



Allied Joint Doctrine for Strategic Communications

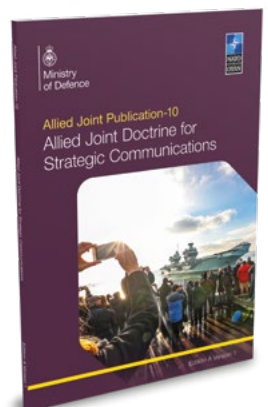


Published in March 2023, Allied Joint Publication (AJP)-10, *Allied Joint Doctrine for Strategic Communications* established the doctrine fundamentals of NATO's approach to strategic communications (StratCom). Now issued with UK national elements, this inaugural StratCom publication lays out for the first time the Defence strategic communication landscape, processes and interconnections. It provides commanders and staff at the operational level an authoritative source of guidance as Defence begins to adopt a StratCom mindset in its approach to all activities.

Control of the narrative as a means of shaping the engagement space has never been more important: NATO's competitors have developed ways of influencing attitudes and behaviours by the manipulation of information in the sub-threshold space. In this context, the successful application of the military instrument requires planning that is cohered by a central narrative and informed by a comprehensive understanding of the intended audience. Only by adopting this approach can Defence create deterrence and shaping effects to achieve its desired objectives.

AJP-10, *Allied Joint Doctrine for Strategic Communications* (with UK national elements) provides the foundation for developing the StratCom mindset and a capability that will enable Defence to compete in this changed environment. By describing narrative development, audience understanding and the orchestration of information operations, this publication frames StratCom as a central consideration for all commanders, given that every Defence action has communicative effect; that everything we do, or choose not to do, communicates a message that will be perceived differently by different audiences.

The UK uses 'Defence strategic communication' (Defence StratCom) in the singular, rather than the NATO form, 'strategic communications'. The UK defines Defence StratCom as: 'advancing national interests by using Defence as a means of communication to influence the attitudes, beliefs and behaviours of audiences.' The Defence StratCom function ensures that all Defence activities are conceived, planned and executed with the desired outcome in the cognitive dimension of the engagement space in mind. Information activities are planned and conducted using the two primary communication capabilities: media operations and psychological operations.



There are five Defence StratCom principles:

- strategic military planning must be underpinned by analysis;
- strategic military direction must focus on audiences and desired attitudes/behaviours;
- all Defence assets are a potential means of communication;
- strategic narratives must be fought for – Defence's actions, images and words must consistently align with the relevant strategic narrative to build and maintain credibility; and
- a continual influence cost/benefit analysis is required to identify the most advantageous combination of activities.

Indicating the importance of StratCom, NATO joint force commands have created new J10-StratCom staff branches to generate and coordinate StratCom direction and guidance, narrative development and audience understanding. UK Defence is not currently organised in the same way as NATO for the delivery of StratCom. At the Ministry of Defence level, Military Strategic Effects provides Defence StratCom support to audience-centric campaigns in collaboration with the Directorate of Defence Communications and coordinated across Whitehall. In Permanent Joint Headquarters, Defence StratCom and information activities are planned and orchestrated through Joint Effects in the J3 branch. Meanwhile, in Headquarters Allied Rapid Reaction Corps, StratCom rests with the Joint Fires and Influence branch.

In delivering its StratCom functions, Defence now needs to train and educate commanders and staff to be conversant with StratCom approaches and specifically audience centrality as being fundamental to integrated action. Inculcating a StratCom mindset for the effective delivery of audience-centric planning and narrative-led execution begins with AJP-10, *Allied Joint Doctrine for Strategic Communications* (with UK national elements).

Want to read more?

The full edition of AJP-10 is designed to be a simple and concise explanation of StratCom, and it is written at the OFFICIAL classification to access the widest possible audience. It should be of value to joint commanders and staffs, the single Services, the broader defence community and other government departments, as well as UK partners and allies.



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