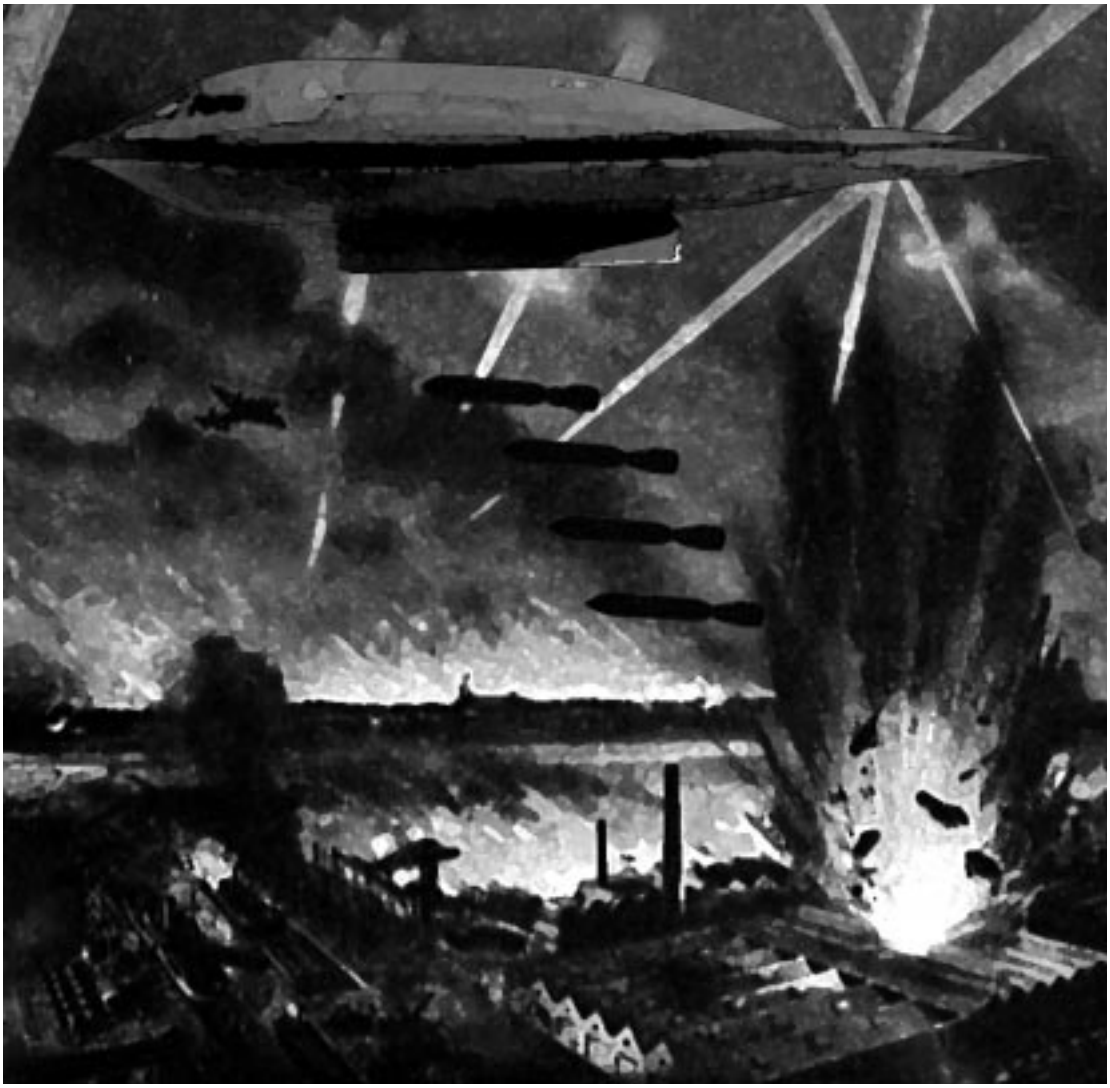

USAF Aerospace-Power Doctrine

Decisive or Coercive?

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Editorial Abstract: Is our doctrine geared to serve the funding war more than the shooting war? The author investigates this question in light of Kosovo, pointing out some interesting internal friction points. Using typologies of "positive" and "negative" goals, he argues for a more effective shooting-war doctrine based on coercive aerospace power.

