

# **Planning Airpower Strategies**

## **Enhancing the Capability of Air Component Command Planning Staff**

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## Abstract

This study attempts to determine whether air component commands are capable of developing an effective airpower strategy. It examines US Central Command Air Forces (CENTAF) because of its recent experience in developing and executing a sizable airpower contribution to a theater campaign. The author sets the background by describing CENTAF's role in the Persian Gulf War theater campaign strategy. The conclusion is that the commander in chief (CINC) of Central Command did not think that CENTAF had an acceptable holistic airpower strategy in August 1990 and therefore requested the assistance of the Air Staff at the Pentagon. Next, the author justifies and describes credible sources for determining the attributes of an effective operational-level airpower strategy. Using this information, he recommends a notional air component commander's campaign planning organization and describes the individual branch's responsibilities and products. The largest implication of this notional organization is the requirement to possess a strategy cell with immediate, direct, and continual access to the JFACC, to develop an overall framework for the rest of the combat planning organization. Using this notional planning organization as a template, this study also examines CENTAF's current combat planning staff. The conclusion is that although CENTAF has made inroads into improving the efficiency or "doing things right" of campaign planning, they still need to improve the effectiveness or "doing the right things" of their efforts. The final section of this study examines several solutions to this shortfall and concludes that the mission of developing operational-level airpower strategies should remain at the air component commands. To improve the situation at the air component commands, support should be given to a centralized training institution which stresses the importance of beginning the process with an effective and holistic operational airpower strategy.



## About the Author

Maj Charles K. Shugg was commissioned in 1980 upon graduation from the United States Air Force Academy (USAFA). Graduating from undergraduate pilot training in 1981, he went on to fly OV-10s as an instructor pilot and standards and evaluation pilot at Sembach Air Base (AB), Germany. He was subsequently selected to fly the F-15C as an instructor pilot and standards and evaluation pilot at Soesterberg AB, the Netherlands. He then was assigned to the F-15 Replacement Training Unit at Tyndall Air Force Base (AFB), Florida, as an instructor pilot. While there he graduated from the USAF Fighter Weapons School and was subsequently assigned to the Checkmate Division of the Air Staff in 1992. He has a bachelor's degree in economics and management from USAFA and a master's degree in management sciences from Troy State University. In July 1995, Major Shugg was assigned to the 1st Fighter Wing, Langley AFB, Virginia.





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I especially Colonel Feldman for his logic and cognitive framework for describing a “process.” This proved to be invaluable in developing the responsibilities and products of an air component commander’s campaign planning organization. Two graduates of the School of Advanced Airpower Studies, Lt Col Jack Egginton and Maj Michael R. Moeller, graciously provided their experience and knowledge of airpower strategy development to this study. Their assistance and keen insight kept me on track.

Most important, I express my appreciation to my family for their patience and understanding during this process.



## Introduction

In an attempt to determine whether US war-fighting commander's subordinate air component commands are capable of developing an effective airpower strategy, we use an "a fortiori" or best approach. This study uses US Central Command Air Force (CENTAF) as our example of an air component command because it is the air component command with the most recent experience in creating and executing a sizable airpower contribution to a theater campaign.

To set the background, we examine CENTAF's role in Central Command's (CENTCOM) Persian Gulf campaign strategy. At the start of the hostilities in the Persian Gulf, CENTAF did not have or initially produce an airpower strategy that was acceptable to the commander in chief (CINC). Their CINC, Gen H. Norman Schwarzkopf, found what he and our senior military and political leaders thought was the correct theater airpower strategy in the Instant Thunder plan. This plan was developed by the Checkmate Division of the Air Staff in Washington, D.C.

To determine if CENTAF's current combat planning organization has the capability to produce an acceptable airpower strategy for future conflicts, this study examines certain credible sources to establish some of the attributes that make up an effective airpower strategy. Using these sources as a guide, I create a notional campaign planning organization which possesses those successful attributes. This notional organization is compared to the current CENTAF planning organization by using staff assistance reports, interviews, and observations from CENTAF's most recent Blue Flag exercise. It determines which attributes are lacking and whether or not they are critical to the development of a successful theater airpower strategy. Finally, this study examines a number of proposed solutions to improving the war-fighting commander's ability to receive an acceptable theater airpower strategy.

## Chapter 1

# USCENTAF's Role in CENTCOM's Persian Gulf Campaign Strategy

A “plan” is the simple expression, written or otherwise, used to guide the implementation of a strategy and resources to achieve desired objectives. Implicit in a plan are measurements of success which are used to determine if the plan is succeeding or been overtaken by events.<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately this definition does not coincide with most US war plans.

Central Command's (CENTCOM) preparation for conflict in the Persian Gulf area of responsibility (AOR) adhered to the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) standardized planning procedures. These procedures, called the Joint Operations Planning and Execution System (JOPES), called for an operations plan (OPLAN) which was created during the deliberate planning phase of JOPES. “An OPLAN is a complete description of the CINC's [commander in chief] concept of operations. It identifies the forces and supplies required to execute the plan and includes a movement schedule of resources into the theater of operations.”<sup>2</sup> OPLANs are periodically revised to reflect the dynamic state of foreign affairs. At the time of the Persian Gulf crisis, CENTCOM's OPLAN concerning the Iraqi area was in revision to reflect the changes brought on by the end of the cold war.

However, there is a misperception that all CINC OPLANs allocate forces and schedule force deployments based on a proposed employment strategy. Nothing could be further from the truth. Like most, USCENTCOM's OPLAN was “primarily a deployment document that outlined only a vague notion for the use of air power along with a general concept for ground operations.”<sup>3</sup> Similar to other theater contingency plans, planners devoted their effort to defining forces, establishing command relationships, and developing a scheme to move forces to the theater to support CINC missions—deterrence and defense—with the possibility of some limited counteroffensive action. This was accomplished without an employment strategy to base these decisions. The OPLAN made no mention of an offensive US operation or an independent offensive air campaign.<sup>4</sup> In an effort to remedy this situation in the future, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS) has ordered a formal change to the focus of operational plans to the “employment of forces to the maximum extent possible.”<sup>5</sup>

Without an overall theater employment strategy in the AOR, Central Command (CENTAF) did not prepare an air component employment plan. Although the CINC and the CENTAF/CC discussed possible options on how to

refocus the emphasis of the CINC's OPLAN for upcoming revision, the plan still resembled a deployment document. It still did not refer to the employment of forces. To the Air Staff's directorate of plans, where all of the CINC's plans are reviewed by Headquarters USAF, this deficiency was very evident. After reviewing the spring 1990 draft of CENTCOM's OPLAN, Col John A. Warden III, Air Force deputy director for war-fighting concepts, dispatched a team of officers from the Checkmate Division to visit CENTAF and CENTCOM headquarters to argue for the incorporation of an "air option" into the OPLAN. At the time, their efforts were not welcomed.<sup>6</sup>

Combat planning exercises, designed to practice the execution portion of a campaign plan, never used a proactive airpower strategy. Soon after taking command of USCENTCOM, Gen H. Norman Schwarzkopf began shifting CENTCOM's emphasis toward a more regional vision. Thus, CENTAF began focusing away from the traditional cold war Soviet threat and more toward an Iraqi threat.<sup>7</sup> However, Internal Look, a USCENTCOM joint exercise, and the two previous USCENAF Blue Flag exercises, remained defensively oriented and continued to use airpower in a reactive mode as a support asset for ground forces. These exercises always assumed the traditional airland battle scenario of ground forces already in contact and airpower's role being relegated to air support of those ground operations. According to Col Samuel J. Baptiste, the chief of Combat Operations Planning Staff in Headquarters USCENAF Combat Plans, these exercises prepared his staff in developing air tasking orders (ATO) and familiarizing them with potential Iraqi targets.<sup>8</sup> Airpower was never exercised as a proactive offensive option, just a reactive support component for the ground operations. He noted that, "the size and tempo of air operations in Desert Shield and Storm exceeded anything USCENAF had either planned for or exercised."<sup>9</sup> Thus, prior to the start of the Persian Gulf War, USCENAF had not planned or exercised a proactive airpower option which explored other aspects of airpower's potential contributions to a theater campaign plan.

On the morning of 8 August 1990, CINCCENT made a unique phone call to the Pentagon. Eight days prior to that phone call, General Schwarzkopf had given his assessment of the Iraqi forces along the Kuwaiti border to the JCS and the secretary of defense. Five days prior to that phone call, Iraqi forces had invaded Kuwait and General Schwarzkopf had personally ordered his air component commander, Lt Gen Charles A. Horner to meet with him at CENTCOM headquarters to discuss airpower options. The phone call to the Pentagon on 8 August was to the chief of staff of the Air Force (CSAF), Gen Michael Dugan. Since the CSAF was on temporary duty out of town, the vice-chief of staff of the Air Force (VCSAF), Gen John M. Loh, took the call. General Schwarzkopf told the VCSAF, "we have a decent plan for air/ground operations, but I'm thinking of an air campaign, and I don't have any expertise—anybody here who can think in those kinds of terms and look at a broader set of targets or a strategic campaign."<sup>10</sup> General Schwarzkopf had earlier asked the CJCS, Gen Colin Powell, for permission to make this request. The VCSAF passed this tasking to Maj Gen Robert M. Alexander,

director of Plans (AF/XOX), and a small planning group headed up by Colonel Warden who had been looking at just such an issue since 5 August.<sup>11</sup>

The small planning group's (Checkmate) efforts can be credited with creating the framework for CENTCOM's innovative airpower strategy in support of the theater campaign. Although there remains a bit of controversy on whether or not Checkmate's Instant Thunder plan was the foundation of the executed plan, there are still some undeniable facts.

