

A Call for Standardization

Improving the Intelligence Community's No-Strike Target Support (U)

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The IC's performance during the 1999 Balkans conflict illustrates the complexity of handling data on sites that should remain off-limits to military attack.

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As the use of precision-guided weapons increases the feasibility of controlling damage in urban-area attacks, the Intelligence Community (IC) must ensure that the information it provides on potential targets keeps pace with the needs of attacking forces. NATO's accidental bombing of the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade during Operation ALLIED FORCE (Serbia 1999) revealed significant weaknesses in intelligence support. A subsequent White House report—*A National Security Strategy for a New Century*—specifically refer-

enced the mistaken bombing of the Embassy as evidence that more attention needs to be paid to targeting, especially when urban areas are involved.¹ (U)

This article draws on the IC's performance during the 1999 Balkans conflict to illustrate the complexity of handling data on sites that should remain off-limits to military attack. Targets are designated as “no-strike”

¹The White House, *A National Security Strategy for a New Century* (Washington DC: The White House, 1999), p. iv. (U)

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either because the facilities themselves are sensitive or because bomb impacts could cause collateral damage to sensitive sites nearby. Confusion over which sites should be protected and variations in IC products and procedures for dealing with no-strike data make a strong case for standardization to reduce the danger of costly mistakes during wartime.² (U//FOUO)

No Agreed-Upon Definitions (U)

During Operation ALLIED FORCE, intelligence analysts had no standard set of guidelines that they could draw on to produce the “no-strike data” that political and military leaders needed to make decisions on viable targets. Universal guides that address the issue of protected sites—such as the Geneva Conventions, the International Law of Armed Conflict, and the Hague Peace Conference Articles—were available, but not adapted for IC application.³ The Geneva Conventions comprise a long series of documents prepared in 1949 and the validity of the items listed there can be debated in today’s

² This article draws on research and interviews conducted for a project at the Joint Military Intelligence College in the spring of 2000. The author reviewed more than 100 documents from eight agencies and organizations, and interviewed 16 analysts and officials from five agencies. For reasons of privacy, interviewees are identified only by position. (U)

world. The International Law of Armed Conflict, a compendium of papers produced in various years, is a more manageable length, but does not provide many no-strike categories. The 1907 Hague Peace Conference Articles appear to provide the most extensive guidance that is still relevant today. These documents are not easy to find, however, despite today’s electronic media. Moreover, IC officials had not distilled information from them either to steer collection and database building in advance of the 1999 Balkans conflict or to supply practical guidance to analysts struggling to provide data on no-strike targets under the fast pace of war. (U//FOUO)

US military documents provided little help on this complex subject. Joint Publications (JPs) contain the official guidance for the US armed forces and supporting agencies engaged in joint operations and training. During Operation ALLIED FORCE and several years afterward, there were 106 primary JPs.⁴ Of these,

³ The Geneva Conventions and the Hague Articles attempt to set standards in the conduct of war, notably with regard to the humane treatment of persons and the proscription of weapons deemed cruel. The International Law of Armed Conflict addresses the issues of combatants vs. non-combatants and legitimate military targets vs. civilian property. (U)

⁴ Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Electronic Library*, “Joint Publications,” no date, internet website: <http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/jel/index.html>, accessed on 13 January 2000. (U)

58 held some relevance for no-strike targeting—five in the Intelligence Series 2-0 and 53 in the Operations Series 3-0. Only three, however, contained any significant information on the subject. The two publications that best addressed the no-strike issue were JP 2-0, *Doctrine for Intelligence Support to Joint Operations* (9 March 2000) and JP 3-09, *Doctrine for Joint Fire Support* (12 May 1998). (U)

Under the heading “Intelligence Cycle,” JP 2-0 stated that “Collection managers will, when necessary, nominate ‘no-strike’ targets.” It defined no-strike targets as “usually adversary entities whose intelligence value to future operations may exceed the benefit to be gained from attacking them.”⁵ The definition, however, did not state what comprised the no-strike targets, when it might be necessary to nominate no-strike targets, or where such guidance might be found. The JP was primarily concerned with civilian casualties and the possibility of eliminating key intelligence sources by damaging particular facilities.⁶ JP 2-0 referenced JP 3-09 for “further information on ‘no-strike’ targets.”⁷ JP 3-09 confined no-strike issues to the glossary where it echoed JP 2-0, by

