



ASSESSMENT CONSIDERATIONS

Last Updated: 25 January 2021

Commanders should continually evaluate employment and intelligence assessments to ensure the capabilities used during missions create the intended effects supporting the joint force commander's (JFC's) objectives. The ambiguities and limitations resident within the space operations environment require frequent adjustment of operational planning considerations to ensure desired effects are achieved while avoiding specifically designated or unintended negative consequences. The [commander, Air Force forces](#) (COMAFFOR) or [combined force space component commander](#) (CFSCC) will evaluate the results of global counterspace operations and will coordinate with the applicable theater COMAFFORs and [joint force air component commanders](#) to evaluate the results of counterspace operations supporting theater objectives and theater actions supporting global counterspace operations.

Assessing the degree of control of space is challenging. The inherent characteristics of [airpower](#)—speed, range, and flexibility—apply to enemy counterspace threats as well, which makes assessment of enemy actions and intent more difficult. As previously stated, the military necessity for the desired level of control of space is now one of the highest priorities for the joint force, a necessary condition for success in all domains. All subsequent planning and assessment is based on this determination. A thorough understanding of the enemy system and its components should logically drive the development of friendly objectives, effects, and tasks. The key to effective assessment is to develop measures and indicators *at the same time* as the objectives, effects, and tasks they measure—not after the fact. Measures and indicators should either be directly observable or something that can be reliably inferred from other data.

Measuring effects in the counterspace fight may seem daunting, but the very purpose of counterspace operations provides some guidance: Counterspace operations are conducted to ensure freedom of access to the advantages gained from space capabilities to joint forces in all domains, freedom to attack, and freedom from attack. The effects associated with counterspace will necessarily be related to these three items. It is possible to measure, directly, the number of successful friendly and enemy attacks as well as the space capabilities affected by enemy counterspace activity. The desired effects will also be based on the level of control of space required. Regardless of which effects are desired, or how they are measured, one important point should be understood: task performance and effect performance should be measured (and reported) independently.

Measuring task and effect performance separately provides the clearest picture of progress towards achieving the objective. The expected outcome of these measures and indicators is

a rough alignment between task, effect, and objective performance. Since tasks were designed to create effects—and desired effects lead to the achievement of objectives—this makes sense. When the levels of performance in task, effect, and objective do *not* align, it may have a profound effect on future actions in the offensive counterspace (OCS) or defensive counterspace (DCS) effort.

For example, if a large number of enemy satellite communication (SATCOM) antennas are assessed as degraded due to damage (high task performance), but the enemy continues to conduct C2 of fielded forces via SATCOM (low effect performance), then the OCS plan needs to be examined. How does the enemy continue to communicate? Are they rapidly repairing the antennas? Have they deployed mobile transmitters? Perhaps SATCOM antennas are not a critical node of the enemy system after all—and the focus should shift from air strikes against the antennas to electronic warfare capabilities. These are questions that never would have revealed themselves if task performance was the sole determinant of success in the objective.

Even more revealing is a high level of effect performance (objective met), accompanied by low task performance (few bombs on target). To use the example above, suppose that only a few enemy SATCOM antennas have been targeted, but the enemy ceases the use of SATCOM for C2. The enemy is clearly capable of communicating, but for some reason (as yet unknown) does not. Future actions, in this case, will depend on the amount of risk the JFC is willing to accept. If the acceptable level of risk is low—enemy antennas will continue to be attacked until the enemy's potential SATCOM capability is very low. In effect, the task performance will “catch up” to the effect performance. Conversely, if the JFC is willing to accept a higher risk, efforts may shift away from SATCOM antennas to other components of the enemy communications infrastructure—or to different objectives entirely.

OCS and DCS performance may be measured separately, or they may be combined depending on the course of action selected. In many cases, desired effects are applicable to both DCS and OCS. For example: OCS efforts to degrade or destroy enemy space launch facilities will necessarily have a positive impact on the DCS effort if the enemy has direct ascent anti-satellite (ASAT) weapon capability, since fewer enemy ASATs will be available to launch. Conversely, successful enemy attacks on friendly space capabilities (due to unsuccessful DCS efforts) will have a negative impact on the ability to provide necessary space capabilities to friendly forces in all domains—potentially affecting both DCS and OCS.

Effective assessment is a key feature of the effects-based approach to operations, and if done correctly should generate as many questions as answers. Warfare is a clash between living, thinking systems, which often react to one another in unexpected ways. By measuring friendly actions (tasks) and changes in the enemy system (effects) separately, critical review of actions, tasks, and effects becomes possible. The questions: why are my actions not producing results? Why is the enemy behaving in this manner? What changes should be made to the plan – and why? These are exactly the questions and answers the CFSCC needs to effectively prosecute counterspace missions.
