



TYPES OF AIR INTERDICTION AND CLOSE AIR SUPPORT

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Counterland missions are either scheduled or on-call. Scheduled missions result from preplanned requests during the normal [air tasking cycle](#) and allow for detailed coordination between the tactical units involved. Preplanned requests may result in sorties in an on-call status (either airborne or ground alert) to cover periods of expected enemy action, respond to immediate requests, or attack emerging targets. Scheduled [air interdiction](#) (AI) missions use detailed intelligence to attack known or anticipated targets in an operational area to generate effects that achieve the [joint force commander's](#) (JFC) objectives. Scheduled [close air support](#) (CAS) missions are normally provided to a specific ground unit or operation.

With the appropriate commander's approval, scheduled AI or CAS missions can be re-tasked to provide CAS or attack [time-sensitive targets](#) via the dynamic execution process. Threats, aircrew qualifications, weapons load, and weapons fusing should be considered when re-tasking missions. Commanders and planners should carefully consider the balance between effectiveness and efficiency of keeping a portion of air assets in reserve when identifying airborne and ground alert missions. Immediate requests may result from situations that develop after the suspense for preplanned requests in a particular [air tasking order](#) (ATO) period. Dynamic execution provides a responsive use of on-call or dynamically re-tasked counterland missions to exploit enemy vulnerability that may be of limited duration. However, dynamic execution may reduce success because of reduced time for mission preparation and target study.

The following are types of counterland missions, followed by the corresponding Theater Battle Management Core Systems mission-type codes:

- ★ **AI/AI** is a mission scheduled to strike particular targets in response to JFC or component target nominations.
- ★ **GAI/GINT** is the AI term used to identify an on-call mission placed on ground alert to provide responsive AI throughout the theater in response to emerging targets.
- ★ **XAI/XINT** is the AI term used to identify an airborne alert AI mission tasked for on-call targets that may be re-tasked during execution for targets of opportunity (also referred to as armed reconnaissance).

- ✦ **SCAR/SCAR** ([Strike Coordination and Reconnaissance](#)) missions use aircraft to detect targets for dedicated AI missions in a specified geographic zone. The area may be defined by a box or grid where worthwhile potential targets are known or suspected, or where mobile enemy ground units have relocated because of ground fighting. For more information on SCAR, see Air Force Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures (TTP) 3-2.72, [Multi-Service TTP for Strike Coordination and Reconnaissance](#).
- ✦ **CAS/CAS** is a mission scheduled to provide air support to preplanned CAS requests.
- ✦ **GCAS/GCAS** is the CAS term used to identify an on-call mission placed on ground alert status to provide responsive air support to ground forces that encounter substantial enemy resistance. CAS assets located close to the supported ground forces normally provide faster response times. GCAS missions may be changed to XCAS as the situation dictates. See [‘Pull CAS’ discussion](#).
- ✦ **XCAS/XCAS** is the CAS term used to identify an on-call mission on airborne alert status in the vicinity of ground forces that expect to encounter enemy resistance. XCAS sorties typically remain in established holding patterns to provide responsive air support while waiting on a tasking from any ground unit that needs CAS. If no tasking evolves during the vulnerability period, XCAS missions may shift to an AI role if other targets exist. See [‘Push CAS’ discussion](#).

Command Relationships and Mission Types

The TBMCS uses “mission type” descriptors for missions ranging from direct support of ground forces, to the independent application of airpower supporting JFC objectives in the absence of ground forces. Descriptors and their prefixes are not linked to command relationships. An XINT mission using special operations forces (SOF) as a sensor could quickly devolve into a CAS mission if the SOF unit becomes compromised. In this case, airpower supported by SOF becomes SOF supported by airpower, and the TBMCS mission type planned is irrelevant.

NOTE: When “X” prefix missions are scheduled with the objective of providing flexible or continuous airborne presence, the effort constitutes a persistent air mission. XINT missions are designed to provide persistent reconnaissance or persistent attack, on-call airpower where targeting is expected to be highly dynamic or unpredictable. High-endurance unmanned aircraft have inherent advantages when executing this approach. However, building persistence into ATO assigned missions is not bound to a specific aircraft type. Planning for a persistent combination of surveillance, kinetic, and non-kinetic actions is the underlying goal of any ATO. Dominance in the air translates into

key effects in the land domain and provides integration points for cross-domain access. Further, the ability to continuously create effects at a position or defined area for long durations can enable cross-domain capabilities.

Some theaters of operation may use nondoctrinal mission taskings such as “armed overwatch.” These are specific applications of CAS or AI and should not be confused as a new counterland mission category. During [counterinsurgency](#) (COIN) operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, ground commanders relied heavily on aircraft conducting “armed overwatch” missions to provide full motion video in support of the ground commander’s scheme of maneuver. Armed overwatch provided critical situational awareness and when necessary, immediate CAS in the dynamic COIN environment. If the situation requires the “armed” portion of the mission, including shows of force, it should be considered CAS in support of the affected ground force and use CAS procedures as outlined in Joint Publication 3-09.3, [Close Air Support](#). Armed overwatch should not be considered a new or independent counterland mission area distinct from CAS; however, commanders may develop specific procedures in addition to CAS procedures if required for the “overwatch” portion of mission.

Other examples of unique counterland missions include the generic term “attack” for missions that do not clearly meet AI definitions, and [strategic attack](#) for missions that fall under a different operational function than counterland.
