

# Non-Kinetic Operations: Information Operations, Air Force Style

By Colonel Bruno Mignot

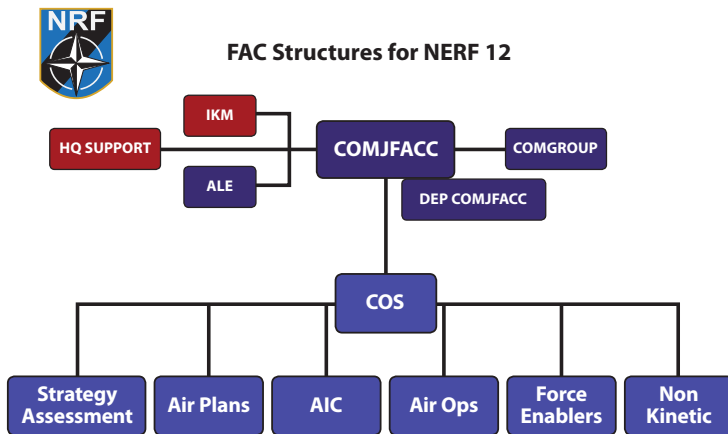
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The air operations carried out by the French Air Force are characterised by a global approach, in that they fully integrate non-destructive operations described as “non-kinetic” and include the whole range of information operations in the broadest sense. Typical of this approach, which has already received international recognition during joint and combined exercises, is that it takes account of the political, military, cultural, economic and social environment of a country in crisis at the time of an external operation. This article examines non-kinetic operations firstly by looking at the various players in the operational theatre, then by asking what is meant by “non-kinetic”. Information operations and the strategy of influence are examined and then the eight basic functions of non-kinetic ops are described with the article ending on a description of the organisation of a non-kinetic cell.

Today, the air operations carried out by the air force are characterised by a global approach, in that they fully integrate non-destructive operations described as “non-kinetic” and include the whole range of information operations in the broadest sense. Typical of this approach, which has already received international recognition during joint and combined exercises, is that it takes account of the political, military, cultural, economic and social environment of a country in crisis at the time of an external operation.

**Introduction**

Over the course of some years, the French Air Force (FAF) has been developing a new capability known as “non-kinetic operations”, which covers nearly the whole spectrum of information operations. There is nothing really new in this for the air force, since this type of operation is hardly a novelty, apart from the impetus given to it by the air defence and air operations command (CDAOA) to acquire and maintain sound capabilities in the area. This impetus has led to the setting up of a dedicated cell, which has operated within the JFACC (*Joint Force Air Component Command*) during major exercises conducted successfully by the air force since late 2008.<sup>1</sup> Consequently, the global approach taken by the FAF when handling a crisis now admits France to the exclusive club of nations that have a complete C2 tool, bringing together the essential functions of intelligence, situational assessment, operational planning, real-time conducting of operations, theatre logistics and control of information. Before describing these new capabilities, we should examine the whole background to the global approach in operation.



The exercises carried out as part of the JFACC structure allow the air force to develop its global approach and retain its place in the inner circle of nations that have a complete C2 tool

**The Global Approach in Operation**

Over time, as the UN took on the role that it would have had since 1945 had it not been for the Cold War, coercive military actions gave way to operations aimed at maintaining or restoring peace, usually divided into six phases: force generation, deployment, intervention, stabilisation,

normalisation of relations and, finally, withdrawal of troops. As experience showed in Bosnia, Kosovo, Iraq and Afghanistan, stabilisation and normalisation can last for many years. However, the success of any operation, whether peacekeeping or pure coercion, does not depend solely on military action because the problems generally result from an accumulation of security, cultural, historical, political, economic and social factors that have interacted and thus sparked off the conflict. This is why a “global” approach to the situation is needed, to gain a better understanding of its complexity, untangle the threads, weave a new fabric and restore balance so that the parties can live together in a manner that they find acceptable. The military commander therefore needs tools that are not specifically military, so that he can effectively operate all the levers available to him. The slider for action has therefore moved towards manoeuvres that are much less military-centred, involving a number of players whose presence sometimes complicates the task of the Force Commander.

### The Various Players in Theatres of Operation

Since the theatre of operations has moved into the urban environment, the inhabitants have become the centre of gravity of any concerted action. To get a sympathetic welcome, it is necessary to guarantee security and establish the conditions for a return to normal life. Much is therefore expected of the international community, as initiator of the operation, source of legitimacy and holder of financial resources that are – often incorrectly – thought to be unlimited.

