



PLANNING

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- Joint operation planning is conducted at every echelon of command, during peacetime as well as conflict, and across the [range of military operations](#) (ROMO).
- Plans are continuously reviewed and adapted to accommodate changes in strategic guidance, resources, the actions of adversaries and other actors, and the [operational environment](#).
- Joint operation planning also identifies capabilities outside the DOD, and provides the means of integrating military actions with those of other [instruments of national power](#) and multinational partners in time, space, and purpose to create all effects necessary to achieve objectives required to attain the [end state](#).

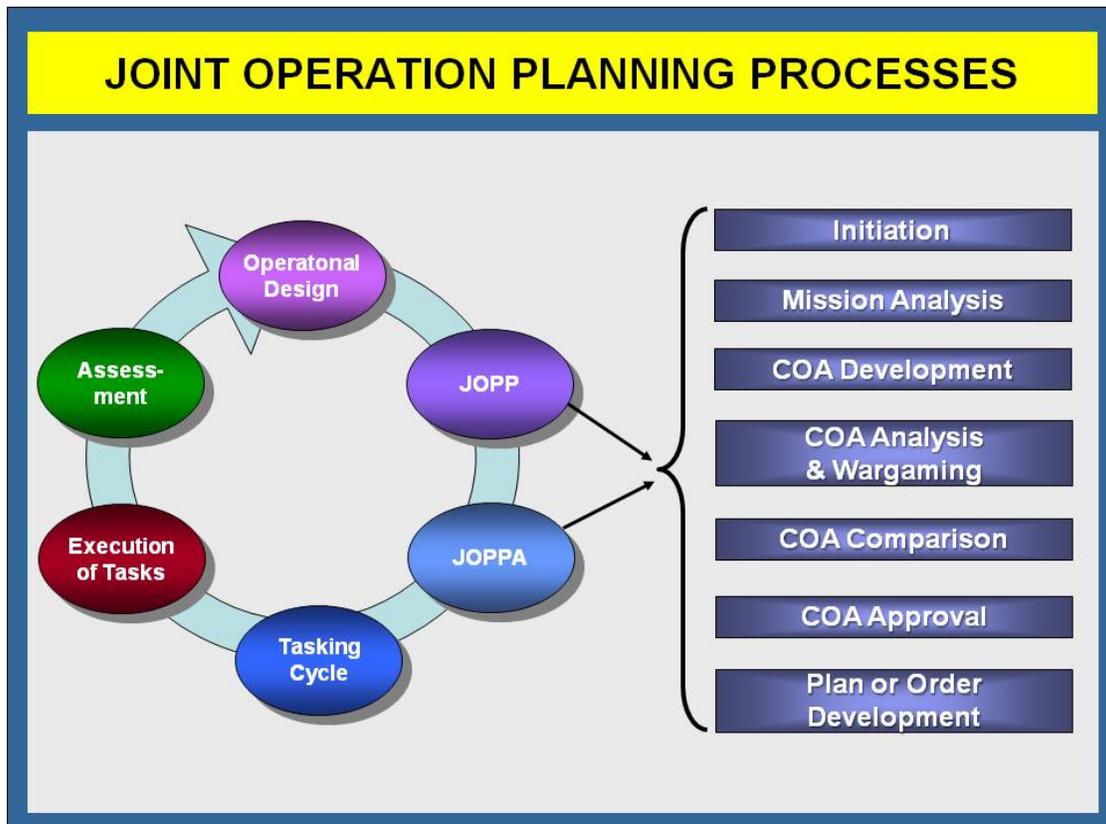
The Relationship Between Operational Design and Planning

- In many respects, [operational design](#) constitutes the “front end” of planning, since commanders should frame the problems he or she seeks to solve and determine its scope and parameters.
- It logically forms the first steps of [deliberate planning](#), [crisis action planning](#), and other operational planning. It makes sense to determine an operation’s overall end state before detailed employment planning begins (or, for that matter, before many aspects of deployment and force planning begin).
- In other respects, design and planning are complementary and even overlap:
 - ✦ Design may begin before initiation of the [joint operation planning process](#) (JOPP) or the [joint operation planning process for air](#) (JOPPA), but some portions of the mission analysis stage of the JOPP and JOPPA may provide insights needed to properly frame an operational problem.
 - ✦ Design often begins with step 1 of the JOPP (“Initiation”), but certain formal products of deliberate and crisis action planning (such as warning and planning orders) may be issued after design efforts have begun, but before more detailed planning has started.

