



DYNAMIC TARGETING

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[Dynamic targeting](#) complements the deliberate planning efforts, as part of an overall operation, but also poses some challenges in the execution of targets designated within the dynamic targeting process. Dynamic targets are identified too late, or not selected for action in time to be included in deliberate targeting. The doctrine of a deliberate targeting process controlled by strategy, [law of armed conflict](#) (LOAC), and [rules of engagement](#) (ROE), etc. is equally applicable to the dynamic targeting process.

Also by definition, dynamic targeting occurs in a much more compressed timeline, requiring special consideration and attention for all personnel assigned to work the dynamic targeting process. The importance of dynamic targeting is further emphasized by joint targeting doctrine. While not the sole domain of the [commander, Air Force forces](#) (COMAFFOR), Airmen are heavily involved in the planning and execution of the dynamic targeting. The [joint force commander](#) (JFC) ultimately designates the responsibilities and authorities associated with the prosecution of dynamic targets and may often designate specific component responsibilities, based on location, capability, or target types.

Dynamic targeting is a term that applies to all targeting that is prosecuted outside of a given day's preplanned [air tasking order](#) (ATO) targets (i.e., the unplanned and unanticipated targets). It represents the targeting portion of the "execution" phase of [effects-based approach to operations](#) (EBAO). It is essential for commanders and [air operations center](#) (AOC) personnel to keep effects-based principles and the JFC's objectives in mind during dynamic targeting and ATO execution. It is easy for those caught up in the daily [battle rhythm](#) to become too focused on tactical-level details, losing sight of objectives, desired effects, or other aspects of commander's intent. When this happens, execution can devolve into blind target servicing, unguided by strategy, with little or no anticipation of enemy actions.

Dynamic targeting is different from deliberate targeting in terms of the timing of the steps in the process, but not different in the substance of the steps. Ultimately, dynamic targets are targets—as such, their nomination, development, execution, and assessment still takes place within the larger framework of the targeting and [tasking cycles](#). Some are fleeting and require near-immediate prosecution if they are to be targeted. Such targets require a procedure that can be worked through promptly and

that facilitates quick transition from receipt of intelligence (“trigger events”) through targeting solution to action against the target. This compressed decision cycle is best handled through the specialized dynamic targeting sub-processes. Seen from the larger cycle’s perspective, dynamic targeting takes place within phases five (execution planning and force execution) and six (assessment) of the targeting and air tasking cycles. The earlier phases serve to provide commanders’ targeting guidance and determine [concept of operations](#) (CONOPS) for making the resources that may prosecute dynamic targets available. Ultimately, the JFC and COMAFFOR should make decisions about these targets based on critical and timely intelligence information and may likely require reallocation of resources that could impact ongoing deliberate plan execution.

The combat operations division (COD) is responsible for implementation of dynamic targeting for the ATO currently in execution.¹ Successful dynamic targeting, however, requires a great deal of prior planning and coordination with other divisions within the AOC and with other components based on the type of target. If dynamic targeting is to be done correctly, planners should develop a plan that makes assets available to the COD prior to the start of execution. This can be done in a number of ways but the most common methods are:

- ✦ Preplanning target reference methods and coordination measures such as kill boxes and combat area entry points/routes for cruise missiles.
- ✦ Preplanning on-call or pre-positioned strike and [intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance](#) (ISR) packages (including [tanker support](#)) for rapid response to emerging targets (such as on-call [electronic warfare](#), [space](#), [cyberspace operations](#), [interdiction](#), or [close air support](#) missions available for tasking during ATO execution; missions on ground alert; and/or air-to-ground weapons loaded on aircraft performing defensive [counterair](#) missions).
- ✦ Using [joint intelligence preparation of the operational environment](#) (JIPOE) to determine the most probable areas where targets may emerge during execution.
- ✦ Diverting airborne assets assigned to lower priority targets to strike the recently identified target.
- ✦ Coordinating and synchronizing dynamic targeting operations by streamlining procedures.
- ✦ Developing procedures for rapid handover of the mission tasking to another component for mission execution, if the air component cannot attack an emerging target.

Divisions other than the COD have important roles to play in dynamic targeting. The strategy division (SD) should capture macro-level targeting guidance to include

¹ See [Air Force Instruction 13-1 AOC, Volume 3](#) for a description of the AOC other service/functional component liaisons.

component priorities in the [air operations directive](#) (AOD). Many items in the AOD, like commander's intent, anticipated weapons available, ROE, acceptable risk levels, and elements of the ISR collection plan provide vital information needed by operators and targeteers to develop and implement effective and timely effects based responses. For instance, ROE are especially important to this form of time-compressed targeting. While the SD typically drafts ROE inputs with advice from the judge advocate general, all involved in planning and execution should clearly understand the ROE. Compliance with ROE is a shared responsibility between the COMAFFOR staff, subordinate command elements, and aircrews/operators. Due to the probable time-sensitive nature of targets prosecuted during execution, clear guidance should be developed to enable rapid prosecution. Planning personnel may need to convey the priority of the dynamic target planned for engagement in terms relative to the target planned for deliberate execution that may not be engaged due to the reprioritization. In that same light, the priority of the ISR asset that may provide assessment information on that target should also be addressed, especially if there may be a dynamic change to the ongoing [joint integrated prioritized collection list](#) (JIPCL) missions.

Liaison officers (LNOs) from coalition partners, other components, and other Services are essential during dynamic targeting. LNOs—particularly the [special operations liaison element](#) (SOLE), [battlefield coordination detachment](#) (BCD), and other government agencies—may be able to provide the COMAFFOR with additional options for dealing with emerging targets as well as provide locations and activities of friendly forces. LNOs work de-confliction issues and their forces may also assist friendly forces by finding, fixing, tracking, targeting, and assessing targets. As stated earlier, dynamic targeting occurs in a much compressed timeline. Successful prosecution of a target may require that targeting be completed in minutes. To achieve this time compression, the COMAFFOR should consider implementing procedures that enable the phases of dynamic targeting to be performed simultaneously rather than sequentially. Ideally, one COD team should perform targeting of all dynamic targets. Creating separate teams may result in unwanted isolation, impede [unity of effort](#), and inhibit the cross-flow of information.

Successful prosecution of targets during execution also requires well organized and well-rehearsed procedures. There is a need for sharing sensor data and targeting information, identify suitable strike assets, obtain mission approval, and rapidly deconflict weapon employment. The reaction time between the sensor and shooter can be greatly accelerated if there are clearly articulated objectives, guidance, priorities, and intent for dynamic targeting before targets are even identified. The appropriate response for each target depends heavily on the level of conflict, the clarity of guidance to define the desired outcome, and ROE.