However, it is by no means the only player in the theatre since it rubs shoulders with international or regional organisations like the Red Cross, the European Union through its agency ECHO<sup>2</sup> or the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, governmental organisations such as the French Development Agency or USAID, non-governmental organisations such as *Médecins Sans Frontières*, Handicap International or *Human Rights Watch*, and finally private security agencies benefiting from the frequently observed phenomenon of outplacement of protection functions within the Force.<sup>3</sup> The task of resolving a crisis then involves joint, or at least coordinated, action by all these bodies, which do not necessarily share the same values, are often present in the theatre of operations long before the Allies, but have to act in synergy in order to avoid duplication and to share effort.

What is more – and this does not make things any easier – the media is everywhere. The Force’s image has become crucially important and determines the legitimacy of the operation, this legitimacy being conferred by the media according to the turn of events. For instance, it is becoming increasingly difficult for the military to justify the use of armed violence because



**For operations to be successful, the local population has become a crucial factor. Civil-military action can win sympathy and confidence**

it is so easy for journalists to challenge the logic of bombing infrastructure that may have to be rebuilt a few weeks later... In this respect, the example of Gaza in early 2009 is convincing.<sup>4</sup> Accordingly, military command is under pressure to reduce strikes to their simplest form and consequently find other means of action. While armed action still has a useful life ahead of it, for dealing with hotbeds of unrest or terrorism the world over (Afghanistan, Burma, Kashmir, North Korea, Iraq, Iran, Mali, Pakistan, Palestine etc.), annihilating a potential enemy is now no longer the final solution sought. Any action of coercion and peacekeeping must be organised and made coherent by using a global strategy that, as we have shown, is no longer military-centred.<sup>5</sup> This naturally leads us to examine the concept of “non-kinetic” operations. We shall now see what is involved.



**The image of the forces determines the legitimacy of their action. In this respect, the presence of journalists in the theatres of operation plays an important part in how the action is perceived**

### **What is Meant by “Non-Kinetic”?**

“Non-kinetic” is an American expression that is difficult to define because of its multiplicity of interpretations. Some consider that it refers to the use of non-destructive means, others think it means non-lethal weapons, and for others still it refers to means that do not use energy. *A priori*, non-kinetic operations are the opposite of operations of pure violence using speed combined with mass, and therefore kinetic energy  $E = \frac{1}{2} mV^2$ . However, air strikes, which are said to be “kinetic”, are sometimes intended to achieve effects that are not kinetic, which complicates matters.<sup>6</sup> We should note, therefore, that non-kinetic operations includes measures aimed at producing effects without the use of force; not renouncing force but using all fields opened up by information operations.

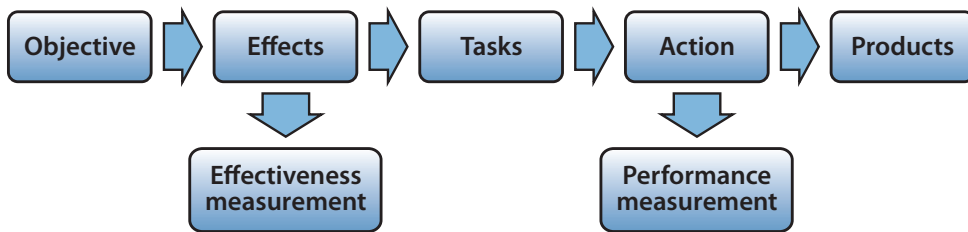
If we refer to recent American documentation, such operations derive from a precise assessment of the environment and culture of the country in which the operation takes place.<sup>7</sup> In France, it was when the Directorate of Military Intelligence was set up in 1992 that the military extended the field of useful intelligence to what was known as intelligence “of military value”, which went beyond simple knowledge of enemy forces and dealt with the environment of the theatre of operations. While the intelligence services look at enemy forces, those dealing with “non-kinetic” matters are interested in culture, habits, lifestyles, customs, traditions, charismatic personalities etc., in other words anything that matters to a country,<sup>8</sup> in so far as this knowledge is essential to the phase of stabilisation after action. Let us examine in detail the core activity of information operations.

### **Information Operations and the Strategy of Influence**

In global action, information operations are usually conceived at the political and military (or strategic) level, owing to their sensitive and delicate nature. They are then implemented

through a strategy of influence led and directed at an operational level. Targets fall into three categories: firstly, opinion multipliers in France and in coalition countries, which need to be nurtured in view of the importance of retaining the support of public opinion; secondly, host countries and regional partners where their support is essential; finally, the enemy, i.e. political and military forces, opinion multipliers and the general population. The idea is to influence ideas, plans of operation and action, and even to destroy, pervert, interrupt, hinder, deceive and exploit the enemy's decision-making process and his information systems.