Due to the lack of preplanning, USCENTAF Combat Plans spent a tremendous amount of effort during the first week of August on the deployment of forces into the AOR. According to Colonel Baptiste, "normally, details concerning selected units, deployments, and beddown are worked out well in advance by planners and logistics experts. The resulting Timed Phased Force Deployment Data List (TPFDDL) thus becomes an integral part of an operational plan. But, since USCENTCOM's theater emphasis had only recently shifted to a regional threat, the new Operational Plan 1002-90 was not complete. One part missing was detailed force deployment data. In addition, host-nation agreements for beddown of units had not been worked out with Saudi Arabia or other Persian Gulf states. These problems combined to make deployment of forces more an 'ad hoc' effort than a well thought-out plan. Obviously, an incomplete OPLAN caused Desert Shield to get off to a rough start."<sup>12</sup>

Military planners, such as Colonel Baptiste, make a tremendous assumption when it comes to the preplanned TFPDDL included in most OPLANs. That assumption is that the deployment plan is based on the requirements of an employment plan. As mentioned earlier, most OPLANs do not include an expected employment plan so deployment plans cannot coincide with the yet to be determined employment strategy. Thus, the addition of a TFPDDL to the newly revised OPLAN 1002-90 would only have given the planners a false sense of security.

The second undeniable fact is that General Schwarzkopf went in search of a proactive and holistic operational-level air strategy plan. He found such a plan in Checkmate's Instant Thunder. Logically developed and organized, the plan used political objectives to shape theater military objectives. It described an airpower strategy and showed linkages to military objectives and particular target sets. Although some senior military leaders did not agree with the strategy, it was a comprehensive and well-organized plan that its creators and supporters were able to successfully communicate. Above all, it was accepted as the approved campaign strategy by the president of the United States and his CINC. According to Colonel Baptiste, "USCENTAF Combat Plans could have developed a similar plan [Instant Thunder]. However, General Horner was extremely busy as the senior CENTCOM commander forward and had turned over USCENTAF to his vice-commander. Also, Combat Plans and the rest of the USCENTAF staff had their hands full bedding down forces and building the daily and D-Day ATOs."<sup>13</sup> He also went on to conclude that "in retrospect, General Schwarzkopf's choice of the Air Staff was a good one. I believe General Horner received the genesis of a well

thought-out plan quicker than [USCENTAF] Combat Plans could have produced it in Riyadh.”<sup>14</sup>

Thus, at the start of hostilities in August 1990, CENTCOM's airpower portion of the campaign strategy was unsatisfactory in the eyes of its commander, General Schwarzkopf. His own Air Force component, USCENTAF, was not prepared for numerous reasons. First, they did not preplan a holistic airpower strategy. Second, their regional OPLAN was in revision and its format was not conducive to allowing an airpower employment strategy. Third, their exercises continued to practice the cold war reactive style of airpower employment even though their commander had revised their focus toward a more regional and non-Soviet threat. Fourth, their exercises did not prepare them for the potential size and tempo of airpower operations. This unexpected magnitude of tasking, and lack of preplanned airpower options, lead to their inability to satisfy their commander's demand.

Because of these circumstances, General Schwarzkopf looked to the Air Staff. The Air Staff's Checkmate Division prepared an airpower strategy to his satisfaction, and this strategy went on to become the framework for his overall theater campaign plan. In an attempt to determine how this situation could have been handled by CENTCOM's air component command, I examine how an air component planning staff can effectively create airpower strategies. The first step in this next task is to determine resources that are successful in teaching or producing innovative theater-level airpower strategies.

#### Notes

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## **Chapter 2**

# **Credible Sources for Determining the Attributes of an Effective Airpower Strategy**

The need for knowledgeable operational-level airpower campaign planners is reflected by the revision and creation of new Air Force institutions. By examining these institutions, and other credible sources, we can establish some of the attributes that make up an effective airpower strategy. To keep the number of institutions and sources to a manageable number, only institutions that concentrate on the operational level of airpower strategy or campaign planning are examined. These are the Joint Doctrine Air Campaign Course (JDACC), Air Command and Staff College (ACSC), Joint Forces Air Component Commanders (JFACC) Course, Checkmate Division of the Air Staff, and the latest successful airpower strategy to be accepted and implemented by a CINC: Instant Thunder.

JDACC is a school created and tasked by the Air Force director of Plans and Operations (AF/XO) to be a training forum for operational airpower planners. Established in 1991, this two-week course teaches officers to plan and execute an air campaign as part of an overall theater- campaign plan. Taught by Air Force officers at Air University, its mission is to educate airmen from unified, combined, and supporting air component commands in the fundamental process of theater-level, joint combined air campaign planning through the application of established aerospace concepts, principles, and doctrine. The academics focus on Air Force, Navy, Army, Marine Corps, and joint aerospace doctrinal concepts. In addition, they also analyze previous air campaigns from a historical perspective.<sup>1</sup> JDACC emphasizes the need to become knowledgeable of potential crisis areas and to be well prepared. Preplanning airpower employment strategies for an AOR or OPLAN directive gives an operational logic to the CINC's airpower deployment plans and schedules.<sup>2</sup>

ACSC, since 1993, has become the largest educational institution to instruct and advocate innovative approaches to airpower strategy. Due largely to the vision of its new commandant, Colonel Warden, who was the former leader of the Checkmate group responsible for the creation of the Instant Thunder airpower strategy, the school primarily focuses on how airpower can be employed at the operational level of warfare. Concepts such as the role of higher-level objectives, the strategic structures of a nation-state, the operational structures of a military force, joint operations planning, air



campaign planning, war gaming, and campaign termination are introduced to more than 500 students a year.

The JFACC course is a senior-level professional military education course offered by the US Air Force to prepare potential JFACCs. The one-week course is held semiannually. The first course, held in April 1995, was attended by 12 senior joint service officers: 7-Air Force, 3-Navy, 1-Marine Corps, and 1-Army. The attendees are selected by their respective senior officer management programs based on their potential for assignments as a JFACC. The senior officers study war fighting, military doctrine, and the employment of unified, joint, and combined forces. Particular emphasis is placed on theater-wide airpower employment.

The Checkmate Division of the Air Staff plays a major role in assisting air component commanders' staffs to develop their airpower strategies. Established by Gen David C. Jones, CSAF, in November 1976, it was originally used to "express and explain the complexities of combined arms warfighting capabilities and shortfalls."<sup>3</sup> The division "uses all available intelligence sources to identify and compare the strengths and weaknesses of the United States and its Allies."<sup>4</sup> The planners then use that information to "identify ways to fight the most pressing contingency with existing capabilities and ensure a decisive outcome."<sup>5</sup> The original focus of this group was to study and understand the Soviets and determine their vulnerabilities for US/NATO exploitation. However, after the cold war ended, Colonel Warden was able to convince General Dugan, then AF/XO, to keep the organization intact and use it as a "kind of Air Force think tank."<sup>6</sup>

The AF/XO keeps the Checkmate Division busy by tasking it to find ways to enhance air component commanders' planning staffs' ability to create effective and innovative airpower strategies. In the summer of 1992, the Checkmate Division developed the JFACC training course for flag officers and taught the validation course prior to it being transferred to Maxwell AFB in 1994. That same year they were also tasked by the AF/XO, in cooperation with the Advanced Research Projects Agency, to develop a computerized operational-level airpower planning tool to assist air component commanders' planning staffs in creating and documenting airpower strategies. This task was successfully completed and the product was called the Air Campaign Planning Tool (ACPT) or the JFACC Planning Tool (JPT).<sup>7</sup>

Briefly, this tool's contribution to theater airpower strategy is two-fold. In peacetime, its automation capability allows planners to perform in-depth analysis and identify enemy vulnerabilities. This analysis allows operations and intelligence planners to focus on the most lucrative targets for airpower and thus reduce the intelligence collection requirements to a feasible number. This focused effort facilitates contingency planning by enhancing existing databases, improving assessments, and allowing construction of more effective theater airpower strategies. Ideally, airpower planners could then assess and present numerous alternative strategies and force commitment levels to their commanders.<sup>8</sup>

During times of crisis, the tool is designed to allow the JFACC's planning staff to significantly accelerate their decision process. It provides pilotage charts, imagery, country studies, and analysis of the crisis situation at a single workstation. It graphically displays critical information to allow the JFACC's planners to visualize large quantities of data and quickly appreciate the impact of information updates. In short, it allows the JFACC's staff to better construct the airpower portion of a theater campaign plan and then quickly adapt it to counter enemy reactions or the fog and friction of war. This tool is currently being deployed to air component planning staffs around the world.<sup>9</sup>

In addition, numerous air component commanders and their planning organizations have requested Checkmate expertise and assistance in planning for numerous exercises and real-world conflicts. Checkmate personnel deploy with these planning staffs to observe, analyze, and assist their theater airpower campaign planning process and products. Some of the planning staffs that have asked for Checkmate assistance since 1993 includes the Seventh Air Force in Korea, 32d Air Operations Group in Europe, USCENTAF, and the Twelfth Air Force at Davis-Monthan AFB.<sup>10</sup>

Another source of attributes for an effective airpower strategy is the Instant Thunder plan. By understanding the attributes of this strategy, we can possibly gain an insight into an effective airpower strategy. During the examination of this plan, care was taken to look for general attributes because although it was successful during the Persian Gulf War, it was developed for a specific situation and time. It should not be used as an "approved" or "institutionalized" airpower strategy. The general attributes of Instant Thunder that were examined included characteristics of its creators, how the plan was organized, and the nature of its presentation.