⁵ JP 2-0, *Joint Doctrine for Intelligence Support to Operations* (Washington, DC: GPO, 5 May 1995), p. i. (U)

⁶ SECRET-level interview with senior officer, Joint Chiefs of Staff Targeting Staff, 3 April 2000. (U)

⁷ JP 2-0, II-5. (U)

defining no-strike targets as those targets, designated by a commander, whose “destruction would interfere with or unduly hamper projected friendly military operations or friendly relations with indigenous personnel or governments.”⁸ JP 3-09 referenced JP 1-02, which contained no more than the exact definition used in JP 3-09.⁹ (U//FOUO)

Other JPs made reference to “Rules of Engagement” and “Standard Rules of Engagement.” JP 3-07—*Joint Doctrine for Military Operations Other Than War* (16 June 1995)—referred both types of rules, stating that in military operations other than war “political considerations permeate all levels and the military may not be the primary player. As a result, these operations normally have more restrictive rules of engagement than in war.”¹⁰ In this JP, no attempt was made to depict or define those “rules” or reference any particular documents to clarify what types of restrictions may be standard. It did not provide guidance on no-strike facilities. (U//FOUO)

⁸ JP 3-09, *Doctrine for Joint Fire Support* (Washington, DC: GPO, 12 May 1998), GL-8. (U)

⁹ JP 1-02, *Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms, As Amended Through 10 June 1998* (Washington, DC: GPO, 23 March 1994), p. 303. (U)

¹⁰ JP 3-07, *Joint Doctrine for Military Operations Other Than War* (Washington, DC: GPO, 16 June 1995), 1-1. (U)

A review of 20 documents in the US Air Force’s Intelligence Series-14, and 99 documents in its Operations Series-10 showed that only one contained significant references to no-strike facilities and none served as a practical guide.¹¹ In Air Force Pamphlet 14-210—*United States Air Force Intelligence Targeting Guide* (1 February 1998)—Chapter 5 stated that a target’s geographic location could cause it not to be selected for strike. A target’s location in relation to cultural features was listed as an important consideration. If an attack on a target might have political repercussions because of possible damage to a nearby installation or population center, the target might not receive strike approval.¹² Under “Target Validation,” the Air Force pamphlet discussed no-fire lists, prohibited lists, protected lists, and collateral damage risks—these were the most extensive lists found in Air Force literature. Here, as in the international conventions and laws regarding no-strike parameters, the pamphlet stated that international law does not preclude targets from attack even when the possibility of collateral damage exists. However, the degree of military advantage gained by the attack must be considered in proportion to

¹¹ United States Air Force, Air Force Publications: Electronic Publications, no date, internet website: <http://www.af-pubs.hq.af.mil/pubs/publist.asp.html>, accessed on 6 April 2000. (U)

¹² US Air Force Pamphlet 14-210, Chapter 5, “Target Development.” (U)

the possible damage such an attack may cause.¹³ Chapter 4 of the Air Force pamphlet briefly discussed the types of guidance available and general objectives. It suggested that the International Law of Armed Conflict, Rules of Engagement, and command guidance be consulted. In Attachment 4, the pamphlet covered targeting and international law and focused on the immunity of civilians. It also referenced the Geneva Conventions and the Hague Peace Conference. The content remained at a high level of generality, however, and provided no concrete guidance for intelligence support on no-strike targeting. (U//FOUO)

No One in Charge (U)

With no solid doctrinal foundation, intelligence agencies took independent approaches to developing, handling, and presenting data on no-strike targets. Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) Director Vice Adm. Thomas R. Wilson has written that “no-strike lists...[were] an area not traditionally included in [DIA’s] database structures but one that has become increasingly important in an era of urban

¹³ US Air Force, Targeting Process. 8 October 1998, Intelink site: http://www.497ig.aia.ic.gov/target/process/objguid/obj_typ1.html, accessed on 31 March 2000. (U//FOUO)

warfare.”¹⁴ This statement could apply to the entire no-strike target support process in the IC—existing procedures were uncoordinated and ineffective in keeping pace with the increase in urban area conflicts. (U//FOUO)