- ✦ Design may also continue after completion of initial JOPP and JOPPA planning. There is no clear demarcation between when design ends and planning begins, especially during the “first round” of design and planning.
- ✦ Strategists often also identify possible [branches](#) and [sequels](#) at various points based on planning assumptions.
- Later, during plan execution and [assessment](#), operational design may be conducted in concert with planning to adapt to emerging situations or behaviors.
- ✦ In this part of the process, commanders and strategists determine whether to implement pre-planned branches or sequels, or even initiate complete re-design of an operation.

The Joint Operation Planning Process for Air

- The Air Force plans using the process known as the JOPPA.
 - ✦ This is the process by which [commanders of Air Force forces](#) (COMAFFORs) create the detailed plans they require to effectively employ airpower, including the [joint air operations plan](#) (JAOP), [operation orders](#) (OPORDs), etc.
 - ✦ The JOPPA produces the JAOP and, as part of an ongoing battle rhythm, the guidance that helps create the air operations directive (AOD), which guides the tasking cycle through its iterative execution.
 - ✦ The JOPPA may also be used to produce required supporting plans and concepts, such as a long-range phased air targeting scheme (PATS), an area air defense plan (AADP), an [airspace control plan](#) (ACP), operation orders required by the COMAFFOR’s staff, and others. **The JOPP and JOPPA each consist of seven steps**, as depicted in the following figure, Joint Operation Planning Process.



Initiation

- Planning begins when an appropriate authority recognizes potential need to employ military capabilities in response to a potential or actual crisis and initiates strategy creation and operational design.
 - ✦ At the strategic level, the initiating authority is national leadership—the President, Secretary of Defense (SecDef), and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.
 - ✦ Below the national strategic level, that authority is usually a joint force commander (JFC) (combatant commander [CCDR] or joint task force [JTF] commander).
 - ✦ It is vital for Airmen to become involved in the planning process at the JFC-level as soon as possible to understand the JFC's design concept and ensure that the capabilities of airpower are properly represented, integrated, and employed.

Mission Analysis

- The primary purpose of mission analysis is to understand the problem at hand, the purpose of the operation, and to issue appropriate commander's guidance to focus the planning process.
- Mission analysis may already have been accomplished as part of operational design, but there is significant value in conducting an "airminded" mission analysis in dialog with the commander and air operations center (AOC) strategists, reviewing the products or reiterating the process of framing the problem "the plan" is intended to solve.
- The commander's mission and intent statements should be created in this step of the process if they have not already been created during earlier design effort.
 - ✦ These statements should include the military end state (MES) and the portion of it that the [joint force air component commander](#) (JFACC) is tasked to deliver.
 - ✦ If the problem the plan is intended to solve is not adequately framed, then the commander responsible for planning (e.g., the JFACC for the JOPPA) should "go back up the chain of command"—even to the level of national leadership—and request that it be further clarified.

COA Development

- A [course of action](#) (COA) consists of the following information: what type of action should occur; why the action is required; who will take the action; and the expected outcomes. A valid COA is one that is:
 - ✦ **Adequate**—Can accomplish (or appropriately support) the JFC's mission within given commanders' guidance.
 - ✦ **Feasible**—Can accomplish the mission within the established time, space, and resource limitations.
 - ✦ **Acceptable (Balanced)**—Should balance cost and risk with the advantage gained and maintained.
 - ✦ **Distinguishable**—Should be sufficiently different from other COAs.
 - ✦ **Complete**—Should incorporate objectives, effects, and tasks to be performed; major forces required; concepts for deployment, employment, and sustainment; time estimates for achieving objectives; mission success criteria; and end state. It may also delineate appropriate trigger points for pre-planned branches and sequels.

