


ASSESSING STRATEGIC ATTACK OPERATIONS

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[Assessment](#) is essential to successful operations in general and successful [strategic attack](#) (SA) in particular. It is integral to the [effects-based](#) planning-execution-assessment cycle from beginning to end. Planning for it should begin long before forces are engaged and actual assessment efforts may continue long after a conflict ends. It informs day-to-day operations once a battle rhythm is established and influences doctrine, [strategy](#), and even procurement in peacetime. Analysts involved in the assessment process are a vital part of US warfighting efforts. Operational and campaign assessment, performed by the air component and [joint force commander](#) respectively, extend analysis far beyond the tactical realm of combat assessment and are especially vital to SA efforts. The focus of these must go beyond assessments of battle damage or weapons effectiveness to anticipatory judgments about what effects SA may have over the course of a campaign or a conflict.

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|  | <p><i>The conceptual problems in constructing an adequate or useful measure of military power have not yet been faced. Defining an adequate measure looks hard, and making the estimates in real situations looks even harder.</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;"> — Andrew W. Marshall Director of Net Assessment, Office of the Secretary of Defense </p> |
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Nonetheless, assessment is often the most difficult part of the planning-employment-assessment cycle to perform consistently well. While direct physical effects normally provide key indicators for measuring the success or effectiveness of an operation, the indirect effects are most important for the SA effort and are harder to measure, relying on qualitative and subjective [measures of effectiveness](#), not quantitative and empirical [measures of performance](#). This will continue to present significant challenges to analysts for the foreseeable future.