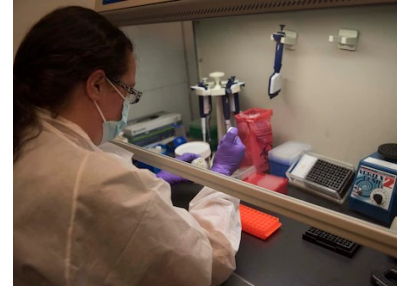


Technical Exploitation and Battlefield Evidence

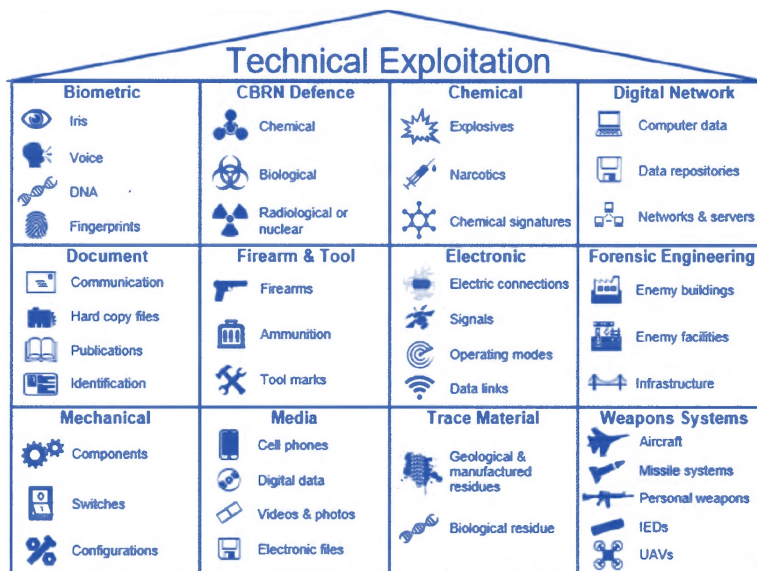
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Project Overview

In the course of their participation in NATO missions and Operations, military forces can obtain vast amounts of material and information from the field, which have the potential to support mission objectives and Alliance security more broadly. This potential can be unlocked by employing scientific tools and methods through a process termed Technical Exploitation (TE). Material collected from the field and/or information derived through TE can be shared with law enforcement entities as Battlefield Evidence (BE) which has contributed to bringing foreign terrorist fighters, pirates, and war criminals to justice.



DNA analysis at the Afghanistan Captured Material Exploitation (ACME) laboratory, 2019. Source: US Department of Defense via www.media.defense.gov.



The above diagram provides an overview of the specialized areas that fall under the umbrella of TE

Despite the valuable contributions made by TE and BE within and beyond the theatre of operations, the two concepts have struggled for attention and resources over the years. The JALLC was tasked to develop and evidence-based understanding of NATO's TE/BE preparation, planning, and execution activities in order to support the implementation of the recently (2020) adopted TE and BE policies in NATO. The project team analysed data from six missions/operations: Implementation Force (IFOR) and Stabilization Force (SFOR) in Bosnia & Herzegovina; Kosovo Force (KFOR), International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and Resolute Support Mission (RSM) in Afghanistan, and Operation Ocean Shield (OOS) in the Gulf of Guinea.

The report not only provide pertinent findings and recommendations regarding the implementation of the TE and BE policies, but also serves as valuable repository of information on the topic.

“TE has made critical contributions to mission success by supporting a variety of outcomes, from force protection, to targeting, and support to legal proceedings

The contributions made by BE are important and multifaceted, and involve a range of legal finishes, from arrest, to prosecution, incarceration, of suspected terrorists, pirates and war criminals; and wider rule of law and public confidence gains”

Findings

TE and BE related activities have made important contributions to NATO missions and operations. Both concepts remain relevant today for NATO's cooperative security and its deterrence and defence tasks. However, there are still important challenges ahead in the institutionalization of TE and BE across the Alliance, such as: standardizing terminology, ensuring that relevant lessons from past missions and operations are not lost, and synchronizing developments across the different communities of interest and capability development avenues. Specifically the project team identified challenges relating to: planning and preparation; execution; and information sharing and dissemination that will need to be addressed to ensure the proper implementation of TE and BE throughout NATO.



Left: NATO forces inspect the site of an Improvised Explosive Device explosion. Source: www.act.nato.int. Right: Biometric registration by ISAF forces. Source: www.armyupress.army.mil.

Recommendations

The project team were able to make several recommendations across the spectrum of the challenges identified which include the following suggestions:

Doctrine

By revising existing doctrine on TE and creating new doctrine on BE, related tasks and responsibilities could be better captured, increasing efficiency and effectiveness of TE and BE Alliance-wide.

Structure

Specific TE and BE structures should be put in place, making use of subject matter expertise.

Information Sharing and Dissemination

A NATO-owned system for the sharing and dissemination of TE and BE information sharing could enhance information flow and ensure that TE and BE relevant information continues to support NATO tasks and activities.

Build awareness preserve lessons

Finally, it is of paramount importance to ensure that the hard-won lessons from missions and operations regarding TE and BE are not lost. Dedicated training packages and handbooks could be developed to ensure this valuable information is passed on for future missions and operations.

Project Team

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CDR Vogel joined the Royal Netherlands Navy in 1980 as a marine- and air engineer. He was posted to the JALLC in September 2019 as an analyst in the Lessons Learned Analysis Divisions, where he has worked on various analysis projects for NATO.

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