

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY COMMANDER'S OVERVIEW

- **Discusses the critical purposes of joint planning at the strategic and operational levels.**
- **Describes how strategic direction is established and how it is implemented within the joint planning and execution community to develop military plans and orders.**
- **Outlines the four planning functions, the planning process, and an operational design methodology.**
- **Discusses how operational art and operational design enable understanding, provide context for decision making, and enable commanders and planners to identify hazards, threats, consequences, opportunities, and risk.**
- **Describes how combatant commanders develop campaigns to support the global campaign and shape the operational environment in a manner that supports strategic objectives.**
- **Outlines how operation assessment provides perspective, insight, and the opportunity to correct, adapt, and refine planning and execution to make military operations more effective.**
- **Discusses the three possible conditions for transitioning planning to execution.**

Joint Planning

Joint planning is the deliberate process of determining how to implement strategic guidance: how (the **ways**) to use military capabilities (the **means**) in time and space to achieve objectives (the **ends**) within an acceptable level of **risk**.

Leaders conduct joint planning to understand the strategic and operational environments to determine the best methods for employing the Department of Defense's (DOD's) capabilities to achieve national objectives.

Joint planning serves two critical purposes at the combatant command (CCMD) and subordinate joint force level:

At the strategic level, joint planning provides the President and the Secretary of Defense (SecDef) with options and advice to achieve the *National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (NSS) objectives through the employment of the joint force.

At the operational level, joint planning translates national level guidance into specific activities aimed at achieving strategic and operational objectives and attaining the military end state.

***Strategy, Plans, Operations,
and Assessments Cycle***

Plans translate the broad intent provided by a strategy into operations; successful operations achieve the strategy's objectives.

The four planning functions of strategic guidance, concept development, plan development, and plan assessment are generally sequential, but they often run simultaneously to accelerate the process.

***Strategy, Strategic Art,
Operational Art, and
Operational Planning***

Strategy is a prudent idea or set of ideas for employing the instruments of national power in a synchronized and integrated fashion to achieve theater, national, and multinational objectives.

Strategic art is the formulation, coordination, and application of ends, ways, and means to implement policy and promote national interests.

Operational art is the cognitive approach by commanders and staffs—supported by their skill, knowledge, experience, creativity, and judgment—to develop strategies, campaigns, and operations to organize and employ military forces by integrating ends, ways, means, and evaluating risks.

Strategic art and operational art are mutually supporting. Strategic art provides policy context to objectives, while operational art demonstrates the feasibility and efficacy of a strategy. Operational planning translates strategy into executable activities, operations, and campaigns, within resource and policy limitations to achieve objectives.

Principles of Planning

Focused on the Objective. Joint planning is oriented on achieving an objective: plans and actions should contribute to achieving national objectives.

Globally Integrated and Coordinated. Integrated planning synchronizes resources and integrates timelines, decision points, and authorities across CCMDs to enable the achievement of strategic and operational objectives.

Resource Informed. Joint planning is resource informed and time constrained.

Risk Informed. Planners assess and articulate risks and identify potential mitigation.

Framed within the Strategic Environment and Operational Environment (OE). Planning requires an understanding of the OE as it exists and as it changes.

Informs Decision Making. Joint planning must be agile and flexible enough to provide senior leadership with information to make critical decisions.

Adaptive and Flexible. Planning is an adaptive process that occurs in a networked, collaborative environment.

Planning Products

While the planning process is generally the same for campaign, contingency, or crisis planning, the output or products may differ. Campaign and contingency planning encompasses the preparation of plans that occur in non-crisis situations with a timeline generally not driven by external events. Crisis planning uses the same process but is typically driven by external events and is almost always time constrained. **Combatant command campaign plans (CCPs)** provide the means to translate strategic guidance into activities executable by CCMDs.

The two basic types of plans are campaign and contingency plans.

Shared Understanding

Civilian-Military Dialogue. Strategy is developed and joint planning is conducted at the United States Government (USG) department level. Joint planning supports the interaction between senior DOD civilian leadership, combatant commanders (CCDRs), and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS); to help the President and SecDef decide when, where, and how to employ US military forces and resources.

Adaptive planning provides a range of options at the operational and strategic levels. The complexity, rate of change, and inherent political nature of the strategic environment often drive policy makers to seek maximum strategic and operational flexibility.

Providing Options and Aligning Resources. CCDRs provide options for the use of the military in conjunction with other instruments of national power. Further planning enables CCDRs to develop courses of actions (COAs) that identify costs (including casualties) and risks associated with the options, a timeline, required resources and capabilities, and probability of success or failure of the military objectives in contributing to the desired national strategic objectives.

Risk Identification and Mitigation

Identifying Risk. Risk is the probability and consequence of an event causing harm to something valued. Commanders and senior leaders should account for risk when evaluating the likelihood of mission success. Risk can be assessed through the cost imposed by, or the impact on, achievement of the objective. Military risk is the estimated probability and consequence of the joint force's projected inability to achieve current or future military objectives (risk-to-mission), while providing and sustaining sufficient military resources (risk-to-force).

Mitigating Risk. Planners and CCDRs identify methods to mitigate risk as part of the plan.

