
The Area of Operations— Fighting One Campaign

By DOUGLAS E. UTLEY



Providing command and control, Combined Arms Exercise 4-98.

2^d Marine Division, Combat Camera (S.A. Hanvood)

Emerging concepts for command and control increasingly pit air commanders against land commanders for the control of airpower in the deep battle—beyond the range of friendly artillery. Increasingly, both Army and Marine Corps officers insist on controlling operations in their areas of operations (AOs)—which extend ever deeper into the battlespace beyond friendly ground forces. From an Air Force perspective, creating AO commanders partitions the battlespace and fragments airpower planning and employment. Rather, the Air Force argues that airpower can accomplish objectives throughout the battlespace including some the Army and Marine Corps have regarded as their responsibilities.

The land force approach to command and control (C²) follows a cultural bias on geographic zones or sectors. From an airpower perspective, zones, sectors, or areas are less important than assignment of objectives for establishing supporting/supported relationships among components. The latter concept certainly requires fewer resources and personnel to accomplish all needs throughout the battlespace. Land forces have a critical requirement to influence events beyond the range of friendly field artillery, but air and space forces remain the best source of information and provide the preponderance of capabilities to accomplish those objectives. Thus the joint force air component commander (JFACC), through a jointly manned and expert staff, is best suited to integrate those joint forces capable of fighting the deep battle.

Deep Battle

The term *deep battle* has little relevance for air forces. The air commander wages battle throughout a CINC's area of responsibility (AOR) or a joint operations area (JOA). Whether targets are close or far, shallow or deep, is of less concern than their importance to achieving the objectives of joint force commanders (JFCs). The desired effects on enemy centers of gravity and the actions enabling penetration to them drive where, when, and by what targets are attacked. The speed, range, flexibility, and survivability of airpower allow JFCs to employ asymmetrical force against

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strategic, operational, and tactical targets in a parallel, simultaneous manner. Airmen and aviators usually measure depth by the number of threats en route to assigned targets. Generally, the more numerous the threats, the deeper the airman must penetrate. Both high performance and stealthy aircraft increasingly make the issue of depth less meaningful.

In contrast, the land force commander measures depth in terms of geography and time. How long or how far does it take to close with enemy forces? Time and distance equate to ability to shape battlefields. The greater the time and distance, the greater the opportunity to influence relative strengths, terrain advantages, and other factors.

For example, the land commander focuses on the distance and strength of second echelon forces from the perspective of the number and relative strength of friendly battalions that remain to meet them. The farther out a land commander

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Establishing communications at Combat Support Operations Course, Fort Dix.

can engage enemy ground forces the greater the attrition that can be inflicted before contact is made and the more influence can be exerted on where and when engagement occurs. Thus geography and time are of greatest importance to land force commanders.

Historically, air forces have been the predominant elements operating deep against ground force targets. In World War II before July 1943, aircraft were employed like field artillery. Key ground commanders who dictated priorities were concerned with establishing air umbrellas over friendly troops and attacking targets in visual range. After the disaster at Kasserine Pass, command and control of aircraft was centralized under a single air commander to mass airpower for decisive effects throughout the theater. Since then air targeting and aircraft control have been the purview of air commanders, who command

the airmen/aviators occupying the deep battlespace and have the best situation awareness of the area and expertise to employ air assets. Interestingly artillerymen frequently target by using situation awareness provided by air and space reconnaissance, whereas airmen rarely use information provided by artillerymen. Land commanders have always wanted greater control over aircraft because of the information and the destructive capabilities they offered. Just as artillerymen are best suited to conduct artillery operations, airmen are best suited to conduct air targeting and air employment throughout the battlespace, especially beyond the range of massed artillery.

Interpreting Doctrine

Command and control over disparate forces that operate deep must be both integrated and controlled at the appropriate level. This battle is waged by various ground and air capabilities, but primarily the latter. Air assets employed in the deep battle are manned or unmanned aircraft (fixed and rotary wing) and guided surface-to-surface missiles. They include reconnaissance assets such as U-2s, the joint surveillance and target attack radar system (JSTARS), RC-135s, EP-3s, P-3s, and unmanned aerial vehicles. Also critical are electronic assets such as F-16Cs—with the high-speed antiradiation missile (HARM) targeting system—and EA-6Bs, psychological operations assets like the EC-130 Commando Solo, and fighter/bomber/attack aircraft, helicopters, and Tomahawk land attack missiles (TLAMs) with precision munitions to destroy ground targets.

Ground assets are frequently limited to AT-ACMS and Special Operations Forces (SOF). Because these capabilities are employed in the same area, they must be coordinated to avoid mutual interference, maximize efficiency, and reduce fratricide.

