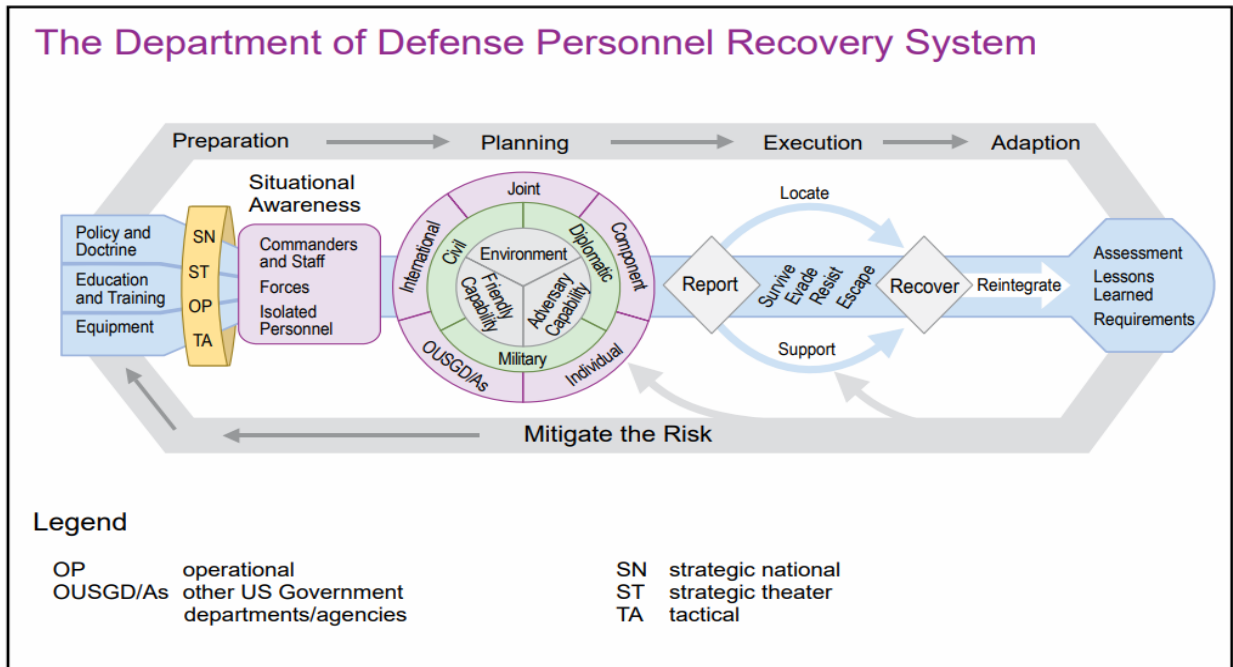


## PERSONNEL RECOVERY SYSTEM

Last Updated: 18 March 2020

The Department of Defense (DOD) personnel recovery (PR) system (see diagram below) ensures a complete and coordinated effort to recover US military, DOD civilians and contractor personnel, and other personnel directed by the President or Secretary of Defense (SecDef). Air Force capabilities, tactics, techniques, and procedures represent an integral part of the joint PR system. This system consists of the **preparation, planning, execution and adaptation functions**. Although the activities within these functions can happen consecutively, they generally occur concurrently or, at a minimum, they overlap in execution. There are three primary PR responsibilities: prevent, plan for, and coordinate/respond to isolating events. [Force protection](#) and focused PR planning, to include evasion plans of action (EPAs) during combat operations, development of EPAs, detailed area studies, and review of Department of State EPAs are essential during operations outside declared theaters of active armed conflict. Finally, the Air Force PR system, as well as the joint PR system, is centered on five essential tasks: report, locate, support, recover and reintegrate.



**Department of Defense Personnel Recovery System**

## PREPARATION

PR is, by nature, an event fraught with variables and complexities that are difficult to predict prior to their occurrence. It is also one that should be executed quickly to increase the likelihood of success. Historically, the successful recovery of an individual who has been on the ground behind enemy lines for longer than four hours falls below 20 percent. While PR events do not lend themselves to a great deal of prior planning, there is much that can be done long before an event is declared to shorten the decision and execution processes—this is preparation.