Assessment

Commanders continually assess plans. At the CCMD-level, the joint planning and execution community (JPEC) and senior DOD leadership share

this task. Assessments continuously measure the effectiveness of military operations and project the expected effectiveness of plans against contingencies as the OE changes. Assessments support decision making by measuring the progress toward accomplishing a task, creating an effect, achieving an objective, or attaining a military end state.

Interorganizational Planning and Coordination

Interorganizational planning and coordination is the interaction among elements of DOD; participating USG departments and agencies; state, territorial, local, and tribal agencies; foreign military forces and government departments and agencies; international organizations; nongovernmental organizations; and the private sector to achieve an objective. Unified action is the synchronization, coordination, and integration of the activities of governmental and nongovernmental entities with military operations to achieve unity of effort. Coordination of interorganizational and multinational plans facilitates unity of effort among multiple organizations by promoting common understanding of the capabilities, limitations, and consequences of military and nonmilitary actions.

Multinational Planning and Coordination

Multinational operations is a collective term to describe military actions conducted by forces of two or more nations. Such operations are usually undertaken within the structure of a coalition or alliance, although other possible arrangements include supervision by an international organization; (e.g., the United Nations or Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe). **Key to any multinational operation is unity of effort** among national and military leaders of participating nations emphasizing common objectives and shared interests as well as mutual support and respect.

Strategic Guidance and Coordination

Strategic direction is contained in key documents, generally referred to as strategic guidance. Strategic direction may change rapidly in response to changing situations, whereas strategic guidance documents are typically updated cyclically and may not reflect the most current strategic direction.

National and the Department of Defense (DOD) Guidance

The President. The President provides strategic guidance through the *National Security Strategy of the United States of America* [short title: NSS], executive orders, and other strategic documents in conjunction with additional guidance and refinement from the National Security Council (NSC). The President also signs the *Unified Command Plan* (UCP) and the *2018-2020 Contingency Planning Guidance* (CPG) [short title: CPG], which are both developed by DOD.

SecDef. SecDef executes authority, direction, and control over DOD components. SecDef oversees the development of broad defense policy goals and priorities for the deployment, employment, and sustainment of US military forces based on the NSS. For planning, SecDef provides guidance to ensure military action supports national objectives. SecDef approves assignment and allocation of forces.

CJCS. The CJCS serves as principal military advisor to the President, SecDef, and other members of the NSC and assists the President and SecDef with providing unified strategic direction to the Armed Forces of the United States.

National Security Council System

The NSC is the President's principal forum for considering national security and foreign policy matters with senior national security advisors and cabinet officials, including SecDef and the CJCS. NSC decisions may be directed to any department or agency.

National Security Strategy

The NSS is prepared by the Executive Branch of the USG for Congress and outlines the major national security concerns of the United States and how the administration plans to address them using all instruments of national power.

Department of State and the United States Agency for International Development

The Department of State (DOS) is the lead US foreign affairs agency within the Executive Branch and the lead institution for the conduct of American diplomacy. The Secretary of State is the President's principal foreign policy advisor. The Secretary of State implements the President's foreign policies

worldwide through DOS and its employees. The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) is an independent federal agency that receives overall foreign policy guidance from the Secretary of State. USAID serves as the USG lead for international development and foreign disaster assistance.

DOD

National Defense Strategy (NDS). The NDS is signed by SecDef and outlines DOD's approach to implementing the President's NSS.

UCP. The UCP, signed by the President, establishes CCMDs and responsibilities and missions of the CCDRs.

CPG. The CPG, signed by the President, fulfills the statutory requirement in Title 10, USC, Section 113. SecDef, with the approval from the President, and with advice from the CJCS, provides written policy guidance on the preparation and review of campaign and contingency plans.

Joint Strategic Planning System

The Joint Strategic Planning System (JSPS) is the primary system the CJCS uses to execute statutory responsibilities assigned by Title 10, USC, Section 153. The JSPS enables the CJCS to conduct assessments; provide military advice to the President, SecDef, NSC, and Homeland Security Council; and assist the President and SecDef in providing strategic direction to the Armed Forces of the United States.

Combatant Commanders

CCDRs use strategic guidance and direction to prepare command strategies focused on their command's specific capabilities and missions to link national strategic guidance to theater or functional strategies and joint operations. The command strategy, like national strategy, identifies the command's broad, long-range objectives that contribute to national security. The command strategy provides the link between national strategic guidance and joint planning.

Commander's Communication Synchronization

Commander's communication synchronization is the DOD process to coordinate and synchronize narratives, themes, messages, images, operations, and

actions to ensure their integrity and consistency down to the lowest tactical level across all relevant communication activities.

Application of Guidance

Joint Planning and Execution Community

The headquarters, commands, and agencies involved in joint planning or committed to a joint operation are collectively termed the JPEC.

- The **supported CCDR** has primary responsibility for all aspects of a task assigned by the CPG, the Joint Strategic Campaign Plan (JSCP), or other joint planning directives.
- **Supporting commanders** provide forces, assistance, or other resources to a supported commander in accordance with the principles set forth in global force management policies and procedures. Supporting commanders prepare supporting plans as required.
- **Coordinating Authority.** Coordinating authority is the authority delegated to a commander or individual for coordinating specific functions and activities involving forces of two or more Military Departments, two or more joint force components, or two or more forces of the same Service (e.g., joint security coordinator exercises coordinating authority for joint security area operations among the component commanders), and may include USG departments and agencies and partner nations (e.g., as part of security cooperation planning).