War is too important to be left to the generals.

—Georges Clemenceau

WHILE NORTH ATLANTIC Treaty Organization (NATO) aircraft prosecuted an air campaign of unprecedented precision against the former Republic of Yugoslavia, NATO marked its 50th anniversary in Washington, D.C. NATO solidarity was at stake. For 78 days, the world's most powerful alliance appeared on the verge of fragmentation. To NATO's relief, Serbia capitulated after a military campaign fraught with gradualism and obtrusive political meddling. For many airpower proponents, Operation Allied Force vindicated decisive airpower doctrine. For others, Allied Force was a misapplication of core US Air Force aerospace doctrine. Without NATO's political interference, many believed the air campaign would have netted a more rapid and asymmetric victory for the alliance.

Allied Force highlighted a significant doctrinal imbalance between decisive and coercive airpower. US Air Force aerospace-power doctrine focuses almost exclusively on the idea that airpower is decisive in a major theater war scenario. Consequently, it minimizes discussion regarding the coercive application of airpower in nontraditional types of conflicts like Kosovo. The result is a doctrinal void of guidance in the education of future Air Force leaders to understand the complexities and truly coercive nature of airpower. Allied Force was a prime example of coercive airpower application resulting in far less than decisive outcomes. The root cause of this ineffective coercive air campaign nested in clashing positive and negative political/military objectives.

In his book *The Limits of Air Power*, Mark Clodfelter defines positive objectives as "those that [are] attainable only by applying military power" and negative objectives as goals "achievable only by limiting military force."[1] He explains "that political controls on air power flow directly from negative objectives, and that the respective emphases given to positive and negative aims can affect air power's political efficacy."[2] Our purpose here is not to endorse Clodfelter's choice of terms, which can be misleading if misinterpreted to imply a moral valuation. Yet, simply using his typology affords a clearer understanding of Kosovo's complex interaction of military and political factors. Clodfelter's intent is to strike a comparison between potential bipolar military and political objectives that collide to create opposing and coercive consequences of military action. The air campaign over Kosovo was just such an example.

Allied Force endured strong interference by NATO's political leadership, which revealed tension between NATO's negative political objective (preserve the alliance) and the positive military objective (destroy or compel Serbian forces to depart Kosovo and halt ethnic cleansing). This chasm between negative and positive objectives fostered friction and frustration among senior officers, which worked against a rapid conclusion of the air campaign. Over time, several factors plus airpower (lack of Russian support, the involvement of the Kosovo Liberation Army, and Serbian successes in achieving their tactical objectives), coerced Serbian forces to pull back from Kosovo. One can argue, then, that airpower was indecisive in preventing regional destruction, refugee migrations, and ethnic cleansing—all originally positive military objectives. Clearly, NATO's negative objective to preserve the alliance dominated the decision to implement a laborious incremental air campaign. Moreover, counter to the positive effects of unlimited application of airpower, the gradualism of Allied Force may well be the norm for future coalition conflicts. In contrast to decisively oriented US Air Force aerospace-power doctrine, all positive military objectives became subordinate to the negative political objective, and Allied Force used coercion to oust the Serbian army from Kosovo.

Allied Force raises questions concerning the scope of US Air Force airpower doctrine. Is doctrine intended as a practical warfighting educational medium, or is it a marketing strategy designed to compete with sister services in a scarce budget environment? In fairness, the US Air Force Doctrine Center is tackling such issues by focusing doctrine at an operational warfighter's level. Several revised doctrinal publications, such as Air Force Doctrine Document (AFDD) 2-1, *Air Warfare*, address a broad spectrum of operational applications of airpower. The documents correctly emphasize the importance of understanding the ambiguities inherent in warfighting and applying sound doctrine: "Training, therefore, involves mastering the necessary level of knowledge and then developing the judgement to use that knowledge in the fog of war."[3] Yet, there is little mention that the application of airpower might not be decisive, might not be allowed to attack in parallel, and might not be allowed to leverage its asymmetrical advantages against a nontraditional enemy. In this case, AFDD 2-1 lacks an important discussion about applying airpower outside current doctrinal thinking.

