



TYPES OF CLOSE AIR SUPPORT REQUESTS AND MISSIONS

Last Updated: 21 October 2020

CLOSE AIR SUPPORT REQUESTS

Preplanned Requests for CAS. Preplanned requests for CAS are initiated when the Department of Defense (DD) Form 1972, *Joint Tactical Air Strike Request*, are sent to the [air operations center](#) (AOC) and result in a scheduled mission in the air tasking order (ATO). These missions are scheduled on the ATO for a particular target/area, [time on target](#), and a weapons load specifically tailored to match the desired effects specified in the DD Form 1972, which normally coincides with the anticipated time when CAS will be needed most by the ground component. Preplanned requests for CAS result in one of two types of mission: scheduled or on-call (discussed below).

Immediate Requests for CAS. Immediate requests for CAS are those requests that were not made early enough during planning cycles to result in a scheduled ATO mission. Immediate requests may result from unanticipated or unplanned needs on the battlefield, often of an emergency nature, that require diverting, rescheduling, or dynamically re-tasking aircraft from other missions. Without the benefit of thorough preplanning, immediate requests may increase the risk of friendly fire or excessive collateral damage. Immediate requests can be filled with ground or airborne alert CAS, if available, or by diverting aircraft from preplanned CAS (or even [air interdiction](#)) missions that are of lower priority.

CAS MISSIONS

Scheduled CAS. From a planner's perspective the preferred use of a CAS asset is to have it preplanned and briefed in order to provide participants an opportunity to walk through the operation, achieve familiarity with terrain, airspace restrictions and procedures, and to identify shortfalls. Scheduled missions normally have a specific contact point at a specific time to expect handoff to a [joint terminal attack controller](#) (JTAC) or a [forward air controller \(airborne\)](#) (FAC[A]). Scheduled CAS missions are the most likely to have good intelligence on the expected type of target, resulting in a better munitions-to-target match. Although joint doctrine states that a specific target must be identified when requesting scheduled CAS, the reality of dynamic operational environments makes identifying a CAS-eligible target days in advance very difficult.

On-call CAS involves putting the aircraft on ground-based or airborne alert (often listed as GCAS [ground-based alert] or XCAS [airborne alert] in the ATO) during a preplanned period when the need for CAS is likely, but not guaranteed. During major operations when there is competition for counterland resources, on-call CAS can result in a less than optimum use of resources. Because these CAS assets may or may not actually employ against the enemy, it is important that on-call CAS assets have a backup target or a plan to transition to within the ground commander's area of operations.

In a situation in which the air component knows the joint force commander has placed CAS as a high priority in the air apportionment decision, but the land component has few requests for CAS, the AOC can use "push CAS" or "pull CAS" to meet both the JFC's intent, and the land component's un-forecasted need for CAS. Both methods provide on-call CAS when needed but differ in aircraft location when the need is recognized.

- ★ **Push CAS** represents a proactive method of CAS that differs from the request-driven pull CAS method. Push CAS provides the CAS already on station, in a contact point, awaiting tasking. While similar in concept to other preplanned CAS missions, push CAS differs because it is planned and often flown before any actual request for CAS is made by the supported ground component. The term "push"

The Origins of "Push CAS"

The successful DESERT STORM tactic of "push CAS" can trace its origins at least back to World War II. By 1944, the US Army Air Force and Great Britain's Royal Air Force in Italy had perfected a method of flowing fighters into the CAS area on a regular, prescheduled basis. This system, known as "cab rank" for its similarity to a line of taxicabs waiting for passengers, provided a constant flow of fighters overhead for the ground controllers, then known as "Rovers." If not needed for close air support, these missions pressed on to a preplanned backup target, typically a bridge or other interdiction target of known value to the enemy. The cab rank system was possible because of Allied air superiority and large numbers of counterland assets and provided the ground force with very responsive air support. Cab rank response time was as little as a few minutes, while traditional CAS missions that were only scheduled in response to specific requests by the ground force might not arrive for several hours.

refers to the fact that CAS missions are "pushed" forward to the [air support operations center](#) (ASOC), [direct air support center](#), FAC(A), or JTAC before the formal CAS request is made; those assets not needed for CAS should be pushed to preplanned backup targets so the sorties are not wasted. Push CAS works best in

an environment where many CAS targets are available, so the assets involved will likely have a lucrative target to attack. Although push CAS significantly cuts response times, the number of sorties required is often high and the advantages gained should be weighed against the other potential uses for these assets (such as interdicting known targets). Therefore, planners should regularly assess how much push CAS to use based on such factors as available assets, existing targets, and the ground scheme of maneuver.

- ✦ **Pull CAS** has the aircraft on ground alert, awaiting the need to be recognized before the aircraft launch. The term “pull” refers to the fact that CAS missions are “pulled” from ground alert, after the formal CAS request is made. Pull CAS works best in an environment where few CAS targets are available, so the assets involved will not need to fly until targets are found. Therefore, planners should regularly assess how much CAS is required based on such factors as available assets, existing targets, and the ground scheme of maneuver. For pull CAS to be most effective the ASOC should be delegated launch and divert authority by the AOC.

There are several factors to consider before diverting counterland aircraft for immediate CAS requests. First, the aircrew must be CAS qualified for all but emergency situations. Extensive knowledge and familiarity with specialized CAS procedures are required to destroy targets, minimize collateral damage and avoid friendly fire. Second, suitable mission materials such as required maps, code words, and communications gear should be available. Finally, appropriate ordnance—fusing and weapons effects are critical factors when attacking targets in close proximity to friendly forces, and especially so in urban environments or where avoiding collateral damage is necessary.
