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FOR DOCTRINE DEVELOPMENT AND EDUCATION



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STEADY-STATE OPERATIONS

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The Department of Defense (DOD) and the Air Force have increased the emphasis on the military engagement, [security cooperation](#), and [deterrence](#) portion of the [range of military operations](#) (ROMO). A key milestone was the 2008 release of the inaugural *Guidance for Employment of the Force* and complementary *Joint Strategic Capabilities Plan*, which introduced a campaign planning methodology for steady-state operations. As a result, combatant commands now develop and execute steady-state [campaign plans](#) and [commanders, Air Force forces](#) (COMAFFORs), develop and execute steady-state campaign support plans. Both plans “operationalize” a commander’s strategy. Even though fighting and winning the nation’s wars remains the primary justification for standing and capable military forces, these same forces share in the responsibility to shape the [operational environment](#), deter aggression, and prevent conflict. Airmen should be as proficient in steady-state operations as they are in conducting contingency and crisis operations.

The military engagement, security cooperation, and deterrence portion of the ROMO is increasingly referred to in DOD publications as the “steady state.” Although DOD has not formally defined this term, the Air Force describes it as “a stable condition involving continuous and recurring operations and activities with simultaneous absence of major military, crisis response, and [contingency operations](#). The steady state is characterized by shaping operations and activities at a relatively low level of intensity, urgency, and commitment of military forces.”

The steady state is synonymous with shaping, and is designed to influence the environment in order to prevent and deter future conflict; mitigate operational risks associated with combat; and strengthen United States and partner capabilities to respond to [major operations](#), [campaigns](#), and contingencies. From the Airman’s perspective, the focus of steady-state operations is to support the [combatant commander’s](#) (CCDR’s) steady-state campaign plan.

The term “steady state” also provides context and relevance for the many Airmen who conduct operations on a daily basis, not just during crises. Such Airmen include air mobility personnel performing intertheater airlift; space and cyberspace operators in the performance of global requirements; missileers and bomber crews on nuclear alert; Air National Guardsmen performing air defense alert; and intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance operators maintaining worldwide situational awareness. The daily

contributions of these and other Airmen are just as important as the contributions of Airmen in periods of crisis.

Refer to Annex 3-0, [Operations and Planning](#), for discussion of Air Force planning, execution, and assessment in support of steady-state operations.
