ARMY MULTI-DOMAIN TARGETING CENTER
THREE-PART SERIES—PART ONE

MODERNIZING ARMY TARGET DEVELOPMENT: A MODEL FOR ASCC LEVEL PRODUCTION CELLS

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ASCCS AND ABOVE

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Editor's Note: This article begins a multi-part series on how Army Service Component Commands can design and sustain effective Target Production Cells to support joint targeting at scale. Grounded in operational experience and current doctrine, the series examines why deliberate TPC design matters and how these organizations enable timely, compliant target development in competition and LSCO. Future installments will focus on TPC manning, organizational design, and the certification and training required to sustain production over time.

INTRODUCTION

Modern large-scale combat operations (LSCO) demand the ability to rapidly identify, develop, and maintain high-quality targets across domains and echelons. While the Army has made significant progress in aligning analytic responsibilities through programs such as the Defense Intelligence Analysis Program (DIAP), persistent gaps remain in entity-level target development capacity, particularly at the Army Service Component Command (ASCC) level and above.

To address these gaps, the Army Targeting Action Plan (ATAP) 25-02 directed the examination of Target Production Cells (TPCs) as a scalable mechanism to meet joint targeting requirements. This article evaluates the theoretical basis and operational effectiveness of TPCs, drawing on joint and Army policies, lessons learned from the Army Targeting Committee, and collaboration with operational commands and intelligence community partners.

It proposes a practical TPC design tailored to production requirements, certification standards, and modernized systems such as Modernized Integrated Database (MIDB) and Machine-Assistance Analytic Rapid-Repository System (MARS), providing ASCCs and senior field artillery leaders a framework to build sustainable, effective target production capabilities in support of operational planning and execution.

SCOPE & FOCUS

TPCs are not formally defined or descripted in joint or Army publications. However, insights from the Army Targeting Committee and senior leaders across Army echelons provide a robust foundation. This data encapsulates lessons learned, relevant Military Occupational Specialties (MOS) spanning intelligence disciplines and operational warfighting functions as it relates to target development standards, and desired outputs aligned with joint-level targeting and planning efforts, such as Operational Plans (OPLAN) and Contingency Operations (CONPLAN).

This article focuses on how ASCC can man and certify TPCs to meet modern targeting demands. Specifically, it examines the personnel structure and certification requirements necessary to support entity-level target development at the ASCC level. The discussion centers on enabling effective execution of both Intermediate Target Development (ITD) and Advanced Target Development (ATD), while ensuring target materials are properly integrated into modern databases such as the MIDB and the MARS. The intent is not to prescribe an idealized organization, but to outline a practical framework that meets minimum operational requirements, aligns resources with production demands, and maintains compliance with established target development certification standards.

PROPOSED APPROACH

The proposed organizational structure, manning, and certifications encompass the development and implementation of a manning framework or TPCs at the ASCC level, addressing two distinct operational assumptions:

1. **FULL TARGET DEVELOPMENT RESPONSIBILITY (ITD through ATD)**

- TPCs are responsible for the entity-level target development from the ITD phase (initial identification and characterization of targets) through the ATD phase (weaponeering, aimpoint selection, and collateral damage estimation).

This includes all tasks related to entity-level target development, such as data collection, analysis, validation, and preparation of target materials for operational use.

2. **ITD PHASE with ARMY TARGET MATERIAL PRODUCTION WORK CENTER SUPPORT**

- TPCs focus solely on the ITD phase, with responsibilities limited to initial target identification and characterization.

- A Target Material Production Work Center (TMP WC) is required to perform Joint Desired Point of Impact (JDPI) production during the aimpoint selection phase of ATD (Step 2).

TMP WCs are accredited (IAW CJCSI 3505.01) to conduct target coordinate mensuration for JDPIs, produce related JDPI details and target materials, and upload them into MIDB/MARS. JDPIs are tied to specific target elements and specific weaponeering solutions based on ITD and weaponeering (Step 1 of ATD) and required prior to Collateral Damage Estimation (CDE), which is the final step of ATD. Once this is complete, end-to-end production is completed for the entity level target (IAW CJCSI 3370.01). TPCs that develop targets that require effects from sources outside of the CSW subclass are subject to accreditation and/or certification from the appropriate organization if applicable.

