

# Joint Fires in NATO: Analysis of the relationship between Joint Fires, Joint Effects, and Joint Targeting

## Overview

Contemporary warfare is no longer confined to the traditional battlefield. Instead it encompasses a wide range and often complex array of actions; everything ranging from the use of lethal force to strategic communications. These actions, known broadly speaking as *fires* in military terms,<sup>1</sup> are all aimed at, directly or indirectly, influencing either a potential adversary or other target audience. In the NATO context, Joint Fires is a complex function which is intended to integrate all types of fires as efficiently and effectively as possible in order to produce the desired effect(s).<sup>2</sup> In this context, the JALLC was tasked by Supreme Allied Commander Transformation to analyse related NATO doctrine, process, and structures for Deputy Chief of Staff Strategic Employment, SHAPE, in order to identify where these could potentially be improved to be more effective and efficient.



There are diverging views as to what encompasses the term Fires; the different perspectives include everything from traditional gun fire to strategic communications (picture source: Allied Land Command).

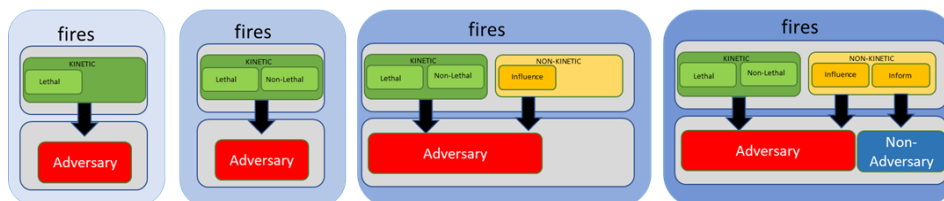
**“Most practitioners agree on the following: fires are actions, effect is change, and targeting is process.”**

## Methodology and Key Findings

The complex nature of Joint Fires as a multi-disciplinary function meant that extensive research was required to fully understand the scope and meaning of the diverse terminology used throughout NATO, its Allies, and Partners. Clear and standardized terminology is critical to all of NATO's activities and, as such, the Project Team focussed on this area to identify how the relevant terms were used and understood within the Alliance. Then the Project Team were able to distil and propose four basic interpretations of fires, which depend on how a person perceives the related terminology (see figure below).



A well-timed strategic communication can be effective in efforts to deter a potential adversary (picture source: NATO website: [www.nato.int](http://www.nato.int)).



<sup>1</sup> The Project Team notes that the term *fires* and specific related terms, such as *Joint Fires*, *Joint Effects*, and *Joint Targeting*, are more complex than presented here and recommend obtaining a copy of the corresponding JALLC report for those who wish to better understand this terminology.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.





## Project Team

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The relationship between the key areas of Joint Fires, Joint Effects, and Joint Targeting (the process of carefully selecting targets in the context of a particular mission) was also analysed in order to understand how related current and future key documents might need to work together to ensure NATO has the best possible framework for an effective and efficient Joint Fires function for the Alliance.



NATO media teams provide the backbone for a complex and ever changing information battle space, covering all aspects of the conflict (picture source: the Joint Warfare Centre).

## Conclusions and Recommendations

The report highlights a number of challenges regarding the development of the Joint Fires function in the context of Joint Effects. One, already highlighted in this factsheet, is the need for clear and standardized terminology. Another is the need to fully understand the relationship between Joint Fires, Joint Effects, and Joint Targeting and how these areas need to work together in terms of doctrine, structures, and processes. Further, the report concludes that there may be a need to further standardize how NATO HQs ultimately implement the Joint Fires function throughout the Alliance. The report contains a number of recommendations including several models that offer suggestions on how the relationship between Joint Fires, Joint Effects, and Joint Targeting can work depending on different understandings and approaches to the function as a whole.

One of the models is presented here offering one of several perspectives on the relationship between the areas.

