
JFQ 50, LETTERS TO THE EDITOR (Unedited)

To the Editor: In my experiences as a JFACC planner with Pacific Air Forces and Central Command, I've been encouraged by the ability of action officers in the different functional components to work past service centric mindsets to come up with joint, workable solutions to challenging problems. That said, it seems that when we approach similar problems outside of the construct of a joint task force, we tend to forget the inherent advantages of working closely with our sister services. As a result, we often end up planning in a relative vacuum, even when we're living right next door to one another. I offer a case in point: when I was working as a strategist in Pacific Air Forces' Air and Space Operations Center (AOC) last year, I learned that Pacific Fleet was developing their own operational level headquarters, the

Maritime Operations Center (MOC), to provide command and control in the Maritime Domain. This is an outstanding enhancement for the joint force: having a maritime staff that is dedicated full-time to operational level planning and execution can only make us better able to predict and respond to events in the theater. From my parallel experience in the 13th Air Force AOC, I can personally attest to the advantages of having a functionally oriented staff that can concentrate daily on "force consumer" issues rather than the service specific "force provider" (which are handled by the "A Staff" under the USAF Component Numbered Air Force construct).

So if the MOC is so great, why the long letter? The only problem I had with the MOC is that it seemed that the Navy and the Air Force were not talking about it with each

other. This didn't make sense to me—the Air & Space Operations Center construct had already reached a relative level of maturity and acceptance in the joint force, and it seemed that we should be actively helping the Navy and Marines steer around our past mistakes and leapfrog onto our advances. At the very least, we should be making sure that we are both evolving command and control systems that are designed to work together. But no matter who I asked in my Air Force chain, it seemed that no one had any official information about the MOC, or could tell me what its implications would be for the command and control of joint airpower. When I asked my action officer contacts in Pacific Fleet, the answers I got were often incomplete or troubling in their implications. Based on these discussions, and some Navy O-6 briefings I

had observed at Third Fleet during an exercise, I started coming to some discomfiting conclusions about the MOC. It seemed that the Navy was interested in putting the JFMCC firmly in charge of “the Maritime Domain,” including the air above the oceans and littorals, and was going to use the MOC to do it. Rather than allocate excess sorties to the JFACC, the JFMCC would retain control carrier air, including interdiction sorties, and task them out through a Maritime Tasking Order (MTO). Needless to say, as an advocate of functional components and the centralized control of airpower, I was extremely concerned that we were about to create what amounted to two JFACCs in the same JOA. I could easily imagine this opening up operational seams in intelligence, command and control, and common support functions that could be exploited by a canny or even lucky adversary—not

unlike the operational disconnects of Leyte Gulf in World War II, but in the sky this time. Convinced that it was my job to prevent this, I spent countless hours researching the potential issues. I looked up the “domain” definitions in the joint pubs. I read historical accounts of airpower command and control disconnects. I prepared bullet background papers and essays about why we should not assign shared domains to single functional or service components. I prepared a submission for your publication to share my views and provoke discussion. But then, I finally did what I should have done from the very start: I called up the folks at the Pacific Fleet MOC and asked them what was going on. Was the MOC being designed to replicate JFACC functions within the JFMCC? Absolutely not. Would the MOC seek to put naval sorties on the MTO instead of the ATO?

Only outside the JOA, not for JTF forces. Was the Navy intentionally hiding their plans from the Air Force? No, they were just trying to get their hands around an enormous task before consulting with the other services, and only had a small staff to do it. In less than fifteen minutes, I had resolved months of angst, suspicion, and interservice competition conspiracy theories that no one I knew could disprove based on firsthand information.

This leads me to a few conclusions. First, it tells me that despite some notable disagreements between the services on the best way to structure the joint force to protect our nation, we’re still all very much on the same team when it gets down to doing the job. Second, it tells me that when I feel like someone isn’t communicating with me, it’s probably at least half my fault, and even more if I don’t ask the question. Third, it tells me that we should be applying the

lessons of the JTF to “Phase 0.” Why do we treat steady state operations differently than other events across the range of military operations? Why don’t we have liaisons (not to be confused with joint assignments) between service headquarters’ outside of a JTF construct? Why don’t we plan Phase 0 activities more collaboratively, rather than to execute “Phase 0” by service component? How many opportunities to learn and execute together are we missing out on by not talking to one another regularly? The sooner we can bring the JTF teamwork and mindset to our steady-state ops, the sooner we can put ex-conspiracy theorists like me to better uses.