DELIVERABLES

1. **MANNING FRAMEWORK DOCUMENT**

- Detailed manning structure for TPCs under both assumptions (full ITD-ATD responsibility and ITD-only with work center support).
- Role descriptions, including responsibilities, required skills, and certifications.

2. **MANNING CROSSWALK**

- A table mapping personnel roles to applicable certifications, ensuring compliance with DoD and Army standards.

3. **TRAINING & CERTICATION PLAN**

- Guidelines for training personnel to meet certification standards for target development tasks.

CONSTRAINTS

- **BUDGET**: Limited to available ASCC funding for personnel, training, and system integration.
- **PERSONNEL AVAILABILITY**: Dependent on the availability of certified personnel or the ability to train existing staff within the project timeline.
- **SYSTEM INTEGRATION**: Must align with the ongoing transition from MIDB to MARS, with MARS expected to achieve initial operational capability in Spring 2025 and continued capacity increases throughout the remainder of FY25 and FY26.

ASSUMPTIONS

1. TPCs have access to sufficient intelligence data sources to support ITD and ATD phases.
2. The Army TMP WC have the capacity and expertise to handle aimpoint selection tasks and MIDB/MARS uploads.
3. MIDB remains operational during the transition to MARS, with no significant disruptions to data access.
4. Existing certifications align with DoD standards for target development, with minimal need for new certification programs.

TARGET PRODUCTION AT SCALE

The 2021 National Security Strategy underscores the urgent need to prioritize target development to build a resilient Joint Force capable of countering escalating multi-domain threats. This imperative drives the need for robust, efficient, and scalable target production capabilities to ensure national security.

The Defense Intelligence Analysis Program (DIAP) provides the framework for aligning analytic responsibilities, monitoring capacity, and ensuring the Defense Intelligence Enterprise meets mission requirements. DIAP is not designed to provide indications and warnings (I&W) or to directly support target development—those functions are addressed through Strategic Support Program (SSP) and Strategic Defense Intelligence Analysis & Production Program (SDIAPP.) Within the Army, the National Ground Intelligence Center (NGIC) is the only command assigned federated DIAP responsibilities, and it is currently meeting all assigned requirements. Both NGIC and AGB produce to Intelligence Community standards, demonstrating compliance with DIAP expectations. In this sense, DIAP is less about correcting deficiencies and more about refining efficiency and optimizing analytic alignment.

However, while DIAP standards are being met, gaps remain in target development capacity. Army Service Component Commands (ASCCs) face challenges in contributing to the Modernized Integrated Database (MIDB), which supports OPLAN and CONPLAN development. To close these gaps, the Army must prioritize effective and streamlined Target Production Centers (TPCs).

TPCs are essential for aligning target development with DoD mandates, producing high-quality outputs at scale, and providing federated reach-back capabilities to support operational planning and execution.

The importance of strengthening TPCs cannot be overstated. Without them, the Joint Force risks losing its ability to counter emerging threats at scale. After months of collaboration between AGB, USAREUR-AF, USARPAC, and Intelligence Community partners, the Army Multi-Domain Targeting Center (AMTC) Targeting Division produced a foundational model for sustainable TPC operations. This framework, endorsed by the Army Targeting Action Plan (ATAP) working group, provides a path forward to ensure the Army can meet future operational demands with speed, precision, and resilience.

END OF PART ONE

This first installment has examined why deliberate TPC design matters at the ASCC level. By outlining the operational gaps, certification challenges, and system considerations facing ASCCs, it establishes the foundation for understanding how TPCs enable effective joint targeting at scale. The next installment will build on this foundation by examining how TPCs should be structured and staffed to sustain target development in competition and conflict.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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