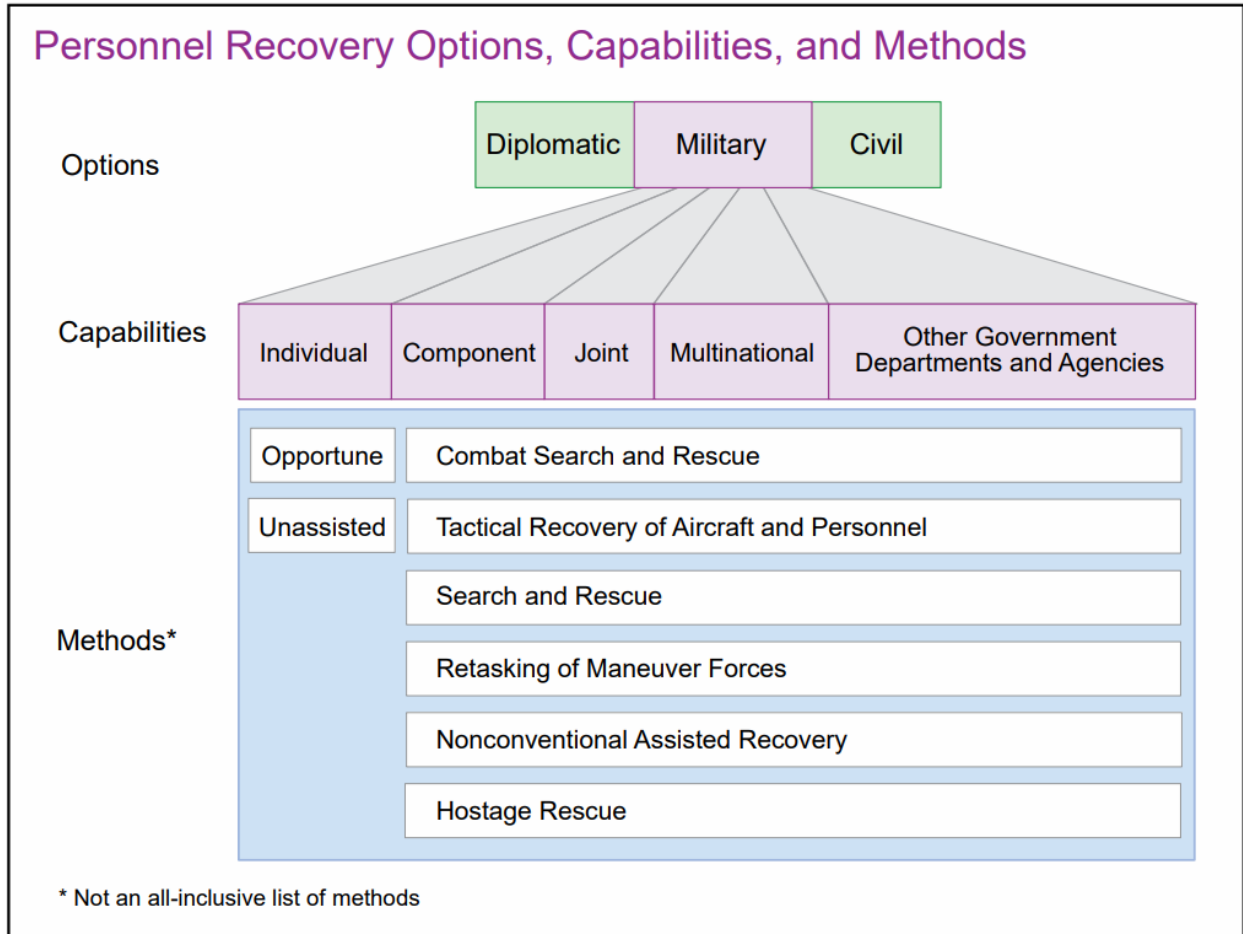
Preparation involves the development of policy, doctrine, equipment, education and training in a standardized fashion as seen through the [tactical, operational, theater strategic and national strategic](#) lenses. All of this is directed at commanders and staffs, forces that could participate in a PR event, to provide greater situational awareness that enhances their abilities to take expedient, decisive action, including the rescue of relief of isolated personnel (IP). This is the doctrinal foundation which should be built long before the first event occurs and be the foundational response for future events. It is flexible, but it prescribes terms, capabilities and response options so that when properly employed, a coordinated, planned mission can be conducted with minimal time expended between notification and execution. Preparation is an ongoing element of PR in both times of peace or conflict. Reading policy and doctrine documents is part of the preparation process, as is PR exercise participation, necessary training (i.e., Survival, Evasion, Resistance and Escape (SERE) and Code of Conduct training), and organizing, training and equipping dedicated PR forces (i.e., rescue squadrons) and others who may be called upon to participate in a PR mission. Proper preparation is crucial to rapidly providing an appropriate and tailored response.

