TARGETING DURING FORMAL PLANNING

Last Updated: 15 March 2019

Targeting supports every form of employment planning for joint operations. Joint planning employs an integrated process for orderly and coordinated problem solving and decision-making of the joint force commander’s desired objectives. In its peacetime application, the process is highly structured to support the thorough and fully coordinated development of contingency plans. In crisis, the process is shortened as needed to support the dynamic requirements of changing events. In wartime, the process adapts to accommodate greater decentralization of joint planning activities. Joint planning is conducted through the joint planning process (JPP) in order to develop effective plans and orders. The JPP is applicable for all planning and results in campaign plans, contingency plans or operation orders. See Joint Publication (JP) 5-0, *Joint Planning*, for more details on the JPP.

The Airmen’s supporting plan to a campaign or contingency is the joint air operations plan (JAOP). The JAOP is created through the seven step joint planning process for air (JPPA) and is normally developed in support of the JFC’s plan or order. Almost all targeting support to pre-conflict planning is accomplished through the JPPA. The targeting intensive aspects of JPPA are discussed below:

**Initiation.** The commander, Air Force forces (COMAFFOR) and staff performs an assessment of the initiating directive to determine time available until mission execution, current status of intelligence products, and other factors relevant to the specific planning situation.

**Mission Analysis.** During this stage, joint intelligence preparation of the operational environment (JIPOE) begins. In order to fully support an effects-based campaign, the intelligence community should conduct robust JIPOE to inform planning. JIPOE provides a comprehensive framework for intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) support to planning and COA selection. Consequently, JIPOE should assist commanders in anticipating enemy intent and enable them in pre-empting enemy actions. The JIPOE process continues throughout planning by examining adversary and friendly capabilities, adversary intent, and the operational environment. Enemy and friendly centers of gravity (COG) are also identified during this initial stage of the JPPA. As mission analysis is refined through later stages of the JPPA, enemy COGs are analyzed, yielding critical vulnerabilities or other key system nodes. These are further
examined through target system or nodal analysis to yield target sets, targets, critical
elements, and aimpoints, as well as commander’s critical information requirements
(CCIRs) to support JIPOE and tactical assessment. Such analysis carries a
considerable information-flow cost. In order to properly identify collection and
exploitation requirements for targeting, **target system analysis (TSA) and or targeting**
effects studies should begin well in advance of operations and should continue
throughout them. It should begin during the initial stages of JIPOE and draw upon as
much ongoing peacetime intelligence/targeting material as is available for the theater or
area of operations. While space, cyberspace, electromagnetic spectrum, and
information operations should already be fully integrated into mission analysis, JIPOE,
TSAs and target development should also ensure integration of specialized analysis in
support of space, cyberspace, electromagnetic spectrum, and information operations.

**COA Development.** JIPOE is refined during this stage and includes detailed analysis of
COGs identified during mission analysis. COG analysis is important to targeting efforts
because it identifies the enemy’s sources of power and will to fight and tries to discover
how and where those sources of power are vulnerable, where critical nodes within them
are, and how they can be exploited by the full capabilities of the joint force (e.g., air,
space, cyberspace, electromagnetic spectrum, information operations, etc.). Critical
vulnerabilities can be difficult to pick from critical requirements or to translate those
vulnerabilities into explicit target sets. Techniques for translating vulnerabilities into
targets can be used as the foundation for development of COAs or a selected COA may
be directed by the JFC.

**Plan or Order Development.** This step and its ultimate product, the JAOP, describe
how the air component may support the JFC’s operational plan. The JAOP identifies
objectives, desired effects, targets, and assessment measures in as much detail as
available time and intelligence allow. Objectives and the end state are derived from
commander’s guidance, strategy development and planning. Targeting efforts should
always aim toward achieving these objectives and the end state. During JAOP
development, deliberate targeting is used to develop targets and target sets included in
the JAOP and its attachments. Even if targeting information developed during planning
is not included in the JAOP or its attachments, JAOP development may require
considerable targeting effort in order to validate selected COAs, CONOPS, and other
elements of the plan. Commanders and planners should know, at least approximately,
how much effort and what resources are required to achieve the operation’s desired
effects. This knowledge can be gained by conducting some (at least notional) deliberate
targeting systems analysis using existing TSA products, functional system products
(i.e., power, roads, communications, chemical, etc.), targeting databases, and/or
assessment of the total number of potential targets within the modern integrated
database (MIDB) binned into functional categories (e.g., airfields, air defense, ballistic
missile, WMD, C4I, etc.) before the conflict begins. Target selection should be based
upon desired effects against enemy COGs, which in turn should be based upon the
objectives for the conflict.

The JAOP should be effects-based, including lethal and/or nonlethal effects, as
appropriate. It is the air component’s main source of guidance. Targeting efforts play a
major role in building an effects-based JAOP by relating effects to particular targets and target systems and helping validate whether planned resources can achieve those effects.

The JAOP should provide broad guidelines for prioritizing targets/target systems, as well as making clear which categories or sets are most important to the campaign. The JAOP should also provide guidance on the sequencing of targeting actions or effects, which is not the same thing as priority. Although parallel effects are generally best, sometimes some targets should be attacked first to enable effects against other targets. The JAOP, as well as subsequently published special instructions, air operations directive, and air tasking orders, should clearly articulate the commander’s rules of engagement that ensure operations comply with the law of war.

Finally, the JAOP should establish guidelines for dynamic, especially time-sensitive, targeting. Dynamic targeting is one of the most labor-intensive and intellectually demanding challenges the air component faces. Anticipating as much of the challenge as possible and spelling out guidance and priorities in the JAOP may ease the burden on commanders and air operations center combat operations division personnel once the daily battle rhythm begins. This may prevent mistakes from being made during employment or may at least mitigate their impact. Planners should address as broad a scope as possible in as much detail as time and planning resources allow. This should include robust rules of engagement and related legal considerations (see Appendix A).

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18 See Air Force Instruction 13-1 AOC, Volume 3 for an expanded discussion on AOC divisions and teams.