

TARGETING. EVOLUTION THROUGH THE YEARS

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Joint targeting is the result of the need to translate the joint force commander's (JFC) plan into tactical actions. Joint targeting involves the process of selecting and prioritizing targets (classified in NATO as Facility, Individual, Virtual Entity, Equipment, or Organization – FIVE-O), and determining the appropriate means to influence them, taking into account operational requirements and available capabilities, to produce desired effects consistent with the objectives of the operation. It links tactical actions to the strategic desired end state through operational objectives by influencing prioritized impact objectives.

Its practical application began in the early 20th century, the First and the Second World Wars (Japanese Theatre), in the conflict between North Korea and the United States, the Vietnam War, being used during Operation Desert Storm, the Kosovo Conflict, the Iraq War, and continuing to be applied in modern warfare.

Keywords: targeting; effect; specialists; training; operation;

Motto:

“The focus at a given level of war is not on the specific weapons used, or even on the targets attacked, but rather on the desired effects”.

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INTRODUCTION

The future operating environment is expected to be more congested and chaotic, hindering freedom of movement, more challenging, more connected and more constrained. It is therefore critical to enhance the adaptability and resilience of formations to operate in these conditions, which would put at stake compliance with the principles of international humanitarian law (IHL) in the conduct of operations.

The threat of or the use of deterrence and coercion will remain at the core of military operations in the near future. Therefore, the Armed Forces must be able to coordinate and synchronize, and through targeting, apply a broad spectrum of capabilities to influence different conflict actors as part of a comprehensive approach and in a diverse operational environment.

The term targeting is synonymous with “*target selection*”. The armed conflicts of the past two decades of the 21st century highlight the importance of adapting its structure, doctrine and procedures to the requirements of the international community.

Targeting (FM 3-60, November 2010) is the process of identifying sources of instability within an entity's area of responsibility and areas of influence. It is the process of selecting targets (https://irp.fas.org/doddir/dod/jp3-56_9) and matching the appropriate response to them. It considers strategic and operational requirements and capabilities and the threat to friendly forces imposed by the adversary. Targeting is a tool that is applied in every planning phase of an operation (Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff – CJCS, 28 September 2018).

According to *Joint Publication 3-60*, targeting is the process of selecting and prioritizing targets and matching an appropriate response to them given operational

requirements and capabilities. Targeting requires an ongoing analytical process to identify, develop, and influence targets to meet the commander's objectives.

Targeting is part of the military decision-making process to achieve the commander's intent. The methodology used to translate the commander's intent into a plan is to decide, detect, deliver, and evaluate. The functions associated with this methodology assist the commander in deciding what actions to take.

The term "targeting" is synonymous with "target selection" (NATO Standardization Office/NSO; FM 3-60, p. 47). Targeting began its evolution in the Second World War, but the need for its application began to be "felt" as early as the First World War.

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF TARGETING APPLICATION

The German Zeppelin raids on London in 1917 were probably the first known use of air power outside direct support of ground operations. While the material effects of these raids were minimal, the effects on the conceptual role of air power were enormous. In November 1918, Major Edgar Gorrell (<https://airandspace.si.edu/collection-archive>) developed the first strategic bombing plan for the Air Service. His goal was to "drop aerial bombs on commercial centres and lines of communication" in such quantities as to cut off needed supplies to the formations. To achieve that result, the officials responsible for planning it required predetermined targets. To that end, pilots analysed critical enemy centres to determine which should become targets (between 12 June 1918 and 11 November 1918, US bombers fired 275,000 pounds of bombs on rail yards, factories, bridges, command posts etc.). However, the war ended before the plan was carried out. The lessons of the war show that the greatest criticism that can be levelled against aerial bombing is the lack of a predetermined program carefully calculated to destroy enemy critical infrastructure sites. Achieving this objective requires systematic analysis to determine which targets, if destroyed, would cause the greatest damage. An organization with a sustained focus on air targeting is needed to undertake this type of systematic study.

By 1926, many aviators considered bombing to be the most important role of air power, and the prevalence of bombing led to an increasing emphasis on targeting.

According to Major Donald Wilson "attacking multiple critical targets would disrupt the enemy's economy" (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Donald_Wilson).

According to then-Lt. Haywood Hansel, one of two officers assigned to assist Major Wilson, "The proper selection of vital targets in the industrial/economic/social structure of a modern industrialized nation and their subsequent destruction by air attack can fatally weaken an industrialized enemy nation and lead to victory by air power" (<https://www.military.com/off-duty/books/>).

Despite the clear lessons of the First World War, participation in the Second World War, without an intelligence organization capable of conducting systematic research on potential enemies and recommending vital targets whose subsequent destruction would lead to victory, did not produce the desired result. Commanders still relied on Army intelligence to maintain sufficient data to conduct air operations.