## PLANNING

PR planning is part of contingency or crisis planning. Air Force planning is conducted using the joint planning process for air with specific outcomes based on commander's intent. It entails detailed PR mission analysis, course of action development, and wargaming based on the plan's mission, goals and tasks developed for the PR appendix (Appendix 5 to Annex C) of a [joint force commander's \(JFC's\) campaign plan](#)<sup>3</sup>, or the [joint air operations plan](#) (JAOP) at the component level. A completed PR mission analysis will be the foundation for the PR operational concept and be used in the development of the PR appendix of the basic plan. Planning options may be diplomatic, civil, or military. While there is little the military can do to prepare diplomatic and civil plans, PR planners may be called upon to support those two options. Overall, the bulk of military PR planning is focused on the execution of the military option.

---

<sup>3</sup> Common access card required.



**Personnel Recovery Options, Capabilities, and Methods**

**Personnel Recovery Capabilities**

**Individual.** The individual capability is exercised when IP return themselves to friendly control, either through unassisted evasion or through taking advantage of assistance from friendly or sympathetic persons. While IP are expected to survive, evade, resist, and escape or otherwise assist in their own recovery for as long as possible, this capability is not typically a planned event. It can, however, occur to enable other capabilities and occasionally results in a self-recovery.

**Component.** Component commanders are expected to plan for and execute PR in support of their own operations. This usually results in the development of Service-unique PR capabilities for the environments in which those components normally operate in (air, maritime, and land) and with the specific tools and equipment available to them. It makes sense that the Navy should be best at, and have the appropriate equipment to conduct, maritime PR, for example.

**Joint.** Although each component has unique capabilities, joint level planners look at all the component capabilities to develop an integrated plan for a [joint operations area](#) that provides broad PR coverage over a wider area.

**Multinational.** [Multinational partners](#) may not have the same capabilities as the US. However, incorporating them for permissive PR or a civil search and rescue capability in host nations is useful. Host nation law enforcement, intelligence, and security forces often have the best human intelligence in the area of responsibility that can be obtained through proper utilization of counterintelligence and force protection activities. This also frees up low density, high demand PR assets to focus on combat PR missions. Care should be taken when using multinational forces with security, communications, equipment interoperability, and both language and cultural barriers.

**Other Government Agencies.** Given the increased participation of non-state actors in warfare and the expanded use of other governmental agencies (OGAs) (such as the Drug Enforcement Agency and the Federal Bureau of Investigation) overseas, PR has become a greater concern for these agencies. Many of these OGAs will have developed some recovery capability of their own to varying degrees of robustness. These capabilities are available to the air component through the [joint personnel recovery center](#)<sup>4</sup> (JPRC) which has [direct liaison authorized](#) (DIRLAUTH) through the Department of State.

