

# Filling a Gap Network Engagement

Randall Munch and Chris Worret

*The U.S. must never enter a conflict with a strategic plan limited to engaging and destroying an enemy's forces. Lasting strategic success is not a function of enemy units eliminated or targets destroyed. A successful strategic outcome rests...on the ability of soldiers, Marines and special operations forces to defeat an enemy force and seize and hold territory by direct physical interaction with local populations...in order to create the conditions of a lasting peace.*

—Lt. Gen. Keith C. Walker, while serving as Training and Doctrine Command Deputy Commanding General of Futures and Director, Army Capabilities Integration Center, February 2013<sup>1</sup>

Lt. Gen. Walker's comments above imply that influence within the human domain is a critical element in achieving strategic success and lasting peace. Soldiers engage in "direct physical interaction with local populations" in order to exert influence. His comments reinforce one of the key lessons learned during the past decade of war. The military needs to better understand the operational environment (OE) in order to more effectively engage the human domain. The Joint Staff J7 Decade of War (DOW) study identifies this as one of 11 major lessons learned, stated as follows, "A failure to recognize, acknowledge, and accurately define the operational environment led to a mismatch between forces, capabilities, missions, and goals."<sup>2</sup>

U.S. forces have failed to fully understand the OE not only during the past decade of conflict in Iraq and Afghanistan, but also during numerous previous conflicts. This problem is recognized at the highest levels within the Department of Defense. The Chief of Staff of the Army, the Commandant of the Marine Corps, and the Commanding General of U.S. Special Operations Command endorsed a May 2013 paper, "Strategic Landpower: Winning the Clash of Wills," which stated, "Time and again, the U.S. has undertaken to engage in conflict without fully considering the physical, cultural, and social environ-

ments that comprise what some have called the "human domain."<sup>3</sup>

Past failures to adequately understand the OE are serious, and the reasons behind these gaps in knowledge should be addressed now so that they are not repeated during future conflicts. Inadequate understanding of the OE has repeatedly caused the U.S. to spend months or years pursuing incorrect, or at a minimum, incomplete strategies that were not based on a "nuanced understanding of the environment."<sup>4</sup> The major root cause behind lack of understanding the OE is the failure to understand the cultural and social environments that comprise the human domain. Failure to understand the human domain is a common link between the lesson learned in the DOW study that applies to failure to understand the OE and the repeated shortfall of not fully considering the human domain, as identified in the Strategic Landpower paper.

TRADOC's answer to this need for better understanding of the human domain, and thus, better understanding of the OE, is the "The U.S. Army Concept for Engagement," dated 24 February 2014, also known as the Engagement Warfighting Function (WfF). The Engagement WfF "concept institutionalizes lessons learned from the past decade of conflict and outlines how future Army forces will conduct operations."<sup>5</sup>

*Randall Munch works in the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) Training Brain Operations Center (TBOC). A retired U.S. Army officer (Infantry/Foreign Assignments Officer) with service in the 82nd Airborne Division, 10th Mountain Division, Joint Special Operations Command, Defense Intelligence Agency, Joint Staff J2, and the Defense Threat Reduction Agency. Deployments include Iraq and Mogadishu, Somalia. After retirement in 2005, Munch worked as a Defense contractor in the Joint Counter-IED Defeat Organization, TRADOC G2, and the Training Brain Operations Center.*



*Chris Worret works in the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) Training Brain Operations Center (TBOC). A retired U.S. Navy officer (SEAL/Intelligence) with service in SEAL Team Five, Naval Special Warfare Center, Joint Special Operations Command, JTF-Horn of Africa, JIATF East, Naval Expeditionary Combat Command. Deployments include Saudi Arabia in 1990/1991, Iraq in 2003, 2006 and 2007, Djibouti and Uganda in 2009/2010. Following retirement in 2010, worked as a Defense Contractor in Joint and Coalition Warfighting and the Training Brain Operations Center.*



- The engagement warfighting function will institutionalize into Army doctrine, training, education, and leader development, the capabilities and skills necessary to work with host nations, regional partners, and indigenous populations in a culturally attuned manner that allows bridging language barriers, opening lines of communication and connections with key political and military leaders in a way that is both immediate and lasting. It enhances interdependence between special operations forces, conventional forces, and unified action partners while incorporating the tenets of the emerging idea of the human domain. As a result, this warfighting function will contribute to mission accomplishment by providing better, more synchronized lethal and nonlethal capabilities to assess, shape, deter, and influence decisions and behavior of a nation's security forces, government, and people.<sup>6</sup>

The Engagement WfF aligns with lessons learned during the past decade of war. Both the Engagement WfF and the DOW study point to a fundamental requirement for forces to be able to influence the behavior of various groups of people in order to shape the OE for successful unified action. Shaping the OE by influencing human behavior requires in-depth understanding of the human domain.

