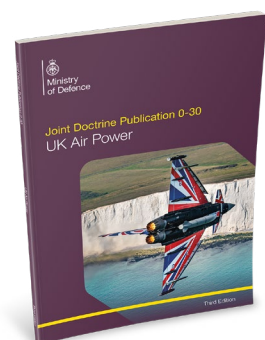# UK Air Power

Joint Doctrine Publication (JDP) 0-30, *UK Air Power* is the UK's keystone space domain doctrine publication. Whilst JDP 0-01, *UK Defence Doctrine* provides the broad principles and philosophy underpinning the use of UK Armed Forces, JDP 0-30 is focused specifically on UK air power.

Air power is defined as: the ability to use air capabilities in and from the air, to influence the behaviour of actors and the course of events. UK air power is persistently active, domestically and globally, protecting UK national interests at home and overseas. In the UK, the Royal Air Force (RAF) has the conceptual lead for warfare across the air domain, thus the generation and employment of air power is primarily focused around the RAF. However, the Fleet Air Arm of the Royal Navy and the Army Air Corps and other aviation elements of the British Army also contribute significantly to the delivery of UK air power. Although air power can be used independently of the other operational domains, it seeks to create effects and exert influence within them, whilst conversely, maritime, land, space and cyber forces all have the ability to influence events in the air environment. Air power is truly global in nature because it theoretically enables access to any point on Earth, be it over land or sea, and it offers policymakers an agile, timely and focused capability that can be highly effective in resolving or averting a developing crisis.

The basis of air power is its exploitation of height, speed, and reach within the air environment, which facilitates the four core roles of air power: control of the air; attack; intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR); and air mobility. Control of the air underpins all air operations because it secures freedom of action in the air domain, while limiting or denying its use by an adversary. The use of overwhelming force through an attack from the air lies at the heart of the ability of air power to influence the behaviour of actors and the course of events. The speed of aircraft enables highly responsive ISR solutions; their reach gives them the ability to fly long distances and cover vast areas, collecting information from a variety of sensors. Air mobility provides the ability to deploy, sustain and recover personnel and equipment quickly, often over significant distance. Modern, multi-role aircraft afford a significant degree of simultaneity, whereby a single aircraft can perform more than one role during the same mission.

Command and control envelopes all four air power roles and it is essential for the effective delivery of air power. Centralised control and decentralised execution is the UK's preferred method for air command and control as it enables tactical flexibility whilst ensuring unity of effort at the operational level. Air operations are best delivered under the command of a single air commander, the joint force air component commander. All air operations

require a tailored air command and control system, centred around an air operations centre, with UK air command and control capabilities being primarily delivered by the RAF via 11 Group. The UK joint force air component headquarters provides the UK with a scalable and deployable command and control capability for UK, North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and multinational air operations. Air power is best integrated with the other components of the military instrument during joint operational-level planning. The air tasking cycle is the iterative and cyclical process for planning, apportioning, allocating, coordinating and tasking air assets. The UK, NATO and United States use an air tasking order to provide mission commanders with the details required to plan and execute their missions; this is mission command in the air domain.

Although air power is capable of independently achieving desired political objectives, it works most effectively when integrated with the other components of the military instrument of national power. Effective cross-domain integration in the UK depends on mutual trust and understanding, built on well-established cooperation between the single Services. In addition, whilst UK air power remains capable of delivering all four air power roles, interoperability with allies and partners, especially other NATO nations, enables air power to be massed at the operational level and delivered at the tactical level via mission-specific packages of aircraft drawn from different nations. Through air power's flexibility, and the speed with which it can reach the engagement space, it provides vital power projection and sustainment, thus offering significant military advantage.

Want to read more about UK air power?

The full edition of JDP 0-30 is designed to be a simple and concise explanation of the utility of air power, written at the OFFICIAL classification to access the widest possible audience. It should be of value to joint commanders and staffs, the single Services, the broader defence community and other government departments, as well as UK partners and allies.

Find out more about joint operational-level doctrine and the other work of the Development, Concepts and Doctrine Centre at the links below.

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