



ANNEX 3-2 IRREGULAR WARFARE

AIR FORCE CAPABILITIES AND IW EXECUTION

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Many Air Force capabilities have been identified as best practices in the conduct of [irregular warfare](#) (IW). Planners should consider capabilities and best practices when developing IW plans for the commander, Air Force forces (COMAFFOR).



Appreciating Airpower's Reach

Airpower is more than dropping bombs, strafing targets, firing missiles, providing precision navigation and timing, or protecting networks. It is also a way of influencing world situations in ways to support national objectives. Through careful building of partnerships, Air Force forces can favorably shape the strategic environment by assessing, advising, training, and assisting {partner} nation air forces in their efforts to counter internal or external threats.

- Volume 1, *Basic Doctrine*

AIR FORCE CAPABILITIES

The Air Force should avoid unilateral operations, and assume that partner nations (PN) cannot always independently execute military operations when US interests are at stake. The Air Force's asymmetric IW capability lies with collaboration. Relationships, cultural understanding, and the ability to integrate Air Force capabilities with other military and non-military organizations are key for success.

Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance

IW is a very complex and dynamic environment that requires an adaptive and dedicated [intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance](#) (ISR) force. ISR operations, target development, and an understanding of the socioeconomic principles by ISR personnel and commanders provide the Airmen with the best opportunities to successfully achieve appropriate effects. Joint intelligence preparation of the [operational environment](#) builds understanding of political, military, economic, social, information, and infrastructure systems, as well as the cultural factors in a conflict that enable friendly forces to target for specific effects within the operational environment. Intelligence products should provide the commander with the fullest possible understanding of all entities involved in the conflict. Near-real time ISR and precision location also help build commanders' situational awareness even if they are not used directly in targeting. When working with the IW partner, effective ISR is a critically important tool.

Air Force ISR operations in IW include the full spectrum of intelligence disciplines across air, space, and cyberspace. Intelligence disciplines such as [geospatial intelligence, signals intelligence, and human intelligence \(HUMINT\)](#) provide synergy to operations. In addition, special operations forces' (SOF's) unique manned and unmanned deep capability provides valuable adversary ISR for the joint force commander (JFC). Triggers for operations often rely on one of these ISR disciplines and often this intelligence is derived from non-Air Force sources. Air Force intelligence planners and operators should be integrated and involved with national, joint, coalition, and host nation partners; these embedded personnel can more easily acquire unfiltered and current insights and interaction with PN counterparts. Air Force intelligence personnel should understand and assist with ISR plans and operations to ensure effective use of assets and focused collections. ISR collections and their associated processing, exploitation, and dissemination operations can be long duration efforts with little to no payoff, or short duration with immediate payoff. Regardless, intelligence personnel should justify this weight of effort to commanders and commanders should understand the importance and time requirements of target development.

Target development is important in conducting IW. The Air Force's capabilities are heavily leveraged to develop the target sets. ISR assets and analysts are vital in identifying enemy capabilities, centers of gravity and [command and control](#) (C2). Another important factor in IW is managing the social, political, and economic consequences of operations as well as minimizing traditional collateral damage. For every action there will be a reaction, and often in IW the local populace's reaction may

seem irrational or unwarranted. Planners should closely examine cause and effect relationships of operations. Failing to anticipate popular perceptions or the potential effects of enemy propaganda can turn a successful mission into a strategic setback because of the loss of popular support (both in the area of responsibility (AOR) and possibly at home).

Government legitimacy is often a key target in IW. If a government is unable to provide basic services (security, rule of law, basic governance, water, electricity, sanitation services, infrastructure, etc.) the population can become hostile or apathetic. This may allow hostile forces to thrive or move freely. Furthermore, it is important that intelligence planners understand the cultural dynamics throughout the operational environment. Indications of socio-economic stressors or cultural stress can be indicators of a contested operational environment. It is imperative for intelligence personnel to identify and articulate the appropriate courses of action to the commanders. For example, security might be obtained temporarily in a key area with precision lethal strikes, but might be secured in the long term by enabling social or economic improvements. Such analysis requires thorough fusion of intelligence of all types from all possible sources, especially during the prelude to operations. For a more detailed discussion of Air Force ISR, see Annex 2-0, [Global Integrated Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance Operations](#).

Cyberspace Operations

Like air operations, cyberspace operations may strike directly at nodes of interest. For example, cyberspace operations may hinder or disrupt insurgent operations, or at least require them to expend resources defending their cyberspace assets.

