



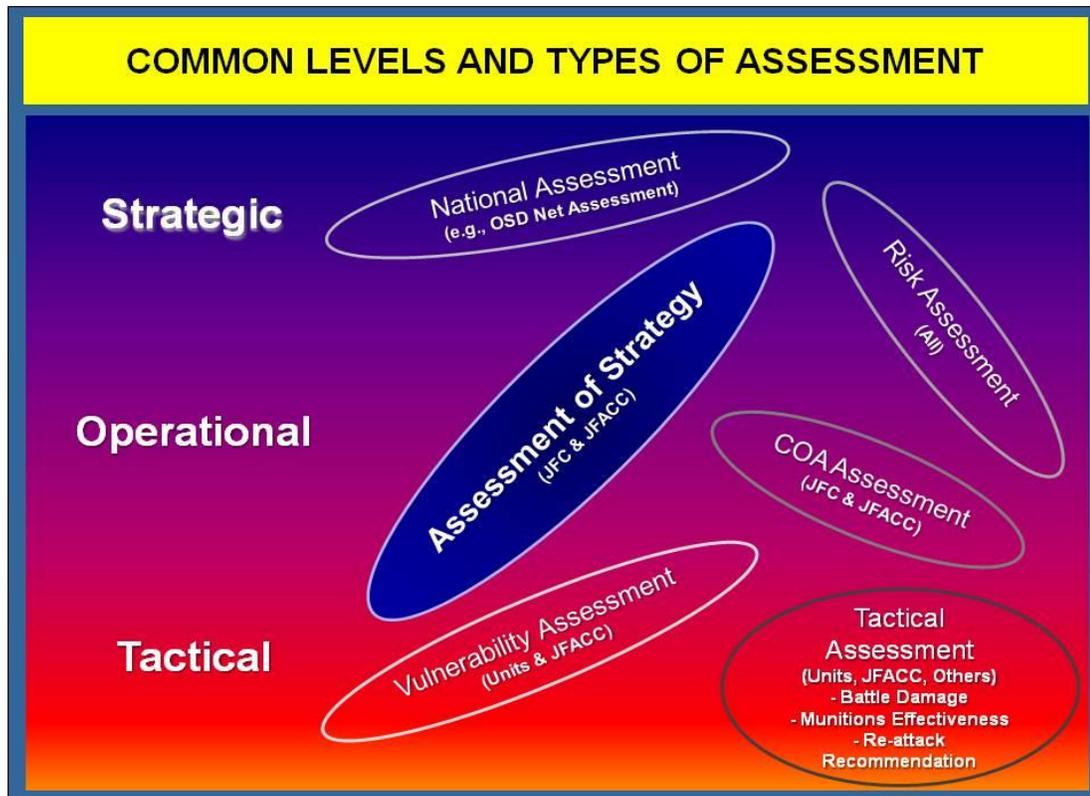
## ASSESSMENT

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- **Assessment** is “a continuous process that measures the overall effectiveness of employing joint force capabilities during military operations.” It is also the “determination of the progress toward accomplishing a task, creating an effect, or achieving an objective.”
- The purpose of assessment is to support the commander’s decision-making process by providing insight into the effectiveness of the strategy and accompanying plans.
- Many types of assessment exist, and may be used in support of operations, but assessment in this document refers to activities that support the commander’s decision-making process.
- In an effects-based approach, assessment should provide the commander with the answers to these basic questions:
  - ✦ Are we doing things right?
  - ✦ Are we doing the right things?
  - ✦ Are we measuring the right things?
- *For a more complete overview of assessment, [click here](#).*

### Levels of Assessment

- Assessors perform many types of assessment across the strategic, operational, and tactical levels to inform a wide array of decisions. The following figure, Common Levels and Types of Assessment, displays some common types of assessment and, broadly, the levels where each would most likely be applied (the depiction is not all-inclusive).