A coherent methodology that will serve as a foundation for developing Army doctrine and training to fill the gap identified in the DOW study and provide the “how to” for the Engagement WfF is needed. This methodology currently exists, and is known as “Attack the Network” (AtN). The AtN methodology enables operational units to develop in-depth understanding of their operational environments in support of achieving mission success at all levels from tactical to strategic.

### The U.S. Army Capstone Concept and Engagement Warfighting Function

Before discussing how Attack the Network (AtN) will provide the “how to” for the Engagement WfF, it's important to look more deeply into the thinking behind the concept. The “U.S. Army Capstone Concept” (ACC) publication, released in December 2012, describes the gap in Army doctrine:

- Current doctrine does not adequately address the moral, cognitive, social, and physical aspects of human populations in conflict. Since the purpose of military action is to affect the behavior of human groups in the operational environment toward a defined objective, the Army must improve the doctrinal representation of the operational environment and account for the socio-economic, cognitive, and physical aspects of human activity.<sup>7</sup>

How is the doctrinal gap that is described in the ACC related to the OE lesson learned described in the DOW study? The ACC describes the need to “affect the behavior of human groups in the operational environment toward a defined objective.” The “human groups” are also known as “the human domain,” and the ability to “affect,” or shape, the human domain is often critical to achieving mission success. In fact, the “defined objective” toward which the human domain should be shaped is mission success.

The Engagement Warfighting Function further matures the ACC concept. It states, “To assess, shape, deter, and influence the behavior of a people, foreign security forces, and governments, commanders must understand the operational environment.” Clearly then, the ACC, the DOW study, and the Engagement Warfighting Function are addressing the same root issue - *commanders must understand and success-*

*fully engage the human domain in order to achieve mission success.* That's exactly what Attack the Network training was intended to achieve.

### Attack The Network Training and Doctrine

Attack the Network (AtN) methodology aligns closely with the Engagement WfF. AtN emerged as a training methodology to better enable units deploying to Iraq and Afghanistan to defeat threat IED networks. It became one of three major lines of operation within the Joint IED Defeat Organization (JIEDDO) soon after its establishment in 2006. Elements of JIEDDO began to train AtN as early as 2008.

AtN was best articulated as a methodology by the Asymmetric Warfare Group (AWG) in a series of products titled, “AWG Attack the Network Methodology”, published in four parts during March 2009 through August 2010. AWG's AtN methodology describes a means of analyzing, modeling, and developing a network in order to make sound recommendations for collection against and targeting of networks. AWG's AtN Methodology also describes a means of synchronizing lethal and non-lethal targeting, enabling Army forces to not only neutralize threat networks, but to simultaneously support friendly networks and influence neutral networks. By including friendly and neutral networks, the AWG AtN methodology plays a significant role in supporting the emerging Engagement WfF with a clear methodology for understanding and comprehensively engaging all major elements of the human domain.

Another key contributor to the concept of AtN is U.S. Army Col. David M. Hodne. In then Lt. Col. Hodne's October 2010 article titled, “After the Surge,” he described his task force's phased network-centric strategy:

- Among the first coalition units to implement the historic Security Agreement, 3rd Squadron, 4th U.S. Cavalry developed a phased network-centric strategy focused on building effective Iraqi capacity within local government institutions and Iraqi security forces. This was a departure from previous security-centric strategies that sought solely to reduce enemy influence or protect the local population. This strategy recognized the interrelationships of both enemy and friendly networks and addressed both simultaneously.<sup>8</sup>

During operations in Iraq, Col. Hodne's phased network-centric approach succeeded. His article continues to serve as a guide in the ongoing development of AtN training and doctrine.