## General Planning Considerations

The specific information required for pre-mission planning and for execution or launch authority includes such items as: the location of IP, authentication, threat, weather, terrain assessment; evaluation of safe passage corridors; and air refueling capabilities. In order to improve mission planning effectiveness, it is optimal to co-locate all dedicated PR planning activities. Furthermore, direct communication with the AOC, the JPRC, [personnel recovery coordination cell](#) (PRCC), and wing operations centers is essential. This direct communication is most important when the battlefield conditions dictate the formation of a robust combat search and rescue task force (CSARTF). Additionally, the [air component commander](#) should consider the capabilities of the host nation, other Service/functional components, and multinational forces during all phases of PR mission planning. Accordingly, PR should be thoroughly integrated in contingency or crisis planning and the resulting JAOP. For more information on Appendix 5 (Personnel Recovery) to Annex C to the JAOP formatting, see Chief of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Manual 3130.03, [Planning and Execution Formats and Guidance](#).<sup>5</sup>

The dynamic nature of combat search and rescue (CSAR) creates the need to fully integrate PR considerations in the [master air attack plan](#) in order to ensure maximum flexibility and responsiveness for PR forces on the [air tasking order](#). PR should be coordinated throughout the AOC and with other component liaisons, to include: the Army's battlefield coordination detachment, the naval liaison element, the special operations liaison element, and the Marine liaison element. As part of the planning process, Air Force personnel conducting and supporting PRs should be thoroughly familiar with the [law of war](#) and applicable [rules of engagement](#)

---

<sup>4</sup> Common access card required.

<sup>5</sup> Common access card required.

(ROE). This is particularly important when addressing issues of the use of force during CSAR operations (to include self-defense considerations), as well as treatment and release of persons captured or detained. Law of war application during low-intensity operations may be complicated by organizational structures, responsibilities, and status of potential adversaries. Extensive law of war training and a thorough understanding of theater ROE and [special instructions](#) (SPINs) provide PR forces a proper foundation that enables sound judgment in ambiguous situations.

Another key concept that enables successful recovery operations, while properly adhering to law of war, is clear and consistent ROE. PR forces should attempt to influence the ROE development process as early as possible, in order to gain maximum flexibility in recovering IP.

**Personnel Recovery Coordination Cell.** As part of planning and preparing for executing PR in support of Air Force operations, the air component commander stands up a PRCC or a functional equivalent. The air component commander executes operational control over Air Force PR forces through the PRCC which should be embedded in the air operations center where they have the greatest situational awareness and the ability to provide a direct response with the appropriate resources. The PRCC is the focal point for all Air Force PR activities. JFCs may designate the air component commander as the supported commander for PR. In doing so the Air Force forces (AFFOR) PRCC chief will become the joint personnel recovery center (JPRC) director and the PRCC will become dual-hatted as the JPRC as well as the AFFOR PRCC. At this point, other components should provide joint level PR expertise to the JPRC to work their component's joint PR equities.

**[Joint Personnel Recovery Center](#)**<sup>6</sup>. When employed under a [joint task force](#), JFCs will stand up a JPRC within their own joint operations center. The JPRC coordinates PR resources between component PRCCs whose capabilities may be exceeded by a PR mission. Having DIRLAUTH between outside agencies (Department of State, national intelligence organizations, etc.), the JPRC is a valuable resource for additional resources and information that the component PRCCs may require to execute their mission. JPRCs are coordination nodes only. They do not exercise formal control over any resources (resources belong to the component commanders who executes that authority through the PRCCs).

**[Joint Personnel Recovery Agency](#)**<sup>7</sup>. The Joint Personnel Recovery Agency within the Joint Staff provides operational support teams and exercises support to assist [combatant commanders](#)' (CCDRs') planning and deployed / deploying forces executing PR to meet a commander's force protection requirement.

**Communications.** Communications should be concerted, rehearsed and redundant amongst all theater players to maximize accuracy, authority, notification, launch and recovery of PR mission.

---

<sup>6</sup> Common access card required.

<sup>7</sup> Common access card required.

**Intelligence.** Successful PR requires timely and accurate [intelligence](#) support. Intelligence support is always an integral part of PR. As such, intelligence specialists should be assigned to, and deploy with, PRCCs and operational rescue units.

**[Counterintelligence Support to Force Protection \(CISFP\)](#).** Using CISFP methodologies and leveraging host nation law enforcement and security relationships allow US forces to engage indigenous resources to gather information on IP and assist in the formulation of a [force protection](#) (FP) plan.

**Security.** Failure to implement an effective [operations security](#) (OPSEC) program could result in mission compromise and loss of personnel and resources.

