DERIVATIVE MISSIONS ASSOCIATED WITH COUNTERLAND

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Derivative mission types are frequently tasked to complement and support counterland operations. The following discussion briefly describes common missions associated with the effective accomplishment of close air support (CAS) and air interdiction (AI).

Forward Air Controller (Airborne) (FAC[A]). FAC(A) missions provide terminal attack control (TAC) for CAS aircraft operating in close proximity to friendly ground forces. Due to the risk of friendly fire, FAC(A)s are specifically trained aviation officers qualified to provide delivery clearance to CAS aircraft. The FAC(A) is the only person cleared to perform such control from the air and can be especially useful in controlling CAS against targets that are beyond the visual range of friendly ground forces.

Tactical Air Coordinator (Airborne) (TAC[A]). TAC(A) missions provides communications relay between the tactical air control party (TACP) and attack aircraft, as well as other agencies of the theater air control system, in the absence of the Joint Surveillance Target Attack Radar System (JSTARS) or a FAC(A). Air Force two-aircraft FAC(A) flights, especially in higher threat environments, may divide responsibilities so one aircraft fills the normal FAC(A) role while the second becomes a TAC(A). The TAC(A) expedites CAS aircraft-to-joint terminal attack controller handoff during “heavy traffic” CAS.

Strike Coordination and Reconnaissance (SCAR). SCAR 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 to exist, or where mobile enemy ground units have relocated because of ground fighting.

SCAR missions are normally part of the command and control (C2) interface to coordinate multiple flights, detect and strike targets, neutralize enemy air defenses, and provide battle damage assessment (BDA). SCAR aircrew perform a similar function for AI missions that FAC(A) provide for CAS missions. Typical tasks include cycling multiple attacking flights through the target area and providing prioritized targeting guidance to maximize the effect of each sortie. Aircrew on most fighters and some C2 platforms, such as the JSTARS, are trained to coordinate SCAR missions. Platforms like remotely piloted aircraft can perform specific SCAR tasks such as locating,

verifying, and cross-cueing other assets to positively identify targets and pass target updates. These platforms may also be able to engage targets on their own, buddy lase for manned aircraft, and provide BDA for the same mission. Optimally, the control and sequencing of aircraft is best performed by an Airborne Warning and Control System (AWACS) or a control and reporting center (CRC).

Even though some SCAR responsibilities are similar to those of a FAC(A), SCAR aircrew do not have the authority to conduct terminal attack control of CAS. FAC(A)s undergo specialized training to effectively coordinate and integrate air-ground forces to conduct TAC safely during CAS—a SCAR aircrew does not have terminal attack control authority. A FAC(A)-qualified pilot can conduct SCAR, but a SCAR pilot without FAC(A) qualification cannot conduct FAC(A) duties. Planners and commanders should understand this important nuance when tasking airborne alert AI or armed reconnaissance missions, or diverting airborne aircraft to an immediate CAS request, since the AI aircrew may not be CAS qualified. For more information on SCAR see Air Force Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures (TTP) 3-2.72, *Multi-Service TTP for Strike Coordination and Reconnaissance*.