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absence of an established approach, a senior analyst would train new recruits on the job. Training apparently consisted of the identification of certain cultural and geographic features of the area. Asked how analysts knew what features to designate as “no-strike,” an interviewee responded that they looked for places and facilities that might contain significant numbers of civilians. This method automatically excluded cemeteries and historical monuments, which are protected under the International Law of Armed Conflict, and additional potential targets covered by the Geneva Conventions, such as ambulances and drinking water facilities.¹⁸ (S)

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facilities. Beyond that, the J2T relied on the judgment of individual IC analysts to refine the categories and decide which targets to put on the no-strike list.²⁰ (S)

A Theater Commander-in-Chief (CINC) is authorized to provide “guidance on targets that may not be engaged under the law of war or applicable rules of engagement.”²¹ Normally, a CINC would pass guidance to the J2, who then would manage/monitor/disseminate targeting information to supporting IC agencies. During Operation ALLIED FORCE, however, the CINC’s staff communicated directly with the Joint Warfare Analysis Center by briefing the JWAC liaison officer at Theater Headquarters or by calling JWAC analysts.

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¹⁴ Thomas R. Wilson, Vice Admiral, USN, “From The Director: Focus On Attacking The Database Problem,” *Communiqué* 12, no. 2 (March/April 2000), p. 1. (U)

¹⁵ SECRET-level interview with production manager, National Imagery and Mapping Agency, 20 December 1999. (U)

¹⁶ For example, should schools for adult vocational or military training be off limits, or only schools for children? Should hotels containing diplomatic presence be treated as diplomatic facilities or lodging places? See:

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¹⁸ US Air Force, *Targeting Process*; Department of the Army, *Convention for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded and Sick in Armies in the Field*, 6 July 1906, Geneva, Intelink site: http://www2.army.mil/ace/snglsorc/osis/opensource/archive/2000/icrc_balkans/62791e65a370890ac125641e00369e45-OpenDocument.html, accessed on 31 March 2000. (U//FOUO)

¹⁹ SECRET-level interview with senior officer, Joint Chiefs of Staff Targeting Staff, 3 April 2000. (U)

The CIA’s involvement in military targeting during the Balkans conflict was extremely limited. It did not enter information into no-strike databases or review areas under consideration for placement on the no-strike list. Once a target was

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Facility Types Accepted For Basic No-Strike List (U)

Ambassador residences	Food stocks
Areas for gathering sick/wounded	Markets
Art facilities-museums	Media Facilities
Capital buildings (seat of Government)	Medical means of transport
Cemeteries	Nuclear electrical generation stations
Charitable institutions	Passenger terminals
Chemical production facilities	POW camps
City hall	Prisons
Civilian population centers	Property of educational institutions
Commercial areas--non-host nations	Refugee facilities
Dams, dikes	Religious facilities
Deputy Ambassador residences	Schools
Dissidents/political prisoners areas	Science facilities
Drinking water installations	Shopping malls
Embassies	Stadiums
Embassy staff residences	Undefended towns
Grain elevators	USAID
Historical monuments	USIA sites outside Embassy
Hospitals	(and)
Hotels	Specific Rules of Engagement, defined
Irrigation works	by CINC, Chief/JTF, President
Libraries	

UNCLASSIFIED**Facility Types Rejected For Basic No-Strike List (U)**

Agricultural areas	Police Stations
(facilities for processing crops)	Port facilities
Crops	Railroad facilities
Livestock	
Personal Property (personal/collective)	

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selected for bombing, the CIA, like other IC agencies, was charged with contributing any additional relevant information during the final target validation process. An interview with a CIA analyst who worked on the Balkans conflict did not yield evidence of standard operating procedures or no-strike designation criteria at that agency. The accidental bombing of the Chinese Embassy stemmed from the one-time-only selection and processing of a target by a CIA employee inexperienced with targeting procedures and an IC target validation process that failed to recognize that the building thought to be the Yugoslav Federal Supply Building was in fact an embassy. (S//NF)