**Information Operations.** [Information operations](#) (IO) serves to amplify the effects of traditional military operations. PR can influence IO planning in several ways. First, PR operations can influence the course of national and international politics by denying adversaries opportunities to exploit the intelligence and propaganda value of captured personnel. In addition, the presence of a robust and viable CSAR force, when combined with public affairs activities, increases morale, with a resultant increase in operational performance. Finally, PR contributes to IO by countering the adversary's deception and propaganda efforts.

For example, if enemy forces have already captured IP, they may try to deceive PR forces in order to lure them into an ambush. Even if IP have not been captured, the enemy may try to provide false data to PR forces and, at the same time, move additional air defense assets into the area in an attempt to ambush the recovery force.

While friendly force communications discipline and adherence to PR standard operating procedures may counter enemy deception operations, PR operations' success or failure can impact the JFC's IO significantly. PR planners should appreciate the influence of PR operations well beyond the actual recovery of the IP. Similarly, IO planners should keep in mind the intrinsic value of PR operations to IO. PR and IO planners should work together to maximize the influence of successful PR and minimize the impact of mission failure.

**Medical.** Due to the variety of injuries to IP, [medical](#) personnel should be integrated into planning, deployment, and support of PR. The PRCC is the focal point for PR coordination with military medical facilities in order to provide medical advice beyond the expertise of the recovery team.

**Space Requirements.** Air Force PR forces require timely, accurate, and current [space](#) products and support during all phases of PR, from initial planning through deployment and execution.

**Environmental Considerations.** Air Force PR forces require timely and accurate [weather support](#) during all phases of planning, deployment, employment, and

redeployment. This allows PR forces to use weather conditions to their advantage. Temperature, barometric pressure, precipitation, humidity, ground and low-level flight visibility, predicted winds, fog, cloud cover, radio frequency propagation, sensor detection ranges, and other hazards to recovery forces and the IP greatly impact PR planning and execution. PR forces are capable of conducting operations in a wide range of topographical environments. Terrain features often determine the type of capabilities required to conduct recovery operations. Additionally, sunrise, sunset, moonrise, moon phase, predicted ambient light, and hydrographic data affect PR significantly. PR forces will require additional support and expertise from emergency management and medical personnel when conducting PR in chemical, biological, nuclear, and radiological (CBRN) environments or recovering potentially CBRN contaminated IP. These conditions play an important role in the timing and tempo and should be considered critical planning factors for PRs.

**Host Nation and Multinational Considerations.** Military planners should work with interagency and [international partners](#) to develop a PR umbrella across the competition continuum, regardless of titles of authority. Gaining knowledge of partner PR capabilities and [command and control](#) (C2) infrastructure through building partnership capacity is essential to the AF recovery capability. Similarly, an air component commander should consider the capabilities of other Service and functional components, multinational and host nation (HN) forces during all phases of PR mission planning. Where possible, detailed PR planning should consider coalition, partner, and allied nation ROE and agreements to facilitate multinational PR effort and recognize constraints. HN security force and emergency response personnel may not always possess the capabilities required to respond effectively to an isolating incident involving US personnel. The US may need to partner with a HN to build upon or supplement their capabilities for a given mission. A PR relationship with multinational forces may be the deliberate intent of the JFC or it may be directed from higher authority. In most cases, the JFC will have to consider the PR coordination between US forces and the host nation military. The JFC's PR concept of operations should address the multinational PR architecture to promote detailed planning, coordination, and the consideration of coalition, partner, and allied nation ROE agreements to facilitate multinational PR efforts and recognize constraints. Achieving balance and unity of effort among multinational forces is a major challenge that can be mitigated by planning, training, and rehearsing.

## **Mobility Planning Considerations**

Early identification of requirements, inclusion in force enhancement and flexible deterrent option (FE/FDO) planning, appropriate PR priority in the flow of [time-phased force deployment data](#) (TPFDD), and frequent reevaluation are keys to sustaining PR support. Historically, during contingencies, PR requirements are often an afterthought rather than a preplanned consideration of the joint operation planning and execution system. Similar to air tasking order (ATO) planners, PR action officers on a JFC's staff and PR officers at the air component commander level should consider PR requirements in conjunction with other operational requirements when developing operation plans (OPLAN), operations orders, FE/FDO, TPFDD, and other planning

products. For additional information on combat support requirements see AFDP 4-0, [Combat Support](#).