AFDD 2-1 describes a "new American way of war" that "uses the rapid employment of sophisticated military capabilities to engage a broad array of targets simultaneously, strongly, and quickly, with discriminate application, to decisively shape the conflict and avoid the results of previous wars of attrition and annihilation."[4] The essential point rings clear: Modern aerospace power is decisive, and because it is decisive, the Air Force must not repeat past mistakes where airpower was applied incrementally, gradually, and with coercive effects. In effect, AFDD 2-1 prescribes a set of standards demanding decisive execution by airmen.

Future Aerospace-Power Doctrine: Decisive or Coercive?

In light of the assumption that the United States will likely fight all future conflicts as a multilateral coalition, is the US Air Force better served by adopting a doctrine that reflects the decisive or coercive character of airpower? Which of the two better serves the war fighter when faced with major theater war (e.g., the Gulf War) or nontraditional conflicts like Kosovo?

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The answer resides in the expectations of military commanders and how those expectations are interwoven into service doctrine. In his discussion on the coercive nature of airpower, Robert Pape addresses the need for a fresh assessment of aerospace-power application. In the process, he postulates three distinct types of coercive military strategies: campaigns of punishment, risk, and denial. First, *punishment coercion* campaigns inflict "suffering on civilians, either directly or indirectly by damaging the target state's economy. Bombing or naval blockades can cause shortages of key supplies such as food and clothing or deprive residents of electrical power, water, and other essential services."[5] By design, punishment campaigns are meant to quickly compel the opposing government to concede or to convince the population to revolt. Second, *risk coercion* strategies center around gradual destruction of civilian and economic targets "in order to convince the opponent that much more severe damage will follow if concessions are not made."[6] Third, *denial coercion* strategies specifically "target the opponent's military ability to achieve its territorial or other political objectives, thereby compelling concessions in order to avoid futile expenditure of further resources."[7] After an analysis of World War II, Korea, Vietnam, and the Gulf War, Pape concludes that "coercion by punishment rarely

works. . . . [W]hen coercion does work, it is by denial."[8]

This insight offers a way to assess the application of coercive aerospace power in relation to the positive and negative military and political objectives of Operation Allied Force. Pape believes that

> studying military coercion may be even more relevant to policy now than it was in the past. The end of the Cold War and the rise of potential regional hegemons are shifting national security policy away from deterring predictable threats toward responding to unpredictable threats after they emerge, making questions about how to compel states to alter their behavior more central in international politics. This trend is also apparent in the growing role of airpower in U.S. military strategy.[9]

Ethnic cleansing in Kosovo presented just such a challenge to aerospace power.

Operation Allied Force Planning

The NATO air campaign against the former Republic of Yugoslavia stemmed from the 1991–95 genocide in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Politically, NATO aimed to prevent a repeat of the atrocities committed in Bosnia, partly because NATO members saw the Balkans as the seat of historic instability in Europe. Following the initiation of Serbian military operations to cleanse the Kosovo province, NATO rallied around reactionary diplomatic negotiations in Rambouillet, France, and started planning for military action against Serbian ground forces.

As early as June 1998, US planners developed multiple versions of an air campaign against Serbian forces. These planners dealt with three critical issues: military and political objectives, the proposed command relationships and command structure, and senior leadership dynamics.

Strategic Military and Political Objectives. Prior to the first bomb crater in Kosovo, NATO's primary positive military and political objectives were to stop Serbian forces from ethnic cleansing and to compel Slobodan Milosevic, Serbia's president, to recall his military forces from Kosovo. As such, Gen Wesley K. Clark, the supreme allied commander Europe (SACEUR), faced a daunting task of selling a credible air campaign plan to 19 ministers of defense while convincing NATO members they were accountable for their commitments to use military force, if so ordered by the NATO North Atlantic Council (NAC). For reasons of security and capabilities, selected US Air Force planners executed nearly all combat planning efforts, and NATO planning remained inconsequential and limited. Consequently, General Clark's priority became consensus-building among NATO political members who knew little about the detailed air campaign plan. SACEUR's overall positive political objective clashed with the emerging negative political objective of maintaining NATO consensus and cohesion. As a result, SACEUR's finalized plan, a three-phase air campaign, fell drastically short of US Air Force expectations to achieve the positive military objectives. Even the purest notions of applying decisive aerospace doctrine became subservient to the negative political impact resulting from a lack of consensus by NATO.

