



Doctrine Update on Joint Freedom of Action Enabled by Air Superiority

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The invasion of Normandy on 6 June 1944 was a classic example of *air superiority as essential to ensuring freedom of action and mission success*. The invasion was one of the most complex, daring and effective operations conducted by combined forces in the history of warfare. The daylight bombing of Germany was a critical enabler for the invasion. The aerial offensive compelled the German fighter force to redeploy to Germany where it was crippled in the battle for air superiority over Europe. Then, the enemy was denied critical French airfields and unable to effectively attack the Allied landing. The air superiority fight *far away from Normandy*, not the massive air presence over the beaches, enabled the freedom of action needed for the invasion's success. Today, freedom of action is one of ten joint common operating precepts foundational to successful joint warfare.

- A successful joint force maintains its freedom of action throughout an operation while seeking to deny it to an enemy. JFCs “must consider freedom of action from the outset of operational design and must be alert to indicators during operations if freedom of action is in jeopardy.” (JP 3-0, II-9)
 - Freedom of action is ensured when joint forces protect their lines of operation, which may extend across and beyond the JOA. (JP 3-0, II-9)
 - Freedom of action created by air superiority is not limited to operations in the air domain. Air superiority enables freedom of action in all domains.
- The need for freedom of action underscores the necessity for Airmen to advocate for air superiority—“that degree of dominance in the air battle by one force that permits the conduct of its operations *at a given time and place without prohibitive interference* from air and missile threats.” (JP 1-02, 13).
- The freedom of action granted to coalition forces in Afghanistan and Iraq has reinforced the mandate for air superiority.
 - Be they SOF forces, Provincial Reconstruction Teams, airborne ISR platforms, or B-1s conducting on-call close air support, each has enjoyed freedom of action, in part, because of air superiority.
 - As one Army general officer with extensive command experience since 9/11 recently stated to General Welsh, “I worry about everything. But, not once in my career have I ever worried about anything ‘up there.’” ([CSAF speech to AFA Air & Space Conference](#))
- The apparent ease with which U.S. forces established air superiority in the past two decades must not obscure the need to retain the capability to gain and maintain air superiority in future conflicts.
- **The Air Force recognizes that obtaining joint freedom of action has expanded beyond air superiority to include space and cyberspace superiority.** “Air, space, and cyberspace superiority are the essential first ingredients in any successful military operation.” (AFDD 1, 17)

The goal today and tomorrow is the same as it was in July 1944; providing freedom of action for joint forces conducting operations and ensuring mission success. For more information e-mail: LeMayCtr.weworkflow@maxwell.af.mil or call DSN 493-9575.