**Deployment.** Air Force PR forces should have the ability to execute time-sensitive deployments and to deploy as deliberately planned elements of an [air expeditionary task force](#) (AETF). PR forces should deploy in theater prior to the start of hostilities and be prepared to provide immediate PR mission capability with minimal support airlift. Tailored rapid-response deployment packages support the intent of the AETF concept and follow-on in-theater contingency operations.

The initial deployment of PR forces in support of Operation ENDURING FREEDOM (OEF) represents a perfect example of the significant emphasis that CCDRs and Service chiefs put on PR. Military commanders delayed decisive operations until the JFC established an adequate PR capability. Another way to look at this, OEF demonstrated the need to have PR forces in place prior to commencement of combat operations. Based on OEF and other historical data, the PR forces should be listed high on the CCDR's TPFDD.

**Enduring and Contingency Locations.** Air Force planners should determine beddown locations for rescue forces based on factors including response time, operations tempo, FP, and other variables. Best practices reflecting support and deployment concepts include the capability to operate from main operating bases, forward operating sites, cooperative security locations, and contingency locations. Planners should tailor logistical support requirements based on the most likely operating location. To decrease response time and improve the chances of a successful recovery, rescue forces should be positioned as far forward as the situation allows. As an initial planning consideration, the air component commander should have the ability to deploy PR assets to austere environments for up to 14 days with minimum base operating support.

**Main Operating Base (MOB).** A MOB is a facility outside the United States and its territories with permanently stationed operating forces and robust infrastructure. If the MOB is significantly removed from potential PR objective areas, planners should consider the establishment of airborne alert holding areas, in order to expedite recovery operations.

**Forward Operating Site (FOS):** A scalable location outside the United States and its territories intended for rotational use by operating forces. Such expandable "warm facilities" may be maintained with a limited US military support presence and possibly prepositioned equipment. Support for FOSs may come from MOBs. For vertical-lift PR forces, a FOS may or may not be an airfield, it may be a forward arming and refueling point. FOS capability may require organic communication packages to provide the necessary C2 and intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance for successful mission execution. It is important to understand that for FOS operations, fuel, ammunition, medical supplies, and other mission essential material may come from MOBs.



**Contingency Location Operations.** When land-based MOBs or FOSs are unavailable, contingency location operations offer a unique alternative. Although contingency location operations do not require extensive host nation coordination, environmental conditions or the intricacies of shipboard operations offer unique challenges.

## EXECUTION

### The PR Essential Tasks

**Report.** Awareness and notification initiate the PR process. Rapid and accurate notification is essential for a successful recovery. Threat conditions permitting, IP should attempt to establish contact with friendly forces in accordance with notification procedures as outlined in the PR SPINS portion of the ATO.

Once an actual or potential PR incident or potential isolating event is reported, the PRCC initially assumes the duties of PR mission coordinator, initiates PR planning, and provides search and rescue incident reports and search and rescue situation reports to inform the JPRC. As the PR mission coordinator, the PRCC tasks and coordinates mission requirements with subordinate PR-capable units.

The JPRC coordinates and tasks PR support requirements, when those PR missions involve forces from more than one component, to conduct PR missions other than [nonconventional assisted recovery](#)<sup>8</sup> missions. When the JPRC receives a request for PR support, it initiates action to locate the IP (if not already accomplished), makes recommendations for, and coordinates the tasking of forces. This coordination is essential to prevent duplication of PR efforts, facilitate efficient exchange of PR information, and provide the most efficient use of PR resources. Coordination is particularly important when a PR incident occurs near the boundary between components' operational areas. When a component independently initiates a PR mission, it is required to notify the JPRC through its PRCC, to help ensure effective coordination and deconfliction. Thereafter, the JPRC will monitor the mission and be prepared to support, as required.

