



EMPLOYMENT IN DIRECT SUPPORT OPERATIONS

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The Air Force can provide direct support at varying levels of conflict intensity to enhance or supplement security assistance activities and host aviation programs. To preserve [host nation](#) (HN) self-sufficiency and legitimacy, the Air Force should maintain a proper balance between [direct](#) and [indirect](#) forms of assistance. Such direct support initiatives as combat advising and assisting may be used concurrently with [security assistance](#) to prevent the transition to more destructive forms of warfare and higher levels of US involvement. At the same time, direct support initiatives should not undermine the HN's will or capacity to achieve an internal solution to the crisis.

HN airpower requirements may exceed the objectives and limitations of security assistance and joint-multinational exercises. Concurrently, a US combat role may be tactically inappropriate or politically infeasible as a [foreign internal defense](#) (FID) instrument. To satisfy some of these requirements at acceptable levels of commitment and risk, the Air Force can employ its resources in a variety of direct support roles that bridge the gap between indirect assistance and combat operations. Examples include intelligence sharing, logistics airlift, equipment loans, communications support, and other "stand-off" options.

Direct support (not including combat) does not eliminate all risks, but it offers a means of providing specialized assistance to a HN without directly exposing US personnel to hostile fire. Direct Air Force involvement in such activities as [humanitarian and civil assistance](#) and military civil action (MCA) requires the physical presence of Air Force personnel working in close contact with friendly elements. For some operations like intelligence collection and [military information support operations](#), it may be possible to conduct operations from outside the recipient country when there are political or operational constraints on the presence of Air Force assets on foreign installations. Clandestine or low-visibility techniques and procedures in politically sensitive or denied areas may also be required for combat operations. Commanders should consider the use of Air Force special operations forces to conduct these kinds of operations if required.

During multinational operations, commanders should anticipate differences in tactics, techniques, and procedures between US and HN forces. Commanders should consider

using Air Force advisory personnel to resolve these differences and make adjustments to fit the strengths and weaknesses of the multinational force. Commanders may also have to tailor their operating procedures to suit specific objectives, operational constraints, legal limitations and policies pertaining to the use of Air Force forces in the HN.

A central objective of combat operations is to protect vital resources and to buy time for the host government to stabilize its social, economic, and political institutions. The Air Force role is supportive only. It is not designed to capture the strategic initiative or to transfer strategic responsibilities from the host government to the United States. To preserve HN legitimacy and achieve a lasting, internal solution to the conflict, the host government must carry full responsibility for the strategic offensive. The Air Force FID effort should be designed to transfer air support tasks and responsibilities to the HN as soon as practical.