Adaptive Planning

The intent of adaptive planning is to develop plans that contain military options for the President and SecDef as they seek to shape the environment and respond to contingencies. This facilitates responsive plan development that provides up-to-date planning and plans for civilian leaders.

Operational Activities

Operational activities comprise a sustained cycle of situational awareness, planning, execution, and

assessment that occur continuously to support leader decision-making cycles at all levels of command.

Joint Planning Process

Planning is Commander's Business

Commanders own the planning process and must continuously participate in planning to provide guidance and expertise. The planner develops possible solutions to a problem presented in strategic or commander's guidance.

Planning Teams

Planners should establish a team of experts to support the planning process. These are often called joint planning groups, operational planning teams, operational planning groups, or cross-functional teams, and are normally led by either the plans directorate of a joint staff or the operations directorate of a joint staff.

Transregional, All-Domain Planning

When the scope of contemplated military operations exceeds the authority or capabilities of a single CCDR to plan and execute, the President, SecDef, or CJCS, when designated by the President or SecDef, identify a CCDR to lead the planning for the designated strategic challenge or threat. The commander's assessment supporting this decision could be either the assessments of multiple CCDRs addressing a similar threat in their areas of responsibility (AORs) or a single threat assessment from a CCDR addressing the threat from a global, cross-AOR, or functional perspective. Situations that may trigger this assessment range from combat operations that span UCP-designated boundaries to the threat of asymmetric attack that overlaps CCMD boundaries and functions, thereby requiring strategic integration of two or more CCDRs' campaigns and operations.

Overview of Planning and the Planning Functions

Although planning has an input (guidance) and an output (the plan or order), the planning process is a recursive, assessment-informed process and not linear. Issues discovered in later steps of the planning process can require adjustments to earlier steps.

Planning consists of four functions, the planning process, and an operational design methodology.

The four planning functions of strategic guidance, concept development, plan development, and plan assessment are generally sequential, although often run simultaneously to deepen the dialogue between civilian and military leaders and accelerate the overall planning process. SecDef, the CJCS, or CCDR may direct the planning staff to refine or adapt a plan by reentering the planning process at any of the earlier functions.

The relationship between the application of operational art, operational design, and joint planning process (JPP) continues throughout the planning and execution of the plan or order. By applying the operational design methodology in combination with the procedural rigor of JPP, the command can monitor the dynamics of the mission and OE while executing operations in accordance with the current approach and revising plans as needed.

The Joint Planning Process

Through the use of operational design and the application of operational art, commanders develop innovative, adaptive alternatives to solve complex challenges. These broad alternatives are the operational approach.

JPP is an orderly, analytical set of logical steps to frame a problem; examine a mission; develop, analyze, and compare alternative COAs; select the best COA; and produce a plan or order:

- Planning Initiation (Step 1)
- Mission Analysis (Step 2)
- COA Development (Step 3)
- COA Analysis and Wargaming (Step 4)
- COA Comparison (Step 5)
- COA Approval (Step 6)
- Plan or Order Development (Step 7)

Operational Design

Operational design is the analytical framework that underpins planning. Operational design supports commanders and planners in organizing and understanding the OE as a complex interactive system. Commanders must understand the audience and political environment to give the best military advice to civilian decision makers. Planners must consider how they will translate often-times confusing military jargon and concepts into a universally understood language; interagency partners are critical to this discussion. Operational design is interwoven with the planning process to fill in gaps in guidance and information and provide a framework in which to plan, enabling planners to address the complexity of the OE, support mission analysis and COA development, and develop a concept of operations with the highest likelihood of success.

Operational Design Methodology

Methodology. The general methodology for operational design is:

- Understand the strategic direction and guidance.
- Understand the strategic environment (e.g., policies, diplomacy, and politics) and the related contested environments.
- Understand the OE and relevant contested environments.
- Define the problem (create shared understanding; planning with uncertainty).
- Identify assumptions needed to continue planning (strategic and operational assumptions).
- Develop options (the operational approach).
- Identify decisions and decision points (external to the organization).

*Operational Design
Methodology Steps*

- Refine the operational approach(es).
- Develop planning and assessment guidance.
- Understand the Strategic Directions and Guidance.
- Understand the Strategic Environment.
- Understand the OE.
- Define the Problem.
- Identify Assumptions.
- Develop Operational Approaches.
- Identify Decisions and Decision Points.
- Refine the Operational Approach.
- Prepare Planning Guidance.

*Elements of Operational
Design*

The elements of operational design are considered in four broad categories: overarching, space (OE), time, and forces:

- **Overarching** elements of operational design are those that drive the operation. Some, such as the objective or military end state, may be provided in higher level guidance.
- The space of the **OE** requires planners to consider the physical characteristics, conditions, and geometry of the environment, to include how the commander should divide the operation for command and control (C2) purposes.
- **Time** considerations lead planners to identify how long it could take to conduct operations from an initial decision to commit forces through planning, mobilization, deployment, and execution.

