Changing the Way We Look at Operations Assessment

The Activities of NATO SAS 110

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- Objective 1: Examine recent operations, NATO and non-NATO, for ideas, lessons, techniques, organizations, measures and processes that could be used in conducting operations assessments for future missions and operations. Where practical, collect examples and tools as options for the commander and the staff to study and implement. The inclusion of examples of what not to do is as important as ones on what to do. Also, a concerted effort should be made to look at the verification and validation of proposed examples and tools; methods include testing of a tool/process or reviewing historical usage for validity. Peer review by persons well practiced in performing operations assessment should be included. A second area for consideration: examine non-military actors for potential lessons and information that could be applied.

- Objective 2: Identify those potential tools, techniques, organizations, and processes from objective 1 that may be used by NATO / Coalition members (now and in the future) which would assist the commander and the staff in preparing for future campaigns, operations, and engagement. Recommend which findings would be mature enough to be applied unchanged, and which may require further concept development or experimentation to develop their full potential.

- Expected benefits:

  - Support to Mission Planning for Future Operations;

  - Lessons Learned and Professional Military Education

  - Proper Use of OR&A to support military operations

- The primary purpose of assessment is to make operations more effective.

  - Secondary purpose of assessment is to provide accountability.

- Assessment is a process, not a product.

- The product of assessment is an effective operation, not a slideshow.

- Assessment is continuous, not periodic.

- Assessment is not new. We have always done it.

- Assessment is everybody's business.

- Assessment is a part of, and provides focus to, planning.

- Assessment is a part of, and provides timely feedback to, operations.

- The important question is not _what_ the metrics are doing; the important question is _why_ they are doing it.

- Metrics alone are not sufficient to describe interactions in a complex environment.

  - The numbers do not tell the story… the numbers keep the storyteller honest.

- "Assessment" in common use means any one of several things:

  - "the assessment" usually refers to the report or slideshow.

    - I will argue this is a conceptual problem.

  - "the assessment" can (and should) refer to our improved understanding of the OE we get as result of the assessment process– a cognitive, not a written product.

    - The report or slideshow is a communication of the more pertinent parts of this understanding. In effect, an "EXSUM."

The New Way Recognizes that...

- Effectiveness is more important than accountability.

- Collecting the information required to be more effective allows us to account for resources without much extra effort.

- Assessment is not about writing a report. The report is merely a communication of the understanding we get from working through the assessment process.

- Assessment requires the whole-of staff.

- A focus on effectiveness means products look forward. Accountability features products that look backward.

- Effectiveness means products are for your boss and other leaders within your organization (in and down) while accountability means products are for your boss's boss (out and up).

- Aggregation schemes hide the problems we are looking for.

- Questions are more important than answers.

- Assessment is about understanding the OE, and our place in it, so that we choose activities for our forces that maximize their effectiveness.