Information Operations

The effective implementation of information operations in IW is critical to achieving US military objectives. In IW, populations are central to the conflict. Information-related capabilities and activities are integrated in order to create significant impacts on adversary, neutral, and friendly populations.

The rapid flow of information from around-the-clock news, blogs, social networking, and text messaging has changed the world. The ability of social networks in cyberspace to incite popular support, organize protests, and spread ideology is not limited by geography or time. The continued proliferation of information technology assets, especially mobile platforms, have profound implications for US forces and PNs during IW operations. Commanders at all levels should consider the ability of neutral and hostile forces to shape the battlespace due to the speed, availability, and low access barriers to information pathways.

It is vital to keep in mind the importance of information operations across all phases of an IW operation. [Information operations](#) (IO) should be the supported capability during shaping and deterrence phases, as well as during stability and support operations. IO

can be used to bolster the legitimacy, not only of US actions, but the PN government that is engaged in the conflict as well. Through the integration of information-related capabilities and activities, the US can aid the PN in establishing internal security, defending from external aggression, and building partnerships within the region. HUMINT is key to IO in support of IW, particularly in planning and executing military information support operations, perception management, and public affairs, especially since the enemy also has the ability to run an IO campaign as part of their strategy.

During Operation ALLIED FORCE (OAF), NATO recognized the need to counter the Serbian propaganda apparatus. The Serbians were using a radio relay station next to St Mark's Cathedral in Belgrade to pass propaganda within Serbia and neighboring countries.

NATO used a kinetic option to destroy the relay station in order to deny the Serbians the use of this asset for propaganda.

As seen in the images below, precision bombing resulted in a tactical success, however; it was also successfully exploited by Serbian propaganda. The kinetic option caused civilian casualties and within three hours the relay station was operational and feeding the Serbian propaganda machine.



World opinion sided with the Serbian leader (Milosevic) over the appropriateness of the target¹ and an International Criminal Tribunal for Yugoslavia (ICTY) was formed which stated "...NATO violated the prohibition of direct attacks against civilians and indiscriminate attacks and bears legal responsibility for violations of international humanitarian law."²

Ultimately, the ICTY determined there was no deliberate targeting of civilians or unlawful military targets by NATO during the campaign.³ However, from an IW IO perspective, the kinetic option employed caused the US and NATO operational/strategic harm and required significant diplomatic efforts with the ICTY.

REFERENCES

1. www.psywarrior.com/natostrategicpsyops.html
2. Camppeace.org
3. www.essex.ac.uk/armedcon/Issues/Texts/ICTY001.htm

Conventional Forces Supporting IW Operations

At the JFC's direction, the Air Force may engage in combat operations to meet PN and US objectives. Supporting a PN's IW efforts will most likely present limitations and constraints not often found in traditional warfare. The need to maintain the PN's legitimacy and its leadership role in IW may result in less efficient tactical employment of airpower, but should ultimately be more effective (e.g., flying more sorties using PN capability rather than one US sortie). Support to IW will most likely be a long-term commitment and require a sustainable operations tempo as well as the appropriate force requirements. The COMAFFOR should consider the effect of sustained operations on assets and personnel. Force rotation plans should be coordinated and understood between both organizations. The level of effort may change as the conflict evolves requiring the ability to surge when and where required. Understanding that the nature of the conflict may change multiple times requires planners to continually rely on feedback and assessment in order to shape operations and modify existing plans.

When an IW partner is incapable of countering the threat, the Air Force may be tasked to provide direct support that does not commit US personnel to combat. Such support encompasses Service-funded activities that improve PN air force effectiveness without duplicating or replacing efforts to create or maintain PN capabilities. Air Force activities should emphasize the PN's combat role. These support activities may include:

- ✦ Command and control—create a tailored air operations center-like capability that integrates PN capabilities and leadership.
- ✦ Communications—open channels to use Air Force communications assets.
- ✦ Positioning, navigation, and timing aids—provide equipment and training.
- ✦ [Intelligence collection and analysis.](#)
- ✦ Geospatial intelligence and cartography—ensure National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency (NGA) products are available to PN.
- ✦ [Air mobility](#) and logistics—provide training and fly in conjunction with PN forces.
- ✦ Logistics support—provide theater experts and reachback to US logistics pipeline.
- ✦ [Civil-military operations](#)—civil affairs, IO, and humanitarian and civic assistance.
- ✦ [Medical operations.](#)
- ✦ Security operations.