The personnel who constructed the Instant Thunder plan shared many common characteristics. Most of them considered our current war plans to be focused almost exclusively on the deployment rather than the employment of forces.<sup>11</sup> One reason Colonel Warden used the members of the Checkmate Division as his core cadre was that he had strong ties to the organization. As mentioned earlier, he had lobbied to maintain the organization in the Air Staff after their initial charter for examining a potential NATO/Soviet conflict diminished after the end of the cold war. He did this because he believed in their independent thinking and analysis on important combat-employment issues. Primarily made up of fighter pilots, they had a variety of other specialties to include tanker, airlift, reconnaissance, analysts, and support personnel.<sup>12</sup> All members had the highest levels of security clearances which allowed them access to intelligence agencies and information for their research. Members of this organization strived to examine potential adversaries' force capabilities and intentions while avoiding the tendency to use a "mirror-imaging" mentality. Their job was to examine a wide range of plans and contingencies and come up with alternative solutions. Prior to the Persian Gulf War, these individuals were tasked to provide "fresh insights with free thinking in an unencumbered environment into the future roles,

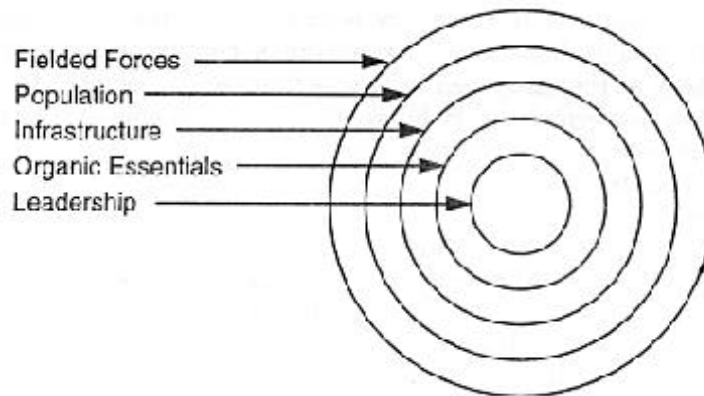
strategies, and tactics for the United States Air Force.”<sup>13</sup> General Schwarzkopf recognized their free thinking by his comment made at the conclusion of the Instant Thunder briefing at Headquarters CENTCOM on 10 August 1990. He enthusiastically stated, “You are the first guys that have been leaning forward. I’m glad to see it. This is exactly what I want!”<sup>14</sup>

In short, the Checkmate Division looked at the big picture of airpower and did not constrain their ideas on the employment of airpower even though CENTAF and Tactical Air Command (TAC) seemed to have narrowed their vision of airpower employment to primarily a “reactive” mode of airpower. CENTAF and TAC limited their use of airpower to primarily force-on-force. They assumed an established land battle and thus airpower became relegated to a more defensive approach. They virtually ignored other potentials for airpower employment.<sup>15</sup>

This narrow “corps-level” view of a reactive mode of airpower employment appears to have manifested itself out of the Army’s AirLand Battle Doctrine. According to the then-current version of Field Manual (FM) 100-5, Operations, while airpower is to be an integrated element of the AirLand Battle concept, it only plays a subordinate role. Even though some argue that the Air Force was not truly committed to this concept, other indications tell a different story. At a USCENTAF briefing, presented by General Horner to General Schwarzkopf in April 1990 on air operations for OPLAN 1002, General Horner’s philosophy became very clear. At the bottom of the briefing slide titled “Mission Flow,” a common term used in flight briefings, General Horner wrote the phrase, “Build a hose and point it where the ground commander sees that it’s needed.” The briefing went on to reference airpower in terms of force-on-force only and assumed that the land battle had begun. The only airpower missions mentioned in the briefing were close air support (CAS) and interdiction.<sup>16</sup>

Instant Thunder was an operational-level plan. Its viewpoint was theater-wide. Its airpower strategy concentrated on how airpower forces were to be employed from the start until the conclusion of hostilities. In short it encompassed the whole picture or campaign. Airpower actions or tasks were based on satisfying well-defined theater-military objectives that were based on our nation’s political objectives. These political objectives were not given to the planning group prior to determining the airpower strategy. They had to be derived by consolidating portions of recent policy statements and speeches from the president and other members of the executive branch. Lt Col David Deptula, a member of the secretary of the Air Force’s Staff Group and later a prominent member of the Checkmate and Black Hole planning groups, commented that the “intent and objectives of [the] air campaign [were] well understood by key planners,” in great part due to the framework of the plan and its briefings.<sup>17</sup>

Instant Thunder’s concept of operations was organized in a unique framework developed by Colonel Warden. Known as the “five-ring” model, he and his group used this model to help describe the logic behind attacking a modern nation-state (fig. 1).



**Figure 1. Colonel Warden's Five-Ring Model**

By describing the modern nation-state as a system made up of numerous subsystems, they were able to illustrate how they determined the enemy's potential centers of gravity. The staff also used this analytical technique to determine critical target categories. Only after they were confident of their logic and analysis to achieve the appropriate effect, did they attempt to select specific targets.<sup>18</sup>

Although the plan eventually contained certain specific targets, Instant Thunder was not simply a prioritized target list. A prioritized target list had become the Air Force's informal doctrine or idea of an airpower strategy. A classic example of this misunderstanding was a conversation General Alexander, Air Force deputy director of Plans and Colonel Warden's boss had with Maj Gen James R. Clapper, Jr., head of Air Force Intelligence (AF/IN), on 8 August 1990. In that phone conversation, General Clapper argued adamantly that the Ninth Air Force (USCENTAF) had a strategic air campaign plan prior to deploying to Saudi Arabia. When questioned on what the plan consisted of, General Clapper explained, "They have about 44 targets." General Clapper did not understand the concept of a complete and comprehensive operational-level airpower strategy. "In the intelligence general's mind, targets and target folders equated to an air campaign."<sup>19</sup> In short, the Instant Thunder plan was constructed from the "top" down versus the historical pattern of a target list first or a bottom-up approach.

Another attribute of Instant Thunder lay in its well-thought-out and constructed presentation. It was organized so that its creators and supporters were able to effectively communicate its attributes. Although some may argue with the validity of Colonel Warden's five-ring model, it served a valuable purpose in creating an effective airpower strategy. As evidenced by his later writings, presentations, and speeches to the faculty and students of ACSC, Colonel Warden was open to alternative methods and models to describe nation-state systems. The brilliance in this particular methodology was that it was a simple and comprehensive cognitive framework. The plan's concept of operations was easily understood by CINCCENT, CJCS, secretary of defense,

and other senior political and military leaders, to include our nation's commander in chief. The benefit of presenting a comprehensive yet simple airpower strategy at the campaign level was that senior political and military leaders could easily grasp the linkages to their strategic-level policy. This ensured that certain issues and concerns were understood by all the senior leaders of the country and thus they felt comfortable giving their support to the military by allowing them to execute the campaign. This attribute of the plan may have been a major contributing factor to a comment made by General Schwarzkopf. In front of his CENTCOM audience that received the first briefing of Instant Thunder on 10 August 1990, he commented, with reference to Colonel Warden and his group of planners, that "You have restored my confidence in the United States Air Force. CENTAF can't do planning."<sup>20</sup>

Thus, in order to determine the attributes of an effective airpower strategy, we combined the knowledge of credible organizations and the attributes of a recently successful airpower strategy. By using these sources as inputs, we structured a notional air component planning staff.

#### Notes

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## **Chapter 3**

# **Recommended Responsibilities and Products of an Air Component Commander's Campaign Planning Organization**

The responsibilities of an air component commander are extremely demanding. Their campaign planning organization must, therefore, assume numerous critical responsibilities to ensure the effective use of airpower assets. Using some of the general attributes of Instant Thunder, the concepts taught and used at various campaign planning courses and the Checkmate Division, this study presents recommendations. These recommendations address the structure of the planning organization along with their assigned responsibilities. It describes the individual element's expected product(s), its relationship to other elements, and provides insight into the qualifications required of its personnel.

The "strategy" cell should be the air component commander's personal think tank. This type of group is similar in nature to the "log (logistics) cell" which Army Lt Gen William G. Pagonis, primary Persian Gulf logistician, established during the Persian Gulf War. Described as a "distinctive innovation," his log cell started out as a small, ad hoc think tank. It collected and analyzed operational information and used it to construct plans against General Pagonis's potential contingencies.<sup>1</sup>

In peacetime the air component commander's strategy cell should create preplanned holistic airpower strategy options for their commander to stimulate innovative thinking on the potential employment of airpower in the overall theater strategy. The best of these options or ideas should then be presented to the CINC by the air component commander. This allows the CINC to be on top of potential airpower options and solutions if queried by senior political leaders and reassures him that his air component command is a forward-thinking organization. If implemented, this strategy will set the framework for which the rest of the organization will base their efforts.