Each strategy can be broken down into objectives that each include effects to be achieved through tasks to be defined and action to be taken. Their effectiveness and performance can be measured by using appropriate indicators.



**“Each strategy can be broken down into objectives that each include effects to be achieved through tasks to be defined and action to be taken.”**

The first goal of the “non-kinetic” cell of a JFACC is to implement the directives issued by superiors, with whom he is in constant contact, in order to maintain the coherence of the action of the Force with regard to information operations. The second is to be proactive. For tactical air command, non-kinetic operations can be divided into eight complementary functions, which are put into effect as circumstances demand and depending on the level required of the JFACC,<sup>9</sup> the capabilities available at the time and the priorities given: psychological operations, civil-military cooperation, electronic warfare, cyber warfare, protection of information, internal communication, communication with the media and *Key Leaders Engagement*. We shall now review these and specify the areas covered by each one.

## **Eight Basic Functions**

### **Psychological Operations or “Military Influence Operations”**

The range covered by psychological operations is very wide. Their objective is to influence minds, mislead opinion or provoke emotions and thereby change behaviour. For example, they use the collateral damage caused by a force to discredit its action or create discord within a coalition – although this type of effect is not the sole prerogative of psychological operations. Most frequently, these operations are controlled at the operational level – FHQ (*Force Headquarters*) or CJTF (*Combined Joint Task Force*) – which implements them either through a specially dedicated unit – such as the JPOTF (*Joint Psy Ops Task Force*) of the US forces – or by Special Forces. However, the head of the air component must have such

resources available, even at reduced levels, around deployed operating bases (DOBs) or forward operating bases (FOBs) so as to be able to contribute to the enduring good image of the air force perceived by the local population.

### Civil-Military Cooperation (CIMIC)

Civil-military operations are carried out for the benefit of the population or local State organisations, in parallel with the action of regional, international or non-governmental organisations present in the theatre. In a way, they institutionalise the types of intervention that were once the domain of NGOs alone; long considered by the military deployed on the ground to be disruptive, their action is nowadays fully recognised.



**CIMIC nowadays forms a fundamental part of any operation, demonstrating the importance of a global approach. As an example, this type of action allowed Kabul International Airport to be rebuilt.**

The term “civil-military cooperation” (CIMIC) is now preferred over what was for a long time known in French as “actions civilo-militaire” (ACM). Mastery of the “action” aspect is mostly the concern of the army, which occupies the land and is mostly concerned with winning over the sympathy of the local population that it rubs shoulders with and among whom it has to operate. The air force is more interested in concentrating on what is vital to it: airspace and airport facilities. Thus, the work of CIMIC operatives in the non-kinetic cell is to bring together the local civil aviation authorities in order to facilitate the entry of the air force into airspace that is foreign to them, and to deal with the deployment of aircraft and air personnel on existing airports or bases. This cooperation can continue through aid with the reconstruction of airport infrastructure and the training of air traffic controllers or ground staff, both specialities of the air force. Finally air CIMIC teams contribute to the economic development of villages located around FOBs and DOBs, so as to establish good relations with the local authorities and find out how neighbouring populations feel about the Force.

### Electronic Warfare

It might be thought that the “electronic warfare” function mentioned here is not a function naturally entrusted to a cell that deals more with influence than with electronic protection or prevention measures. This is partly true but we should not forget that troublemakers can use the media to inflame locals or incite them to reject the presence of the Force. For example,

radio can be used to broadcast messages of hatred, give mass disinformation and call for insurgency by the people; ground-or air-based offensive jamming means should therefore be available, to counter enemy propaganda. Even better, it may be useful to broadcast favourable messages on an appropriate frequency.<sup>10</sup> While ground-based electronic warfare facilities generally belong to ground units, aerial facilities can constitute a useful temporary means, sometimes in an emergency, for achieving the effect sought.

