



CLOSE AIR SUPPORT EFFECTS

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When it is necessary to provide troops in contact with supporting fires, [close air support](#) (CAS) can devastate enemy forces while spearheading offensive operations or covering retrograde operations. CAS can also be used for harassment, suppression, and neutralization. However, because those effects are typically assigned to surface [fire support](#) assets, such use may represent a less efficient use of limited CAS missions. Ground commanders should use their organic firepower when better suited for the task before calling in requests for CAS. However, a ground commander's organic firepower—particularly longer-range systems—may not always be the most appropriate fire support asset. Thus, when planned and integrated well, CAS provides desired effects that can be exploited by the commander responsible for the scheme of maneuver. Ultimately, each of the different CAS applications should be weighed against other, potentially more effective, uses for CAS-capable assets such as [air interdiction](#) or even [strategic attack](#). CAS generates the following benefits:

- ✦ **Facilitate Ground Action.** CAS enhances opportunities for ground commanders to seize the initiative through offensive action. CAS can facilitate the offensive by providing the capability to deliver a wide range of weapons, massed or distributed as necessary, and by creating opportunities to break through enemy lines, protecting the flanks of a penetration, or preventing the countermovement of enemy ground forces. Defensive requirements to blunt an enemy offensive may also dictate the need for close support. CAS can protect the maneuver and retrograde movement of ground forces, protect rear area movements, or create avenues of escape. CAS aircraft may also be used to provide escort and suppressive supporting firepower for air mobile and airborne forces, and to conduct surveillance and security for landing forces or patrol and probing operations.
- ✦ **Induce Shock, Disruption, and Disorder.** CAS should be massed to apply concentrated firepower where it is most needed by the ground commander. When massed, CAS has immediate physical and psychological effects on enemy capabilities. Since available assets are usually limited, CAS is applied against targets of immediate concern to ground forces when those forces cannot produce the desired [effect](#) with organic weapons alone, when ground forces are committed without heavy organic weapons support, or when the disposition of targets prevents successful attack by surface firepower. When used against enemy targets that are

beyond troops-in-contact range, CAS often provides support that is more effective to the ground force due to the decreased risk of friendly fire and the reduced interference of CAS with organic surface fires. The task of CAS is to provide selective and discriminating firepower, when and where needed, in support of ground forces.

★ **Support Stability Operations.** [Stability operations](#) commonly occur during a theater campaign where operations are transitioning from large-scale combat to stabilization and enabling of civil authority, but they can occur at any time, even when large-scale combat operations are still being conducted in other areas of operations (AOs) or other parts of the [joint operations area](#). Nonetheless, stability operations tend to be determined by AOs rather than traditional [fire support coordination measures](#) such as fire support coordination lines and coordinated fire lines. Ground forces conducting stability and [counterinsurgency](#) operations frequently assign the entire AO to subordinate ground echelons in an attempt to operate in a more distributive manner. During stability operations, concerns about collateral damage and civilian casualties create more stringent [joint fires rules of engagement](#) (ROE) and clearance requirements. Consequently, counterland operations are often limited to CAS procedures because the ROE dictate that the supported ground commander clear all fires in his AO.

★★ CAS in support of stability operations should be responsive to immediate requests over potentially large AOs. Typically, this diverges from the concept of massing CAS at a specific point, as the more likely scenario is a simultaneous presentation of small targets over a widely dispersed area. Given that CAS missions during stability operations are often supporting small units that are lightly armed, timely response becomes even more critical. By default, in these situations, CAS may be the only method of nonorganic fire support available to the ground commander to counter enemy forces they are engaging. In addition to friendly fire prevention considerations, minimization of civilian casualties also drives more restrictive ROE during these missions. Therefore, the number of weapons expenditures tends to be lower than it would be during large-scale combat operations and more restrictions are placed on weapon types.

★★ Finally, CAS support during stability operations can be complicated by multiple supported commanders within the same AO. Although a conventional ground unit may clearly be defined as an AO owner and responsible for all fires within the AO, other units such as other government agencies, military reconstruction teams, or logistics forces can and will request CAS for either troops in contact or to service high-value targets. Even though the owning ground commander is responsible for establishing priority, effects, and timing of all fires within an AO, this relationship may not always be as clear cut with multiple commanders in the same AO. CAS aircrew may find themselves competing for airspace with other assets in support of the same ground AO. [Theater air control system](#) elements such as the air support operations center, air liaison officers, [control and reporting center](#), and the [Airborne Warning and Control System](#), use the

[air operations directive](#) to clarify priorities and supported or supporting command relationships during stability operations to preclude CAS conflicts.