—Major David J. Lyle,
USAF
Pacific Air Forces

To the Editor: Mark Clodfelter is a superb historian and I applaud

him for his article, “A Strategy Based on Faith: The Enduring Appeal of Progressive American Airpower” (Issue 49, 2^d Quarter 2008).

Clodfelter correctly points out that the historical record does not match the puffery and, at times, exaggerated advocacy of some airpower strategists. For example, in a recently released White Paper (29 Dec 07) that “charts US Air Force strategy for the next two decades,” Air Force Chief of Staff General T. Michael Moseley asserts, “No modern war has been won without air superiority. No future war will be won without air, space and cyberspace superiority.” Really? The North Koreans and Chinese battled us to a stalemate during the Korean War without air superiority. We lost the Vietnam War even though guerillas did not own a single aircraft and the North Vietnamese did not fly south of the DMZ. Moreover, the United States has enjoyed air

dominance over Iraq for 17 years, yet the strategic situation in the current conflict is less than favorable.

These less-than-ideal outcomes are not, however, the product of progressive promises made by airmen. Rather, much of the responsibility falls squarely in the lap of ground power advocates who continue to advance doctrine that’s largely unchanged from the Vietnam era. The Army’s “new” Counterinsurgency Manual emphatically states, “Twenty counterinsurgents per 1000 residents is often considered the minimum troop density required for effective COIN operations.” Phil Meilinger, a former School of Advanced Air & Space Commandant, points out that, according to this doctrine, operations in Iraq, a country of 26 million people, would require a MINIMUM of 520,000 troops. The United States DID send 520,000 ground troops to South Vietnam,

a country with about the same population as Iraq, yet we lost the war.

Clodfelter argues, “Friction in the form of collateral damage [from bombing] not only undermines American goals but also bolsters the enemy cause.” Certainly, indiscriminate bombing would not endear us to any population. However, it is not clear from Clodfelter’s thesis how the use of ground troops as an alternative is somehow immune from friction. Saturating Iraq with more occupation troops would cause more, not less friction and collateral damage. Plus, it would endanger many more American lives and is extraordinarily expensive. Even with a ground footprint in Iraq that is well below the level recommended in the Counterinsurgency Manual, the United States is spending more than \$12 billion a month. That’s \$5,000 every second!

Clodfelter’s prediction that America will “most

likely” fight heavy propagandized, unconventional wars in the future is, at best, a guess. The United States plans a 92,000 troop increase in its ground force strength, but the great bulk of those troops will likely enter active service after we have substantially reduced our ground presence in Iraq. Few strategists envision fighting another Iraq any time soon. General Mosley’s White Paper appropriately points out, “We should not assume that future conflicts will resemble the current fight in Iraq or Afghanistan—lest we lose the ability to project global power, inflict strategic paralysis, deter nation-states, destroy their fielded forces, and defend our Homeland, its allies and friends.”

Not only do strong air and naval forces play tremendously important roles in the Global War on Terror, they also are critical for deterring and dissuading emerging peer

competitors, like China, from hostile actions. Air and naval forces, not ground troops, would provide the backbone of US combat capabilities to defend against a Chinese invasion of Taiwan.

Airpower is not a silver bullet that offers cheap and easy military solutions to foreign policy problems. Nonetheless, fierce and progressive advocacy of airpower, both on its own and in support of other combat arms, serves an incredibly important purpose—to provide policy makers with expanded options. Clodfelter’s suggestion that airmen “jettison” progressive airpower ideas would stifle strategic debate and limit ideas precisely at a time when the United States is struggling to find the appropriate formula for success in Iraq. Bombing alone may not achieve political goals in unconventional conflicts, but “jettisoning” progressive ideas would further emasculate

airmen's inputs on how best to run a campaign.

