



TARGETING FUNDAMENTALS

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Targeting is focused on achieving objectives. Through targeting courses of action, objectives and effects are translated into detailed actions against adversary targets. **Every target nominated should in some way contribute to attaining the joint force commander's (JFC's) [objectives](#) and end state.**

Targeting is fundamentally effects-based. Targeting is in part accomplished by targeteers who have specialized training in analyzing targets and developing targeting solutions to support the commander's objectives. In performing their job, they use the targeting cycle and an [effects-based approach to operations](#).

Targeting is more than just the selection of targets for physical destruction; this is a limited perspective. Destruction may be the best means to the end, but it is only one effect within a spectrum of possible options within multi-domain operations, that may include influence operations, electronic warfare operations and cyberspace operations. The underlying premise of an effects-based approach is that it is possible to direct the instruments of power -- diplomatic, information, military, economic (DIME) -- against targets in ways that cause effects beyond the mere destruction of targets. These effects will influence the adversary's political, military, economic, social, infrastructure, and information systems (PMESII). Targeting should consider all possible means to achieve desired effects, drawing from all available forces, weapons, and platforms. Target selection based upon desired effects includes consideration of second- and third-order consequences that may either positively contribute to campaign objectives or negatively outweigh the near-term results of the applied lethal or nonlethal capability.

Targeting is interdisciplinary. It requires the expertise of personnel from many functional disciplines. For example, strategists and planners bring knowledge of the context and integrated plans; operators bring experience gained from combat execution; intelligence personnel provide analysis of adversary strengths and vulnerabilities and targeting expertise; and judge advocates provide expertise in the application of the [law of war](#) and interpretation of [rules of engagement](#) vital for mission planning and weapons delivery. An effects-based approach to targeting is fundamentally a team effort, requiring these specialties and many more.

Targeting is inherently estimative and anticipatory. Matching actions and effects to targets requires estimating and anticipating future outcomes. In some cases, the outcome is straightforward, such as anticipating that disabling a fire control radar may significantly impact a surface-to-air missile battery's capabilities. In most cases, however, estimation is more complicated and planners should consider the following processes to aid in making estimates. The [joint intelligence preparation of the operational environment](#) should yield insight on the adversary and their intentions. The [target system analysis](#) yields understanding of how components of the adversary system interact and how the system functions as a whole. Intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance processing, exploitation, and dissemination gathers and processes needed data and helps improve the accuracy and extent of estimation. Such analyses enable planners to select targets and methods of affecting them that increase the probability of desired outcomes and allow the most efficient use of limited airpower resources. This does not imply perfect knowledge or anticipation; uncertainty and friction still apply.

In supporting the commander's objectives, the targeting process is designed to achieve effects in a systematic manner. Targeting, like other planning processes that it complements, is rational, iterative, and methodically analyzes, prioritizes, and assigns forces and capabilities against adversary targets to achieve the effects needed to meet campaign objectives. While targeting is systematic, it is not mechanical and does not assume that the same actions always produce the same effects. If the desired effects are not achieved, targets may be replanned for subsequent engagement, or different targets may be selected.

Targeting is integrated with other processes. Targeting is essential to creating the operational strategy and the [joint air operations plan](#), the daily tasking cycle that produces tasking orders, and combat and targeting assessment that measures progress toward operation and campaign objectives. It cannot be separated from the overarching set of processes without resulting in an inputs-based exercise in target servicing—taking a target list, and matching available resources to those targets. Integrating targeting within these overarching processes enables an effects-based approach.

The attributes set forth above establish a broad framework on which the targeting discipline should build.