- **Force** requires planners to know the science of warfare, the capabilities and limitations of blue force weapon systems and tactics, and the capabilities and limitations of the enemy's weapon systems and tactics.

Objective. The objective is the single most important element of operational design. The objective is why the mission is being conducted and should be determined first. Objectives may be broad or defined by a military end state as directed or informed by policy and strategy.

Operational Environment

The OE includes tangible and intangible factors that affect combat and support operations. Tangible factors include, but are not limited to, physical size, weather/climate, and geography (including lines of communication, distances, interior/exterior lines). Intangible factors include culture (including gender considerations), the information environment (including cyberspace), and population.

Time

Arranging Operations. Commanders must determine the best arrangement of joint force and component operations to conduct the assigned tasks and joint force mission. This arrangement often will be a combination of simultaneous and sequential operations to attain the end state conditions with the least cost in personnel and other resources.

Anticipation. Anticipation is key to effective planning. Joint force commanders (JFCs) must consider what might happen and look for indicators of forecasted events. During execution, JFCs should remain alert for the unexpected and be prepared to exploit opportunities.

Forces and Functions

Commanders and planners can plan campaigns and operations that focus on defeating either enemy or adversary forces, functions, or a combination of both. Typically, JFCs structure operations to attack both forces and functions concurrently to create the greatest possible impact on the enemy and chance for success.

JFCs can focus on destroying and disrupting critical enemy or adversary functions such as C2, sustainment, and protection. Attacking an enemy's or adversary's functions normally intends to destroy their balance; thereby creating vulnerabilities for exploitation.

Defeat Mechanisms. Defeat mechanisms are the methods used by friendly forces in combat operations against an enemy force. Defeating an enemy means creating the conditions necessary to impose the desired strategic outcome on the enemy against the enemy's will to oppose or resist that outcome. These aim at defeating armed enemies through the organized application of force to kill, destroy, or capture. **The three basic defeat mechanisms are: destruction, attrition, and exhaustion.**

Balancing

Commanders will rarely have all the resources or time desired for an operation. By understanding the relationship between the elements of operational design, commanders and planners can balance different factors to maximize the likelihood of success in the most efficient manner.

The operational commander must decide which tradeoffs will produce the best balance. For example, commanders may decide to use an indirect approach and several phases, due to insufficient forces, or a direct assault on a center of gravity. Similarly, a commander may plan for an operational pause to use additional time to mobilize, deploy, or reconstitute forces.

Check the Plan

During all steps of planning, and again on completion of the plan, commanders and planners should review the plan to ensure:

- The plan does not violate any principles of joint operations.
- The joint functions are addressed, interlaced, and reinforcing.
- The plan achieves the objective or attains the military end state within an acceptable level of risk.
- The plan does not foreclose future options.

Campaigning

DOD is tasked to conduct operations in support of achieving national objectives. To support the national strategy (as identified in the NSS and NDS), the CJCS oversees the development of the national military strategy, JSCP, global campaign plans, and global integration frameworks. In turn, CCDRs develop campaigns to support the global campaign and shape the OE in a manner that supports those strategic objectives. They conduct their campaigns primarily through military engagement, operations, posture, and other activities that seek to achieve US national objectives, protect US national interests, and prevent the need to resort to armed conflict while setting conditions to transition to contingency operations when required.

Campaign Planning

Campaigns and campaign planning follow the **principles of joint operations** while synchronizing efforts throughout the OE with all participants. Examples include:

- **Objective.** Clear campaign objectives must be articulated and understood across the joint force.
- **Unity of Command.** Unity of command means all forces operate under a single commander with the requisite authority to direct all forces employed in pursuit of a common purpose.

- **Economy of Force.** Economy of force is the judicious employment and distribution of forces to achieve campaign objectives.
- **Legitimacy.** Legitimacy is based on the actual and perceived legality, morality, and rightness of actions from the perspectives of interested audiences.

*Resource-Informed Planning
(Capability Assignment,
Apportionment, Allocation)*

JSCP-directed campaigns, unlike contingency plans, are not just plans, they are campaigns in execution. They are constrained by the readiness and availability of resources and authorities and forecast future requirements based on projected results of current on-going operations and activities.

Campaign planning requires planning across four resource timeframes [FY 1, Current Year; FY 2, Budget Year; FY 3, Program Year, and; FY 4, Out Year.]:

- The commander develops and briefs the campaign plan for the upcoming year, considering the budget year forecast, assigned and allocated forces, and force apportionment tables.
- The commander uses the current and budget year allocation, combined with the assessment, to develop a budget and resource request for the program years.

*Elements of a Combatant
Command Campaign Plan*

The CCP consists of all plans contained within the established theater or functional responsibilities, to include contingency plans, subordinate and supporting plans, posture plans, country-specific security cooperation sections (CSCSs) for country plans (for CCMDs with designated AORs), and operations in execution.

Assessing Campaign Plans

Campaign plan assessments determine the progress toward creating the conditions necessary to achieve campaign plan objectives. Campaign assessments enable the CCDR and supporting organizations to refine or adapt the campaign plan and supporting plans to achieve the campaign objectives or, with

SecDef approval, to adapt the JSCP-directed objectives to changes in the strategic and operational environments.