- ★ The figure also shows the level of commander who commonly directs a given type of assessment (e.g., the [joint force commander](#) [JFC] and [joint force air component commander](#) [JFACC]).
- ★ At all levels – but especially at the operational level -- the JFACC and staff should observe how the JFC takes information “on board” and craft assessment products that convey the Airman’s perspective without seeming “air-centric” or presenting a biased view.
- **Tactical assessment** (TA) is generally performed at the unit or joint force component level and typically measures physical, empirical achievement of direct effects.
  - ★ TA is an umbrella term covering [battle damage assessment](#) (BDA), munitions effectiveness assessment, and recommendations for re-attack (and often referred to in joint doctrine as “[combat assessment](#)” [CA]).<sup>1</sup> These forms of assessment focus on offensive and kinetic actions.
  - ★ TA should also be accomplished following tactical employment of nonkinetic actions and non-offensive capabilities.

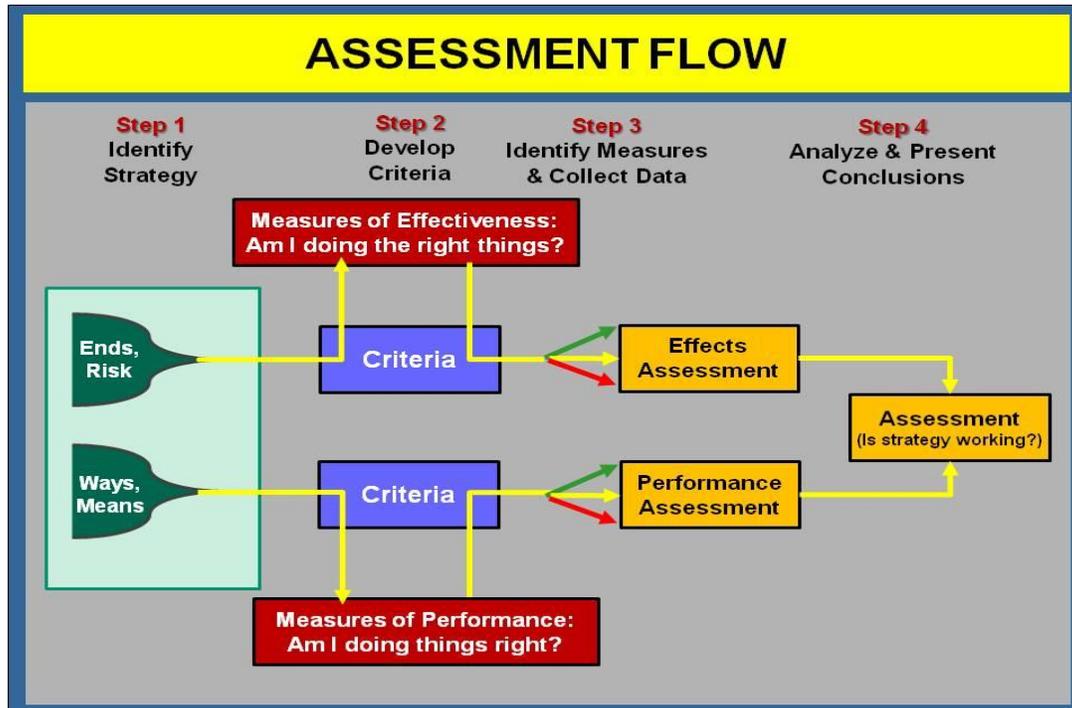
<sup>1</sup> The Air Force has chosen “TA” over “CA” because it is more broadly applicable and descriptively accurate: Not all operations (and hence not all assessments at the tactical level) involve combat. The name should apply to tactical-level evaluation across the ROMO. The terms, however, are functionally equivalent for most purposes.

- **Operational Assessment.** Assessment at the [operational level of war](#) begins to evaluate complex indirect effects, track progress toward operational and strategic objectives, and make recommendations for strategy adjustments and future action extending beyond tactical re-attack.
  - ✦ Assessment at this level often entails evaluation of [course of action](#) (COA) success, assessment of the progress of overall strategy, and joint force [vulnerability assessment](#).
  - ✦ Some measures can be expressed empirically (with quantitative measures); others, like psychological effects, may have to be expressed in qualitative and subjective terms.
- **Strategic assessment** addresses issues at the joint force (“theater strategic,” as in bringing a particular conflict to a favorable conclusion) and national levels (enduring security concerns and interests).
- The time frames considered by the various assessment types may vary widely, from rather short intervals at the tactical level to longer time horizons at the strategic level, even reaching well beyond the end of an operation, as lessons learned are determined and absorbed. The relationship among the various assessment types is not linear, with outputs from one type often feeding multiple other types and levels.
- *For the complete discussion of levels of assessment, [click here](#).*