SACEUR's guidance regarding air campaign planning was perceived by warfighting staffs as reactionary and unpredictable. The NATO Combined Air Operations Center (CAOC) at Vicenza, Italy, and the US Air Force's 32d Air Operations Group (AOG), Ramstein, Germany, received evolving planning guidance depending on SACEUR's adjudication of the conflicting negative political and positive military objectives. As chief of staff at the CAOC, and also as a temporary special assistant to SACEUR, Col William L. Holland, USAF, reflected on the air campaign ambiguities and the negative influence of political objectives on the planning process:

> The NATO Advisory Council (NAC) was supposed to approve the planning, but the guidance came from a variety of sources. We were given direction, and alternative plans, or branches and sequels, that weren't branches and sequels. They were totally different plans based on different guidance. We planned a lot and produced few valid plans. It was a planning

> nightmare. Planning was more a reaction than strategic vision. As the environment, or the media changed, SACEUR gave reactive planning guidance.[10]

The resultant air campaign plan was a compromise between "punishment," "risk," and "denial" coercive strategies that placated NATO's fragile consensus.

Phase 1 involved striking Serbian integrated air defense systems and command-and-control bunkers in order to gain local air superiority. In Phase 2, air strikes were planned against military targets below 44 degrees north latitude. These strikes included "risk coercive" interdiction targets and "denial coercive" targets against Serbian fielded forces in Kosovo. "Punishment coercive" targets (leadership, economic, and population targets in and around Belgrade) were specifically excluded. In Phase 3, NATO aircraft were to strike "punishment" targets north of the 44th parallel, including Belgrade targets.[11] In the end, this phased campaign revealed the incremental and gradual air campaign strategy embraced by NATO and SACEUR.

From the perspective of the CAOC and specifically Lt Gen Michael C. Short, the combined forces air component commander (CFACC), the NATO-approved air campaign plan failed, due to political constraints, to employ decisive aerospace power to achieve political and military objectives. General Short felt a swift "punishment" air campaign was the answer by arguing

> many times to his superiors that the most effective tactic for the first night of the war would be a knockout punch to Belgrade's power stations and government ministries. Such a strike had worked in Iraq in 1991, and it was the foundation of air power theory, which advocates heavy blows to targets with high military, economic, or psychological value as a way to collapse the enemy's will.[12]

The CFACC's arguments centered around a belief that the air campaign plan failed to target the correct Serbian centers of gravity (COG). US Air Force aerospace-power doctrine describes a COG as a target of "fundamental strategic, economic, or even emotional importance to an enemy, loss of which would severely undermine the enemy's will or ability to fight."[13] General Short felt strongly that the Serbian Third Army in Kosovo was *not* the COG that, if destroyed, would compel Milosevic to stop ethnic cleansing.

While General Short favored an air war of "punishment," General Clark envisioned a campaign of "coercive risk and denial." SACEUR sought to target gradually the Serbian Third Army (south of the 44th parallel) and to compel Milosevic's forces to withdraw from Kosovo. Although General Clark's "risk and denial" air strategy stiff-armed decisive aerospace doctrine, he felt this was the best operation he could get NATO to approve.[14] Soon after the 1998 Rambouillet peace agreements began to unravel, SACEUR perceived the negative political objective of NATO cohesion: "I was operating with the starting assumption that there was no single target that was more important than the principle of alliance consensus and cohesion."[15]

Application of decisive aerospace-power doctrine was usurped by NATO political constraints, and the result was a "risk" and "denial" strategy. Although this approach subverted the decisive application of airpower, it should be considered a potential norm for most future US/coalition-based conflicts. Whether right or wrong, the negative political objective established the guidance for all remaining Allied Force planning.