In wartime, the air component commander's strategy cell has various critical responsibilities. It must synchronize air operations with the CINC's guidance prior to and during the conflict. It should also be the primary liaison with the joint force commander's (JFC) planners. This is because it has the primary responsibility to maintain and monitor the continuity of the entire campaign's airpower strategy. Since this group, under the direction of the air component commander, creates the airpower strategy for the overall theater campaign, it must also determine its phasing requirements (phases represent

a period during which a large portion of the forces are involved in similar or mutually supporting activities)<sup>2</sup> and measures of merit (MOM). It is, therefore, logical that they should also be responsible for determining the analysis requirements of these MOMs to ensure airpower is achieving its desired objectives. After determining phase requirements and MOMs, they need to provide the air component commander with phase priorities and assist in the creation of JFACC guidance. This cell must continuously monitor and assess progress within a phase and notify and prepare the JFACC of anticipated phase completion. In addition to all these responsibilities, the cell should also be the primary interface with special technologies and unconventional operations because of their vision and understanding of the entire campaign.<sup>3</sup>

The strategy cell provides the foundation for accomplishment of numerous JFACC or air component commander responsibilities. It, therefore, requires a close relationship with the commander. The personnel of General Pagonis's log cell, or strategy group, reported directly to him and had nearly complete access to him at any time. He demanded total impartiality from them and assured them that their plans would also receive the same candor and vigor from him. In return he assured them that careers would not be jeopardized by exposing possible faults in his planning or by questioning his logic.<sup>4</sup>

The strategy cell's formal products lay the foundation for the rest of the air component commander's combat planning staff. Its formal products consist of an air operations plan, long-term JFACC guidance (i.e., outside the ATO cycle), and a progress assessment for the JFACC to analyze the status of airpower's contribution to the overall campaign.

The air operations plan is the framework in which the overall campaign's airpower strategy is organized and documented. This plan provides an overview of airpower's concept of operations and lists any assumptions used in the determination of its strategy. It documents the strategic-political, theater-military, and theater JFACC air objectives. In addition it clarifies the conditions necessary for the termination of operations. Phase guidance and priorities are recommended for each phase. Supporting air objectives (e.g., conduct air defense and surveillance operations) and the associated airpower tasks (e.g., deploy theater missile defense forces and infrastructure and initiate air defense operations) are then used to describe each particular phase.

Within each of the phases, every supporting objective is assigned suggested MOM criteria. This criteria is used to determine successful effects (not necessarily the accomplishment of the task) of airpower operations. Each phase has suggested criteria for phase completion so that other operations can commence as soon as possible. An effective air operations plan involves a great deal of thought and study. To better understand how to construct an air operations plan, we must examine what is involved in the creation of an airpower strategy.<sup>5</sup>

An airpower strategy must enhance the effectiveness of the overall theater campaign. Strategy has been defined in various ways. One such definition is "the art and science of developing and using political, economic, psychological,

and military forces as necessary during peace and war, to afford the maximum support to policies, in order to increase the probabilities and favorable consequences of victory and to lessen the chances of defeat.” A more concise definition is “a plan of action that organizes efforts to achieve objectives.” These definitions not only “address the art of distributing and applying military means,” as the role of strategy is often defined, but they also link actions to an effect: the fulfillment of objectives which are the ends of policy.<sup>6</sup> Thus, the development of strategy must be based on objectives, geopolitical information (scenario dependent), resources available, and a knowledge of military—especially airpower—doctrines and theories.

Airpower strategy development incorporates many levels of objectives from the national level through current political, theater-military, and airpower objectives. An essence of strategy from the renowned 20th-century military strategist, B. H. Liddell Hart, was to always keep your objectives in mind while attempting to create your plan based on circumstances. He used the phrase, “To wander down a side-track is bad, but to reach a dead end is worse,” to remind planners of this important aspect.<sup>7</sup>

The national-level objectives of the United States can be found in numerous documents. The two most prevalent are the National Security Strategy of the United States, published by the White House, and the National Military Strategy of the United States, published by the CJCS. From these objectives and various policy statements, political objectives will be formulated to reflect the country’s desires concerning the particular geopolitical situation. However, at the start of the hostilities in the Persian Gulf, the political objectives were not presented to the military planners. They were constructed by military planners and then given to the administration for approval.<sup>8</sup> Just as political objectives must support national-level objectives, so must military objectives support political objectives.

Although political and military objectives are different, they should not become separated. For modern nation-states do not go to war just for war’s sake but in pursuance of their policy or political objectives. As described by Liddell Hart, “The military objective is only the means to a political end. Hence the military objective should be governed by the political objective.”<sup>9</sup>

The same correlation should be made for creating airpower objectives for the JFACC’s airpower strategy. They must be linked to the theater CINC’s military objectives, which in turn should be linked to political- and national-level policy objectives. Thus, the aim of an airpower strategy is to enhance the overall theater strategy. When all the objectives or ends have been linked together, it is essential to quickly determine if your means are capable of achieving your ends.<sup>10</sup> To accomplish this task, geopolitical information, resources, theory, and doctrine must be studied.

Geopolitical information is essential to airpower strategy development. Every scenario contains vital factors which make that particular situation or circumstance unique. Thus, the means to accomplish or achieve the desired effect should always be distinctive from other strategies. A comprehensive understanding of the nature and reasons for the crisis is critical. To “know



the enemy,” as the renowned Chinese strategist Sun Tzu noted, has become a cardinal tenet of strategy.<sup>11</sup> Areas of investigation should include, but not be limited to, an in-depth knowledge of the environment, support structure, and threat.

Knowledge of the environment should address physical and social issues of the area. Physical issues, such as topography and weather, are important considerations for the employment of any military but particularly airpower forces. Social issues, as a minimum, include the cultural, political, and international/intranational environment. Historical background of the culture, the psychology of the leadership, the history of the decision-making apparatus/leadership, economic conditions, and religious influences must be investigated.

The enemy’s support structure may reveal linkages and provide insight into how the enemy operates. The country’s economy and infrastructure will illustrate potential strengths and weaknesses in the theater’s communications, transportation (including air base availability and operability), manufacturing infrastructure and the availability of critical items such as food, fuel, and water. Examination should also shed light on the area’s international relations and the particular type economy (commodities, industrial, or knowledge-based). This knowledge will affect potential economic warfare courses of action. The enemy’s military support infrastructure may also reveal potential coalitions and reveal possible strengths or weaknesses in the enemy’s ability to wage war.

Friendly and hostile military capabilities must be examined in-depth prior to creating an airpower strategy. Although the factors used to identify these capabilities are identical for friendly and hostile forces, identifying friendly force capabilities is often more challenging. While there is a tremendous amount of data available on US forces, the same cannot be said about our allies’ capabilities. This may be because our military does not have a dedicated organization which tracks such information compared to our own forces (e.g., logistics) and those that study the threat (e.g., intelligence). In addition, accurately assessing our own capabilities requires an objectivity that may become masked by some of our other interests (e.g., service or branch parochialism).

Besides the traditional way of quantifying fielded military forces and analyzing hostile intentions, other areas of the threat’s military must be examined. We need to determine the ways in which capabilities and intentions are perceived and misperceived. These images or signals provide a valuable insight to the threat’s political-military behavior.

The last aspect in evaluating geopolitical issues for the formulation of airpower strategy development is to avoid ethnocentrism. Ethnocentrism is the tendency to assess aspects of other cultures in terms of one’s own culture’s standards and values. Ethnocentrism is one of the factors which can seriously interfere with rational strategy development. It is usually not the sole cause of mistakes in strategy but only a contributory one. Unfortunately, strategists may not be able to know enough about an individual or group psychology to determine the reason behind a particular decision or action. Thus, the best that one may be able to

hope for is to be prepared and aware of any tendencies to mirror image a potential adversary. Along with geopolitical issues, the amount of resources available plays a critical role in an airpower strategy.

Available resources is a critical factor in determining potential strategies. The key to determining the most effective and efficient amount and type of resources required for a particular strategy involves extensive knowledge and flexibility. An effective and efficient strategy must be constructed with respect to time (e.g., arrival time for deploying forces), and various force levels (e.g., from in-place forces to potential coalitions). Included in the resource allocation process are numerous limiting factors that may prohibit the feasibility of certain resource combinations. These limiting factors could include transportation capability, sustainability, time requirements, and other outside available resources (e.g., coalitions).

An effective and innovative strategy should not be constrained by our current doctrine. However it must not be created without an understanding of various doctrines and theories. An airpower strategist should not only be able to give sound advice on airpower but also provide advice on how surface forces could be employed to complement airpower operations. This advice should lead to synergistic effects that contribute to the achievement of the campaign's objectives. Understanding the past may keep one from reliving the errors and mistakes of others and prevent one from reinventing the wheel. It is tempting to always refight the last war because of the experience gained from it (especially if it was successful). A historical example of this situation is the strategic bombing template from World War II being used against the nonindustrial nations of Korea and North Vietnam.

Airpower strategists must possess and demonstrate vision. Each situation or scenario is unique and therefore requires flexibility in current doctrine and the search for an innovative solution to the problem. The planning staff for Instant Thunder was not ignorant of the current AirLand Battle doctrine nor of the airpower theories from the past. The planning staff recognized the potential contribution airpower could make to the campaign by attacking Saddam Hussein's ability to control his forces.

With such importance placed on creating a sound airpower strategy, the personnel assigned to the strategy cell should be hand selected for their attributes. Personnel assigned to the JFACC or air component commander's staff group must have an in-depth knowledge of a variety of fields. First, and most important, is that the individuals understand operational strategy. In short, they must understand "the art and science of planning, orchestrating, and directing military campaigns within a theater of operations to achieve national security objectives."<sup>12</sup> These individuals must be capable of producing "a strategy based on existing military capabilities; a strategy that is used as a foundation for the formulation of specific plans for action in the short-range time period."<sup>13</sup>

The second trait they require is a combination of an in-depth knowledge in a particular tactical field (e.g., fighter operations, space operations, intelligence, etc.), plus a demonstrated capability in joint operations and/or combined

operations. To keep the size of the strategy cell to a manageable number for a brainstorming working group, the particular tactical expertise should be broad in nature. Examples would include special operations, fighter operations, bomber operations, airlift operations, space operations, intelligence, and logistics. The combined and joint operations problem can be solved by incorporating other service component representatives into the cell during times of crisis and by continuous interaction with the other components during peacetime preparation. The next element involved in the campaign planning process is the day guidance, apportionment, tasking, and targeting (GATT) cell.

