



OFFENSIVE

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“Offensive” is one of the principles of war.

The purpose of an offensive action is to seize, retain, and exploit the initiative.

The offensive aim is to act rather than react and to dictate the time, place, purpose, scope, intensity, and pace of operations. The initiative should be seized as soon as possible. The principle of the offensive holds that offensive action, or initiative, provides the means for joint forces to dictate operations. Once seized, the initiative should be retained and fully exploited.

This principle is particularly significant to [airpower](#) because it is best used as an offensive weapon. While defense may be dictated by the combat situation, success in war is generally attained only while on the offensive. Even highly successful defensive air campaigns such as the World War II Battle of Britain were based upon selective offensive engagements.

The speed and range of attacking airpower gives it a significant offensive advantage over other forces. In an air attack, for example, the defender often requires more forces to defend a given geospatial area than the attacker requires to strike a set of specific targets. The integration of air, space, and cyberspace capabilities enhances the advantages of speed, range and persistence found in airpower.

Although all military forces have offensive capabilities, airpower’s ability to [mass](#) and [maneuver](#), and its ability to operate independently or simultaneously at the tactical, operational, and/or strategic [levels of war](#), provides [joint force commanders](#) (JFCs) a resource with global reach to directly and rapidly seize the initiative. Whether deploying forces and supplies into a region, conducting combat operations, or maintaining [information assurance](#), airpower provides the JFC the means to take the offensive. Through prompt and sustained offensive actions designed to attain operational and strategic objectives, airpower causes the enemy to react rather than act, denies them the offensive, and shapes the remainder of the conflict.