Working Toward a No-Strike Definition (U)

The Balkans conflict pointed out the need for a common understanding of no-strike targeting. In the spring of 2000, the author worked with 21 experts from five organizations—NIMA, DIA, J2T, JWAC, and CIA—to create working standards for identifying no-strike targets. The Delphi method—a structured means of arriving at a group decision—was used. This approach can be effective when little scientific knowledge or few facts surround an issue.²² The process began with the completion of a questionnaire about types of targets by the IC experts. An administrator next consolidated

the responses and then resent the questionnaire, modified to include new facility types suggested during the first round. Participants also were given the overall rating for each question, his/her original response to each question, and space to change answers, if desired. This process was repeated several times until the responses were stable. At the end, the administrator determined the “group position” by averaging the responses.²³ (U//FOUO)

The interagency group came to agreement on 42 types of facilities that might be considered sensitive, and therefore appropriate for a potential no-strike list. They rejected seven as insufficiently sensitive to qualify. (See chart on page 5.) Senior leaders could use such a generic list to tailor a no-target set for the unique political and military objectives of a specific conflict. (U//FOUO)

A Parade of Products (U)

Three IC agencies—NIMA, DIA, and JWAC—prepared nine types of products related to no-strike

²² The Illinois Institute of Technology, “The Delphi Method: Definition and Historical Background,” no date, internet website: <http://www.it.edu/it/Delphi.html>, accessed on 2 August 2000. (U)

²³ *Web Dictionary of Cyberkinetics and Systems*, no date, internet website: http://www.pespmc1.vub.ac.be/ACS/Delphi_mtho.html, accessed on 2 August 2000. (U)

targeting in Serbia and Kosovo in 1999. (U)

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²⁴ SECRET-level interview with production manager, National Imagery and Mapping Agency, 20 December 1999. (U)

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Standardizing Presentation Guidelines (U)

The nine IC products presented no-strike data in different ways, increasing the possibility of confusion that could have led to military errors. Inconsistencies in format also risked undermining customers' faith in the quality of intelligence support, of particular concern as the demand for data on no-strike targets grows in tandem with advances in precision bombing. To explore interagency inconsistencies, the same group of analysts, using the same

Delphi process, arrived at a consensus on 21 standards for the presentation of graphics and other IC documentation related to no-strike targeting. (U//FOUO)

Measuring the various types of no-strike products generated by the IC during the Balkans conflict against the 21 proposed standards illustrates the extent of the inconsistencies.²⁸ None of the eight main products earned a higher score than 63 percent compliance when judged by the newly suggested standards—the average of the individual scores was 54 percent.²⁹ The require-

ment that facility names be drawn from a common database rated a low 37 percent for compliance, primarily because only the DIA products relied on the MIBB. (U//FOUO)

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²⁸ The evaluation process consisted of reviewing samples of each product type until consistent patterns could be discerned, and then measuring those patterns against the new criteria. (U)

²⁹ JWAC's "biggsplats" were dropped from the analysis because only three of the 25 criteria ended up being relevant to that product. (U)

Proposed Presentation Guidelines

General Requirements for No-strike Products, Including Databases

1. Data should be as factual as possible but allow for levels of confidence. Analysts should not reject or attempt to justify any particular target based on their findings.
2. Databases should include "statements of significance" of a feature/target whenever appropriate.
3. In product titles, facility names should be in all capital letters, followed by a two-letter country code, Basic Encyclopedia (BE) number, geocoordinates, and relevant category codes.
4. Facility names should be drawn from a common database—the MIDB.
5. All associated names for the given facility, found in alternate databases or official documents, should be listed.
6. All associated BE numbers, identifying the same facility or complex, should be listed.
7. Intelligence cut-off dates should be included on the product.
8. Production dates should be included on the product.
9. If the precise location of a facility is unknown, this should be stated plainly.
10. The same facility name should be used throughout the product or series of products.
11. A radius of 1500 feet from the target should be used when developing no-strike data.
12. Data should be entered into databases or onto products even when there is not 100 percent eyes-on-ground verification or multiple cross-referenced sources.
13. Levels-of-confidence should be included on all products.
14. Geocoordinates should identify the center of the target.
15. Producer codes should be on all products.