Risk

CCMDs assess how strongly US interests are held within their respective areas, how those interests can be threatened, and their ability to execute assigned missions to protect them and achieve US national objectives. This is documented in the CCDR's strategic estimate and input to the annual joint assessment.

Opportunity

CCDRs need to identify opportunities they can exploit to influence the situation in a positive direction. Limited windows of opportunity may open and the CCDR must be ready to exploit these to set the conditions that will lead to successful transformation of the conflict and thus to transition. This should be done in collaboration with interagency partners, international partners, and partner nations who may have assessment tools that look for opportunities to enhance resilience and mitigate conflict.

Operational Assessment

The starting point for operation assessment activities coincides with the initiation of joint planning. Integrating assessments into the planning cycle helps the commander ensure the operational approach remains feasible and acceptable in the context of higher policy, guidance, and orders. This integrated approach optimizes the feedback senior leadership needs to appropriately refine, adapt, or terminate planning to be effective in the OE.

The Purpose of Operation Assessment in Joint Operations

Operation assessments help the commander and staff determine progress toward mission accomplishment. Assessment results enhance the commander's decision making, enable more effective operations, and help the commander and the staff to keep pace with a constantly evolving OE.

Tenets of Operation Assessment

The following tenets should guide the commander and the staff throughout assessment:

- **Commander Centricity.** The commander's involvement in operation assessment is essential.
- **Subordinate Commander Involvement.** Assessments are more effective when used to support conversations between commanders at different echelons.
- **Integration.** Staff integration is crucial to planning and executing effective assessments.
- **Integration into the Planning Process and Battle Rhythm.** To deliver information at the right time, the operation assessment should be synchronized with the commander's decision cycle.
- **Integration of External Sources of Information.** Operation assessment should allow the commander and staff to integrate information that updates the understanding of the OE to plan more effective operations.
- **Credibility and Transparency.** Assessment reports should cite all sources of information used to build the report.
- **Continuous Operation Assessment.** While an operation assessment product may be developed on a specific schedule, assessment is continuous in any operation.

*Staff Organization for
Operation Assessment*

Cross-functional staff representation is required to effectively analyze progress toward achieving objectives. This provides the assessment activity with varied perspectives and broad expertise that are necessary for the assessment's credibility and rigor.

*Conducting Operation
Assessment*

The assessment process is continuous. Throughout JPP, assessment provides support to and is supported by operational design and operational art. The assessment process complements and is concurrent with JPP in developing specific and measurable task-based end states, objectives, and effects during operational design.

Transition to Execution

Effective planning enables transition. Integrated staff effort during planning ensures the plan is a team effort and the knowledge gained across the staff in the planning process is shared and retained. This staff work assists in identifying changes in the OE and guidance, speeding transition to execution.

The decision to execute will often be presented as an examination of options in response to a developing crisis or action by a competitor state or threat (state or non-state) rather than a specific directive to execute a specific concept plan or operation plan.

Types of Transition

There are three possible conditions for transitioning planning to execution.

- **Contingency Plan Execution.** Contingency plans are planned in advance to typically address an anticipated crisis.
- **Crisis Planning to Execution.** Crisis planning is conducted when an emergent situation arises.
- **Campaign Plan Execution.** Activities within CCPs are in constant execution.

Transition Process

The transition process to contingency plan execution originates in the planning section with significant support from the intelligence staff. Planners synthesize strategic guidance from intelligence and existing plans. The output of this synthesis is a hand-off briefing to the crisis planning lead for the command. For crisis planning execution, plan transition follows similar steps but within the staff section responsible for crisis planning.

Tools to Aid Transition

Rehearsals, Exercises, and Staff Walks. For most likely contingencies, the commander may hold rehearsals to ensure transition activities are understood and the staff assessed.

Transition Book. Commands may develop a condensed primer for the commander and staff that provides a rapid overview of options and requirements for a response.

Staff Checklists. Staff section should develop detailed checklists by both functional areas and timeline on actions required to support crisis execution.

Commander's Critical Information Requirements (CCIRs). Which of the CCIRs fall within the staff's responsibilities? What else does the commander need to know within the staff's responsibilities?

Points of Contact (POC) Lists. Although not specifically part of the plan, planners should have available a list of key POCs.

Conclusion

This publication is the keystone document for joint planning. It provides the doctrinal foundation and fundamental principles that guide the Armed Forces of the United States in planning joint campaigns and operations.

CHAPTER I JOINT PLANNING

*I tell this story to illustrate the truth of the statement I heard long ago in the Army: **Plans are worthless, but planning is everything.** There is a very great distinction because when you are planning for an emergency you must start with this one thing: the very definition of “emergency” is that it is unexpected, therefore it is not going to happen the way you are planning.*

