



TYPES OF AIR INTERDICTION REQUESTS

Last Updated: 16 April 2014

Air interdiction (AI) requests fall into two categories: preplanned and immediate. Each type of request is influenced by a variety of factors. Unless time constraints dictate otherwise, preplanned requests should always be accomplished to allow for proper weapon-target combination, target area tactics planning, threat avoidance, weather study, and other variables, to maximize the probability of target destruction with minimum losses. Attacking mobile or short-notice targets provides a more flexible response that can capitalize on opportunities, but lack of mission planning can reduce effectiveness and higher friendly losses may be expected. Real-time information technology and digital cockpit [imagery](#) reduce, but do not eliminate, this factor. [Kill box](#) operations can also add a flexible response option, enabling timely and effective coordination and control as well as facilitating rapid attacks. Combining the traditional aspects of both an [airspace coordinating measure](#) (ACM) and [fire support coordination line](#) (FSCM) enables expeditious air-to-surface attack of targets that can also be augmented by or integrated with surface-to-surface indirect fires.

Preplanned Requests

Preplanned AI is the normal method of operation in which aircraft attack prearranged or planned targets. This mode is used to hit specific targets that are known in advance, and detailed intelligence information is available to support strike planning. Preplanned attacks are normally flown against fixed targets or against mobile targets that are not expected to move in the interval between planning and execution (e.g., revetted tanks). Target information for scheduled AI can come from sources that vary from overhead reconnaissance to ground-based [special operations forces](#) (SOF). Preplanned AI is conducted within the normal [air tasking cycle](#) and provides enough time for close coordination with other joint force components. It is crucial for component [liaisons](#) to communicate and work together to facilitate centralized planning and effective integration, and avoid duplicating effort. Preplanned AI requests evolve into scheduled and on-call missions.

- ✦ **Scheduled missions** are planned against targets on which air attacks are delivered at a specific time

★ **On-call missions** are planned against targets other than scheduled missions for which a need can be anticipated but which will be delivered upon request rather than a specific time. On-call AI missions can produce responsive, flexible effects. In cases where a specific area to search for enemy AI targets cannot be predetermined, these missions are designated as airborne air interdiction (XAI) or ground-based alert air interdiction (GAI) on the [air tasking order](#) (ATO) and may be put on an airborne alert status. The appropriate [command and control](#) (C2) agency provides guidance to a specific target, [kill box](#), or target area. XAI missions will normally be given a target priority list or other guidance defining which targets to attack for greatest disruption of the enemy. This set of target priorities may be available prior to takeoff, or may be passed in flight by an appropriate C2 agency such as a [forward air controller–airborne](#) (FAC), an [air support operations center](#) (ASOC), AWACS, or a JSTARS. If no targets are discovered in the designated area, XAI missions should be prepared to proceed to a backup target if available or requested by the designated controlling agency. Planners should attempt to match proper weapons load-out with expected target types to maximize XAI effects. When flexible AI is flown in [direct support](#) of the surface component, the target priorities should reflect those established by the surface component and communicated via the appropriate component liaison officer (LNO) within the [theater air-ground system](#) (TAGS). The air support operations center (ASOC) normally coordinates and directs preplanned AI requests flown short of the [fire support coordination line](#) (FSCL).

Immediate Requests

Immediate AI meets specific requests which arise during the course of a battle and which by their sudden nature are not planned in accordance with the normal ATO process. Immediate AI requests can respond to unplanned or unanticipated targets that require urgent, time-sensitive attention. It should be noted that many immediate requests for AI allow sufficient time for in-depth planning prior to execution even if those requests fall inside of the normal 72-hour air tasking cycle that defines “immediate.” Immediate AI often responds to attack requests against dynamic and [time-sensitive targets](#) (TSTs).

[Dynamic targeting](#) prosecutes targets identified too late, or not selected for action in time to be included in deliberate targeting.¹ It is the active process of identifying, prosecuting, and effectively engaging emerging targets. Dynamic targeting includes prosecution of several categories of targets:

★ JFC-designated TST—targets or target set of such high importance to the accomplishment of the [joint force commander’s](#) (JFC’s) mission and objectives, or one that presents such a significant strategic or operational threat to friendly forces or allies, that the JFC dedicates [intelligence](#) collection and attack assets, or is willing to divert assets away from other targets in order to engage it

¹ The dynamic targeting process is referred to as [find, fix, track, target, engage and assess](#) (F2T2EA).

- ✦ Targets that are considered crucial for success of friendly component commanders' missions, but are not JFC-approved TSTs. Component commanders may nominate targets to the JFC for consideration as TSTs. If not approved as TSTs by the JFC, these [component-critical](#) targets may still require dynamic execution with cross-component coordination and assistance in a time-compressed fashion
- ✦ Targets that are scheduled to be struck on the ATO being executed but have changed status in some way (such as [fire support coordination measures](#) changes)
- ✦ Other targets that emerge during execution that friendly commanders deem worthy of targeting, prosecution of which may not divert resources from higher-priority targets

Time-sensitive targets

A TST is a JFC-validated target or set of targets requiring immediate response because it is a highly lucrative, fleeting target of opportunity or it poses (or will soon pose) a danger to friendly forces. The [commander, Air Force forces](#) may recommend TSTs to the JFC. TSTs are prosecuted using the dynamic targeting process described above, but are of higher priority and may require additional coordination with other components or the joint task force. The destruction of these high payoff targets is considered critical for achieving JFC objectives. The JFC is ultimately responsible for TST prosecution and relies upon the component commanders for conducting TST operations.

When using on-call or dynamically re-tasked assets, immediate AI often relies on an offboard sensor such as [Joint Surveillance Target Attack Radar System](#) (JSTARS) to provide initial target detection and attack targeting information. Using real-time target information via data-link, response times can be as short as a few minutes, depending on the distances and C2 arrangements involved. Immediate AI requests allow airborne assets to exploit enemy vulnerability that may be of limited duration. It can work particularly well when attacking enemy ground forces on the move in the enemy rear area and provide a responsive use of [counterland](#) attack when supporting the surface component. The [air support operations center](#) (ASOC) normally coordinates and directs immediate AI requests flown short of the [fire support coordination line](#) (FSCL).

The same quick-responsive nature of immediate AI that allows it to take advantage of fleeting opportunities can also have a negative impact on individual mission success. Scheduled missions allow aircrews more time to study the target imagery and to align attack axes to optimize weapons effects. Detailed study can reduce threat exposure and allow mission planners to optimize the weapon's fusing for maximum effect. Preplanning allows better packaging of strike and support assets when required. The bottom line for dynamic targeting of airborne assets is that it should be used in those cases when the need for a short reaction time outweighs the reduced effectiveness that may result when compared with preplanned operations. Moreover, opportunity costs should be considered. Commanders should ensure the benefits of diverting airpower away from a preplanned target outweigh the costs by pondering several variables. **Is it affordable to delay striking a preplanned target? What are the priorities? Will**

diverting airpower to an unplanned target create greater effects or is it less efficient? In short, the payoff of striking a dynamic target should be worth the cost of diverting preplanned assets.

To increase situational awareness during dynamic targeting, C2 elements should ensure that aircrews have the most current information pertaining to the location of SOF, friendly ground forces, and no-strike target lists.