Beginning in 2010, members of the Maneuver Center of Excellence (MCoE) and the Training Brain Operations Center (TBOC) melded the concepts described by JIEDDO, AWG, Col. Hodne, and others into a comprehensive AtN methodology and began a training program to implement it. The MCoE/TBOC AtN training is unique in that it adopts Col. Hodne's approach and articulates the concept of AtN in terms of three lines of effort; support friendly, influence neutral, and neutralize threat networks.

All of these AtN training initiatives preceded doctrinal development. AtN first appeared as a doctrinal concept in Joint Publication 3-15.1, Counter-Improvised Explosive Device Operations, dated 9 January 2012.

AtN is defined in JP 3-15.1 as:

- Lethal and non-lethal actions and operations against networks conducted continuously and simultaneously at multiple levels (tactical, operational, and strategic) that capitalize on or create key vulnerabilities and disrupt activities to eliminate the enemy's ability to function in order to enable success of the operation or campaign.<sup>9</sup>



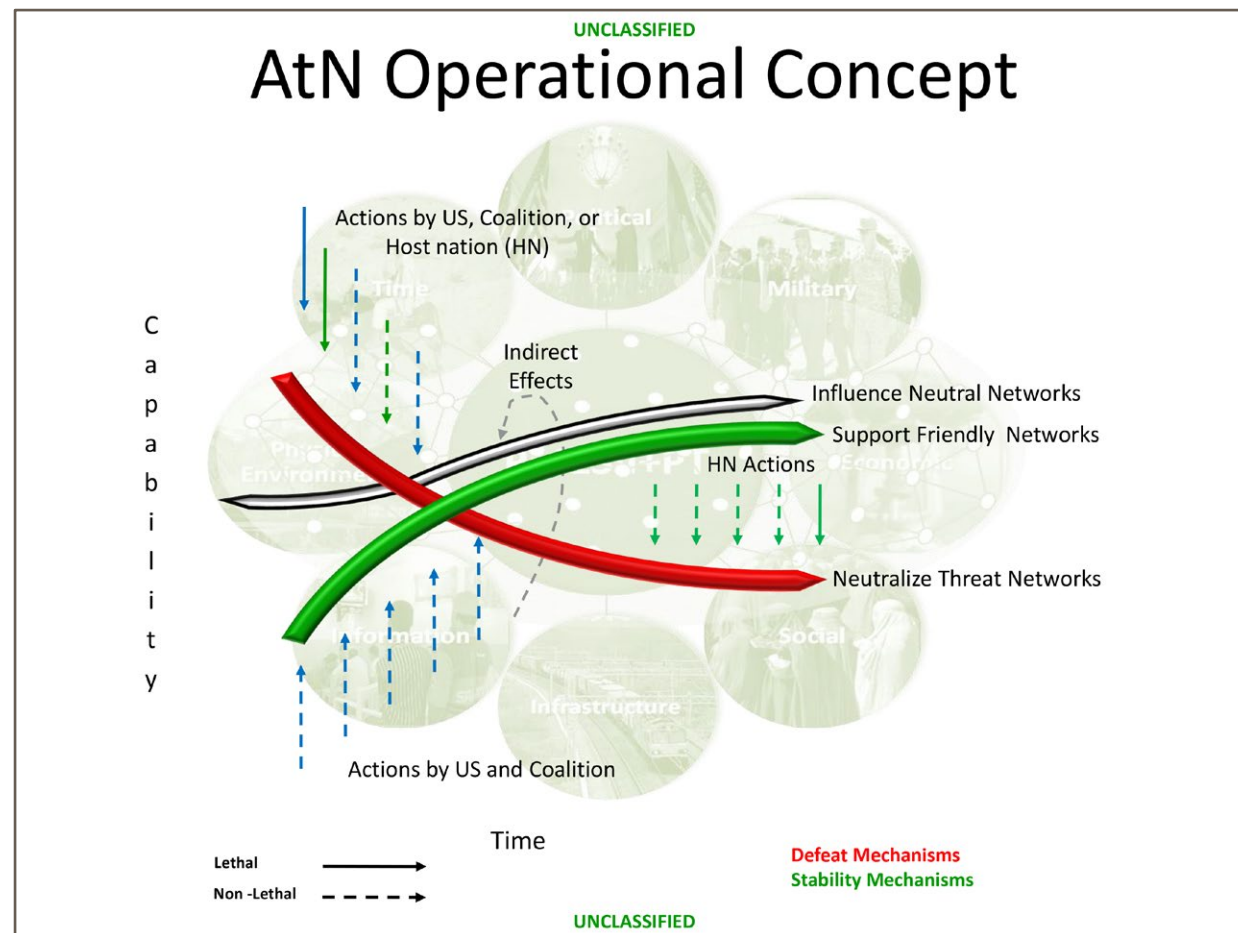


Figure 1. Network Engagement Lines of Effort

The joint doctrinal definition of AtN above, however, is focused solely on enemy forces. It does not address the need to understand and engage friendly and neutral elements of the human domain, and these friendly and neutral elements comprise the majority of the human domain. The Army and Marine Corps recognize this gap, however, and are developing new doctrine that expands the AtN concept beyond the joint definition of AtN shown above. Both services agree AtN must be part of a broader effort to engage the human domain comprehensively, including all three lines of effort.<sup>10</sup> The Marine Corps recently drafted a doctrinal publication on AtN that includes the expanded concept of engaging the human domain, and the Army Combined Arms Center established

a doctrine working group in July 2013 that is taking a similar approach. The concept that aligns these Army and Marine Corps doctrine writing initiatives is represented by Figure 1, below, which is labeled “Network Engagement Lines of Effort”. The Army doctrine working group favors re-naming “Attack the Network” to a more inclusive term such as “network engagement” in order to better align the term with the concept of a comprehensive approach to engaging human networks. Within the broader focus, the term “attack the network” would become a sub-component of network engagement that refers only to one of three lines of effort - neutralize threat networks.<sup>11</sup>

Although the Army has not made a decision on terminology as of this writing, the term

“network engagement” (NE) will be used in this article. As described above, NE combines the AtN line of effort (LOE), neutralize threat networks, with lines of effort to support friendly networks and influence neutral networks.

### Development of Network Engagement and the Engagement WfF

The work of the Army doctrine working group recently produced the initial author’s draft of a future Army Techniques Publication (ATP) on NE, which aligns closely with the Engagement WfF description above of the capabilities and desired outcomes of comprehensively engaging the human domain. Per the initial draft ATP on Network Engagement:

- Network Engagement (NE) consists of lethal and non-lethal means to support friendly networks; influence neutral networks; and neutralize threat networks. NE is conducted simultaneously and continuously at multiple levels and requires a broader approach that leverages the capabilities of unified action partners.<sup>12</sup>

- ...the objective of NE activities is to increase host nation (HN) capability to achieve sustainable political outcomes consistent with U.S. strategic objectives. Critical to objective achievement is friendly force ability to neutralize enemy/threat network capabilities.<sup>13</sup>

The excerpt below was carried forward from the ACC into the Engagement WfF. It clearly demonstrates that both documents advocate the need to conduct lethal and non-lethal operations that effectively engage all major element of the human domain – threat, friendly, and neutral:

- ...to operate more effectively in the land domain, while fully accounting for the human aspects of conflict and war, the Army requires a warfighting function to capture the tasks

and systems that provide lethal and nonlethal capabilities to assess, shape, deter, and influence the decisions and behavior of its security forces, government, and people. The development of the engagement warfighting function and this functional concept are comprehensive solutions to address this requirement.<sup>14</sup>

Both the Engagement WfF and the draft ATP on NE specify certain people groups within the host nation that should be engaged. The Engagement WfF describes them in terms similar to the Clausewitzian trinity of people, army, and government, using the phrase that describes it as a people, its security forces, and its government. Although the words are not identical to the people groups identified in the draft ATP, the concepts align. The Engagement WfF phrase “a people” aligns with the NE phrase, “neutral networks”, and the Engagement WfF phrase, “its security forces and its government” aligns with the NE phrase, “friendly networks”. Because the Engagement WfF discusses the need to engage the various people groups in order to shape, deter, and influence their behavior, it also aligns closely with the NE ATP’s main concept of supporting friendly networks, influencing neutral networks, and neutralizing threat networks. The significance in the high degree of alignment of concepts articulated in the Engagement WfF and the draft NE Army Techniques Publication is that increasing coordination between the groups developing these two efforts will benefit both. By merging and further clarifying these overlapping concepts, both efforts will be strengthened. For example, the Engagement WfF concept could be strengthened by integrating elements of the NE concept of engaging the human domain continuously and simultaneously at all levels (tactical, operational, and strategic)

in order to increase host nation capability to achieve sustainable political outcomes that are consistent with U.S. vital interests.