President Dwight D. Eisenhower
34th President of the United States
1953-1961

1. Overview

a. Joint planning is the deliberate process of determining how to implement strategic guidance: how (the **ways**) to use military capabilities (the **means**) in time and space to achieve objectives (the **ends**) within an acceptable level of **risk**. Ideally, planning begins with specified national strategic objectives and military end states to provide a unifying purpose around which actions and resources are focused. Leaders conduct joint planning to understand the strategic and operational environments to determine the best methods for employing the Department of Defense’s (DOD’s) capabilities to achieve national objectives. Joint planning identifies military ways and means the President can align with other instruments of national power (diplomatic, informational, economic). In the process, joint planning frames the problem; aligns ends, ways, and means; develops operational approaches; accounts for risk; and gives leaders decision space with proposed military options. Combatant commanders (CCDRs) may propose objectives for the President’s and the Secretary of Defense’s (SecDef’s) consideration before beginning detailed planning. The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS), as the principal military advisor to the President and SecDef, may offer military advice on the proposed objectives and global prioritization.

b. The strategic environment is uncertain, complex, and dynamic. The joint force will increasingly operate in a **transregional** (across multiple areas of responsibilities [AORs]), **all-domain** (land, air, maritime, space, and cyberspace), **and multifunctional** (integration of the seven joint functions) environment. Rapid advancements in cyberspace and information capabilities such as artificial intelligence, digital editing, and Internet applications enable rapid sharing of information and narratives, from areas of conflict to national leaders and the global public. This shared information can include digitally manufactured events. An expanding range of adversaries, both state and non-state, can purchase, manufacture, and employ high-tech, homemade weapons that may create problems for nation-states. Although the character of conflict is evolving, the nature of war remains constant—the ability to impose our will on another party to achieve a national objective through the sanctioned use of force.

c. Global integration is the arrangement of military actions in time, space, and purpose to address transregional, all-domain, and multifunctional challenges. The joint force pursues global integration for SecDef through a top-down, CJCS-led approach to integrate

planning, prioritize resources, mitigate risk, and assess joint force progress toward strategic objectives. Strategies, operations, and plans are coordinated worldwide and nested in a whole-of-government approach. Worldwide coordination includes not only within the United States Government (USG), but also our partners and allies.

d. Joint planning serves two critical purposes at the combatant command (CCMD) and subordinate joint force level:

(1) At the strategic level, joint planning provides the President and SecDef with options and advice to achieve the *National Security Strategy of the United States of America* [short title: NSS] objectives through the employment of the joint force. Planning supports decision making by identifying courses of actions (COAs) available along with probable outcomes, costs, and risks.

(2) At the operational level, joint planning translates national level guidance into specific activities aimed at achieving strategic and operational objectives and attaining the military end state as directed in the *(U) National Military Strategy of the United States of America, 2018* [short title: NMS], the *2018-2020 Contingency Planning Guidance (CPG)* [short title: CPG], and Chairman of Joint Chiefs of Staff Instruction (CJCSI) 3110.01, *(U) Joint Strategic Campaign Plan (JSCP)* [short title: JSCP]. Joint planning ties the training, mobilization, deployment, employment, sustainment, redeployment, and demobilization activities of joint forces to achieve military objectives in the service of enduring national interests.

2. Strategy, Plans, Operations, and Assessments Cycle

a. The strategy, plans, operations, and assessments are inexorably intertwined. Plans translate the broad intent provided by a strategy into operations; successful operations achieve the strategy's objectives. The effects of operations, successful or otherwise, change the strategic environment and the OE. To maintain a competitive advantage, the joint force should constantly evaluate effects and objectives, align them with strategic objectives, and verify that they are still relevant and feasible. Joint forces, through their assessments, identify when their actions begin to negatively affect the operational environment (OE) and change their operations and activities to create the desired effects and better align actions and objectives.

b. Throughout planning and execution, commanders and staffs assess conditions and effects to identify whether changes in the OE support national strategic interests. In developing the commander's information requirements, the commander and staff identify key elements of the OE as indicators for success or failure to continuously align the strategy with national strategic interests. The commander updates the command's strategy or operational approach to reflect the changed OE and ensure continued coherence with national policy. Simultaneously, the commander also updates operations to reflect the changed OE and updated strategy.

3. Planning

a. Joint planning is the art and science of interpreting direction and guidance; translating them into executable activities within imposed limitations; and assessing the environment to place the joint force in the best position to achieve objectives. Planning enables leaders to identify cost-benefit relationships, risks, and tradeoffs to determine the preferred COA.

b. The four planning functions of strategic guidance, concept development, plan development, and plan assessment are generally sequential, but they often run simultaneously to accelerate the process. Leaders may direct staffs to refine or adapt a plan by entering the planning process through any of the functions. Planners adapt to changes in guidance and the OE during each planning function. The joint planning and execution community (JPEC) synchronizes plans in the USG through ongoing civil-military dialogue. For the discussion on planning functions, see Chapter III, “Joint Planning Process,” paragraph 5, “Planning Functions.”

c. Strategy, Strategic Art, Operational Art, and Operational Planning

(1) Strategy is a prudent idea or set of ideas for employing the instruments of national power in a synchronized and integrated fashion to achieve theater, national, and multinational objectives. Strategy is also the art and science of determining a future state or condition (ends), conveying this to an audience, determining the possible approaches (ways), and identifying the authorities and resources (e.g., time, forces, equipment, and money–means) to achieve the intended objective, all while managing the associated risk.