## Assessing Strategy

- The purpose of assessing [strategy](#) is to give commanders dependable insights into whether their strategy is effective and to measure progress toward the [end state\(s\)](#) that the commander is tasked to deliver. This type of assessment can be conducted for any commander from the tactical through the strategic level and should address the four main components of a strategy:
  - ✦ **Ends**—The commander’s end state and the objectives required to obtain it. These are generally derived from the commander’s intent statement.
  - ✦ **Ways**—The tasks or actions undertaken to help achieve the effects that achieve the ends, as generated during the detailed planning process.
  - ✦ **Means**—The resources put toward accomplishing the ways. The doctrine, organization, training, materiel, leadership and education, personnel, and facilities (DOTMLPF) construct is often a useful source for examining and developing the means.
  - ✦ **Risk**—The cost and amount of uncertainty and vulnerability the commander is willing to accept in executing the strategy.

- Assessment considers all these components, with the goal of developing insights into whether a strategy is working and what areas may need to be re-evaluated if that strategy is not working. The following figure, Assessment Flow, depicts this strategy-centric approach to assessment.



- For the complete discussion of strategy assessment, [click here](#).

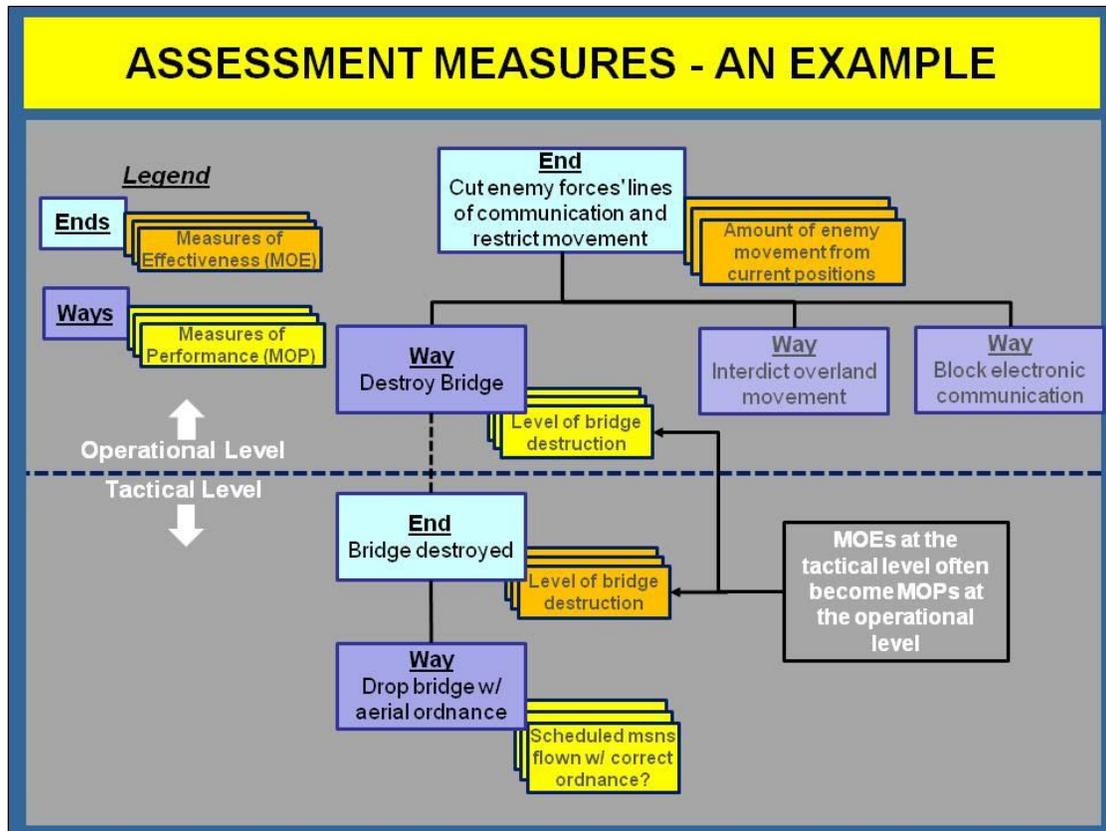
## Assessment Criteria

- Criteria define the attributes and thresholds for judging progress toward the end state and accomplishment of required tasks. **Development of assessment criteria is the critical component of the assessment process and should be accomplished before specific measures or data requirements are defined.** Developing measures without a clear understanding of how those measures fit into a judgment of the effectiveness of the overall strategy often leads to laborious data collection and analysis processes that provide little to no value to the decision-makers.
- Criteria help focus data collection by ensuring that assessment measures relate clearly to the elements of the strategy being assessed. Criteria should be developed for the ends, ways, and means at each level of assessment. Well-written criteria should adhere to some basic attributes:

- ✦ **Relevant to the effect or action being assessed.** The criteria should relate directly to the commander's end state, tasks, and success thresholds as outlined in the strategy.
  - ✦ **Mutually exclusive across the assessment categories** (e.g., good, marginal, poor) for a given effect or action assessed. This ensures that only one category is appropriate for a given outcome.
  - ✦ **Collectively exhaustive across the range of outcomes for a given effect or action.** This helps ensure that most, if not all, potential outcomes are covered by the criteria.
  - ✦ **Well-defined.** Specific and relevant definitions should be developed for any confusing or ill-defined terms used in the criteria. Planners should attempt to objectively define success thresholds and the boundaries between assessment categories whenever possible (e.g., what are the criteria for transition between the 'good' and 'marginal' categories?). Nonetheless, judgment is always necessary when assessing the overall strategy.