Specific Requirements for Graphics

1. North arrows are to be displayed on all image and graphic products.
2. The scale of the imagery should be as large as possible.
3. Oblique imagery is preferred over a near vertical angle.
4. Imagery should be oriented to convey maximum understanding—north does not always have to be at the top of the image or product.
5. Area features should be outlined in black or white lines—whichever shows up best on the imagery.
6. Point features should be identified by a single leaderline from the facility name to the center of the facility.

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No product appeared to have used cross-verification for names and BE numbers.

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names: a native name, a name provided by NIMA, and the MIDB name. NIMA's spreadsheets and some of the CIGs, for example, gave only the native names for areas and places, whereas a search of the MIDB could have yielded an anglicized name as a second reference point. Failing to cross check and moving ahead on the assumption that only one name exists can lead to military mistakes. During Operation DESERT STORM in the Persian Gulf, for example, confusion over names resulted in troops being exposed to chemical agents at the Khamisiyah storage facility.³⁰ (S)

Like place names, the existence of multiple BE numbers is a common occurrence, and one that can lead to significant confusion if not cross checked and clearly marked. In some instances during Operation ALLIED FORCE, JWAC analysts requested an image of a specific location only to receive photos of different installations with the same BE number. The lack of clarity caused the analysts to delay support to military operations until the conflicting

³⁰ IC and military databases contained different names and data for the storage facility. The troops responsible for securing the site received information from a database that did not identify the presence of chemical rounds, leaving the individuals sent to destroy the munitions vulnerable. Persian Gulf War Illness Task Force, *Lessons Learned: Intelligence Support on Chemical and Biological Warfare During the Gulf War and on Veterans' Illness Issues*, December 1997, p. 11. (U)

information could be resolved.³¹ Even in cases where multiple databases do not yield different names or BE numbers, the fact that searches have been made should be noted on the products. (S)

More encouraging, the six IC graphic products were 100 percent in accordance with four of the six graphic-specific criteria established by the interagency group. Standard presentation approaches were already in use for depicting the scale and orientation of the imagery, the use of North arrows, and the designation of area and point features. For the two areas not in accordance, area features were outlined in black or white lines only 20 percent of the time, and a single leaderline from a facility name to the center of the point feature was used only 40 percent of the time. The methods of outlining area features varied among the products, from different colors to different line styles (solid, dashed, dotted). For point features, leaderlines did not always point to the center of the facility. Since the group of analysts agreed that the coordinates

given on a graphic should indicate the center of the area or facility, the leaderline should also point to the center of the target. Because these are matters of presentational style, IC analysts should be able to bring their graphics into line with the proposed standards with relatively little difficulty.

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Looking Ahead (U)

The benefits from standardization are clear. The IC needs to take corrective steps before further crises occur. The development of a basic no-strike target list could allow rapid tailoring by the Joint Task Force, the President, or other leaders when a new conflict looms. Although some of the no-strike work for Operation ALLIED FORCE was done prior to the initial bombings, national databases contained insufficient data and graphics to meet targeting needs.³² Interagency agreement on the contents of no-strike target databases would encourage proactive population of the files and trigger collection to fill data gaps before the information becomes

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Also see: Vernon Leob, "To See and Not Been Seen: Behind the Grids of the National Imagery and Mapping Agency [NIMA]-Two Overseas Incidents Popped Agency's Bubble of Invisibility," *The Washington Post*, 10 July 1999, Intelink site: <http://delphi.dia.ic.gov/admin/EARLY-BIRD/990712/19990712see.html>, accessed on 4 April 2000. (U)

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critical in wartime. Standardizing formats for no-strike products would reduce the potential for confusion that can undermine confidence in the IC, cause operational delays, and risk serious military errors. (U//FOUO)

By identifying weaknesses in the past, this article hopes to establish ground rules for the future. Despite the complexity of the topic, interagency groups at the working level have demonstrated that progress can be made toward a common understanding. The foundation exists

for IC leaders and analysts to integrate experiences from the current war on terrorism to enrich and refine definitions, procedures, and products to provide the best support possible to no-strike targeting in the future. (U//FOUO)