Clodfelter's criticism of airpower in the Balkans campaigns is also a red herring. Clodfelter says the central premise of progressive airpower is a belief that airpower makes wars quicker, cheaper, and less painful for all sides than a reliance on surface combat. There never was a debate, though, over the relative merits of airpower versus ground power to combat Serbian aggression; the use of ground forces in the Balkans was simply a political non-starter. Indeed, President Clinton publicly admitted that he was not even considering the use of ground forces early in the conflict. Furthermore, General Wesley Clark, an Army officer who wanted to use airpower in a conventional manner, determined targeting priorities.

Clark decreed that much of the Operation *Allied Force* air campaign would focus on fielded forces in Kosovo, despite

the vigorous objections of his Joint Forces Air Component Commander, Lt. General Michael Short. In a well-known exchange during one of the daily video teleconferences, Short expressed satisfaction that, at last, NATO warplanes were about to strike the Serbian special police headquarters in downtown Belgrade. "This is the jewel in the crown," Short said. "To me, the jewel in the crown is when those B-52s rumble across Kosovo," replied Clark. "You and I have known for weeks that we have different jewelers," said Short. "My jeweler outranks yours," said Clark (see Dana Priest, "The Battle Inside Headquarters," *Washington Post*, September 21, 1999, A1). To fault progressive airpower advocates for an aerial campaign that "may have spurred the human catastrophe" is disingenuous.

The greatest strength of airmen is our ability to

bring alternative perspectives to the strategic debate. In general, airmen tend to be idea-focused rather than terrain-focused. Muzzling progressive airpower advocates would only serve to empower a small contingent of myopic ground force commanders who cannot see beyond the end of their tank barrel and who measure progress by the number of boots on the ground. We need more debate, more strategic choice, and more political options, not less.

—Lt Col Lawrence Spinetta,
USAF
1st Fighter Wing

Dr. Clodfelter's response:

I appreciate Lt Col Spinetta's thoughtful response to my article; I hoped that it would engender debate about the merits of progressive airpower. Yet I'm not exactly sure what side of the debate he takes. On

the one hand, Lt Col Spinetta notes that “the historical record does not match the puffery and, at times, exaggerated advocacy of some airpower strategists.” On the other hand, he remarks that “‘jettisoning’ progressive ideas would further emasculate airmen’s inputs on how best to run a campaign.”

Lt Col Spinetta also contends that the “less-than-ideal outcomes” in wars like Korea, Vietnam, and the current conflict in Iraq are not “the product of progressive promises made by airmen.” Certainly other factors contributed to America’s difficulty in those wars, but progressive notions were also present. General Curtis LeMay provided one memorable example during Vietnam with his unvarnished assessment that American military power was “swatting flies” in the South rather than going after “the manure pile” in the North. His implication was that bombing 94 key targets

would quickly and cheaply render the Viet Cong insurgency impotent, but in actuality the Viet Cong needed minimal assistance from North Vietnam to keep fighting. Air Force Chief of Staff General John McConnell further proclaimed in August 1965 that ground forces alone could not defeat the Viet Cong and only air power could do so. Although he disapproved of using B-52s in the South because suitable targets were scarce, McConnell nevertheless endorsed continued B-52 raids in September 1965 “since the Air Force had pushed for the use of air power to prevent [Army General William] Westmoreland from trying to fight the war solely with ground troops and helicopters.”

Large numbers of American ground forces are probably *not* the answer to winning unconventional conflicts like Vietnam and Iraq, and I did not mean to imply that the United States

should put additional troops into Iraq to achieve success. Ultimately, the Iraqis themselves will have to decide the outcome of that struggle. Lt Col Spinetta rightly observes that friction affects ground forces as well as air forces, and the more American troops on the ground, the greater the opportunity for friction to cause them harm. Ground commanders, though, have rarely argued that their actions promise results that will be quick, cheap, and efficient, as air commanders have often maintained. Moreover, many air commanders have insisted that their application of firepower is far more discriminate than that of their ground counterparts. Lt Col Spinetta states, “Certainly, indiscriminate bombing would not endear us to any population.” The problem is not that American air leaders condone indiscriminate bombing—none of them do; the difficulty is that friction prevents our

bombing from being completely discriminate—and thus, to many around the world, our bombing creates the *perception* of being indiscriminate, or worse—the perception that we *intentionally* use our sophisticated precision technology to kill innocent civilians despite our rhetoric to the contrary.