The day GATT cell uses the strategy cell's air operations plan as a framework. The day GATT cell's overall responsibility is to translate the air operations plan into a more detailed version for daily operations. It prioritizes tasks for the next ATO cycle and recommends the weight of effort for airpower assets. The cell provides inputs to the JFACC for his attendance at the Joint Targeting Coordination Board (JTCCB). This board is usually chaired by the deputy CINC and attended by all the component commanders. The day GATT cell is also the daytime interface with the ATO execution cell since the former has the working knowledge of why certain decisions were made to that particular day's plan.<sup>14</sup>

The day GATT cell is primarily responsible for two products which assist in transitioning the overall air operations plan into a daily ATO. First, this cell produces a daily prioritized task list which, once approved by the JTCCB, can be used to select individual targets. The concept of using a daily prioritized task list versus a prioritized target list is a very important aspect of creating an effective and efficient daily ATO. This is contrary to the suggested methodology described in Joint Pub 3-0, Doctrine for Joint Operations. As evidenced by our experience during Vietnam, even some of our US political and military senior leaders equate lists of targets to the ends and not just as a means to the end. Except under unusual circumstances, our senior leaders, such as the JFC and component commanders, need to remain focused on prioritizing the ends and not get involved in the micromanagement of the individual means. The idea of prioritizing tasks versus individual targets was used in the second half of Blue Flag 95-2 with outstanding success. Members of the exercise JTCCB reported it was the most effective and efficient board meeting they had experienced. In their opinion it was the first time that the true issue of priorities was addressed and that every member was in agreement.<sup>15</sup> The second product that the day GATT cell is responsible for is determining the daily MOMs. Once the daily prioritized tasks are determined, the day GATT cell must inform the appropriate analysts and intelligence systems of the need to monitor the respective MOMs. This will greatly assist the battle damage assessment (BDA) feedback loop into the daily air operations plan and make the overall plan more effective and efficient.<sup>16</sup>

The night GATT cell continues to add more detail into the daily plan so that it can eventually be turned into an ATO. The night GATT cell's responsi-

bilities include building the next ATO's master attack plan (MAP) and to be the nighttime interface with the ATO execution cell. Its formal product is the MAP which is the framework for creating a daily ATO. A MAP provides theater-level sequencing and resource suggestions for producing an ATO.<sup>17</sup>

Considerations for developing a MAP include, as a minimum, specific target-timing requirements, synergistic effects to minimize attrition while achieving decisive results, effects of other service operations, and the availability of friendly air assets. Specific target-timing requirements refers to the fact that some particular targets are time-critical. This may be due to the target's potential to inflict unacceptable losses on friendly forces (e.g., weapons of mass destruction) or the fact that they are fleeting in nature and it is anticipated that this may be the only time they can be targeted (e.g., Scud mobile launchers). Other specific target-timing factors may include the desire to limit collateral damage (e.g., the downtown district during nonbusiness hours), or intelligence information that makes the target more valuable or vulnerable at a specific time (e.g., known meeting or conference time).<sup>18</sup>

MAP builders should strive to achieve synergistic effects and attempt to minimize attrition while achieving decisive results. Even though attrition risk may heavily influence the sequencing of airpower assets, critical ground operations may take precedence over the order of attack. MAP builders should attempt to mass airpower assets to achieve the greatest impact from a limited amount of suppression of enemy air defense (SEAD) assets. They should also attempt to exploit transitory weaknesses in an enemy's defenses. For these reasons, targets that are in close proximity of each other may be attacked simultaneously even though the targets might support different tasks with dissimilar priorities.<sup>19</sup>

The effect of the other operations in-theater should also have a significant impact on building a MAP. As mentioned earlier, the need to support unanticipated land or sea forces may force a modification to the synchronization of airpower assets. The MAP builders must coordinate and integrate surface maneuver and special forces units to maximize firepower to support and complement airpower objectives.<sup>20</sup>

The availability of certain friendly airpower assets is an important factor in determining sequencing in the MAP. The availability of aircraft (e.g., stealth fighters), weapons (e.g., precision munitions), skilled personnel (e.g., aircrew), and support assets (e.g., tanker aircraft) will affect the number of attacks that can take place over any given period of time. These factors will affect the number of similar type targets (requiring a limited asset) that may be attacked simultaneously. However, these factors should never be the foundation for a MAP. Friendly airpower asset availability should only be a sanity check on the MAP so that the ATO production cell can easily transform the MAP into an ATO. The next two elements involved in the campaign planning process is the ATO production cell and the ATO execution cell.<sup>21</sup>

The responsibilities of the ATO production and execution cells are fairly self-explanatory. The ATO production cell produces and transmits the next ATO to all the appropriate airpower wings or units. The formal product of this cell is

therefore an ATO. An ATO contains very detailed information on how airpower assets will be employed on that particular day. It contains such information as take off times, call signs, weapon loads, mission numbers, identification friend or foe codes, and other special instructions or coordination information. The efficiency of the ATO production process has been greatly enhanced by the computerization of the production and transmission of the ATO. The ATO execution cell executes the current ATO and provides feedback of its effects and results to the strategy cell. The strategy cell is thus able to continuously monitor and update the status of the overall airpower strategy.

This notional campaign planning organization takes a top-down approach in determining the responsibilities and products of the organization. The process began with a holistic operational-level airpower strategy which was communicated through the air operations plan document. That document became the framework for the other branches to the campaign planning division to develop and execute a daily ATO. Using this process, this study next examines CENTAF's early 1995 combat planning staff and attempts to determine if they could develop a holistic and operational-level airpower strategy.

#### Notes

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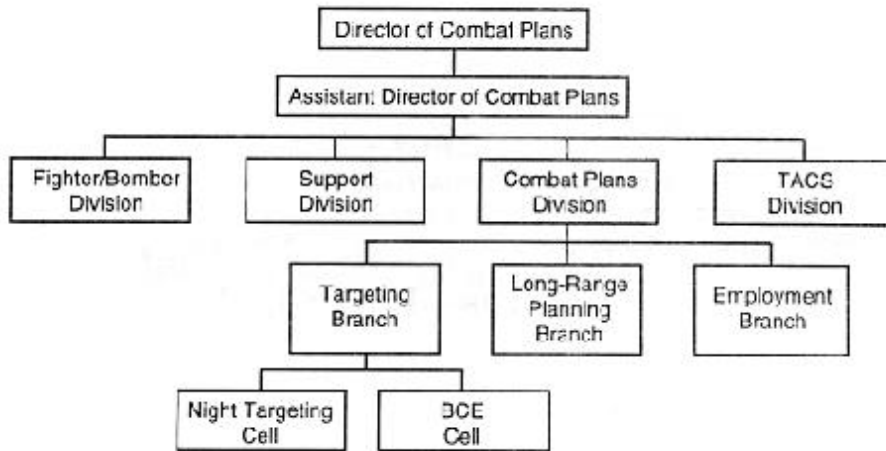
## Chapter 4

### **Report on USCENTAF Planning Staff's Status—Early 1995**

As mentioned earlier, USCENTAF did not possess any preplanned holistic airpower strategy options for their AOR prior to Desert Storm. Recognizing the fact that producing and executing an ATO is a major responsibility of USCENTAF, it must not be forgotten that if the ATO is to be effective, its production must be based on a holistic theater airpower strategy. To determine if today's USCENTAF combat planning organization is any better prepared to recommend and execute a campaign-level airpower strategy, we examine three basic areas. First, we examine the current combat planning organization and compare it with its pre-Desert Storm organization. Next, we use CENTAF's experience at Blue Flag 95-2 to determine how effectively and efficiently the organization functions. Finally, we use personal observations and interviews with various members of CENTAF's planning staff to gain insight of their perceived focus and possible shortfalls.

USCENTAF's combat planning organization has gone through numerous changes and adjustments since 1990. These changes reveal the changing philosophy toward the primary focus of their combat planning staff. According to USCENAFR 55-45, dated 27 June 1990, the USCENTAF Combat Plans organization consisted of a director and assistant director of combat plans who had four divisions under them: Fighter/Bomber, Support, Tactical (now theater) Air Control System (TACS), and Combat Plans. Combat Plans was then divided into three branches: employment, long-range, and targeting. The targeting branch is further divided into the night targeting cell and the battlefield coordination element (BCE). ATO planning and production is not directly shown on the organizational chart (fig. 2).<sup>1</sup>

The change in the organizational structure prior to Desert Shield/Storm may shed more light on the emphasis of the combat planning staff. The pre-Desert Shield organization had the USCENTAF directorate of Combat Plans subdivided into two divisions: Combat Operations Planning Staff (COPS) and the ATO Division. The COPS Division was responsible for areas concerning the commander's guidance letter, the targeting process, the daily ATO concept of operations, and force packaging. All the duties of the COPS seem to have had a short-term focus of only a few days. The ATO Division was responsible for the final coordination, production, and distribution of the ATO. ATO execution responsibility fell under the director of Combat



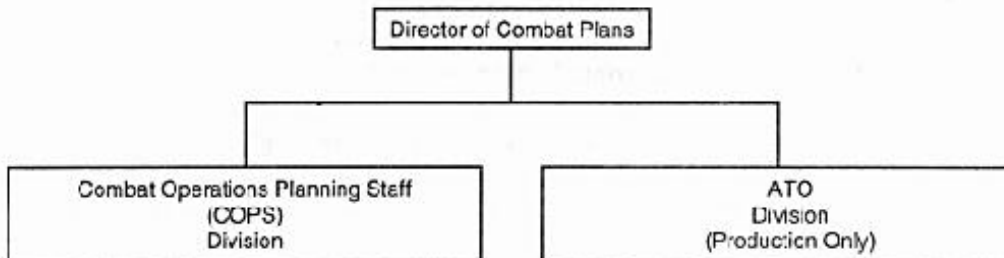
Source: USCENAFR 55-45, 27 June 1990.