In July 1941, at the height of the Second World War, there was not yet sufficient intelligence to plan and conduct combat operations because of the lack of a systematic method for selecting targets. The Air Corps did not provide training for aerial reconnaissance. General Eaker (<https://www.military.com/off-duty/books/>), Commander of the Eighth Air Army, reported in March 1942 that "Intelligence represents the part of the activity in which we are weakest" (<https://irp.fas.org/doddir/usaf/afpam14-210/part15.htm>). In the fall of 1942, the Air Requirements Plan (AWPD-42) against Germany was discussed at the highest level, and as the discussion progressed its limitations in the area of target analysis became apparent. General Arnold (Captain John R. Glock, USAF, 2012) established a Committee of Operational Analysts (COA) in December 1942 to address that deficiency. For the first time, the United States of America created an organization to be responsible for gathering and analysing intelligence information for the purpose of selecting air targets. It eventually became the first Joint Targeting Group, with a Deputy Assistant Chief of the Air Staff for Targeting. To find a systematic approach to target selection it was created a database of potential targets. It was called the *Bombing Encyclopedia* (Maxwell Field, Ala., 1946, pp. 13-15), automating the processing of the vast amount of information needed to provide a target recommendation for every country in the world. It is the forerunner of today's *Basic Encyclopedia*.

In order to centralize the planning process, a Joint Task Force was established in Washington, DC, on 2 August 1944, to provide for continuous analysis of objectives and to ensure a high degree of integration and coordination. The Second World War ended before the group could offer recommendations for objectives, which in turn would directly support Army and Marine Corps troops when they came ashore

on the Japanese mainland. The experience of the two World Wars clearly shows that the proper selection of vital targets is critical to the successful application of air power and depends on the systematic study of available intelligence.

Five years after the Second World War, the United States of America still lacked the organization, the necessary and trained personnel, the database, and the target materials needed to support air power on the Korean Peninsula. Prior to the post-war outbreak, the Air Force had no organization maintaining and analysing the North Korean target base. Information existed on only 53 targets in North Korea, the other targets being obsolete. The problem of inadequate numbers of trained personnel to maintain targeting continued during the war. Because of the lack of competent combat intelligence officers, the Korean campaign provided support for the contention that neglecting peacetime training was a serious mistake.

The lack of trained analysts affected two additional areas: combat assessment and weapons recommendations. Had a greater effort been made to evaluate combat operations, a more accurate assessment of the value of targeting plans would have been obtained. Ten days before the armistice, a vulnerabilities unit was established to provide effective weapons recommendations. If it had been established earlier, it would undoubtedly have contributed to more effective execution of tasks during the Korean War.

The experience gained during the Korean Conflict reinforces the lessons learned from the two world wars – *Proper selection of vital targets is critical to the successful application of air power. Selecting these targets requires trained, experienced personnel familiar with both operations planning and intelligence.*

Targeting results from the need to translate the joint force commander's plan into tactical actions. It involves the process of selecting and prioritizing targets (classified in NATO as Facility, Individual, Virtual Entity, Equipment, or Organization – FIVE-O), and determining the appropriate means of influencing them, taking into account operational requirements and available capabilities, to produce desired effects consistent with the objectives of the operation. Targeting links tactical actions to the strategic desired end state through operational objectives by influencing prioritized impact objectives.

Beginning in the 20th century, First and the Second World Wars (the Japanese Theatre of Operations), continuing with the North Korea-US conflict, evolving

through the Vietnam War, used during Operation Desert Storm, the Kosovo conflict, the Iraq War, targeting continues to be applied in modern warfare.

NOWADAYS

Many lessons have been learned since the end of the Gulf War. Most writers look at how precision weapons and stealth platforms changed the nature of war. It masks another more critical lesson – the importance of the application and use of targeting. From the First World War to the end of Operation Desert Storm, command and control issues remained a source of contention between the Services.

Along with the positive benefits of its application in surgical strikes, there are also negative episodes. As an example of misapplication, mention can be made of the bombing of Iraqi nuclear power plants during Operation Desert Storm. Although it had the effect of reducing, in some ways, the command-and-control capabilities of enemy formations, it led to a supply problem for the population. That in turn led to outbreaks of gastroenteritis and cholera with high mortality rates in some local communities (Rizer, Kenneth, 2001, pp. 1-2).

CONCLUSIONS

Targeting has always been and it will always be a critical function in a military operation to achieve victory on the battlefield. Consistent with the commander's intent, its application is increasingly imperative and mandatory in the modern operational environment.

The modern operational environment is constantly evolving, which in turn requires a change in how the adversary is assessed and influenced. Superiority in an operation requires a precise approach to gathering and analysing information.

Targeting is one of the “engines” of war, one of the key drivers of modern warfare.

The brief historical overview presented here does not claim to be exhaustive, but it does, to a large extent, present the close relationship between war and technology. Air operations have dramatically changed the application of targeting (Osinga, Roorda, 2016, pp. 27-76). In the second half of the 20th century, technological advances continued to reshape the use of targeting.

The application of targeting in Western militaries has increasingly come to include pre-developed standardized procedures and verification mechanisms (Bachman, Holland, 2019, pp. 1028-47).

In the US and NATO militaries, targeting consists of various steps unified by a formalized targeting cycle (Publication 3-60, 2013, p. I-6.).

Nowadays, both military and civilians are heavily involved in the whole process, which aims to increase the effectiveness of an operation, but at the same time maintain the legitimacy and legality of its conduct.

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