



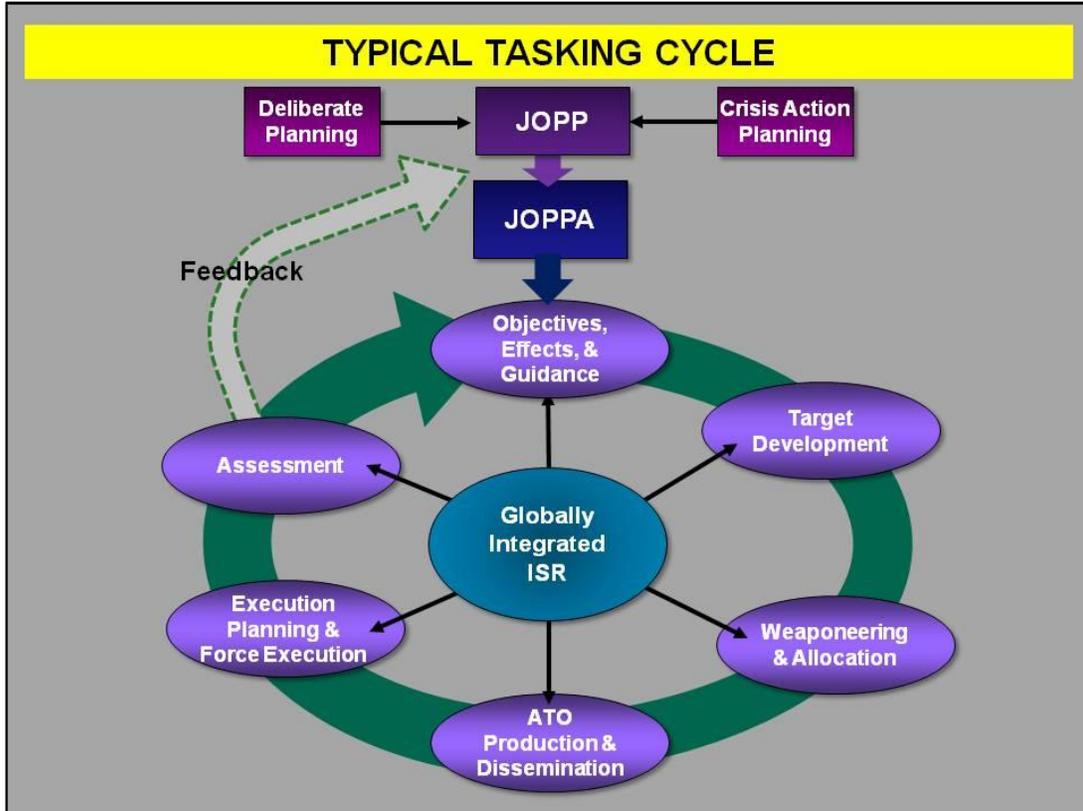
EXECUTING OPERATIONS

Last Updated: 22 Nov 2016

- Execution of operations is an integral part of the overarching effects-based approach construct. Many Air Force operations are executed by means of a tasking cycle. The cycle is used with some modifications for tasking operations in the air, space, and cyberspace and is the heart of the Air Force battle rhythm.
- Once execution begins, the commander continues to guide and influence operations through the air operations directive (AOD) (and, in some cases, equivalent space and cyberspace operations directives).

The Tasking Cycle

- Many Air Force operations are executed by means of a tasking cycle. The tasking cycle creates a daily articulation of the overall airpower [strategy](#) and planning efforts. The tasking cycle is the means Airmen use to accomplish deliberate and [dynamic targeting](#), among other requirements. For further details on the targeting process, see Annex 3-60, [Targeting](#), and Joint Publication 3-60, [Joint Targeting](#).
- The tasking cycle develops the products needed to build and execute an [air tasking order](#) (ATO) and related products, and accomplish assessment.
- Although it is presented below as six separate, sequential stages, in reality **the tasking process is bi-directional, iterative, multidimensional, and sometimes executed in parallel**. It is built on a foundation based on thorough [joint intelligence preparation of the operational environment](#) (JIPOE). The cycle typically consists of the following stages performed at various levels of command (illustrated in the following figure, Typical Tasking Cycle):



- The cycle is built around finite time periods that are required to plan, integrate and coordinate, prepare for, conduct, and assess operations in air, space, and cyberspace.
- These time periods may vary from theater to theater and much targeting effort may not be bound specifically to the cycle's timeframe, but the tasking cycle and its constituent processes drive the [air operations center's](#) (AOC's) battle rhythm and thus help determine deadlines and milestones for related processes, including targeting.
- Some assets may not operate within the tasking cycle. These include:
 - ✦ Most space assets, which are tasked via the space tasking order, although some theater-specific space operations will probably be included in the daily ATO for the sake of situational awareness/understanding, [integration](#), and [synchronization](#).
 - ✦ Special operations most often operate within the dynamic targeting process.

- ✦ Many IO, cyberspace, and [intertheater](#) [air mobility](#) assets commonly operate within a different cycle
 - ✦ In large operations, the existence of differing planning cycles among components can lead to increased complexity in the process.
 - ✦ Most component planning cycles are approximately 72-96 hours. However, the requirement within the air tasking cycle to manage as many as five separate ATOs drives the requirement for discipline to manage defined inputs and outputs during particular slices of time. Also, dynamic targeting and collection take place within a much more time-constrained framework.
 - ✦ Some long-range combat assets based outside the [area of responsibility](#), but operating within the [joint operations area](#), may be airborne on a tasked mission before the ATO that covers their weapons' times over target is published. These assets require the most current draft ATO information and all updates that affect their missions.
 - ✦ Other missions that are not under the COMAFFOR's control may be included in the ATO to provide visibility and assist coordination and deconfliction.
 - The tasking cycle supports every part of the JOPP and JOPPA, as well as the joint targeting cycle, and is interwoven throughout these other processes up to and including execution planning and force execution.
 - *For the complete discussion of the tasking cycle, [click here](#).*
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