Assessment Lexicon: Guidance on Using the Term

The imprecise use of assessment leads to confusion, which can have consequences for campaigns and operations. The meanings in green are appropriate because their real-world use includes qualifying terms that lend specificity and prevent misunderstanding.

Avoid casual or colloquial uses

Instead of *assessment* or *assess*, use *analyze*, *characterize*, *identify*, *consider*, *observe*, *note*, etc.

Stop describing activities in category 3 (situational awareness, running estimates of context) as **assessment**

Refer to these activities as the *production of estimates*.

Never use **assessment** by itself

Always include one or more qualifying or specifying terms, ideally prior to *assessment*.

Recommended Usage

- *Progress assessment*: Requires at least one objective (e.g., goals, end states, mission objectives) and measures progress toward that objective. May include multiple operations, activities, or investments (OAIs). Note that a campaign assessment might aggregate multiple operations assessments, but both are a type of progress assessment. (Category 1)

- *Performance assessment* or *effectiveness assessment*: Subordinate to progress assessment. *Performance assessment* includes MOPs and captures the extent of implementation or execution of a program or OAI. *Effectiveness assessment* measures the contribution of an individual program or OAI toward meeting an objective. Includes MOEs and MOEIs. (Category 2)

- *Estimate*: Does not require an objective. Provides situational awareness about a context, environment, or audience. Different types of estimates are possible; always include qualifying terms. (Category 3)

1
Measuring progress toward an objective/goal/end state

Say what you mean:
Progress assessment

2
Measuring performance or effectiveness on specific tasks or of specific activities

Say what you mean:
Performance assessment or effectiveness assessment

3
Establishing or maintaining situational awareness or **analyzing** context/environment

Say what you mean:
Estimate, such as social media use estimate, estimate of sentiment, etc.

4
Determining the effectiveness of combat actions

Qualifying language avoids confusion:
Combat assessment, battle damage assessment, etc.

4 is a subset of 2

5
Examining the presence or extent of a specific factor of interest

Qualifying language avoids confusion:
Feasibility assessment, threat assessment, risk assessment, etc.

6
As a synonym for *analyzing*, *characterizing*, *identifying*, *considering*, *observing*, etc.

Say what you mean:
Any of the above, but not *assessment*