Optimizing the Maritime Fires Working Group to Integrate The Art and Science of Maritime Fires

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Joint Pub 3-60 states; "Fires are defined as the use of weapon systems to create a specific lethal or non-lethal effect on a target. All fires are normally synchronized and integrated to achieve synergistic results."

The Maritime Fires Working Group (MFWG) and Maritime Targeting Working Group (MTWG) should be the two Cross-Functional Teams (CFTs) within the Maritime Operations Center (MOC) battle rhythm charged with ensuring that maritime targets are both planned for and engaged in such a manner as to accomplish the commander’s desired effects. Although the membership of these working groups may be similar, the purpose, inputs, process used, and outputs are distinctly different. Whereas the MFWG should rely on the knowledge, experience, and creativity of its members to focus on the art of maritime fires by synchronizing lethal and non-lethal weapon systems to accomplish desired effects, the MTWG should focus on the science of maritime fires by utilizing well-defined, repetitive processes to develop standard inputs to the targeting process. This article advocates for the effective employment of a MFWG within the MOC, describes the difference between the MFWG and MTWG, and shows how they should fit within a battle rhythm to develop targets that are synchronized and integrated in order to accomplish the maritime commander’s operational objectives.
The role of the Maritime Fires Working Group is to provide a range of lethal and non-lethal options that can be employed and integrated to accomplish specific effects developed by the Operational Planning Team (OPT) during the planning process. Providing this range of options requires an understanding of how weapons systems can be integrated within resource and time constraints to best accomplish the desired effect (e.g. deter, degrade, disrupt, destroy, etc.). This art of maritime fires is often overlooked, in part because more MOC staff members have a familiarity with the tried and true science encapsulated in the joint targeting process. Conversely, but in a very related effort, it is the role of the Maritime Targeting Working Group to ensure that all targets required to achieve the OPT’s desired effects are integrated, prioritized, and articulated up the chain of command to properly inform a Joint Integrated Prioritized Target List (JIPTL). This is the science of maritime fires. MOCs must be proficient in both the art and the science of maritime fires in order to ensure the synergistic employment of lethal and non-lethal options in order to effectively accomplish operational objectives, not only for the CFMCC, but also across the joint force.

In general, the science of targeting in support of maritime fires is frequently exercised and well understood across Navy MOCs. On the other hand, because the art of maritime fires requires the successful integration of the OPT with lethal and non-lethal planners, and often involves overcoming inherent organizational stovepipes within the command, the art is of maritime fires less frequently demonstrated and typically harder to achieve during real world operations. However, on those occasions where MOCs have successfully demonstrated the capability and capacity to be proficient in the art of maritime fires, the result has been an effective conservation of combat power by ensuring that available lethal and non-lethal effects are optimally integrated into the maritime plan to achieve the commanders’ operational objectives.
The MTWG/MFWG/OPT framework provides the linkage necessary within the MOC to efficiently align lethal and non-lethal actions against specific targets in order to achieve desired effects in pursuit of operational objectives. To ensure this alignment, there must be a strong relationship between the OPT and MFWG (as indicated in the accompanying graphic) to ensure that the OPT properly articulates desired effects geared towards accomplishing operational objectives. These effects are the primary inputs to the MFWG. The MFWG must possess sufficient subject matter expertise to develop a full range of lethal and non-lethal options to achieve the OPT’s desired effects, which in turn should both comply with Commander’s guidance and align with Higher Headquarters (HHQ) messaging and intent. Lethal and non-lethal planners, the Staff Judge Advocate (SJA), Political Advisors (POLADs), and representatives from the Maritime Intelligence Operations Center are all critical members to ensure all “available” lethal and non-lethal weapon systems are considered. The integrated lethal and non-lethal options developed are fed back into the OPT and also to the Joint level to synchronize component level fires.

The integrated lethal and non-lethal options (outputs) produced by the MFWG also serve as the primary input to the MTWG. MTWG membership includes lethal and non-lethal targeters, N2 representation for intelligence and collection management priorities as well as SJA, FOPS and FuPlans. The output of the MTWG is a Maritime Target Nomination List (MTNL) and draft Maritime Integrated Priority Target List (MIPTL) that is aligned with the planning effort and approved at the Maritime Target Coordination Board (MTCB). Component level synchronization of targets is accomplished through the Joint Targeting Working Group (JTWG) and Joint Targeting Coordination Board (JTCB) processes. Of note, both the MFWG and MTWG memberships should include other component LNOs (if assigned) and may be tailored to address specific mission requirements.
Because the MFWG and MTWG have similar participants and because the MIPTL produced by the MTWG typically receives direct flag level attention at a scheduled battle rhythm event, there is sometimes a desire to “short change” the *art* of maritime fires in order to dedicate more time and effort to the *science* of maritime fires. Too often, this results in lethal and non-lethal effects that are not properly synchronized, or when executed accomplish effects that are not effectively aligned to the maritime plan. Effects not aligned to the plan may be accomplished and yet not have the overall desired impact on the adversary. In other words, maritime forces may be “doing things right” but not have the desire impact on the operational environment because they are not “doing the right things.” The MFWG/MTWG/OPT linkage helps ensure that limited lethal and non-lethal resources (in time and space) are optimally integrated to attack critical vulnerabilities related to the Enemy Center of Gravity (ECOG) and ultimately achieve the Commander’s desired effects. MOCs would be well advised to consider the advantages of including the MFWG into the MOC battle rhythm in order to ensure that both the *art* and *science* of maritime fires are fully integrated.

**Conclusion**

The proper execution of fires helps a command achieve economy of force by allocating the right resources to achieve a desired effect. Economy of force allows the Commander to minimize essential combat power allocated to secondary efforts in order to optimize Relative Combat Power in a time and place of their choosing. This is the principle of Mass; concentrating effects of combat power against an adversary at the most advantageous place and time. Combat power is a finite resource conserved through the proper and effective execution of lethal and non-lethal effects options. Advances in non-lethal capability have significantly increased the span of effects that can be accomplished while decreasing the risk to forces involved in execution. When effectively combined with lethal effects, non-lethal effects are a force multiplier to provide the Commander with options to achieve desired effects with economy of force. The *science* of targeting is well rehearsed and understood. The *art* of effectively developing combined lethal and non-lethal effects is harder, less well understood, and requires effective cross-directorate coordination and frequent rehearsal. In order to improve their ability execute synergistic fires, MOCs must effectively integrate both the *art* and *science* of maritime fires.

Some Reference material
There are a number of good references available for more information on maritime and joint fires. **Joint Fire Support** (JP 3-09) is in the final stages of revision but still a valuable read in its current (2010) version. **Joint Targeting** (JP 3-60) was updated in January 2013 and is a good reference to understand the joint targeting process. Maritime Dynamic Targeting (NTTP 3-60.2) and the Joint Staff (J7) focus paper Integration of lethal and non-lethal actions, 2nd edition are also great sources of information.

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