COA Analysis and Wargaming

- COA analysis should identify the advantages of each proposed friendly COA on its own merits; COAs are not compared with each other in this step.
- Wargaming provides a means for the commander and staff to analyze COAs in light of the adversary's possible countermoves, improve their understanding of the operational environment, and obtain insights that they may not have otherwise gained.

COA Comparison

- COA comparison is a process where wargamed COAs are evaluated and compared against a set of criteria established by the staff and commander.
- The commander and staff should develop and evaluate a set of important criteria or governing factors against which to evaluate COAs. Risks to forces and risks to mission should always be considered as evaluation criteria.

COA Approval

- The staff should determine the best COA to recommend to the commander.
 - ✦ The recommendation should take the form of a commander's estimate document or briefing.
 - ✦ **Branches** and **sequels** that the staff considers most likely or most dangerous may be reviewed and approved as part of this process as well. The approved COA is then developed into the appropriate plan or order.

Plan or Order Development

- Deliberate planning results in plan development (e.g., an **operation plan** [OPLAN], contingency plan, or commander's estimate); crisis action planning typically leads to OPORD development; and the JOPPA yields a JAOP, often a long-range PATS, and possibly other products.
- During plan or order development the commander and staff in collaboration with subordinate and collaborating organizations, expand the approved COA into a detailed plan. The detailed plan:
 - ✦ States (or restates) the commander's mission and intent.
 - ✦ Describes the central approach the commander intends to take to accomplish the mission.

- ★ Provides for the application, integration, sequencing, and synchronization of forces and capabilities in time, space, and purpose (including interagency, multinational, and nongovernmental organizations).
 - ★ Describes when, where, and under what conditions any supported commander intends to conduct or refuse combat, as required.
 - ★ Focuses on adversary and friendly COGs and their associated critical vulnerabilities.
 - ★ Avoids discernable patterns and makes full use of ambiguity and deception.
 - ★ Provides for controlling the tempo of operations.
 - ★ Visualizes the campaign or operation in terms of the forces and functions involved.
 - ★ Relates the assigned operational objectives, identified tactical objectives and desired tactical effects to the JFC's campaign plan and to other organizations' schemes as necessary; this enables the subsequent development of detailed tactical tasks and schemes of maneuver, and support requests to supporting commanders.
- There are no separate joint or Air Force procedures for deliberate and crisis action planning beyond some internal coordination and staffing procedures at the various component headquarters.
 - *For complete discussion of the JOPPA, [click here](#).*

Service Component Planning

- The Service component commander develops Service aspects of the JFC's course of action (COA), determines force and resource requirements, and builds or contributes to time-phased force and deployment data (TPFDD) documents to implement the deployment and sustainment aspects of the COA.
- ★ This effort should go hand-in-hand with employment concepts and COAs being developed by the joint force air component commander (JFACC) portion of the commander, Air Force forces (COMAFFOR)/JFACC's staff.
- ★ The Service component command staff also works within Service channels to identify combat support forces, critical materiel, sustaining supplies, filler and replacement personnel, and Reserve Component asset availability.

- ✦ Simultaneously and in coordination, the COMAFFOR's staff, usually led by the A3 (Director of Operations) or A5 (Director of Plans), should develop an Air Force component supporting [operation plan](#) (OPLAN) or [operation order](#) (OPORD) to capture that information pertinent to Air Force forces deploying to and employing within the particular [operational area](#).
 - The Service component supporting OPLAN or OPORD should be comprehensive enough to cover all combat support aspects of how the Air Force component should be employed.
 - ✦ The Service OPORD should include a basic plan plus appropriate annexes and appendices. Ownership of the annexes and appendices is divided amongst the Air Force forces (AFFOR) staff, and, once developed and approved, should be made available to all Air Force units within the [air expeditionary task force](#).
 - *For complete discussion of Service component planning, [click here](#).*
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