Combat Support

[Combat support](#) operations in IW may be designed to support US-only or multinational operations, and enable PN airpower capabilities against irregular threats. Combat sustainment of forces entails transporting materiel, supplies, and personnel to reinforce units engaged in combat within the operational area. Combat support may transition from an Air Force support role to the primary application of military force. The complexity and unpredictability of IW operations and activities present challenges to commanders, who should consider the different risks associated with employing combat support in IW:

- ★ Operating in austere environments with limited infrastructure.
- ★ Increased combat readiness for surviving and operating in increased threat environments to include CBRN environments.
- ★ Increased security requirements.
- ★ Extended logistical lines.
- ★ Communications limitations.
- ★ Multiple distributed operations.
- ★ Medical operations.

The 332d Security Forces Group (SFG) at Joint Base Balad, Iraq, provided inside- and outside-the-wire security to ensure force protection, dominating the base boundary to ensure successful sortie generation. The SFG coordinated closely with the battlespace owner (US Army) to ensure information sharing and seams in the defense were covered. The SFG also integrated organic air ISR assets to aid aggressive patrolling to further enhance base defense efforts.

Finally, Security Forces and OSI were able to establish and leverage existing human networks to gauge US counterinsurgency (COIN) efforts at various mass gatherings in and around the base boundary. The combined COIN and HUMINT efforts of the entire 332d Air Expeditionary Wing resulted in an overall decrease of indirect fire attacks against the base by more than 50 percent.

Planners and leaders may be required to assess a PN's combat support capability as well as develop training and education plans to ensure full mission capability. Combat support capabilities may set the conditions for achieving the JFC's objectives by supporting non-military instruments of power during IW operations. As such, combat support should be responsive and sufficient to sustain the operational requirements of IW. For more detailed information on combat support, see Annex 4-0, [Combat Support](#).

Operation ENDURING FREEDOM (Strike Operations)

On 26 March 2006, an Air Force combat controller attached to a US Army Special Forces Operational Detachment Alpha team in Afghanistan orchestrated one of numerous examples of a successful joint air-ground operation in support of the Afghan National Army. Shortly into their mission, the team made contact with a large enemy force and rapidly assessed that they were surrounded on three sides by up to one hundred anti-coalition militants. While taking heavy and accurate enemy fire, the combat controller made radio contact with numerous aircraft and quickly talked them onto enemy positions and directed precise air strikes that enabled the team to break contact. Over the next six hours, the combat controller requested, integrated, and controlled A-10, B-52, AH-64, CH-47, and MQ-1 aircraft in support of the Afghan National Army and special operations mission. The professionalism and expertise of an embedded Airman and the precision and lethality of airpower, turned a potentially devastating blow to a maturing Afghan National Army unit into a tactical success.

Partner Nation Support with Air Mobility

[Air mobility](#) is essential when conducting IW operations, supporting US ground forces, and enabling IW partner capabilities. Air mobility operations may increase a PN government's capacity to govern and administer through presence and persistence in otherwise inaccessible regions of the country. They also physically extend the reach of public outreach and information programs. Air mobility provides a means of rapidly transporting personnel and supplies to contested areas. Air mobility-focused Airmen, integrated with surface forces, often increase the effectiveness of air mobility and resupply operations, as well as mitigating risk in those operations.

Specifically trained [airlift](#) forces provide [airland and airdrop](#) support to [special operations](#). Since there are a limited number of airlift assets dedicated to this mission, the principle of economy of force is particularly important. When performing these missions, airlift crews normally act as integral members of a larger joint package. Because these missions routinely operate under austere conditions in hostile environments, extensive planning, coordination, and training are required to minimize risk. Airlift used in a special operations role provides commanders the capability to create specific effects, which may not be attainable through traditional airlift practices. Commanders may also consider using indigenous aviation forces to support special operations forces in hostile or denied territory with air mobility and resupply, insertion and extraction, casualty evacuation, [personnel recovery](#), ISR, and [close air support](#) (CAS). However, commanders should also consider the capabilities, proficiency and sustainability of the PN air force, as well as adversary threats, when determining the appropriate assets to employ. Indigenous capabilities should be responsive to asymmetric or irregular threats and circumstances. Indigenous forces also benefit from

the ability to be resupplied or evacuated to receive medical care. This can have a very positive effect on their morale as well as help legitimize the PN government among its own forces. For additional information, see Annex 3-17, [Air Mobility Operations](#); Annex 3-05, [Special Operations](#); and Annex 3-22, [Foreign Internal Defense](#).



