



STEADY-STATE DESIGN: SHAPING THE OPERATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

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Operational design for the steady state has few differences from operational design for crisis situations. The commander remains the central figure in the entire effort, applying military judgment and experience throughout the process. Commanders should look to steady-state planners to assist in developing the steady-state operational approach. For the commander, Air Force forces (COMAFFOR), steady-state operational design is significantly influenced by the combatant commander, who has likely conducted his or her own operational design effort as part of campaign plan development.

As in any design effort, the commander should define success in the steady state (ends) and allocate forces and resources (means) to achieve the desired ends. The operational approach provides the ways to link steady-state ends and means.

STEADY-STATE DESIGN OBJECTIVES

There are five objectives typically associated with the steady state. These provide a starting point for development of a specific operational approach for the commander and situation.

The first objective of steady-state design and planning, and typically the Air Force's highest priority, is to be **ready to respond immediately and appropriately to crisis situations**. The emphasis here is on force readiness. As an institutional responsibility, force readiness generally falls outside the scope of operational doctrine. Crisis situations are normally unexpected, meaning the readiness of the force at the start of the crisis is the readiness that may apply throughout. Major commands and Headquarters Air Force issue policy and guidance and commit resources to assist operational commanders with force readiness.

A second objective is the need to **plan, execute, and assess steady-state operations that contribute to the deterrence and prevention of conflict**. It is far preferable to deter or prevent conflict rather than to engage in conflict. The Air Force has many tools available to support this objective, from continuous bomber presence, to theater security packages, to shows of force, to multinational exercises, and more. Another significant deterrence and prevention tool is building partner capacity, which leads to the next steady-state objective.

Building partner capacity is another important objective, especially acknowledging that even the most committed approach to deterring and preventing conflict is not

always successful. The steady state should be used to develop international partners with the capability, capacity, and interoperability to respond in crisis with, alongside, or—better yet—instead of the US should deterrence fail. Capable partners can reduce the operational burden on the Air Force in both the short- and long-term.

Theater access is the fourth common objective during the steady state. The ideal time to secure or sustain contingency access is during the steady-state, providing the Air Force with air base access, overflight rights, and host nation and logistics-related agreements vital to the conduct of contingency operations. Strong relationships with partner nation air forces improve the likelihood for theater access exactly where and when Airmen might need it the most.

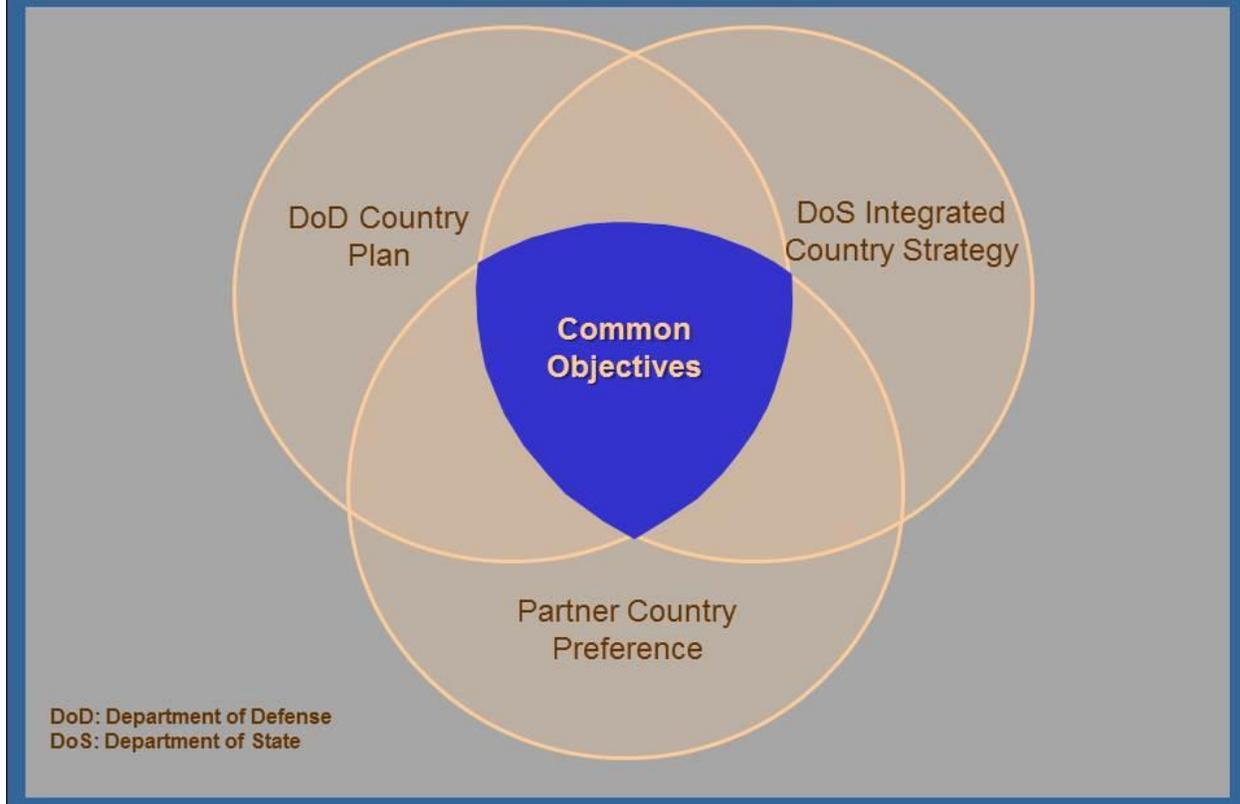
The final objective is vital to the long-term strength of the Air Force. It is the operational commander's responsibility to **participate in Air Force [force development](#) activities**. Force development ensures the required readiness, capabilities, and capacities to respond appropriately in the mid- to long-term. As with force readiness, major commands and Headquarters Air Force provide policy and guidance that influence how operational commanders (i.e., warfighters) participate in force development.