The juxtaposition between the CFACC's warfighting concept and SACEUR's strategic guidance caused significant friction. Many of the arguments revolved around a perceived notion that SACEUR did not understand airpower theory. Colonel Holland expressed this frustration:

> There was a lack of understanding about what airpower should do, not what it can or can't do, but what it should do. Our desired air strategy was to take it to the people who had an effect on the fighting. Not the people who were just carrying out the orders. The biggest failing, in my opinion, was a lack of an attempt by the military leadership to explain the strategy, ratio-

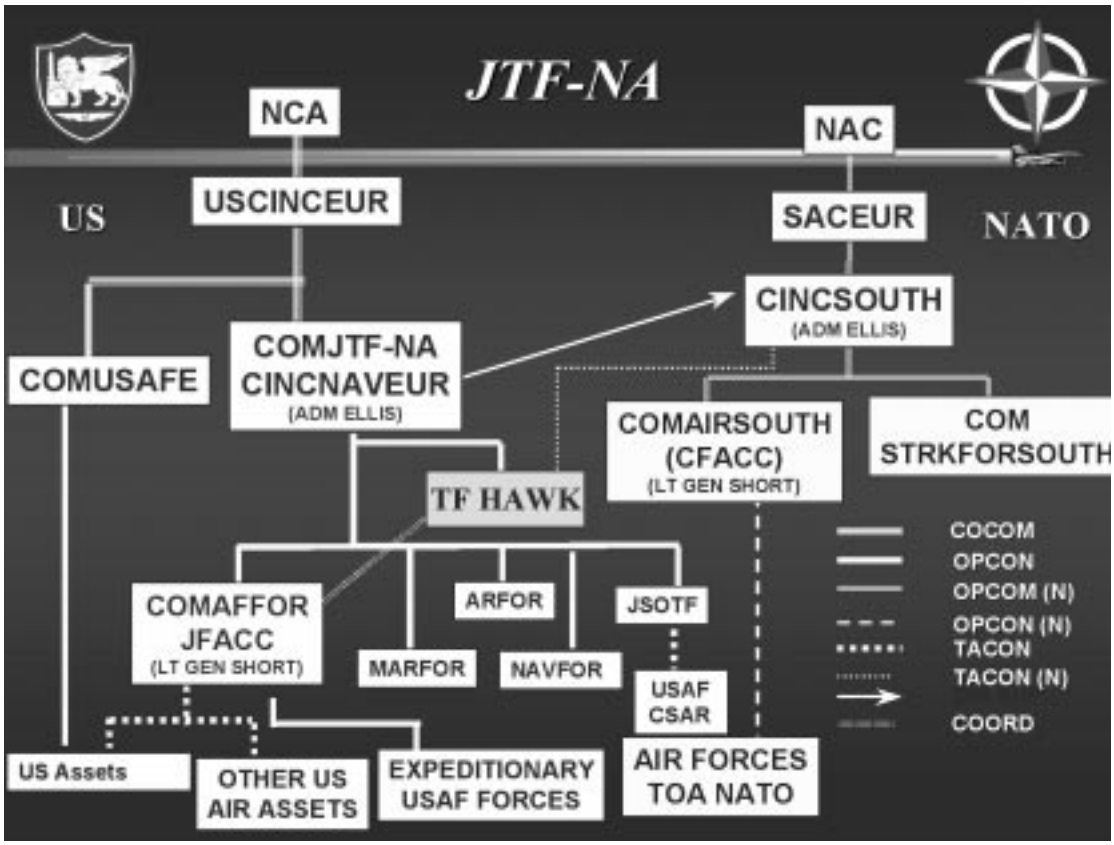

Figure 1. Shown above are the complicated, interdependent command relationships in Operation Noble Anvil (NA), the NATO operations against Serbian forces.

> nalize it to the political leadership, that this is what we have to do to accomplish the objectives set forth by NATO.[16]

It is unclear how much political savvy is required to convince politicians on how best to achieve positive military objectives. Moreover, when these positive military objectives clashed with a negative political objective, prosecuting the optimum warfighting plan became secondary to the desired political outcome. Given the likelihood of a broad array of nebulous military and political objectives, Allied Force suggests that in the future, the decisive employment of aerospace power will be supplanted by the coercive application of airpower.