Indeed, our recent attempts to thwart enemy combat activity in Iraq and Afghanistan have produced tenuous results. In concert with the 2007 surge of an additional 30,000 American soldiers in Iraq, five times as many airstrikes occurred last year compared to 2006. Air Force leaders said that the added troops had pushed insurgents out of urban areas and into places easier to target, plus better intelligence had provided a clearer picture of the battlefield. Still, the bombing that occurred since the beginning of April 2007 had produced more than 200 civilian deaths by the end of the year. In

Afghanistan, 3,572 American and NATO airstrikes occurred in 2007, more than double the total for 2006 and 20 times the number for 2005. The increased bombing caused an estimated 300 civilian casualties in 2007, triple the number reported for 2006.

In regards to airpower in Kosovo, the jury is still out on whether bombing was the key factor that caused the Serbs to leave the province, or whether it helped trigger the ethnic cleansing it was designed to prevent. The facts remain that fewer than 19,000 Kosovar Albanians had fled to Albania before Operation *Allied Force* began, 65,000 more had done so five days after the bombing started, and 620,000 were refugees a month later. Ultimately, the Serbs expelled 800,000 Kosovar Albanians—roughly one-half of the population—before the air campaign ended.

Lt Col Spinetta contends that “fierce and progressive advocacy of airpower . . . serves an incredibly important purpose—to provide policy makers with expanded options.” I don’t disagree. Yet the options provided must be correct for the situation. The nature of the enemy, the character and conduct of the war that he wages, the particulars of the combat environment, and, most importantly, the desired political objectives and constraints on achieving them *all* must receive careful consideration *before* deciding what instrument of military force—if any—is appropriate. Clausewitz cautioned: “The first, the supreme, the most far-reaching act of judgment that the statesman and commander have to make is to establish by that test the kind of war on which they are embarking; neither mistaking it for, nor trying to turn it into, something that is alien to its nature.” Progressive

airpower’s mantra of quick, cheap, and efficient is a “one size fits all” solution that is particularly alien to the nature of intermittent guerrilla struggles like the ones faced in Iraq and Afghanistan. In such conflicts, non-lethal applications of airpower, such as reconnaissance and airlift, are far more likely to achieve lasting dividends than kinetics. Before we shift our focus to “detering and dissuading emerging peer competitors,” we must first make certain that we can deal with the types of war that confront us today, and, given the past 80 years of our heritage, are unlikely to disappear.

—Mark Clodfelter
National War College

To the Editor: As commander of the center responsible for doctrine development and education in the US Air Force, I read James

Corum’s article “On Airpower, Land Power, and Counterinsurgency: Getting Doctrine Right” (Issue 49, 2^d Quarter 2008) with great interest. On one hand, I agree with many points, particularly those reflected in our Service doctrine. On the other, I feel compelled to respond to some of the misinformed assertions found throughout the article.

Before addressing this disconnect, I should note that Dr. Corum is held in high esteem here at Air University. For example, *Airpower in Small Wars* is required reading in our advanced PME schools. We have found, however, that the book’s focus on historic cases tends to discount modern applications of airpower in irregular warfare and neglects the impact that modern technology (including advanced targeting pods, GPS, full motion video, unmanned systems, and airborne networks) has had on airpower’s ability to

influence the irregular warfare fight. In addition, Dr. Corum addressed our Counterinsurgency Symposium last spring. His influential presentation was a highlight of the conference and contributed to the development of the very doctrine that he criticizes in the article.