Security Cooperation Considerations

A basic understanding of security cooperation can also assist the commander in designing an operational approach for the steady state. Three security cooperation considerations are worth highlighting.

First, security cooperation always supports US government interests, and Airmen normally define Department of Defense (DOD) interests in steady-state operational plans such as country plans and campaign support plans. Commanders also ensure Department of State (DOS) buy-in for proposed security cooperation activities, as the DOS is the lead federal agency for diplomacy. The third party to security cooperation is the partner nation itself. The partner nation needs to see the benefit of a relationship or security cooperation event with the US. Therefore, the ideal security cooperation activity simultaneously supports the interests of DOD, DOS, and the partner nation. This ideal is often referred to as the security cooperation "sweet spot." See the figure, "Common Objectives," for a representation of this.

COMMON OBJECTIVES



Common Objectives

A second security cooperation consideration relates to the establishment of desired partner roles. When considering how partner nations contribute to campaign objectives, early design consideration should be applied to the desired security role for each partner. Commanders and strategists should determine what the US government and US Air Force intend for the partner. In other words, what military role should the partner play to support US interests, such as national sovereignty, regional stability, or global commerce? The establishment of desired roles then leads to an assessment of current capability and the development of specific objectives and activities related to building partner capacity or other security cooperation activities. Just as important, designers may also determine what the US does *not* want the partner to do. From an Airman's perspective, a partner nation can serve many important security roles; for example:

- ✦ Respond to crisis in place of the US Air Force.
- ✦ Respond to crisis alongside the US Air Force.
- ✦ Lead an air force coalition in responding to crisis.
- ✦ Defend its own borders from external air aggression.
- ✦ Host a US cooperative security location, forward operating base, or main operating base.
- ✦ Provide contingency access to US forces.

- ✦ Not allow hostile countries to base forces in their country.
- ✦ Be a supporting partner in regional security framework(s).
- ✦ Deny sanctuary to terrorists, insurgents, criminals, or other hostile transnational elements.
- ✦ Be a partner in developing aerospace technology.
- ✦ Provide intelligence and share information.
- ✦ Help deter a potential state aggressor.
- ✦ Host a regional air training center of excellence.

The designer should recognize these are roles the US desires the partner to play and may or may not reflect the current desires of the partner. Further design and relationship building efforts may be required to convince a partner to pursue these roles, and then help the partners succeed in developing and performing these roles.

Finally, security cooperation provides an opportunity to mitigate operational risk by strengthening partner capabilities in areas where the US Air Force has its own capability gaps and shortfalls. This consideration relates to the force development discussion above, suggesting operational commanders can support institutional responsibilities by focusing building partner capacity efforts into areas where the Air Force is accepting operational risk.