US combat air advisors train with Djiboutian airmen, gaining key lift and air transportation capabilities

TRAINING, ADVISING AND ASSISTING PARTNERS

Aviation Foreign Internal Defense

Although the US aviation role in foreign internal defense (FID) can be extensive, the term [aviation FID](#) (AvFID) generally refers to DOD programs for assessing, training, advising, and assisting PN aviation forces in the sustained use of airpower to help their governments deal with internal threats. FID is no longer a special operations force (SOF)-only or predominant arena. Conventional forces (CF) Airmen as well as [Air Force special operations forces](#) (AFSOF) conduct the AvFID mission function. This

mission area delivers CF air advisors and SOF [combat aviation advisor](#) capabilities with specific skill sets necessary to assess, train, advise, assist, and equip PN forces to sustain an aviation force capable of military operations. For more information on AFSOF IW capabilities, refer to Annex 3-22, [Foreign Internal Defense](#).

El Salvador

In El Salvador during the 1980s, indigenous US-trained and equipped aviation forces gave the PN government unmatched mobility, ISR capability, and the ability to destroy drug-related cash crops that the insurgency relied upon for income.

National Guard State Partnerships

The National Guard Bureau's State Partnership Program has developed partnerships between nearly every state's Guard Bureau (including Air National Guard units) and one or more nations throughout the world. State Partnership Program events are often subject-matter exchanges, demonstrations of capabilities, or senior leader visits, usually involving the following areas:

- ★ Disaster management and disaster-relief activities.
- ★ Military education.
- ★ Noncommissioned officer development.
- ★ Command and control.
- ★ Border operations.
- ★ Military medicine.
- ★ Port security.
- ★ Search and rescue.
- ★ Military justice.



The Alabama National Guard (ALNG) and the country of Romania entered into a partnership July 1993. For more than two decades, the ALNG has fostered a solid relationship and continues to be a viable enabler in building capacity in Romania. The ALNG has conducted over 140 engagements since partnership inception focused on NATO interoperability, promoting political stability, assisting in the development of democratic institutions and open market economies, demonstrating military subordination and support to civil authorities, projecting US humanitarian values and providing support to deploying troops in support of the current war fight.

- [Alabama National Guard home page](#)

AIR FORCE SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES

AFSOF Considerations

Before the attacks of 9/11, SOF and CF normally operated in separate operational areas independently of one another. The Global War on Terror and associated IW activities expanded, demanding more than SOF was capable of supporting. SOF and CF found themselves operating in close proximity, increasingly dependent upon each other for mutual support. To achieve mission success, SOF and CF should continue to pursue interoperability, integrate operations when able, and provide mutual support when required. While both the commander, Air Force special operations air component, and the COMAFFOR are responsible for supporting the theater security cooperation

planning efforts through their respective components, the joint special operations air component commander and the joint force air component commander should continue to cooperate to achieve specific theater operational objectives.

AFSOC Capabilities

AFSOF are prepared to deliver SOF airpower capabilities across the range of military operations in support of joint operations. Because of inherent capabilities, characteristics, and specialized training, SOF are ideally suited to participate in US efforts to counter IW adversaries and threats and to conduct operations which promote stability and security.

ISR

Historically, IW efforts have proven to be ISR-intensive. AFSOF ISR capabilities focus on adversary “pattern of life” activities which provide critical intelligence for IW requirements.

Specialized Mobility

AFSOF specialized mobility personnel and assets provide essential movement of US and PN forces to remote and austere locations characterized by poor infrastructure and unimproved landing zones. AFSOF aircrews can also conduct personnel recovery operations. Certain aircrews are specially trained to support unconventional warfare operations and support.

Precision Strike

AFSOF manned and unmanned precision strike capabilities are particularly suited to conduct discreet and precise strikes with limited collateral damage. When required, AFSOF assets can conduct operations in urban environments.

Special Tactics Teams

Special tactics teams (STT) can be called upon to assist when the US Government wants to limit US ground personnel but is willing to place joint terminal attack controllers forward to direct US airpower. STT can also be used to control air operations in urban environments and limit collateral control. STT can also conduct virtual operations from remote locations. Finally, STT may also be used to support unconventional warfare operations and train indigenous forces.

Aviation FID

AvFID personnel can assist PNs develop counterinsurgency and counterterrorism capabilities. They can also assist with general aviation enterprise development. If UW

is embraced as a strategic option, Combat Aviation Advisors may also be required to assist with UW operations and support.

For more information refer to Annex 3-05, [Special Operations](#), and 3-22, [Foreign Internal Defense](#).
