



CURTIS E. LEMAY CENTER

FOR DOCTRINE DEVELOPMENT AND EDUCATION



ANNEX 3-60 TARGETING

LOAC TARGETING RESTRICTIONS

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Personnel

Are we targeting personnel protected under LOAC? Intentional direct attacks on civilians are prohibited. However, this is distinctly different from the incidental injury that may be caused to civilians or civilian objects as a result of an attack on a valid military target ([collateral damage](#)). Collateral damage is an issue of proportionality.

Protection of the Civilian Population. Civilian populations may not be intentionally targeted for attack. Acts of violence designed to spread terror among the civilian population are prohibited. However, civilians may not be used as “human shields” to protect military targets from attack. The fact that they may be used to do so does not necessarily prevent the military object from being attacked. As directed or time permitting, targets surrounded by human shields will be reviewed by higher authority taking into account policy and legal.

Protection of Wounded and Sick. Direct attacks on wounded and sick who are no longer contributing to an adversary’s military operations are prohibited by the Geneva Conventions. As noted above, the incidental additional injury that might be caused to sick and wounded still on the battlefield in the proximity to valid military targets is an issue of proportionality. Also, the sick and wounded may not be used as shields or protect military targets from attack. The fact that they may be used to do so does not necessarily prevent the military object from being attacked. As directed or time permitting, targets surrounded by human shields will be reviewed by higher authority taking into account policy and legal considerations.

Protection of Prisoners of War. Direct attacks on prisoners of war (POW) are also prohibited by the Geneva Conventions. This protection occurs from the moment they surrender because they are no longer considered combatants at that point. POW camps or detention facilities should be marked so as to be visible from the air. However, it is also important that any POW facility be noted as such on a [no strike list](#) (NSL) to ensure there is no confusion on the part of aircrew between the POW facility and adversary forces that may be conducting rear-area operations.

Objects and Places

Are we targeting an object or place protected under LOAC? Intentional direct attacks on civilian objects generally are prohibited. However, this is distinct from the incidental injury that may be caused to civilian objects as a result of an attack on a valid military target. Likewise, there are instances when based on the facts of a particular situation a civilian object may be a valid military target. These are discussed below.

Protection of Civilian Objects. Civilian objects may not be intentionally targeted for attack. Civilian objects are civilian property and facilities other than those used to support or sustain the adversary's war fighting capability. Civilian objects that are being used to engage in or support hostilities may lose their protected civilian status and be legitimate military targets.

Civilian objects that may be legitimate military targets: Some facilities or objects that might be considered as civilian objects but are actually legitimate military targets based on the facts surrounding their nature, location purpose and use:

- ✦ **Dual-Use Objects.** These are facilities or objects that serve both a military and civilian purpose and may be legitimate military targets. For example a power grid that supports an enemy airbase, but also supports civilian cities/towns is dual-use, and may be considered a legitimate military target. A target such as this would need to be examined in light of *proportionality* and specifically as to whether targeting the power grid would be disproportionate to the effects caused to the surrounding civilian objects supported by the same power grid. Typically dual-use targets require a higher level of approval authority because of concerns as to the impact upon the civilian population.
- ✦ **Economic Objects.** These are typically factories, workshops and plants that make an effective (though not necessarily direct) contribution to an adversary's military capability. Like dual-use targets, these typically require a higher level of approval because of the particular facts and circumstances regarding the nature, location, use and purpose of the target.
- ✦ **Lines of Communication.** Transportation systems (road ways, bridges, etc.) and communication systems (TV, radio), while civilian in nature, may also be considered legitimate military targets based on their use. Like dual-use and economic objects, these may require higher level approval based on the particular facts and circumstances regarding nature, location, use, and purpose of the target.

Protection of Medical Units, Hospitals and Medical Transport. Under the Geneva Conventions, these are not to be attacked. These should be marked by a distinctive medical emblem such as the Red Cross, Red Crescent, or some other internationally recognized symbol to show that they are for medical use. Known medical facilities and structures may typically be placed in the combatant commander's NSL database. Like civilian personnel, these may not be used to shield legitimate military targets. For instance, placing a surface-to-air missile (SAM) system next to a hospital does not prevent an attack on the SAM system if necessary in self-defense. Usually the

combatant commander may issue guidance concerning the approval authority for mobile systems placed next to such protected objects when not acting in self-defense.

Protection of Religious, Cultural, and Charitable Buildings and Monuments. Under international treaties and customary law, buildings and monuments devoted to religion, art, charitable purposes, or historical sites are not to be attacked. These should be marked with internationally recognized distinctive emblems (such as the blue shield with two white triangles). Known buildings and monuments devoted to religious, cultural and charitable purposes may typically be placed in the combatant commander's NSL database. Properties considered to be cultural in nature are usually considered irreplaceable and the property of all mankind. Like civilians, these may not be used to shield legitimate military targets. For instance, placing a SAM in the ruins of an ancient temple would not prevent an attack on the SAM system if necessary in self-defense. Usually the combatant commander may issue guidance concerning the approval authority for striking mobile systems placed next to such protected buildings or monuments when not in self-defense.