Figure 2. USCENTAF Combat Planning Organization

Operations and was accomplished in the Air Operations Center (AOC). No organization had the responsibility for the holistic airpower vision (fig. 3).<sup>2</sup>

Comments by General Horner during the preparation for Desert Storm in August lend credibility to the premise that CENTAF's emphasis was on producing an ATO and not on creating an overall airpower strategy. While receiving the Instant Thunder briefing from Colonel Warden, who had been brought over to Saudi Arabia by General Schwarzkopf, he disapprovingly stated to Colonel Warden that "Our (CENTAF) goal [is to] build an A—T—O!" and not to worry about an overall airpower strategy.<sup>3</sup>

CENTAF combat plans went through another reorganization during the Persian Gulf hostilities; however, it was not until the fall of 1993 that it showed a formal focus on producing a preplanned holistic airpower strategy. The new combat plans was subdivided into four divisions. The divisions were Campaign Plans, ATO Development, TACS, and ATO Production. The



Source: According to Col Samuel J. Baptiste, chief of Combat Operations Planning Staff, Headquarters USCENTAF.

Figure 3. USCENTAF Combat Planning Organization, Pre-Desert Storm

Campaign Plans Division consisted of two branches: Strategy and GAT. The GAT branch also contained a night target cell (fig. 4).<sup>4</sup>



Source: USCENAFR 55-45, sec. 2, 11 January 1994.

**Figure 4. USCENTAF Combat Planning Organization, Fall 1993**

This reorganization appeared to reflect USCENTAF's desire to correct the discrepancies of the past and ensure that there could be no mistake on which branch had the responsibility for the creation of an overall airpower strategy.

According to USCENAFR 55-45, dated 11 January 1994, the strategy planning cell responsibilities include but are not limited to:

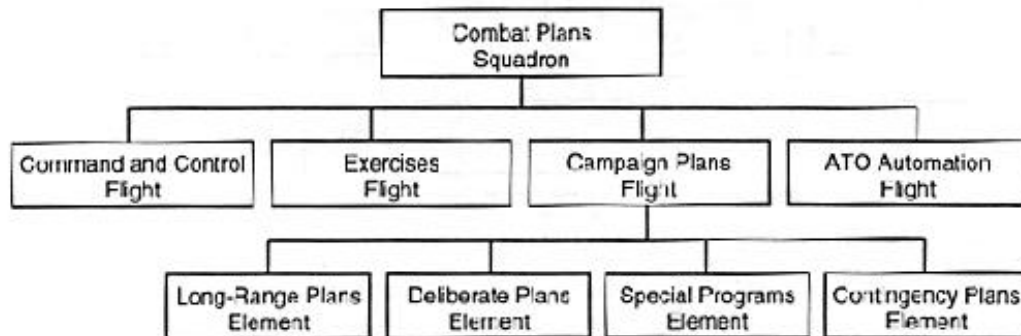
- 1) developing strategies for force beddown, force posturing, and force projection in support of near- and long-term theater campaign objectives;
- 2) coordinating with the CINC and CENTAF commander, identifying logistic support requirements for planned or projected beddowns, restructuring or operations;
- 3) coordinating with supporting commands for the implementation of operational plans and requirements;
- 4) coordinating with other components as to planned campaign strategies and forthcoming operations that require air support or may affect the air component's and/or joint force air component's long-range employment plans; and
- 5) undertaking special projects which are not normally part of the deliberate planning process.<sup>5</sup>

This guidance is further evidence that USCENTAF is aware of some of its shortfalls and made an attempt to remedy the situation. It implies that near- and long-term campaign objectives have to be either known or developed in order to create strategies. It also states that the air component's and/or JFACC's long-range employment plans must be coordinated with the other components and the CINC. This is further evidence that USCENTAF is concerned with the creation of a holistic airpower employment plan. Unfortunately this essential element of the combat plans organization has been eliminated in the current USCENTAF combat planning organization.

As of spring 1995, USCENTAF's newly named Combat Plans squadron, has an entirely new look. The organizational chart currently divides the Combat Plans squadron (A5-DOX), into Command and Control (A5-DOXC), Exercises (A5-DOXE), Campaign Plans (A5-DOXP), and ATO Automation (A5-DOXA).



However, at the same time, the organization chart of the Campaign Plans Flight, previously called a division, shows their flight consisting of four subflights or elements. These elements consisted of Contingency Plans, Deliberate Plans, Long-Range Plans, and Special Programs (fig. 5).<sup>6</sup>



Source: USCENTAF Organization Chart, 609 Air Operations Group, A5-DOX.

**Figure 5. USCENTAF Combat Planning Organization, Spring 1995**

Although the elements in the Campaign Plans Flight gives the impression that USCENTAF is concerned about the continued development of airpower strategies, assistance visits from the Checkmate Division of the Air Staff and USCENTAF's performance at Blue Flag 95-2 tells a different story.

When a potential conflict erupted in Iraq in the fall of 1994, USCENTAF's new commander, Lt Gen John P. Jumper, requested Checkmate to augment his planning staff. As a result, Checkmate suggested that USCENTAF's combat planning organization expand its vision of combat planning to include an overall operational airpower strategy.<sup>7</sup> To clarify this statement a definition of operational strategy is appropriate:

A strategy based on existing military capabilities; a strategy that is used as a foundation for the formulation of specific plans for action in the short-range time period.<sup>8</sup>

Areas examined by the Checkmate Division included

- strategy development (overall campaign);
- JFC/JFACC staff interaction;
- integration of special technology and unconventional operations;
- monitoring the progress and assessing the effectiveness of the airpower effort;
- air operations planning (outside the next ATO cycle);
- other component/JFACC staff interaction;
- ATO development; and
- ATO execution.

The only areas that were deemed to have a formal process were the ATO development and execution areas. It should be noted that these areas had

been the focus of the organization prior to Desert Storm. JFACC staff interaction with the JFC and other component staffs was deemed to be in the realm of an informal process. The rest of the areas that were examined did not exist in the formal process of USCENTAF's planning considerations.<sup>9</sup>

According to Checkmate's analysis, USCENTAF's long-range planning cell had the responsibility to provide the longest and widest vision of the entire campaign. However, its responsibility required it to provide only two to four days worth of priorities (e.g., two to four days from the current ATO) to the JFACC. In addition, they recommended JFACC priorities for the next ATO to the day GATT cell. In short, no group was responsible for airpower's overall campaign strategy. Since there wasn't any such group, it only follows that there was no process or procedure to monitor the progress of airpower's objectives or assess its overall effectiveness.<sup>10</sup> Table 1 is a summary of Checkmate's assessment of the current USCENTAF planning organization.

USCENTAF combat planning organization's experience at Blue Flag 95-2 highlighted similar conclusions. Previous Blue Flags had been a test bed for

**Table 1**

**Checkmate Assessment of Current USCENTAF Planning Organization**

N A M E	R E S P O N S I B I L I T I E S	P R O D U C T
LONG-RANGE PLANNING CELL	- PROVIDE JFACC 2-4 DAY PRIORITIES - RECOMMENDS NEXT DAY ATO JFACC PRIORITIES TO DAY GATT	- JFACC GUIDANCE DAYS 2-4 - DAILY PRIORITIES - APPORTIONMENT RECOMMENDATION
JTCB	- PROVIDE NEXT DAY ATO AND APPORTIONMENT GUIDANCE	- APPORTIONMENT GUIDANCE
DAY GATT	- PROVIDE NEXT ATO TARGET PRIORITIES - FOCAL POINT FOR COMPONENT LIAISON	- JFACC PRIORITIZED TASKS
TARGETING CELL	- BUILDS NEXT ATO TARGET LIST - PROVIDES COMBAT ASSESSMENT	-PRIORITIZED TARGET LIST
NIGHT GATT	- BUILDS NEXT ATO MASTER ATTACK PLAN	- MASTER ATTACK PLAN
ATO PRODUCTION	- BUILDS AND TRANSMITS NEXT ATO	- ATO TRANSMITTED
ATO EXECUTION	- MONITORS/EXECUTES CURRENT ATO	- ATO EXECUTED

the development of computerized ATO development and execution hardware and software and did not allow the organization to adequately practice their AOC operations. Fortunately this situation has changed so that USCENTAF was able to exercise its planning organization for the first time.<sup>11</sup> Thus, since an organization has to learn to walk before it runs, USCENTAF's combat planning during Blue Flag 95-2 emphasized the production of the ATO without any reference to an overall airpower strategy. CENTAF's combat planning process was described in briefings and point papers as simply a series of meetings.

