



STRATEGIC ATTACK IN IRREGULAR WARFARE OPERATIONS

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Throughout history, strategic attack (SA) has been employed as part of [traditional warfare](#) between states and groups of states for “traditional” military purposes—political victory in the context of those nations’ purposes. SA has a place in [irregular warfare](#) (IW)—violent struggle among state and non-state actors for legitimacy and influence over a relevant population—as well. The [center of gravity](#) (COG) in IW is generally the relevant populace and the intent of warfare conducted in this realm is to favorably influence the COG, not “attack” it. [Airpower](#) can influence this strategic COG positively and directly in many different ways. There are uses for SA in IW which history shows to be widely applicable:

Conducting precision-strike operations that eliminate enemy personnel, resources, and infrastructure while minimizing unintended collateral damage on innocent members of the populace—all of which enhances the legitimacy and effectiveness of the supported government, reassures the populace, and undermines popular support for the enemy. The killing of al Qaeda leader Abu Musab al-Zarqawi in 2006 is an example of this.

Conducting precision [cyberspace](#) strikes on enemy financial resources to deny use, as has been done throughout Operation ENDURING FREEDOM and IRAQI FREEDOM.

Conducting strikes on enemy [weapons of mass destruction](#) (WMD) delivery systems and production facilities, or raids on known storage caches, may prevent use of these weapons as part of enemy strategy, as in the destruction of German heavy-water supplies (required for nuclear weapons production) by Norwegian commandos in 1944.
