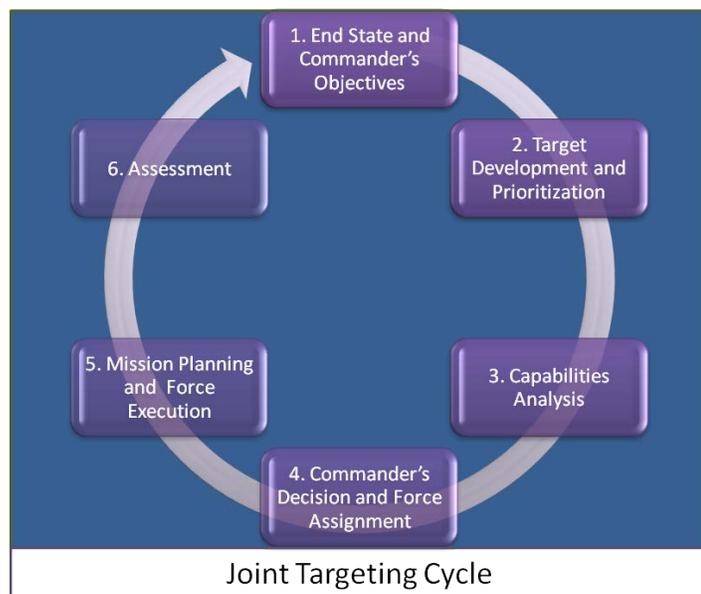


THE TARGETING CYCLE

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The targeting cycle supports the [joint force commander's](#) (JFC) joint operation planning and execution with a comprehensive, iterative and logical methodology for employing ways and means to create desired effects that support achievement of objectives. The targeting cycle described in joint doctrine is also used for Air Force targeting operations. Joint targeting selects and prioritizes targets and matches the appropriate means to engage them, considering operational requirements and capabilities.



The [joint targeting cycle](#) is an iterative, non-linear process that provides a framework for successfully conducting joint targeting. The deliberate and dynamic nature of the joint targeting cycle supports all of the planning horizons of the [joint operation planning process/joint operation planning process for air](#) (JOPP/JOPPA) future plans, future operations, and current operations.

The End State and Commander's Objectives. The military [end state](#) is the set of conditions that need to be achieved to resolve the situation or conflict on satisfactory terms, as defined by appropriate authority. The [combatant commander](#) (CCDR) typically may be concerned with the military end state and related strategic military objectives. The commander's objectives are developed during the mission analysis step of [JOPP](#), or are derived from theater-strategic or national-level guidance. The [commander, Air Force forces](#) (COMAFFOR) staff, using the [JOPPA](#)¹, should establish

¹ For more on the JOPPA see [JP 3-30](#), *Command and Control for Joint Air Operations*; [Annex 3-0](#), *Operations and Planning*; and Chapter 3 of this publication.

the air component's objectives; the specified, implied, and essential tasks that support the CCDR's military objectives and contribute to achievement of the end state.

Objectives are the basis for developing the desired effects and the scope of target development. Attainment of objectives is essential to the successful realization of the desired end state. Effective targeting is distinguished by the ability to generate the type and extent of effect necessary to achieve the commander's objectives.

Target Development and Prioritization. Target development is the systematic examination of potential target systems to determine the type and duration of action that should be exerted on

each target to create desired effects that achieve the commander's objectives. Target development always approaches adversary capabilities from a systems perspective. [Target vetting](#) leverages the expertise of the national intelligence community to verify the fidelity of the intelligence and analysis used to develop the target(s). Target validation determines whether a target remains a viable element of a target system and whether prosecution of that target complies with the law of armed conflict and the rules of engagement. Validation is a continuous process that occurs until the target is serviced or removed from consideration for servicing. Once candidate targets are developed, vetted, and validated, they are added to [joint target list](#) (JTL) or [restricted target list](#) (RTL). During execution, they are prioritized relative to all joint targets in a [joint integrated prioritized target list](#) (JIPTL), which is submitted to the commander for approval.

While a single target may be significant because of its own characteristics, the target's real importance lies in its relationship to other targets within an operational system or across operational systems. A [target system](#) is most often considered as a collection of assets directed to perform a specific function or series of functions.

Capabilities Analysis. This portion of the joint targeting process involves evaluating available capabilities against desired effects to determine the appropriate options available to the commander. Inputs to this stage include target characteristics, desired damage criteria or [probability of damage](#) (Pd) calculations, and delivery parameters. The outputs of this stage include the probability of effectiveness (Pe) which is the result of selected capabilities and target pairings required to create desired effects to inform the commander's estimate within the joint planning and execution system.

Commander's Decision and Force Assignment. The [force assignment process](#) integrates previous phases of joint targeting and fuses capabilities analysis with available forces, sensors, and weapons systems. It is primarily an operations function, but requires considerable intelligence support to ensure [Intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance](#) (ISR) assets are integrated into the plan. The process of resourcing [joint integrated prioritized target list](#) (JIPTL) targets with available forces or systems and ISR assets lies at the heart of force assignment. Once the JFC has approved the JIPTL, either entirely or in part, tasking orders are prepared and released to the executing components and forces. The joint targeting process facilitates the publication of tasking orders by providing amplifying information necessary for detailed force-level

planning of operations. Coordination with other services and special programs at this point in the process is essential to ensure that targets are not serviced by multiple or conflicting resources.

Mission Planning and Force Execution. Upon receipt of tasking orders, detailed planning should be performed for the execution of operations. The joint targeting process supports this planning by providing tactical-level planners with direct access to detailed information on the targets, supported by the nominating component's analytical reasoning that linked the target with the desired effect (conducted in Phase 2 of the joint targeting cycle). This may provide the background information necessary for the warfighter to focus on the JFC's objectives as the operation unfolds.

Assessment. [Assessment](#) measures whether desired effects are being created, objectives are achieved, and next steps are evaluated. Effective planning and execution require continuing evaluation of the effectiveness of friendly and enemy action. Consequently, assessment is much more than "battle damage" or "[combat assessment](#)," as it has traditionally been presented—and more than just an intelligence function that takes place after execution has concluded. Planning for it begins prior to commencement of operations, takes place throughout planning and execution, and continues after the conflict is over. The assessment phase is common to both deliberate and dynamic targeting. The assessment of deliberate and dynamic target engagement results must be integrated to provide the overall targeting assessment.