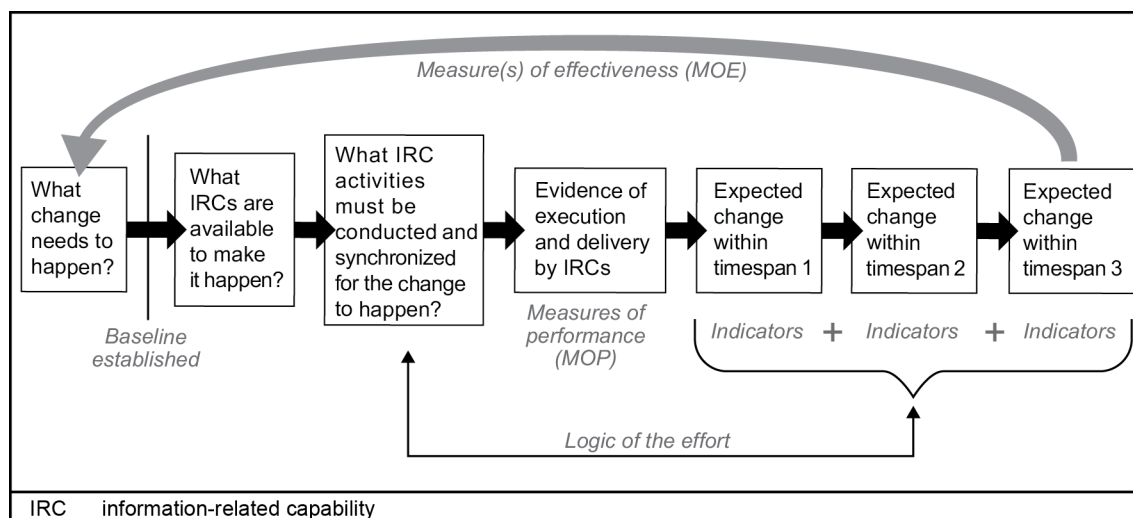


Figure 8-2. Logic flow and components of an IO objective

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