



# CURTIS E. LEMAY CENTER

FOR DOCTRINE DEVELOPMENT AND EDUCATION



## ANNEX 3-60 TARGETING

### EFFECTS-BASED APPROACH TO OPERATIONS

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In the most fundamental sense, [effects-based approach to operations \(EBAO\)](#) is defined as an approach in which operations are planned, executed, assessed, and adapted to influence or change systems or capabilities in order to achieve desired outcomes.<sup>1</sup> Consequently, targeting personnel seek to understand and exploit the complex connections among individual actions, the effects—direct and indirect—that actions produce, how those effects influence the states and behaviors of complex systems in the operational environment, and how effects contribute to the accomplishment of ultimate desired outcomes.

**Effects** are the physical or behavioral state of a system that results from an action, a set of actions, or another effect.<sup>2</sup> They are the full range of outcomes, events, or consequences of a particular cause. A cause can be an action, set of actions, or another effect. Effects join actions to objectives. The actions and effects in any causal chain can derive from any [instrument of national power](#)—diplomatic, informational, military, economic (DIME), and may occur at any point across the [range of military operations](#) from peace to global conflict. Properly understanding the relationship among effects at all levels is important to planning and conducting any campaign.

Effects can be intended or unintended, direct or indirect, lethal or nonlethal. Intended and unintended are straightforward in meaning. A **direct effect is the first-order result of action with no intervening mechanism between act and outcome**—usually immediate and empirically verifiable, like the results of weapons employment. Indirect effects are more complicated. An **indirect effect is a second-, third-, or higher-order effect created through an intermediate effect or causal linkage following a tactical action**—usually a delayed and/or displaced consequence associated with the action that caused the direct effect(s). Direct and indirect effects can be intended or unintended. Objectives are achieved through an accumulation of direct and indirect effects, but the effects sought at the strategic and operational levels are almost invariably indirect.

<sup>1</sup> [Annex 3-0, Operations and Planning.](#)

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

Effects are often categorized as physical or behavioral; are assessed functionally or systemically. Physical effects materially alter a system or target and are most important at the tactical level. Behavioral effects are those that impact reasoning, emotion, and motivation and result in measurable changes in behavior. Functional effects relate how well a system performs its intended function(s) and systemic effects relate how well that system functions as a component of larger systems. These are most important for assessment considerations.

Effects can be imposed cumulatively or in a cascading manner, sequentially or in parallel. Effects can accumulate over time leading to gradual change, or can be cascading changes that occur catastrophically and ripple through related and subordinate systems. Often, there are both cumulative and cascading components to effects. Effects can also be imposed sequentially or in parallel. Effects imposed in series, one after another over time, are sequential. Those imposed near-simultaneously are parallel effects, which may place greater stress upon targeted systems and require faster adaptation. Full understanding of the types of effects and the principles of effects-based thinking can offer commanders more options, hasten success, and lead to success with lower cost in terms of lives, assets, and time.

It is vital to remember that many effects are created through processes other than military targeting. **The diplomatic, information, and economic instruments of national power may create effects that negate the requirement for, or complement military action by contributing to the accomplishment of objectives and end states and therefore should be considered in an effects-based approach.**

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