CENTAF's campaign planning process was structured by a series of meetings which occurred throughout the day starting with the first meeting at 0800 and the last one at 1800. Their emphasis was on the ATO process and it focused almost exclusively on improving the efficiency (e.g., doing things right) of producing a daily ATO. There was little to no effort to determine if the process or the product (i.e., the daily ATO) was in fact effective (e.g., doing the right things). The ATO development process did not attempt to reference an overall campaign plan, objectives, nor any MOM until the Checkmate augmentees suggested and produced briefing slides for the JFACC briefings.<sup>12</sup>

To the benefit of USCENTAF, it has attempted to improve the efficiency of the ATO cycle. This cycle began with a joint guidance, apportionment, and targeting (JGAT) meeting at 0930. The JGAT meeting was chaired by the JFACC (only for this Blue Flag) and attended by senior component representatives. Its primary purpose was to review two days' worth of potential future ATO targets (days B and C) and approve the targeting strategy for the next ATO (day A). (This targeting strategy was a result of the previous day's JTCB meeting.)<sup>13</sup>

The next meeting of the JTCB was at 1100. The JTCB was chaired by the deputy CINC and was attended by the component commanders or their representatives. Its focus was on reviewing JFC's objectives/guidance and discussing long-range targeting strategy (day B) which was used 22<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> hours later at the next JGAT meeting.<sup>14</sup> CENTAF now plans to have this group look outside the ATO cycle (days D through F).<sup>15</sup>

The JGAT working group meeting was held at 1200. It was chaired by the deputy director of Combat Plans and was initially intended to have only field grade component representatives. However, during this Blue Flag the Navy sent an air wing commander (O-6) to be its naval component representative.<sup>16</sup> Its purpose was to publish the joint targeting list (JTL) for the next day (day A) using the guidance from the JGAT meeting at 0930.<sup>17</sup>

The next meeting was at 1700 and was attended by senior AOC component representatives. It attempted to determine JFACC guidance for two days ahead (day B). This guidance was used in the next day's JGAT meeting at 0930.<sup>18</sup>

The GAT began building the ATO at 1800 using the JTL published at that day's 1200 JGAT meeting. A MAP was produced during the night and inputted into the Advanced Planning System (APS) by 0400 the next day. The MAP was then transformed into an ATO by incorporating detailed instructions and coordination information. It was reviewed and approved throughout the process (at 0830 by the JFACC) until 1800 when it was transmitted to simulated airpower wings or units.<sup>19</sup>

The Blue Flag 95-2 debriefing revealed the USCENTAF commander's desire to improve its combat planning capability. The debrief also revealed a possible hidden agenda or subordinate objective. It appeared that USCENTAF was attempting to build the other service components' confidence that the AOC operation and process was under control. Fortunately the

USCENTAF staff was very critical of their performance. USCENTAF's A3/5 stated that the ACPT should have played a greater role and been involved earlier in their initial planning efforts during Quick Flag (training program devoted to creating a holistic airpower strategy to use in the Blue Flag exercise). He also pointed out that within his own staff the operations and plans interface needed improvement and that increased feedback between the two would help to increase each other's awareness. Surprisingly enough, the greatest insight into the exercise came from the person who had been with USCENTAF the least amount of time, its commander. First, he recognized that he needed to be the single point of contact for airpower targeting priorities when he met with the other service components.<sup>20</sup>

The commander also commented that the AOC briefings were unsatisfactory because they focused entirely too much on measuring insignificant events, such as sorties flown, or the number of certain mission types, and not on the impact or effect they had toward the overall campaign. This remark was made soon after US Marine Forces, Central Command's (MARCENT) representative demonstrated his service parochialism by complaining that neither the ATO or the briefings to the JFC reflected the Marine Corps' contribution to the CAS effort (bean counting of mission-type sorties). This comment was made even though those assets were not released to the JFACC for tasking. To his credit, the MARCENT representative later made a very insightful comment to this group of senior leaders. He stated that "Where you sit determines what you see." His challenge to the group was not to assume that just because the JFACC had the "big picture" that everyone else did too. Other components and/or allies, along with the worker bees in the AOC, might easily be left in the dark and have no idea of how they were contributing to the big picture. General Jumper concluded the debrief by proclaiming that USCENTAF could "now start dealing more with the product quality versus the process and evaluate the level of its thinking up to the strategic level." The USCENTAF commander's remarks indicate a concerted effort toward correcting the organization's shortfalls from the Persian Gulf War.<sup>21</sup>

However, the debrief also revealed some serious misperceptions on the part of the other service components. First, US Army Forces, Central Command (ARCENT) asked if it would be possible to "put an ATO on the shelf and give it a formal review in order to institutionalize it." He then used Pacific Air Forces (PACAF) and Korea as an example of this type of process. There are inherently two basic flaws in having USCENTAF take this approach. One is that their AOR is more dynamic and could involve numerous geographically different scenarios, unlike the static situation in Korea. The other flaw is that the concern should not be in the micromanagement of a daily ATO but on the overall campaign and its supporting strategies that affect the campaign. In short the preplanning vision needs to at least encompass the entire campaign.<sup>22</sup>

Another disturbing critique from ARCENT was that there was no formal means to "validate the ATO targets from those requested." This critique

reveals that there is still more work to be done on educating the other components. Other components should only present prioritized task requests to the JFACC and not simply “a list of targets to be serviced.” The idea of continuing to present specific targets to the JFACC may give the impression that the Army is attempting to use airpower as a means to conserve its own organic artillery assets.<sup>23</sup>

US Navy, Central Command’s (NAVCENT) contribution to the debrief was to slip in a briefing on how one of their Persian Gulf War planners (Comdr [“Duck”] McSwain from the 7th Carrier Group) viewed airpower campaign planning. Even though this briefing was not appropriate or relevant to a senior leader exercise debrief, everyone politely listened as he described how to ensure a notional airpower campaign plan placed the appropriate weight of effort on attacking a particular type of target. Unfortunately his process was not concerned with the most important aspect or purpose of the campaign: the effect the attacks were having toward achieving an objective, desired outcome or goal. Although the true purpose of this particular briefing is not clear, its unexpected occurrence in the presence of this group of senior leaders may reveal another service challenge over establishing airpower planning procedures.<sup>24</sup>

Interviews and a fact-finding visit to USCENTAF headquarters at Shaw AFB, South Carolina, revealed a glimmer of hope along with some demons from the past. The brightest star at the field grade level was the Campaign Plans flight commander, Lt Col Bob Schloss. His understanding of operational strategy and his willingness to seek new ideas and methods to improve his flight’s effectiveness was commendable. Unfortunately his office appears to be overwhelmed with noncampaign planning tasks from his superiors and temporary duty assignments to fill Joint Task Force Southwest Asia. Thus, his effort to move his flight toward a more operational or holistic campaign level of thinking is moving slower than desired. To this end, there is still not a group or person responsible in his flight for the creation of a complete airpower strategy for the duration of the entire campaign.<sup>25</sup>

There are two demons still lingering in the USCENTAF combat planning staff. One is the “tactical-level” mind-set maintained by some of the planning veterans. During a discussion on the merits of Blue Flag exercises to the combat planning process, the issue of how the reduced frequency of the exercises affected their combat planning staff. Out of that discussion a question arose on whether the combat planning staff ever attempted to determine the effectiveness of the daily ATOs. A veteran of over 20 USCENTAF exercises and a former Persian Gulf War combat planner responded by stating they used to do that by sending a copy of an exercise ATO to one of the flying wings in their command to have them check to see if they had made any clerical errors in tasking the individual flights.<sup>26</sup> This type of response illustrates the lack of operational-level focus or thought in the production of CENTAF’s daily ATOs which remains today.

It also became apparent that although most planners could agree on the words that described their planning process, the commonality of the concept

was lacking. It was very similar to the comment made by General Horner to Col Steve ("Foose") Wilson (director of the "Fighter Mafia" division of the Air Staff and confidant of Lt Gen Jimmie Adams, the Air Force XO) when he received the Instant Thunder briefing for the first time in Saudi Arabia. In that discussion, he told Colonel Wilson that, "I'm not worried about strategic targets." Although Colonel Wilson was attempting to convey that those particular targets were called "strategic" targets for their potential strategic or war-winning effect, General Horner had thought that strategic targeting was synonymous with "nuclear" targeting. Thus, he firmly let Colonel Wilson know that he was not intending to use nuclear weapons.<sup>27</sup> This type of misunderstanding was also evident with the USCENTAF planning staff when it came to the words campaign planning, operational, and strategy. Although a few felt airpower campaign planning meant creating an overall game plan, most felt that it simply meant producing daily ATOs. Instead of operational referring to the operational level of warfare, most felt that it meant anything other than a support function. Lastly, although the term airpower strategy had a fairly common definition, the duration of its vision varied from the next day to the entire campaign duration.

These observations revealed the need for a standardized educational process for all Air Force officers, and especially combat planners. It also illustrates the point that simply creating a "strategy cell" in name may not automatically achieve the desired outcome of having an assigned group take responsibility for the creation and monitoring of an airpower strategy that encompasses the entire campaign.<sup>28</sup>

#### Notes

1. USCENAFR 55-45, 27 June 1990, 3-18.
2. Col Samuel J. Baptiste, "HQ CENTAF in the Gulf: Reflections on Combat Planning and the Air Tasking Order Process" (Unpublished paper, Air War College, 1994), 28.
3. Col Richard T. Reynolds, *Heart of the Storm: The Genesis of the Air Campaign against Iraq* (Maxwell AFB, Ala.: Air University Press, 1995), 126.
4. USCENAFR 55-45, sect. 2, 11 January 1994.
5. *Ibid.*
6. CENTAF Organization Chart, 609 Air Operations Group, A5-DOX.
7. Lt Col Jack Egginton and Maj Michael R. Moeller, Checkmate Division planners, strategy cell, Pentagon, Washington, D.C., interview with author on Checkmate/CENTAF staff assistance visit, Hurlburt Field, Fla., 6 February 1995.
8. AFM 1-1, *Basic Aerospace Doctrine of the United States Air Force*, vol. 2, March 1992, 297.
9. Checkmate briefing slides, "The State of the JFACC: An Assessment of Current JFACC Organizations and Planning Processes," February 1995.
10. *Ibid.*
11. Lt Gen John P. Jumper, CENTAF commander, interview with author, Shaw AFB, S.C., 14 June 1995.
12. Background paper and briefing slides on CENTAF planning for Blue Flag 95-2 and notes, 6-8 February 1995.
13. *Ibid.*
14. *Ibid.*

15. Col Bill Hoge, CENTAF A3/5, interview with author, Shaw AFB, S.C., 14 June 1995.
16. Ibid.
17. Ibid.
18. Ibid.
19. Ibid.
20. Notes, Blue Flag 95-2 Senior Officer debrief, 8 February 1995.
21. Ibid.
22. Ibid.
23. Ibid.
24. Ibid.
25. CENTAF personnel, notes and interviews with author, CENTAF headquarters, Shaw AFB, S.C., 16–17 March 1995.
26. Ibid.
27. Reynolds, 92.
28. CENTAF's notes and interviews with author.