The Decade of War (DOW) study includes the following lesson learned: “A nuanced understanding of the environment was often hindered by a focus on traditional adversaries and a neglect of information concerning the host-nation population.”<sup>15</sup> This lesson learned implies that effective, simultaneous engagements of all three networks – friendly, neutral, and threat – cannot occur unless operations and intelligence synchronize efforts to develop understanding of the OE and the human domain within it. Future doctrine and training on network engagement should enable U.S. forces to avoid the lesson learned that is described in the DOW study.

An important attribute of both the NE concept and the AtN methodology is that they provide a framework for synchronizing diverse Army capabilities. This makes AtN a useful methodology for implementing the concept of the Engagement WfF.

Understanding the human domain represents understanding the most complex element of the OE. The human domain is often the key terrain within the OE, as implied within the Engagement Warfighting Function. This concept is reinforced by the Strategic Landpower White Paper, which states:

- ...armed conflict is a clash of interests between or among organized groups, each attempting to impose their will on the opposition. In essence, it is fundamentally a human

endeavor in which the context of the conflict is determined by both parties.<sup>16</sup>

The emerging concepts of the Engagement Warfighting Function and Network Engagement should be developed in coordination because many of their concepts are closely linked. The Engagement Warfighting Function describes conceptually why influencing the human domain overcomes a critical lesson learned from the past decade of war, and the Network Engagement/Attack the Network methodology provides a framework for implementing the concepts of the Engagement Warfighting Function. Developing the Engagement Warfighting Function and Network Engagement doctrine and methodology in coordination will facilitate the blending of

concepts, doctrine, and training development as they relate to engaging the human domain comprehensively and effectively during future conflicts. Coordinated development of the Engagement Warfighting Function and Network Engagement concepts will more likely result in doctrine and training that fill the gap described in the Decade of War study, resulting in future U.S. strategies that are more likely to be based on nuanced understanding of the operational environment. Such strategies would better enable commanders and staffs at all levels to achieve enduring outcomes that include not only the desired short-term effects but, ultimately, the intended long-term strategic effects. ■

## NOTES

1. Lt. Gen. Walker’s Feb 13 presentation at the Institute of Land Warfare, titled “The Nation’s Strategic Hedge”, emphasized how influence over the human domain was the critical element in achieving lasting peace, and a key role the U.S. Army will play in future joint operations.

2. “Decade of War, Volume 1”, Joint and Coalition Operational Analysis, Joint Staff, J7, 15 June 2012, pg 2. Hereafter cited as DOW.

3. “Strategic Landpower: Winning the Clash Wills”, May 2013, endorsed by Gen. Odierno, Gen. Amos, and Adm. McRaven as part of a broader effort by the Stra-

tegic Landpower Task Force to better integrate human factors into military planning and executing military operations to achieve enduring outcomes. Hereafter cited as “Strategic Landpower White Paper.”

4. IDOW, pg3.

5. U.S. Army Functional Concept for Engagement, TRADOC Pam 525-8-5, dated 24 February 2014, pg 5. Hereafter cited as “Engagement”.

6. Engagement, pg iii.

7. TRADOC Pam 525-3-0, “The U.S. Army Capstone Concept”, 19 December 2012. Hereafter cited as ACC.

8. Institute for the Study of War, Report 3, “After the

Surge, Task Force Raider’s Experience in Iraq”, Lieutenant Colonel David M. Hodne, October 2010, pg 2.

9. Joint Pub 3-15.1, Counter-IED Operations, 9 Jan 12, pg GL-5.

10. The Training Brain operations Center (TBOC) participated in the official kick-off meeting for Joint Publication 3-25, “Countering Threat Networks”, Quantico, VA, on 19 March 2014.

11. This depiction of the operational concept for human network engagement was developed during 2010 by the Training Brain operations Center and the U.S. Army Maneuver Center of Excellence in support of

the Attack the Network training course that they deliver as training partners.

12. Initial Author’s Draft ATP on Network Engagement, ATP 5-0.6, drafted by members of the Combined Arms Doctrine Division-led doctrine writing working group during October 2014, page 2. Hereafter cited as Draft ATP 5-0.6.

13. Draft ATP 5-0.6, page 9.

14. Engagement, page 7.

15. DOW, page 2.

16. Strategic Landpower White Paper, page 1.