(2) Strategic art is the formulation, coordination, and application of ends, ways, and means to implement policy and promote national interests. Practitioners evaluate the competing interests and objectives of state and non-state actors in the OE, organize joint forces to implement policy, and sense when revision is prudent. Strategies should provide a coherent narrative to bridge the present to the future. Enduring, effective strategy provides the conceptual basis for an integrated military operation or campaign. Visualization and conceptualization of strategic success achieved or supported by military means is the foundation of operational art and operational design. The essence of strategic art is distillation—organizing and articulating the complex interrelationship between national interests, policy, strategic ends, and practice, in clear terms.

(3) Operational art is the cognitive approach by commanders and staffs—supported by their skill, knowledge, experience, creativity, and judgment—to develop strategies, campaigns, and operations to organize and employ military forces by integrating ends, ways, means, and evaluating risks. In planning, many activities are done through a scientific methodology. These include identifying strengths and weaknesses of the opponent, validating requirements through checklists, and comparing the outcomes of analysis. However, planning for conflict and war is best based on operational art and the broad knowledge of commanders and planners that are not easily categorized.

(4) Strategic art and operational art are mutually supporting. Strategic art provides policy context to objectives, while operational art demonstrates the feasibility and efficacy of a strategy. Operational planning translates strategy into executable activities, operations, and campaigns, within resource and policy limitations to achieve objectives.

d. Understanding Problems

(1) To provide definitive focus for the development of a strategy or plan, a clear, concise, and precise problem statement is essential. At its most basic, the problem statement answers the question “what is the nature of our problem?” While the problem statement should be as factual as possible, it is fundamentally a contextual hypothesis regarding the underlying causes of situations in complex and ambiguous environments. Even relatively minor differences in the hypothesis can drive substantial differences in the resultant strategy and plan. Problem statements may need to be refined, revisited, or validated as operations unfold and the OE becomes better understood or changes.

(2) The second question commanders and staffs need to ask themselves before beginning work is, “Who is best suited to lead and/or resolve the problem?” In many cases along the competition continuum, it may be a non-DOD lead, or require extensive efforts from non-DOD assets or organizations. After this analysis, the requisite interorganizational entity can be brought into the beginning of the planning process. Assessment of the OE, including contributing CCMDs and other organizations, keeps the commander’s strategic estimate current, increases its influence, strengthens planning, and improves execution.

(3) Planners distinguish symptoms from root causes when defining problems and developing strategies and plans. Before planning, commanders and staffs should ask, “What problem are we really being asked to solve?” The root cause may not be articulated in strategic guidance. Identifying root causes should begin the civilian-military dialogue at the national level as well as dialogue between the CCDR and JPEC stakeholders at the theater and functional level. For instance, killing or detaining insurgents seldom addresses the underlying causes of an insurgency. In fact, military action may exacerbate problems rather than solve them. Identifying the underlying problems informs commanders so they can develop operation or campaign plans to prevent, prepare for, or mitigate contingencies.

(4) Understanding the problem enables planners to define desired objectives early in the planning process. By correctly identifying and understanding objectives and military end states, the planner should be able to articulate whether proposed planning tasks address only symptoms of the problem, rather than providing a solution. If strategic guidance appears to address only symptoms, other options for using the military instrument of national power should be raised through civil-military discussions.

See Chapter IV, “Operational Design,” for more detailed discussion of identifying and understanding problems.

4. Principles of Planning

a. **Focused on the Objective.** Joint planning is oriented on achieving an objective: plans and actions should contribute to achieving national objectives. Planning begins by identifying the associated national objectives. The commander and staff evaluate strategic guidance, analyze the OE, and coordinate with senior leadership to identify national objectives. Joint planners align plans with national priorities and direct them to achieve national objectives. Planning also identifies and articulates the problem set against which military effort might be applied. The Joint Staff (JS), CCDR, Service, and National Guard Bureau (NGB) staffs work with DOD leadership in this effort. The CCDR, staff, Services, NGB, and SecDef (or designated representative) view problems from different perspectives. Examining and discussing the different perspectives is essential, because a directed military end state or objective may not necessarily result in the strategic objective envisioned by policymakers. Commanders, with their staffs, identify gaps between the directed military end states, the capabilities and limitations of employing the military, and the desired national objectives, and then discuss such gaps with DOD leaders.

b. **Globally Integrated and Coordinated.** Integrated planning synchronizes resources and integrates timelines, decision points, and authorities across CCMDs to enable the achievement of strategic and operational objectives. It should produce a shared understanding across the joint force of the threat environment, required decisions, resource prioritization, and risk. Integrated planning increases collaboration through robust JPEC coordination and across the whole-of-government to address the challenges facing the United States. Integrated planning recognizes the necessity to inform strategy that spans the competition continuum, requiring alignment of campaign and contingency planning.

(1) Integrated planning addresses complex strategic challenges that span multiple CCMD AORs and functional responsibilities. Integrated planning synchronizes resources and integrates timelines, decision matrices, and authorities across CCMDs, the JS, NGB, DOD agencies, interagency partners, and multinational partners. Integrating plan development, in-progress reviews (IPRs), and assessment provides national leadership a holistic understanding of how a conflict could realistically develop, options for response, and how operations by one CCMD could affect the broader global OE.