Indeed, many of Dr. Corum’s views—both in his symposium presentation and in the *JFQ* article—are reflected in our doctrine documents. This is especially true of training, assisting, and advising foreign air forces, which is discussed prominently in Air Force Doctrine Document (AFDD) 2–3, *Irregular Warfare*, under Building Partnership Capacity (BPC). In fact, BPC is presented as the first Air Force capability in irregular warfare, and this was not by happenstance. Moreover, this section of the doctrine document refers readers to AFDD 2–3.1, *Foreign Internal Defense* (FID), for further

information on how the Air Force works by, with, and through our partners by helping them develop and employ airpower. This entire FID document (100+ pages) has the answer for Dr. Corum's call for discussing doctrine on "the vital mission of training the host nation air force."

Dr. Corum's assertion that "In the Air Force counterinsurgency doctrine, the issue of providing appropriate equipment to Third World allies is not even addressed" would seem to indicate some unfamiliarity with AFDD 2-3.1. Our FID doctrine discusses this issue in some detail, outlining best practices for helping foreign countries field air forces with the right technology for their situations.

Another aspect of Dr. Corum's article that cannot go unaddressed is the pejorative view of the kinetic use of airpower. Dr. Corum makes the case that "there is a heavy

political price to pay when airpower in the form of airstrikes is used," yet he fails to mention similar, and practically inevitable, consequences of using land power in COIN, especially when it involves large numbers of American troops in a foreign country. Airpower is among the joint force commander's most precise, flexible, disciplined, and scrutinized capabilities to apply lethal force. In terms of potential for insurgent propaganda and recruitment, ground force excesses, including indiscriminate counter battery fire, "terrain denial" strikes, "harassment and interdiction" fires, heavy-handed searches, imprisonment of innocents, inhumane prison conditions, ubiquitous roadblocks, early curfews, escalation of force events, etc., certainly have the potential for creating more insurgents than they eliminate. We need to be

careful about painting any aspect of our joint forces with a broad, inaccurate brush. From a doctrinal standpoint, we're supportive of language such as the following, taken from the draft joint publication dealing with COIN:

counterinsurgents should calculate carefully the type and amount of force to be applied and who wields it for any operation, regardless of the means of applying force. An operation that kills five insurgents is counterproductive if collateral damage leads to the recruitment of fifty more insurgents. This is true if the source of that lethal force is land, air, or maritime.

One last point to be made is based on my involvement in directing (at the operational level) and flying (at the tactical level) combat air operations in Iraq and Afghanistan: the assertion that COIN tasks cannot be accomplished "from 30000 feet" is more than simply an inaccurate

characterization—it is a blatant cheap shot and misinforms the reader. First of all, it's true that our robust coalition air force ISR, precision strike, air mobility, electronic warfare, and command and control assets are able to operate largely outside the reach of the insurgents' anti-air capabilities—that's part of the asymmetric advantage airpower brings to the IW fight. But implying that operating outside the threat envelope means airpower is detached from the ongoing campaign is flat wrong. In fact, the armed overwatch missions currently being flown in theater exemplify the level of teamwork required to integrate air and ground power to achieve success in COIN activities--airborne assets provide overwatch/observation and protective precision ordnance employment (from well below 30,000 feet, by the way), closely integrated with the ground scheme of maneuver.

In addition to providing critical effects from the air, our Airmen are in the fight on the ground, serving as teammates in the joint force and sharing the inherent dangers. With 26,000-plus Airmen in theater, over 5000 of our Airmen are embedded in ground units, substituting for Army and Marine forces in outside-the-wire missions such as serving on and leading Provisional Reconstruction Teams, guarding detainees, and providing convoy security, perimeter security, and explosive ordnance disposal. The Air Force has also made a significant investment in Battlefield Airmen, including embedded Joint Tactical Air Controllers who synchronize airpower effects with the ground scheme of maneuver, ensuring all of our troops have access to the asymmetric advantage of American airpower. We continually receive messages from joint force commanders lauding the efforts of our deployed

Airmen, and those of us entrusted to lead them stand humbled by their courage, ingenuity, and steadfastness.