Lack of Unity of Command. Lack of unity of command contributed toward the coercive application of airpower during Allied Force. AFDD 2, *Organization and Employment of Aerospace Power,* highlights the US Air Force doctrinal inclination for clear lines of command authority, arguing command relationships in war should be unified.[17] But this ideal command structure is often not possible politically, particularly in coalition warfighting. In fact, the command structure for Allied Force was complicated by parallel structures (fig. 1).[18]

In Allied Force, multiple factors inhibited unity of command. First, there were dual NATO and US chains of command. General Clark, Adm James O. Ellis, General Short, and Vice Adm Daniel J. Murphy Jr. all wore

dual NATO and US command hats because of US insistence to control specific classified weapons systems. For example, Admiral Ellis, as the joint force commander (JFC), theoretically oversaw all air, land, and sea operations with his skeleton joint staff from Naples, Italy. The Naples staff, however, controlled *only US classified* weapons systems. As the combined force air component commander (CFACC) under Admiral Ellis, General Short controlled *nonclassified US and NATO* assets with a robust warfighting staff from the CAOC in Vicenza, Italy. General Short was the primary warfighter, and yet he lacked direct command authority over critical weapons systems that were not intended to integrate with NATO assets. Near disaster occurred when NATO and US assets shared common times over targets in congested Serbian airspace. Ultimately, the joint task force (JTF) staff impeded the warfighting efforts of the CAOC staff and breached doctrinal concepts of unity of command.[19]

Colonel Holland suggested that the Allied Force command structure reflected a poor understanding of joint/combined warfighting:

> SACEUR stood up the U.S.–only JTF, yet he didn't let the JTF be the warfighter. Admiral Ellis wore two hats, the U.S. and NATO hats, and was stuck in the middle. The JTF should have been built at Lt. General Short's level, and let him be the warfighter. If SACEUR would have looked at it with a mission objective focus instead of a rank focus, he might have drawn the wiring diagram a lot differently.[20]

There were additional mission-oriented reasons why the command structure was faulty. The JTF staff was *not* joint, hardly combined, and not a trained warfighting staff. Admiral Ellis, the JFC, recognized that "JTF-Noble Anvil was not formed around a predesignated (and trained) theater staff."[21] The undermanned JTF staff reflected long-term manpower shortfalls plaguing the United States and the NATO countries. General Short felt the JTF obstructed operations:

> I think the JTF never understood its function. I think the JTF was an unnecessary level that was inserted for reasons that continued to escape me. We were given the reason that we needed a U.S.–only capability to control U.S.–only assets. We [CAOC] could have controlled the U.S.–only piece. . . . The JTF saw themselves as fighting the air war as opposed to synchronizing the efforts of the components. The JTF was no value added, from my perspective.[22]

The JTF staff interfered with the warfighting staff at the CAOC, particularly in the target-approval process and management of classified US weapons. Decisive airpower doctrine was undermined by a lack of unity of command.

Senior Leadership Dynamics. Senior leadership dynamics worked against sound planning for Operation Allied Force. Historically, the personalities of leaders has affected military operations: Gen Dwight D. Eisenhower struggled mightily with Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery and twice relieved the cantankerous Gen George S. Patton; President Harry S. Truman fired a defiant Gen Douglas MacArthur; and Gen Billy Mitchell was court-martialed for his strident opinions. Allied Force had similarities. According to Admiral Murphy, "There was a fundamental difference of opinion at the outset between General Clark, who was applying a ground commander's perspective . . . and General Short as to the value of going after fielded forces."[23] One heated exchange between the two men ended only when General Clark reminded General Short who outranked whom. General Short himself recognized this aspect of their relationship:

> When SACEUR said something that I thought was out of the ballpark and I took him on as a three-star, I had people call me telling me I can't do that. On one of SACEUR's visits to the CAOC he threw everyone out of the room and remarked that I was very sharp with him. I replied that I didn't mean to be, but was appalled at the guidance given to me. I felt I did everything I could to get SACEUR to understand airpower. I did everything I could to oppose what I thought was bad guidance. I don't absolve myself of the responsibility, and clearly I'm responsible for the air campaign, but I

> don't know what more I could've done to get SACEUR to understand the process.[24]

While General Short focused on the positive military objective of defeating Serbia's will and ability to fight, General Clark's range of warfare was conditioned by the negative political objective of NATO cohesion. General Clark "didn't need any convincing about strategic targets," and he too wanted "to strike Serbian forces in Kosovo."[25] But without NATO cohesion, Operation Allied Force may have unraveled a 50-year alliance. General Clark spent much time "fending off proposals from the political leaders of some NATO countries—particularly Italy and Greece—who wanted to suspend the bombing altogether."[26]

In addition to this leadership tension, the video teleconferencing (VTC) medium of communication between General Clark, Admiral Ellis, Vice-Admiral Murphy, and General Short created some misgivings. Daily VTCs were unrestricted to audiences of all ranks. Consequently, when disagreements on objectives or strategies emerged, many people witnessed inappropriate senior-level confrontations. Admiral Ellis noted that VTCs were "subject to misinterpretation as key guidance is filtered down to lower staff levels . . . [and] . . . enables senior leadership to sink to past comfort levels where discipline is required to remain at the appropriate level of engagement and command."[27] Although VTCs allowed expedient communications, they showcased open dissent among key senior decision makers, while in turn fostering a poorly focused air campaign.