(2) Military forces alone cannot achieve national objectives. Joint forces must coordinate with USG departments and agencies (e.g., Department of State [DOS] for foreign operations and Department of Homeland Security [DHS] for domestic efforts), allied and partner nations, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), international organizations, commercial entities (e.g., contractors), and local and regional stakeholders. Within an operational area (OA), the commander will also utilize network engagement, seeking to partner with friendly networks, engage neutral networks, and counter threat networks. In most cases these networks will have ties with diasporas or links with international elements of a particular network. Networks that will form, evolve, dissolve, and reform in different arrangements. Individuals will often belong to several types of networks at the same time. Joint force commanders (JFCs) and staffs consider how to

interact with friendly and neutral networks, and how to counter threat networks. Planners coordinate and synchronize joint force actions with the operations of these networks; and align military actions and resources with international organizations' and NGOs' functions, consistent with legal authorities. For more information on network engagement, see Joint Publication (JP) 3-25, *Countering Threat Networks*.

c. **Resource Informed.** Joint planning is resource informed and time constrained. When translating strategic guidance into joint plans and orders, planners must provide a realistic proposal for the application of forces, given current readiness, availability, location, posture, available transportation, and speed of movement. Planning assumes operations will employ forces and capabilities currently available—not future capabilities or capacities. Planners must consider that available resources may change during plan execution.

d. **Risk Informed.** Planners assess and articulate risks and identify potential mitigation. Identification and communication of risk is fundamental in joint planning. In general, risk entails the probability and severity of loss linked to hazards. The severity of risk is determined by both likelihood of occurrence and magnitude of damage if the risk manifests.

(1) In most cases risk and resources have an inverse relationship. As the level of resource commitment to a plan increases, the level of risk to that plan decreases. Planning can identify additional resources that would reduce risk associated with the plan. However, national resources are inherently finite, and their use, or even planned use, may weaken overall US security by creating opportunity costs and elevated risk elsewhere.

(2) Assumptions are suppositions taken as true in the absence of proof. They are unavoidable in planning, but using assumptions incurs risk. Planners must identify the role of assumptions in their plans, and the impact if key assumptions are invalid. Similarly, planners must also identify the impact of constraints and restraints on the operation. Any assumption that is not validated, to include assumptions from strategic or higher headquarters guidance, becomes a risk to either the mission, force, or both.

(3) There is no magic formula for quantification of risk. Planners must provide decision makers an assessment of the expected risks, costs, and benefits; as well as the potential consequences of proposed military actions. This facilitates decisions to reduce, control, or accept risk through a shared knowledge of potential consequences.

e. **Framed within the Strategic Environment and OE.** Planning requires an understanding of the OE as it exists and as it changes. Unlike concepts and future development, adaptive planning is based on continuous monitoring and analysis of conditions affecting the OE (e.g., current friendly and threat postures, readiness, geopolitical conditions, and perceptions of relevant state and non-state actors). Adaptive planning identifies changes that will improve the probability of success or mitigate risks (i.e., additional forces; partner nation contributions; agreements, access, basing, and overflight permissions; preparation activities, including prepositioning). However, until

those changes are implemented, the starting position for any plan is the current OE. Planners should not assume away contentious issues or conditions. Adversaries can be expected to take action to set the conditions to their advantage in the theater and information environment, and, perhaps globally during competition and times of crisis. Adversaries' actions, and the changes they cause to the OE, may challenge the assumptions of US plans or campaigns.

f. **Informs Decision Making.** Joint planning must be agile and flexible enough to provide senior leadership with information to make critical decisions. It must identify the most significant contextual issues, key assumptions, likely resource requirements, costs and cost-benefit trade-offs, and risks associated with different COAs. It must do this in a manner that enables key leaders to make decisions that best serve national interests.

g. **Adaptive and Flexible.** Planning is an adaptive process that occurs in a networked, collaborative environment. It requires dialogue among senior leaders; concurrent plan development; and collaboration across strategic, operational, and tactical planning levels. Early planning guidance and frequent interaction between senior leaders and planners promotes a shared understanding of the complex operational problem, strategic and military objectives, mission, assumptions, considerations, risks, and other factors. Clear strategic guidance ensures joint planners are in synch with senior leaders as they prepare, refine, and adapt plans to an ever-changing OE. If clear strategic guidance has not been provided, or incongruities emerge, clarification of strategic objectives becomes paramount. This enables adaptive planning to produce and maintain up-to-date plans and to provide viable, flexible COAs for commanders, or in the case of top priority plans, for SecDef or the President to consider.

KEY TERM

Adaptive planning is the ability to develop options, update, or change a plan rapidly, based on changes in the operational and strategic environment, such as changes in policy guidance or objectives, resources and available forces, threat assessments, and posture.

5. Planning Products

Joint planning encompasses the preparation of a number of planning and execution-related products. While the planning process is generally the same for campaign, contingency, or crisis planning, the output or products may differ. Campaign and contingency planning encompasses the preparation of plans that occur in non-crisis situations with a timeline generally not driven by external events. Crisis planning uses the same process but is typically driven by external events and is almost always time-constrained. **Combatant command campaign plans (CCPs)** provide the means to translate strategic guidance into activities executable by CCMDs. **CCPs** link current operations to contingency plans. The planner needs to know the type of plan and the detail required. The two basic types of plans are campaign and contingency plans. Both can