## Cyber Warfare

It is not unusual for attacks to be recorded on civilian or military information systems by highly ingenious hackers. Now, air operations command and control systems are totally computerised and therefore vulnerable. Guarding against this threat and achieving effective protection requires mastery of cyber-attack techniques and an ability to use them. This working method is known as a CNO, or *Counter Network Operation*,<sup>11</sup> examples of which are infiltrating an



**The pre-eminence of ICT in operations demonstrates the need to train service personnel so that they can respond to cyber attacks.**

enemy network, hacking into a malicious web site, flooding an e-mail account, placing logic bombs, or simply introducing computer viruses. These operating methods are nowadays used solely by the intelligence services, although they should be mastered by the military because of the pre-eminence of ICT<sup>12</sup> in operations nowadays. I would therefore suggest that there is a need for these capabilities to be developed within the JFACC, while remembering that the values defended by the Force always need to be respected.<sup>13</sup>

## Protection of Information (OPSEC)

It is as urgent to acquire means for cyber-defence as it is appropriate to conceal useful information, particularly intentions, operational plans, strategy adopted, effects to be produced, operational messaging etc. Protection of information is consequently a completely separate function combining respect for classified documents, screening of mailing lists, security of information systems, network security and personal measures for protecting information distribution means. This does not mean taking over the information system function from within the non-kinetic cell but rather keeping a watchful eye over what goes into the JFACC and what comes out.

## Internal Communication (*Info Troops*)

Keeping up morale among the air force personnel engaged in a theatre of operations is not a secondary function: far from it. Indeed, it is absolutely essential to keep the “troops” informed in order to counter any rumour or enemy propaganda circulating within the Force. This internal communication can take several forms: formal memos signed by the head of the

air component, addresses from the Force Commander himself, occasional simple messages relayed by the base commanders, individual booklets reminding the troops why they are there, COMJFACC blog, text messages, notices etc. For example, it is vital for all service personnel to be notified of the rules of engagement and instructions about behaviour towards the locals, and for them all to understand and apply these: collateral damage from an inaccurate air strike or something that undermines the self-esteem of the population near a base always sends a negative signal about the whole Force, which it is very difficult to put right.

### Media Communication (*Public Affairs*)

The media can be an ally one day and undermine the legitimacy of the Force the next. Consequently, their usefulness should not be underestimated, and neither should their nuisance value, when they relay inaccurate or incomplete information. Since transparency constitutes the first principle that should be adhered to where they are concerned, media information requires constant attention, which is handled within a permanent Press Centre managed by press officers.



**To legitimise an operation, the military needs to deal with the issues presented by communication.**

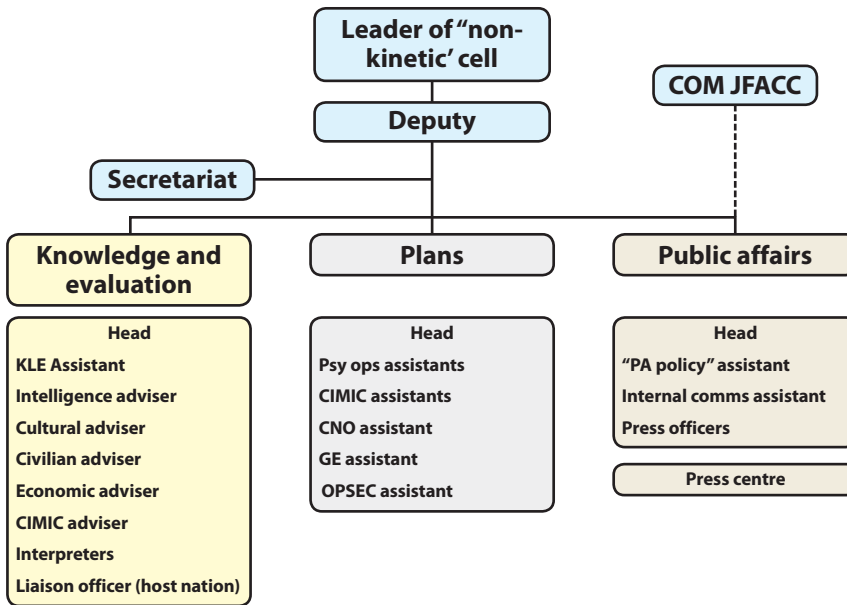
### *Knowledge Development for the Purpose of Key Leaders Engagement*

The concept of knowledge development has been worked on by NATO since August 2009 and multinational experiments (MNEs) have been conducted for France by the CICDE.<sup>14</sup> The role of this fully-fledged function – it could almost be described as a means of action – is to enter isolated data in the areas of politics, the military, economics, social issues, infrastructure and information (PMESII) into a structured database containing and linking all knowledge on organisations and key figures (*Key Leaders Engagement*) present in a theatre of operations. It includes the relationships between the players as well as power struggles. Any component commander must have an accurate picture of local structures and decision-makers so that he can adjust his own strategy of influence. For instance, the COMJFACC is concerned with five principal targets: the ministry of defence, particularly with regard to relations with the local air force chief of staff, the ministry of transport for relations with the head of local civil aviation, the ministry of the interior for relations with prefects and mayors of towns and villages near the planned bases, the local, regional, national and international media, and finally organisations with a presence in the theatre (international, governmental, non-governmental etc.).

