

Letters . . .

LOST IN SPACE

To the Editor—Should space be a theater of conflict or simply a conduit of information? In “Space and the Theater Commander’s War” (*JFQ*, Winter 00–01), Thomas Doyle sidesteps that issue in arguing that “spacepower must be incorporated into campaign planning and conduct.” But his proposal that the director of space and information should be part of the joint operations center or under the joint force air component Aerospace Operations Center amounts to a decision that we expect to conduct space-to-space conflict.

Doyle delicately points out that every head of U.S. Space Command (SPACECOM) “since the mid-1990s has championed the idea of spacepower as a center of gravity, yet many planners have difficulty treating it as vital because space systems do not shoot bullets or drop bombs.” The problem with declaring spacepower as a center of gravity is that it represents no one’s center of gravity except our own. The argument that it is necessary to make doctrinal and organizational changes to attain “victory over space-savvy enemies” is weakened by the fact that, in comparison to U.S. dependence on space systems, there are no “space-savvy enemies.” Cooperation with NASA keeps the Russian space program afloat. Other potential antagonists do not have elaborate space architectures but employ commercial systems. Does anyone seriously believe that non-state commercial space companies would provide information to a regime conducting a war

against the United States—the nation that is the world’s greatest market for information? SPACECOM has argued such, but they have a bit of a parochial interest in demonstrating that they are a real warfighting command. Given the U.S. position in the world economy, the powers of the Security and Exchange Commission, Internal Revenue Service, and other agencies have considerable deterrent effect on potential trading with an enemy—even by supposedly multinational corporations.

It may be that we will need to conduct anti-satellite operations in order to blind future anti-access or area denial strategies designed to keep U.S. forces out of a region of conflict. A modest ground- or air-based antisatellite capability—along the lines of that developed and stored during the Cold War—should be retained both as insurance and a deterrent. Hardening satellites and enhancing our capacity for replacing them are also prudent steps. But my research indicates that two-way space-to-space conflict is unlikely in the next twenty-five years, and—given current conditions—it is better to continue to dissuade the development of space combat systems through deterrence and diplomacy than reorganize and plan to conduct war in space. The current space capabilities of potential enemies can be neutralized best by strikes against control facilities on the ground.

One of my fears about a comprehensive, essentially independent-minded spacepower doctrine is the potential for space capabilities to become separated from joint warfighting. If SPACECOM focuses on fighting the war in space rather than on

supporting the information needs of the CINCs, close space support might go the way of close air support—something the services are still convinced they must do by themselves.

—Captain Sam J. Tangredi, USN
Institute for National Strategic Studies
National Defense University

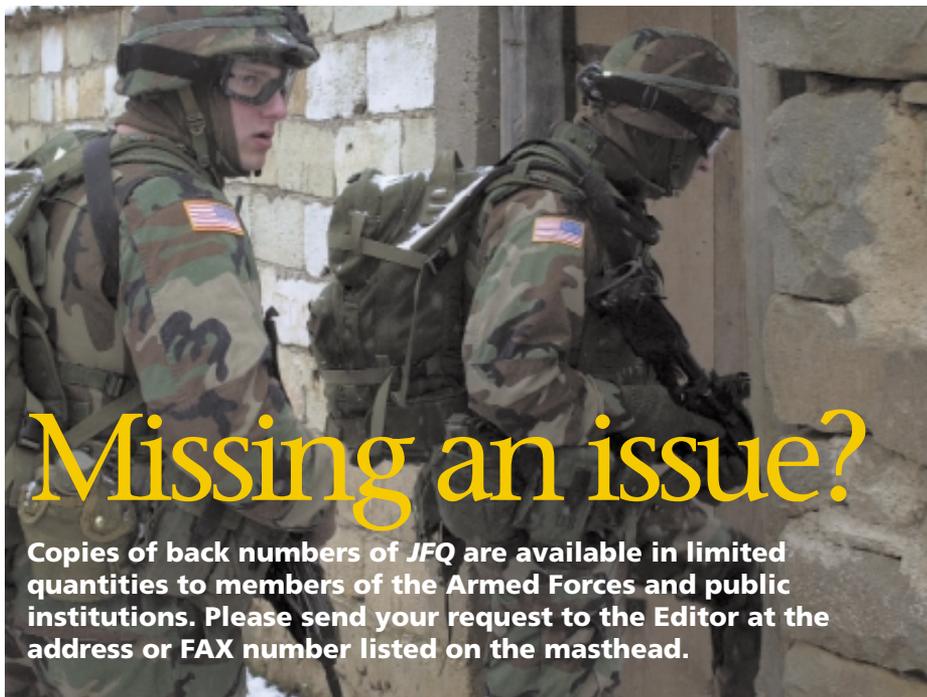
CONTAINMENT POST 9/11

To the Editor—With the events of September 11 fresh in our minds, the distinction made between containment and deterrence by Paul K. White in “Airpower and a Decade of Containment” (*JFQ*, Winter 00–01) seems all the more important. Containment is possible in the case of Saddam Hussein because the United States and its allies maintain the initiative and are able to take the fight to the adversary. Deterrence, White rightly points out, is another thing entirely. The initiative is in the hands of an enemy, who can choose to suffer the consequences if it acts but cannot be prevented from deciding to act. Saddam is deterred so long as the United States is actively engaged in keeping him in the box. Containment may not be able to remove the threat he poses, but it can neutralize it.

The United States is currently able to contain Iraq because of its overwhelming superiority in aerospace power. That superiority will not last forever. Baghdad is acquiring new capabilities in an attempt to defeat our strategy, recently downing two unmanned Predator surveillance vehicles. The failure to modernize our forces by acquiring new capabilities such as the F–22 and joint strike fighter, space-based radar, and unnamed aerial vehicles as well as improving the strategic bomber force and upgrading electronic warfare systems, including the venerable EA–6B, will eventually compel the United States to abandon its containment strategy. More important, it will weaken the U.S. deterrent and make the next war both more difficult and costly.

These same capabilities will be critical in the war on terrorism. The perpetrators of the September 11 atrocities should have been deterred by our overwhelming superiority in military, intelligence, and police/security capabilities. They were not. We can no longer rely on deterrence to protect us against the new threats of the 21st century. Containment means carrying the fight to the enemy. We may soon be required to act again against not only terrorist networks but against the countries that support them. To prosecute this new kind of war, we will need the greatest advantage in aerospace power we can achieve.

—Daniel Gouré
Lexington Institute



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