CURTIS E. LEMAY CENTER
FOR DOCTRINE DEVELOPMENT AND EDUCATION

ANNEX 3-01 COUNTERAIR OPERATIONS

INTRODUCTION TO COUNTERAIR OPERATIONS

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The US Air Force flies, fights, and wins in the domains of air, space, and cyberspace. Control of the air provides the joint force with freedom of action while reducing vulnerability to enemy detection, attack, and other effects. Joint doctrine provides broad guidance for countering air and missile threats (see Joint Publication 3-01, Countering Air and Missile Threats), but does not describe the full spectrum of control of the air, as this publication does. The Air Force brings specific capabilities to a joint force to achieve various levels of control of the air by operating in the air domain. Clearly defined domains help identify the conditions and capabilities under which systems and personnel conduct operations, but do not mandate or imply command relationships. The air domain is the area, beginning at the Earth's surface, where the atmosphere has a major effect on the movement, maneuver, and employment of joint forces.

Control of the air is normally one of the first priorities of the joint force. This is especially so whenever the enemy is capable of threatening friendly forces from the air or inhibiting a joint force commander's (JFC's) ability to conduct operations. Counterair is a mission that integrates offensive and defensive operations to attain and maintain a desired degree of control of the air. Counterair missions are designed to destroy or negate enemy aircraft and missiles, both before and after launch. Counterair helps ensure freedom to maneuver, freedom to attack, and freedom from attack.

Counterair is directed at enemy forces and other target sets that directly (e.g., aircraft, surface-to-air missiles, ballistic missiles) or indirectly (e.g., airfields, fuel, command and control facilities, network links) challenge control of the air. Airmen integrate capabilities from all components to conduct intensive and continuous counterair operations aimed at gaining varying degrees of control of the air at the time and place of their choosing.