



VOLUME 1 BASIC DOCTRINE

MASS

Last Updated: 27 Feb 2015

“Mass” is one of the principles of war.

The purpose of mass is to concentrate the effects of combat power at the most advantageous place and time to achieve decisive results. Concentration of military power is a fundamental consideration in all military operations. At the [operational level of war](#), this principle suggests that superior, concentrated combat power is used to achieve decisive results.

[Airpower](#) is singularly able to launch an attack from widely dispersed locations and mass combat power at the objective, whether that objective is a single physical location or a widely dispersed enemy system or systems. From an Airman’s perspective, mass is not based solely on the quantity of forces and materiel committed. Airpower achieves mass through effectiveness of attack, not just overwhelming numbers. Contemporary airpower has altered the concept of massed forces. The speed, range, and flexibility of airpower—complemented by the accuracy and lethality of precision weapons and advances in information technologies—allow it to achieve mass faster than other forces.

Air Force cyberspace capabilities, often enabled by space systems, allow dispersed forces to collaborate to rapidly find, fix, track, and target fleeting targets and mass a response in new ways. Previously, operators and planners worked in relative proximity within the same theater of operations; today, those same planners and operators leverage distributed capabilities to apply precise effects around the globe.

[Airlift](#) and [air refueling](#) provide a significant and critical capability to mass lethal and nonlethal forces on a global scale. The capability of airpower to act quickly and mass effects, along with its capability to mass other lethal and nonlethal military power, combine the principle of mass with the [principle of maneuver](#).