Until recently, command and control of forces in deep areas was clear-cut since only the air commander had situation awareness and owned forces that could strike deep targets. Increasingly, as the Army acquired a few longer-range weapons and its aviation force has substantially been severed from ground maneuver units, friction has developed over targeting and airspace allocation. Army and Marine arguments are rooted in command and control through geographically assigning areas of operations (zones or sectors). Air Force arguments are based on the inherent speed, range, mobility, and flexibility of aircraft that must be centrally controlled for decisive employment anywhere in the battlespace.

E-4B leaving Offutt Air Force Base.



1st Combat Camera Squadron (Ken Bergmann)



1st Combat Camera Squadron (Cary M. Humphries)

On board National Airborne Operations Center E-4B.

Current C² doctrine can be interpreted in different ways. Joint Publication 3-0, *Doctrine for Joint Operations*, enables JFCs to establish AOs for land and maritime forces. Within these areas land and maritime commanders are supported commanders for maneuver, fires, and interdiction and thus establish the timing, priority, and effects of these operations to support their objectives. The publication's authors accept overlapping supported commander relationships that enable both land and maritime commanders to be supported

in their AOs to accomplish objectives while simultaneously not constraining an air commander's ability to use assets JOA-wide (inside and outside AOs) to accomplish theater-level JFC objectives. *Fires* was used in the classical context of "fire support," which included artillery and close air.

The apparent contradiction of overlapping supported relationships was rationalized by merging land and maritime component targeting priorities with air and other JFC JOA-wide targeting priorities. Land commanders dictate the priorities of targets they submit for attack, but those are interwoven with the JOA-wide targeting priorities of JFCs. The result is that land and maritime commanders' air support requests are integrated with other JFC priorities within the AOs.

Objective-Oriented C²

The concept of an area of operation, a geographic approach to command and control, limits joint integration and increases requirements for resources including personnel, C² infrastructure, and weapons systems. Some in the Army and Marine Corps maintain that there must be a single supported commander who sets timing,



355th Communications Squadron (Jim Steele)

Checking equipment on EC-130E during Red Flag 99-1.

priority, and effects of all operations in an AO. This implies that a land commander should plan and control all land, sea, and air operations within a geographic area. That is tantamount to employing a joint task force within a joint task force using a commander and staff that specialize in only land combat to plan and control operations that span two or more mediums. The implication is that JFCs set objectives based on an area on the ground rather than on the effects that must be imposed on an enemy. In fact, these desired effects rarely conform to a geographically selected area usually rectangular in shape. Thus the geographic approach limits integration by partitioning among AOs the efforts of forces operating in the various mediums—on land, at sea, and in the air.

Even if objectives which transcend geography could be allocated to AO commanders, the total resources required to accomplish all air tasks for each AO would be greater than if airpower continued to be centrally planned and controlled by the air expert, the air commander. Airborne alert assets would be needed to react to the dynamics of targeting airborne and

time sensitive threats in individual AOs, increasing the systems and personnel needed to achieve JOA-wide objectives. The need for

command and control assets to coordinate air employment among AOs would grow. Thus C² that uses AOs fragments air employment, diminishes unity of command over air assets by air experts, and increases overall resource requirements.

joint integration is best achieved by organizing under functional component commanders

By contrast, C² through objective-oriented supported/supporting relationships integrates joint forces, ensures that commanders command and control activities in which they are expert, and optimizes assets across the AOR/JOA. Joint Publication 0-2, *Unified Action Armed Forces (UNAAF)*, clearly indicates that a supported commander is designated by virtue of tasks assigned and makes no mention of an area assigned. Defining support requirements based on tasks without regard to an arbitrary area requires component commanders to understand the nature of the JFC-assigned tasks of each component. This task-oriented support enhances joint integration. For example, the land commander must precisely relate deep targets to assigned land force objectives. Such targets can be anywhere in the battlespace if related to objectives. Likewise, by coordinating and deconflicting the intentions of the land commander, the air commander can attack targets located anywhere beyond the fire support coordination line (FSL) to achieve assigned air component objectives. This C² arrangement enables the air commander to employ airpower throughout the AOR/JOA, maximizing the effectiveness of air assets. Thus objective-oriented C² enhances joint operations without partitioning the battlespace.

Objective-oriented C² improves force integration without partitioning land, sea, or air forces into AOs. Command and control of operations based on objectives instead of areas requires close planning and coordination among those forces operating in varied mediums. This is achieved by integrating objectives from a theater perspective rather than segregating them based on partitioning the battlespace. It applies across the board, not just in integrating land with air. In this era of high volume, increasingly reliable communications, ground forces of different services should not be commanded and controlled by zones, sectors, or AOs. Development of an accurate, real-time battlespace picture should reduce the need for these measures, which limit the employment of combat power to assigned areas, thus reducing the total power in any single area.