Operation Allied Force Execution

From the start of Allied Force, the CAOC was unable to produce a *timely and accurate* air tasking order (ATO). The primary cause was the absence of a doctrinally based joint/combined targeting guidance and approval process. For the first *40 days* of the air campaign, target lists, instead of target sets based on desired effects against Serbian forces, were approved and disapproved spontaneously during daily VTCs. This procedure was anathema to the ideal envisioned in US Air Force doctrine. Furthermore, it highlighted a lack of doctrinal education, training, or unintentional disregard by senior leaders who assumed the threat of NATO bombing would cause Milosevic to capitulate quickly.

Misapplication of Joint/Combined Air Operations Center Doctrine. AFDD 2 explains the function of a joint/combined air operations center (J/CAOC):

> The commander's guidance and objectives will identify broad categories of tasking and targeting priorities . . . this guidance will also include the apportionment decision. Tasks and targets are nominated to support the objectives and the commander's priorities. The final prioritized tasking and targets are then included in a Master Air Attack Plan (MAAP) that forms the foundation of the ATO.[28]

Doctrinally, the CFACC receives strategic planning guidance from the commander in chief (CINC) or JTF commander. Target sets are developed from a master target list (MTL) and are approved based on the desired effects and objectives. A joint/combined targeting control board (JTCB) convenes to consolidate the target sets into prioritized objective-oriented categories. The resultant joint/combined prioritized target list (JPTL) is incorporated into a master air attack plan, which marries assets to tasking in the form of the ATO.

Strategic guidance should be clear so that nominated target sets have a decisive effect on objectives. Warfighting staffs should be provided a robust MTL that supports the CFACC's effects-based targeting guidance. Also, the CFACC should transmit warfighting guidance to his staff through a daily air operations directive (AOD). None of this occurred during the first phases of Allied Force.

Contrary to sound doctrinal practice, senior military leaders believed "the political objective was to prompt Milosevic to accept the Rambouillet peace agreement, and NATO calculated that by dropping a few bombs Milosevic would do so."[29] At the outset of bombing, the MTL consisted of a meager

100 targets, of which slightly over 50 were approved for the initial air strikes. The lack of approved target sets perplexed General Short, who recalled thinking that "SACEUR had us all convinced we didn't need very many targets, and we didn't need an air campaign, and Milosevic just needed a little bit of spanking, and it was all going to be done. We never really ran an air campaign in a classic sense."[30]

SACEUR faced a pivotal problem: acquiesce to dissenting political desires of fickle NATO allies or risk damaging NATO cohesion by unleashing "punishment" attacks on Belgrade's population and leadership target sets. With the predominance of the negative objective, SACEUR's only realistic choice was to ensure NATO cohesion and resolve and do what he could about Belgrade's behavior in the margins. NATO's consensus revolved around a brief sanitary operation with limited targets not aimed at leadership or population COGs. The initial air campaign was the antithesis of decisive-oriented US Air Force aerospace doctrine.

Delay in Joint/Combined Targeting Approval and Guidance Process. It took four weeks of mismanaged combat operations to recoup the capability to nominate, weaponeer, approve, and incorporate target sets in a coordinated joint/combined planning and guidance process. Along with the consensus that Milosevic would capitulate quickly, four other issues factored into this delay: General Clark's comfort level with the initial target approval process; the absence of a senior airman advisor to SACEUR; the political interplay of target approval/disapproval; and the initial absence of a strategy/guidance, apportionment, and targeting (STRAT/GAT) cell at the CAOC.