### **The Organisation of a Non-Kinetic Cell**

The division of labour within a non-kinetic cell can be represented in a coherent organisation chart with three divisions working in close collaboration. The reader will find that a non-kinetic

cell contains a pool of high-level advisers with skills allowing them to deal with all cultural, economic, civilian and even legal matters. Their contributions make it possible to organise very useful war games to test the consequences of any planned action on the population, local decision-makers or the media. These *war-gaming* sessions serve to identify potential side effects, minimise risks, guide the scope of the action or even cancel it altogether. Because of the diversity of its members, their qualifications and ability to work in collaboration, the non-kinetic cell constitutes a real *think tank* available to the leader, an outstanding tool for brainstorming and assisting with decision-making. Finally, it is through the non-kinetic cell that knowledge about the environment is disseminated within the air forces, and this knowledge is vital for all involved in preparing, planning, leading and supporting air operations within a JFACC.



**“The division of labour within a non-kinetic cell can be represented in a coherent organisation chart with three divisions working in close collaboration”.**

Every year, the air force is training more personnel capable of serving in a non-kinetic cell. This function was created only recently and there is still some way to go in working out how the air force community should take ownership of the issues. The seriousness of the challenges is clear and is increasingly a concern of the CDAOA command, which inspected the cell during the most recent major exercises in which it participated. This is why the non-kinetic function is being taught as a subject in its own right at CASPIAN,<sup>15</sup> so that any trainee can be made aware of what is at stake in the global approach. It is necessary to have taken command on the ground or in a major exercise in order to understand its incomparable added value.

Colonel Bruno Minot, deputy chief of air staff at operational headquarters, CDAOA

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> These were the joint exercises *Noble Ardent* (October 2008) and *C2 Natex* (November-December 2009) in Solenzara, and the combined exercise *Austere Challenge 2010* with United States European Command (EUCOM) in April-May 2010 in Ramstein.

<sup>2</sup> Through its agency ECHO (*European Community Humanitarian Office*), the European Union is the largest donor of humanitarian aid in the world.

<sup>3</sup> At the end of August 2010 the Afghan President Karzai requested their withdrawal from Afghanistan.

<sup>4</sup> The Sharm-El-Sheikh Conference of donor countries for the reconstruction of Gaza took place less than two months after Israel's operation *Cast Lead* against Hamas in Gaza (27 December 2008 to 18 January 2009).

<sup>5</sup> In his closing speech at the joint defence college on 22 June 2010, the Chief of the Defence Staff, Admiral Edouard Guillaud quoted Lyautey – “*Someone who is purely a soldier is a bad soldier*” and told the graduates of the class of 2009, named after the general: “*So do not simply be military-centred service personnel*”.

<sup>6</sup> Let us take two examples. In February 1986, the American raid against Colonel Gaddafi's main residence in Tripoli, which killed his adoptive daughter and wounded two of his sons, led him to revise downwards his anti-American policy. Similarly, in spring 1999, the bombing of the family and friends of the Serb leader Slobodan Milosevic persuaded him to go back to the negotiating table. In the march towards an ideal world, humanity will go through a stage where non-kinetic operations alone will be sufficient and ultimately, we may hope, a zero level of violence will be achieved...

<sup>7</sup> Through the process of cultural evaluation or *Knowledge Assessment*.

<sup>8</sup> The peacemaking campaigns of Lyautey in Morocco and Galliéni in Madagascar demonstrated that the French armed services took an interest in this well before 1992.

<sup>9</sup> Level 1 + around 100 sorties/day; level 2 = 200 sorties/day and level 3 = up to 600 sorties/day.

<sup>10</sup> For this, the US air force has specially equipped *C130* aircraft called *Commando Solo*.

<sup>11</sup> In French, LID (*lutte informatique défensive*) and LIO (*lutte informatique offensive*).

<sup>12</sup> Information and communication technology.

<sup>13</sup> There is a legal void in this area, which the armed forces are reluctant to take over.

<sup>14</sup> Joint Forces Centre for Concept Development, Doctrine and Experimentation.

<sup>15</sup> The French analysis and simulation centre for air operations, established at the Lyon Mont-Verdun air base in September 2010.

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