—Maj Gen Allen G. Peck
Commander of the
LeMay Center for
Doctrine Development
and Education

Dr. Corum's response:

In response to Major General Peck's letter I have four comments:

On airpower's kinetic effects. In *Airpower and Small Wars* and several articles I have documented the fact that air strikes have become symbols of US and Western aggression in the eyes of much of the third world. For more than two decades legitimate and carefully executed air operations against insurgents, terrorists and radical factions have been depicted by such groups as atrocities. Exaggerated and false claims of civilian

casualties and damage are commonly made for propaganda purposes. Unfortunately, a gullible and ignorant media often uncritically accept and repeat such stories. Airpower has been singled out as an “unfair” use of force, and even some US allies have proposed that restrictions be placed on the use of airpower such as banning cluster bombs.

I wholeheartedly agree that ground operations have probably caused more civilian casualties than air operations. The difference in the bias against airpower in the media coverage is that the government/coalition ground forces are usually in control of the ground at the end of a fight and can accurately assess casualties and ensure media reporting is fair. In the case of air strikes independent of ground action the opposition controls the ground—and the story—and are therefore free to make false claims without contradiction.

Describing my careful documentation of such actions as ‘pejorative’ and then failing to acknowledge that the Western nations have a serious image problem in the third world and media does not address the problem we face.

On Airpower Technology. General Peck’s letter implies that my writing on airpower in counterinsurgency is about events long ago. But *Airpower in Small Wars*, published 2003, addressed the use of modern airpower techniques and technology in conflicts up to 2002. I am very aware of the tremendous and positive contributions of airpower technology in counterinsurgency from 2003–2008. But while airpower has been an important part of the fight against insurgents in Iraq and Afghanistan, I do not agree with General Dunlap’s argument (“Developing Joint Counterinsurgency Doctrine: An Airman’s

Perspective,” *JFQ* Issue 49, 2^d Quarter 2008, pp. 86–92) that airpower might substitute for troops on the ground in counterinsurgency. Recent operations in Bosnia, Kosovo, Afghanistan and Iraq have demonstrated that effective counterinsurgency requires a very large number of security personnel (including coalition forces, host nation military, host nation police, home guards, etc.) to protect and control the population. Counterinsurgency is a highly interpersonal endeavor. Trying to conduct counterinsurgency with minimal manpower and “airmindedness” (General Dunlap’s term) will lead to failure in the long term.

On Training. In contrast to past conflicts our efforts to train host nation air forces in Iraq and Afghanistan have small and fairly ineffective. During the Korean War a large US training and

advisory mission trained a South Korean Air Force that could provide effective CAS support to ground troops by 1952. In the early 1960s the USAF stood up several squadrons to train the South Vietnamese Air Force and within four years the VNAF was able to provide considerable and effective air support to allied forces.

Unfortunately, the US military services have forgotten the very successful history of training/advisory missions. Five years into the Iraq conflict and seven into Afghanistan, neither country has a capable air force. This is not just a USAF failure, but a broader US military failure. The Army and Marines have large aviation branches and the expertise to train the large helicopter forces that Iraq and Afghanistan need. But progress to date has been minimal and both countries will be completely dependent on

allied air forces for many years.

**Contrasting
Doctrines on Technology
for the Host Nation.**

Service doctrine ought to provide useful guidance for the commander and staff planner. On the very important subject of equipping the air forces of less developed nations the only comment of the new USAF counterinsurgency doctrine is, “The key to BPC is not finding high or low-tech answers, but the right mix of technology, training, and support that provides a PN with affordable, sustainable, and capable airpower.” (USAF DD 2-3, *Irregular Warfare*, August 2007, p. 29). Contrast this with the Army/Marine doctrine FM 3-24 which lists the basic capabilities needed of a small nation air force in counterinsurgency, provides recent and current examples of the effective use of simple airpower technologies, and then discusses the advantages and disadvantages of

modifying transports as aerial gunships. (FM 3-24 pp. E3-E5). Which of these doctrines provides the better starting point for the counterinsurgency planner?

—James S. Corum, Ph.D.
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Reserve