## **Chapter 5**

# **Implications/Solutions to Air Component Commands' Combat Planning Shortfalls**

Since the completion of Desert Storm, many ideas have come to the forefront on how to remedy the shortfalls of air component commanders' combat planning staffs. Solutions range from improved training for these staffs to the complete elimination of its planning responsibility. This study briefly examines a few of these options and comments on their attributes and shortfalls.

One proposal is to have one centralized combat planning staff for all air component commands. Some advocate that an established group of knowledgeable campaign planners, such as the Checkmate Division of the Air Staff, should be that staff. They argue that Checkmate already has the correct mixture and quality of personnel. They claim that the Checkmate organization has been, and continues to be, the informal experts in campaign planning in the Air Force (as evidenced by the demand for their assistance). Its location in Washington, D.C., offers a direct "eyeball-to-eyeball" access to intelligence-gathering sources and organizations (e.g., Defense Intelligence Agency, Central Intelligence Agency, National Security Agency, etc.) that facilitate the formulation of an effective airpower strategy.

Problems with this proposal are both concrete and perceptual. The concrete problems include the lack of manpower and reduced interaction with the respective air component commanders and their other organizations. Assuming various air component commanders would still require preplanned studies and contingency plans, a large quantity of personnel would be needed to continuously track and update all of the information. In addition, not having the combat planning staff collocated with their respective commander and the other organizations (e.g., logistics) within the command could lead to a disconnect with the commander's intent. Since the commander and his strategy cell must have a personal relationship and trust concerning their airpower strategy, this situation would not be optimal.

It would be unrealistic to assume that unfavorable perceptions from the Vietnam era no longer exist. Many of our senior Air Force leaders are very hesitant to support planning organizations to be staffed by military or civilian personnel in Washington, D.C. During the Persian Gulf War, Gen Robert D. Russ, commander of TAC; General Adams, the AF/XO; and General Horner, the CENTAF commander, were very adamant about having combat planning done only in-theater. By moving the centralized organization out of the



Washington, D.C., area, the organization no longer has day-to-day personal contact with the national intelligence agencies.

A second proposal is to increase the number of combat planning exercises for the air component commands. On the surface this proposal seems to be the easiest to accomplish even though funding could be a limiting factor. However, the problems with this proposal are twofold. Even though exercises, such as Blue Flag, examine and exercise a portion of the air component combat planning staff and provide interaction with sister component planning staffs, they do not adequately address the effectiveness of overall airpower strategies. They primarily exercise the ATO development and execution cells and then only for a few days.

Granted the air components need to be able to produce and execute an ATO for the successful employment of airpower, but an ATO is only effective if it is based on a solid airpower strategy. Currently, air component combat planning exercises fail to assess the components' overall airpower strategy or allow their strategy cells to assess the progress of their overall strategy and make appropriate modifications to it.

The final option is to establish a centralized training center for all air component commanders' combat planning staffs in an attempt to teach effective airpower strategy planning. During the course of conducting research and composing this study, such an organization was formed under the Air Warfare Center. The Center for Integrated Air, Space, and Information Operations is situated at Hurlburt Field, Florida. Along with the other schools located there (Air Ground Operations School, Battle Staff Training School, etc.), it will supposedly create a "JFACC Tech" and become "a center of excellence for training at the operational level of warfare." The organization's proposed mission is to "train, exercise, and support JFACCs/JFACC staffs/AOCs in campaign planning (includes Military Operations Other Than War)."<sup>1</sup>

The Center for Integrated Air, Space, and Information Operations anticipated concept of operations is to work with air component command staffs during pre-exercise planning to create campaign plan(s) for execution during exercises (Blue and Green Flags, Cope Thunders, JFACC Trailblazer [United States Air Forces Europe exercise], Ulchi Focus Lens [Korea], etc.). More specifically it anticipates assessing the effectiveness of campaign plan(s) during exercises and to publish lessons learned. It also plans to test and assess air, space, and information operations doctrine using live and computer-assisted exercises. Finally it anticipates assisting air component staffs in creating campaign plans for contingencies and to augment those planning staffs as needed.

Although this is the best of all the proposals, there are still some potential shortcomings to this option. First and foremost is that it may be hard to break some perceptions of this new organization. Hurlburt Field has not been known, as a location, for having demanding training programs in the past, having a large number of future Air Force leaders stationed there, or for being a recognized overall career enhancing permanent change of station

experience. In addition, it may be difficult for a new organization to obtain instant credibility with the air component staffs. Finally, some supporting components may also feel threatened by yet another organization impinging on their perceived territory (e.g., USSPACECOM's resistance to placing operational space assets at ACSC for familiarization and training).

The recommended solution to correcting the shortfalls of an air components' combat planning organization is twofold. First, the mission of operational-level airpower strategy development should be maintained at the air component command. As suggested by General Jumper, this can be accomplished by using the Checkmate Division expertise. During peacetime certain members of Checkmate would visit his organization to stimulate innovative and creative thought toward airpower. In times of conflict certain members of Checkmate could then be used to augment his planning staff. The bottom line is to provide the air component commander with the planning assets that he requires and avoid other organization's needs to create alternative or competing plans.<sup>2</sup> Second, the air component command's combat planning staff needs to increase their operational-level training. This training should be done at a centralized location so that standardization can be obtained within all the air component commands and the specialty of operational-level airpower campaign planning. It must teach the staffs to begin with a holistic and operational-level airpower strategy and to use that strategy to develop and produce a daily ATO. Through this type of training we can hope that the next time an air component command is called upon to enter into a conflict, it will be well prepared due to their staff's preplanning efforts and understanding of how airpower can contribute to the overall theater campaign.

#### **Notes**

1. Briefing slides, Headquarters USAF/XOX, Center for Integrated Air, Space, and Information Operations, Winter 1994.

2. Lt Gen John P. Jumper, CENTAF commander, interview with author, Shaw AFB, S.C., 14 June 1995.

## Chapter 6

### Conclusion

This study's goal is to provide insight into an air component command's ability to create an effective airpower strategy. By determining some of the most important attributes of an effective airpower strategy, this study presented a critical analysis of a combat planning organization. It concludes that CENTAF combat plans are capable of efficiently developing and producing daily ATOs but does not yet base those ATOs on an effective airpower strategy.

The deficiency of the CENTAF combat planning organization primarily lies in its lack of a strategy development cell within its staff. This strategy cell provides an operational vision to develop a holistic airpower strategy to complement the CINC's overall theater strategy. This strategy then provides a framework for planners to build an effective ATO.

An analogy to this situation is the development of a housing subdivision. A commercial real estate investor establishes a community by getting advice from housing development and community development experts. This is similar to a CINC getting expert advice from his component commanders prior to developing his theater campaign strategy. Once a decision is made to establish the community and with a general set of guidelines, such as location, size, and type of community, the expert developers determine how to effectively and efficiently follow those guidelines. With regard to war fighters, once the general guidance for a theater campaign plan is provided by the CINC, the air component commander must decide how to effectively and efficiently employ airpower to support the CINC's theater campaign plan. A housing developer must create a subdivision plan, such as where to put the houses to maximize the effectiveness (e.g., quality of homes and lots) and efficiency (e.g., minimize costs) of the project. This plan is used by the housing architects to assist in their housing blueprint decisions. Those blueprints are then used by the construction workers to build the houses. An air component planning staff has a similar responsibility to a housing developer. The staff must develop an effective and efficient airpower strategy which is translated into an air operations plan. The air operations plan is the framework by which the GATT cell develops and passes on their MAP. The MAP is then used by the ATO developers to build the daily ATO.

Largely, air component commanders and their planning staffs concentrate on the development and production of the ATO. Unfortunately this is to the detriment of the creation of a sound overall airpower strategy. This situation is similar to a housing subdivision being established with emphasis on

individual homes rather than how all the homes fit together to form a quality subdivision. The result could be disastrous for the commercial real estate investor: CINC.

Thus, the air component planning staffs must refocus their concentration toward two of its responsibilities. First, they must ensure that the air component commander is as knowledgeable as possible concerning airpower employment. The commander can, therefore, be effective in the role of expert advisor to the CINC. Second, once the CINC provides guidance for the theater campaign strategy, the planning staff must develop an overall airpower strategy. This strategy is used as a solid framework for the rest of the campaign planning process.

Thus, the goal of the air component's planning staff is twofold. First, it must provide the air component commander with the best possible inputs so that the commander can properly advise the CINC. Second, it must improve its ability to effectively plan an airpower strategy to complement the CINC's overall theater strategy. To accomplish this task, a strategy development cell must be incorporated into the combat planning staff and the entire combat staff must receive recurring standardized training on how to effectively employ airpower assets at the operational versus tactical level of warfare.

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