- *For the complete discussion of assessment criteria, [click here](#).*

## Assessment Measures

- Assessment measures are simply the data elements that, via the criteria, provide insight into the effectiveness of the commander's strategy. Assessment measures are commonly divided into two types:
  - ✦ **Measure of performance (MOP)**—A criterion used to assess friendly actions that are tied to measuring task accomplishment.
  - ✦ **Measure of effectiveness (MOE)**—A criterion used to assess changes in system behavior, capability, or operational environment that is tied to measuring the attainment of an end state, achievement of an objective, or creation of an effect.
- MOPs address the ways and means that are employed during execution to help achieve desired effects; they indicate progress toward accomplishing planned tasks or actions. MOEs assess progress toward creating desired effects and thus achieving the objectives and end state (simply put, MOPs help tell us if we are doing things right; MOEs help tell us if we are doing the right things).
- The distinction between MOEs and MOPs can depend on their context within the commander's strategy. The exact same measure can be an MOP for one commander and an MOE for another, lower echelon commander. The following figure, Assessment Measures – An Example, illustrates a practical example of this delineation.



- Developing good measures is an art, though there are some general guidelines that can aid in developing high-quality measures:
  - ✦ **Measures should be relevant and necessary.** Measures should relate to the effect or task they are intended to describe and should feed directly into the already-established criteria. Collection of irrelevant measures that do not shed light on the effectiveness of the commander's strategy is a misuse of valuable time and resources. Focusing primarily on collecting the data necessary to apply to the developed criteria should help avoid the creation of superfluous measures.
  - ✦ **Measures should represent a scale, not a goal or objective.** Metrics developers may be tempted to write a goal or criterion as a measure. Instead, the goal should be included in the criteria in accordance with the commander's risk tolerance and thresholds. Operators and planners should establish these goals (objectives) in coordination with the assessors.
  - ✦ **The data satisfying a measure should be observable, or at least inferable.** The measurements can be quantitative (numerical) or qualitative (non-numerical). In general, the more objectively measurable the better. However, **commanders and planners should avoid "the numbers trap:" blindly using rates, numbers, and other quantitative metrics, especially in assessing effects, since their seemingly "empirical" and quantified elements may be**

**based on wholly subjective assumptions** and the number may be meaningless—thus they may often lack direct linkages to the objectives or ends outlined in the strategy, while sometimes also imparting an illusion of “scientific validity” merely because they are quantified.

- *For the complete discussion on assessment measures, [click here](#).*
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