**Locate.** Methods used to locate IP may include: theater electronic surveillance, reconnaissance, C2 aircraft, global satellites, wingman reports, counterintelligence support to force protection methodologies, and visual and electronic search by dedicated PR forces. Even with precise coordinates that can pinpoint the isolated person's location, PR forces still have to authenticate the isolated person's identity prior to facilitating successful support and recovery operations.

An effective authentication system is essential to prevent the compromise of vital information and minimize risk to IP and the recovery force. This holds true because rescue assets are extremely vulnerable during the execution phase and need exact and reliable authentication information. Accordingly, IP and rescue forces should take

---

<sup>8</sup> Common access card required.

extreme care not to compromise authentication information and allow its use over an extended period. Some of the ways that rescue forces authenticate IP include CSAR code words, letters, numbers, and visual signals, as well as IP report data. Ordinarily, theater or area of responsibility-specific additional procedures are published in appropriate directives, OPLANs, and/or PR SPINS.

**Support.** Support is the planned effort necessary to ensure the physical and psychological sustainment of IP. The five objectives in supporting an IP are situational awareness, protection, establishing two-way communications, providing morale-building support, and aerial resupply (including aerial escort to a supply cache or more secure area). Protection may also encompass the suppression of enemy threats to the IP. This may preclude capture for the isolated person and disruption of the adversary's response to rescue efforts. When possible, combat rescue officers, pararescuemen, and equipment may be pre-positioned to support the IP until the recovery phase. Besides support to the IP, this task also includes physical and psychological assistance to the IP's family.

**Recover.** This task reflects activities by commanders, staff, recovery forces, and IP to physically recover the IP. CSAR is the Air Force's preferred recovery mechanism. As information of a potential PR incident becomes available, the PRCC should assess the situation quickly, determine mission feasibility, and disseminate data to units that may participate in the rescue mission. Once mission execution appears feasible, units may be tasked to initiate/continue planning or launch from alert. If they launch, the recovery force should include all the necessary supporting forces required to execute a recovery operation. The JFC or the designated PR supported commander can issue the "execution order." The JFC's PR concept of operations or SPINS will direct specific launch and execution authority as determined by the JFC. The following are recovery methods employed by the Air Force:

- ★ **Immediate.** Immediate response missions commence from a dedicated ground or airborne alert posture. In order to decrease flight time to the anticipated recovery area and reduce air refueling requirements, rescue forces may be located on the ground at a forward location or loitering in anticipation of an execution order. Additionally, these forces may be embedded in existing airborne missions to further reduce response time.
- ★ **Deliberate.** Commanders choose this method when an immediate response may not be possible due to environmental, political, or threat considerations. Deliberately planned missions give planners the flexibility to utilize all necessary assets to complete the recovery.
- ★ **Hold.** A PR mission is never closed because of risk or inability to locate the IP; however, a mission may be placed on hold for these reasons. Generally a "hold" status on a mission means the information required to execute does not meet commander's execute criteria (e.g., location, intelligence, etc.).

**Reintegrate.** Reintegrate is the task that allows the Department of Defense to provide medical care and protect the well-being of recovered personnel through decompression, while conducting debriefings to gather necessary intelligence and SERE information. The reintegration task begins when the recovery force relinquishes physical control of IP to a designated team member or organization in the theater reintegration process. American citizens who are recovered by DOD PR Teams are reintegrated through a Department of State process, not the Department of Defense. The welfare portion of the reintegration process may be a long-term ([Phase III](#)<sup>9</sup>) endeavor with no specific end date and may become a service responsibility. Ultimately, theater reintegration procedures are supported by the air component commander in two phases in accordance with CCDR guidance. Phase III reintegration may be conducted by the Service if warranted.

## **ADAPTATION**

Adaptation is dependent on the collection of PR information and data from after-action reports, PR mission logs, debriefings, and oral interviews. This information enables a process that includes continuous analysis of everything that is going on in PR as it happens, the recognition of what is working correctly and what is not, and implementing change when and where needed. Adaptation can re-enter the PR functional chart where needed, through updated policy, doctrine, equipment, or training in the preparation function, to different tactics used in the recovery task in the execution function. The purpose of adaptation is to make changes that promote more effective and safer PR and achieve higher rates of success.

---

---

<sup>9</sup> Common access card required.