A more effective approach for ground components is to unify operations by developing the headquarters of a joint force land component commander to take advantage of all ground combat capabilities wherever and whenever needed. Land, sea, and air forces operating in separate AOs require duplicating staffs of experts for each medium at higher echelons to coordinate operations. Thus joint integration is best achieved by organizing forces under functional component commanders who are experts at employing forces theater-wide throughout a medium. It is less efficient to use multiple AO commanders to command forces operating in the various mediums.

E-6B TACAMO aircraft taking off for exercise.



Fleet Combat Camera Atlantic (Leland Comer)

JFACC Is Well Suited

The JFC role for all operations is to ensure that appropriate objectives are planned for each component and are integrated and prioritized to enable unified action toward accomplishing the mission. Although prospective JFC staffs are becoming increasingly expert at directly planning joint operations, their most effective capacity is to facilitate planning by component experts who will fight the various forces—land, sea, air, and special operations. As representatives of those who will execute the plans, component planners develop teamwork and understanding for the priorities and requirements of the joint operations as they plan together. Each knows JFC priorities of operations by phase and intimately understands his forces' supporting or supported roles as execution progresses through the phases.

Supported/supporting relationships vary by phase. Measures and benchmarks that indicate phase changes must be understood by all. Lateral as well as vertical communication of individual component progress through each phase is increasingly possible via modern command, control, communications, computer, and intelligence (C⁴I) systems. Real-time iterative planning by staffs in continuous communications with other component staffs ensures continuous synchronization. JFC monitors all operations, interprets

overall progress, synchronizes component objectives, and changes supported/supporting relationships as operations dictate. Thus, under JFCs, component commanders and staffs plan and execute together.

As commander of the preponderance of forces physically operating beyond FSCL, JFACC is best equipped to integrate all capabilities to fight deep beyond friendly ground forces. Not only have staffs evolved into an entirely joint organization, but they have developed refined capabilities to act and react to accomplish the JFC JOA-wide air objectives, including air support requirements for other components. Most information on an enemy comes to the air commander first through air and space capabilities. Forces that can influence events in these areas are largely air capabilities.

Until now JFACC has had tactical control of air capabilities except for helicopters. Great synergy could be realized if attack helicopter operations in conjunction with fixed wing operations were planned and controlled by JFACC through the theater air control system to attack airborne and ground targets beyond FSCL. If attack helicopter operations were integrated by JFACC, the only other significant capabilities operating deep would be SOF and ATACMS. SOF capabilities are integrated with air operations through the liaison element in the JFACC Joint Air Operations Center (JAOC), and the limited number of ATACMS are integrated through the battlefield coordination

detachment in the same operations center. Thus JFACC, with assistance from a joint and integrated staff, continues to be well suited to command and control the deep battle for JFCs.

Elimination of C² by AOs and the assignment of deep battle responsibilities to JFACC would greatly improve joint responsiveness and effectiveness in defeating air threats and enemy centers of gravity beyond the range of artillery. The extensive joint planning capabilities of JFACC would enable the optimization of all joint assets operating beyond FSCL and facilitate the extensive coordination required for air operations, air defense, and airspace control there. This preplanning would permit the optimization of force employment against targets that were specifically known. More importantly, JFACC could rapidly re-role and re-target assets against time sensitive targets, maximizing the sensor-to-shooter techniques most readily available to the air commander. Streamlining command and control of predominantly air assets operating beyond FSCL would improve the effectiveness and responsiveness of the entire joint force.

The road map for adopting this approach is largely in place. The air strategy cell in JFACC JAOC currently rationalizes JFC guidance and priorities with component priorities. Army, Navy,

and Marine Corps planners work with air planners to achieve objectives that are deep—beyond the range of friendly artillery. TLAMs are currently planned as part of air operations. Some AT-ACMs are apportioned to JFACC for planning purposes in some theaters. And helicopters could easily be added to overall air operations. Service components would continue to have operational control over their forces while forces/capabilities made available to JFACC for deep operations would be in either direct support or tactical control as appropriate. Such forces, which might require control through the theater air control system, would normally be tactical control.

The emerging division of responsibility for using airpower deep beyond FSCL represents one giant step backwards in C² doctrine for the Armed Forces. All components have capabilities to accomplish objectives for JFCs. If components continue to develop overlapping capabilities to perform tasks in all mediums partitioned by AOs, the demand for resources will decrease the role of components. Establishing command and control by objectives, eliminating AOs, and assigning deep battle to JFACC would improve effectiveness and responsiveness of joint warfighting as well as save American lives and national treasure. **JFQ**