SACEUR's Comfort Level. The initial VTCs between SACEUR, the JFC, CFACC, CMFCC, and other key players usurped the doctrinal model for target approval. Colonel Holland remembered:

> SACEUR did not understand the targeting approval process. As airmen, we should have been pushing that forward with a package from the CAOC to SACEUR. I don't know what happened. We started off allowing SACEUR to have tactical control of everything. The first VTCs supported this preconceived notion of how the target approval process would work. Because of the preconceived notions, the first VTC started off reviewing the nuts and bolts of each individual target, and that's what drove us to be well within [preempting] the doctrinal planning cycle.[31]

The first VTC cemented SACEUR's comfort level with a doctrinally unsound target-approval process. The result in the CAOC was a round-the-clock scramble to identify and plan short-notice targets, rapid construction of mistake-ridden ATOs, and tasking aircrews as they walked to their aircraft. The process debilitated the CAOC planning staffs and aircrews. Interdiction targets of little significance were hit repeatedly, while attacks on illusive enemy forces inside Kosovo proved difficult at best.*

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Absence of Airman Advisor to SACEUR. Many blamed the faulty target-approval process on the notion that there was no assigned senior-level US or NATO air force airman vigorously advising SACEUR. In retrospect, Maj Gen Charles D. Link, USAF, Retired, suggested the lesson of Allied Force was the need to "place air campaigns in the hands of an 'Airman' commander. Put that

*Author's note: As part of the CAOC warfighting staff, I recall that weather precluded many attacks on fielded forces in Kosovo. However, for the initial 40 days of the campaign, numerous insignificant targets were repeatedly bombed into rubble due to a lack of freshly approved target sets.

commander in direct dialogue with the political authorities so that his specialized competence can be brought to bear in the planning phase as well as the execution. Military means are appropriately subordinate to political ends, but political leaders deserve expert advice—direct from the airman's mouth."[32]

Many onlookers felt General Short should have been General Clark's senior air advisor. General Short described his perception of the problem:

> Look at the SHAPE [Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe] staff. A U.S. Army four-star is SACEUR, a British Army four-star is Deputy SACEUR, and a German Army four-star is the Chief of Staff, until you get to the Air Force two-star. SACEUR had no air expertise. Not that the two-star isn't an expert, but you can't go head-to-head with a four-star. There was no air expertise at the appropriate level. General John Jumper [four-star Commander of U.S. Air Forces Europe], the senior airman in the theater was several layers removed and physically absent from SHAPE headquarters.[33]

Although General Jumper did assist SACEUR on numerous occasions, he was a supporting commander and not directly in the NATO chain of command. NATO officers at the CAOC felt the SHAPE structure overlooked the need for a senior airman advisor to SACEUR. Col Hans-Peter Koch of the German air force, one of several battle staff directors tasked with coordinating the real-time air strikes at the CAOC, believed "the biggest shortfall was that SACEUR did not have a NATO airman in his close proximity."[34]

Interplay of Politics on Target Appoval/ Disapproval. General Clark's comfort level with the VTC venue of target approval and the absence of an airman in his inner circle were not the only obstacles to a functioning target-guidance and approval process. Incremental target approval from selective NATO nations was a chronic problem. Politics thwarted the execution of Allied Force. Stephen Aubin correctly discerned

> that the military had been politically constrained right from the start. What seems clear is that the political leaders, especially those in Washington, never intended to fight an all-out war. Military force was to be applied tentatively and in limited doses in support of continuing diplomatic initiatives.[35]

Indeed, a politically motivated and convoluted target-approval process meted out the tentative use of military force. General Short argued that the political interference in choosing targets was sanctioned at the highest US and NATO military levels:

> We went right back, from my perspective to 1968, where the President of the United States was approving targets. The Joint Staff drove this to an unacceptable degree. Targets were picked and turned down by the Joint Staff. Once Washington approved the target, you had to get it through the NATO North Atlantic Council (NAC). Then the targets had to go to the five Chairmen of Defense [members] (United Kingdom, Germany, Italy, France, and the U.S.). That's where each nation would weigh in.[36]

Doctrinally, the JFC and CFACC should have been allowed to recommend *block* target sets for *block* approval based on the desired effects mandated by the military objectives. Instead, the incremental target-approval process wreaked havoc on doctrinally supported synchronized air operations. Colonel Holland remarked that "targets were not available to the CAOC planning staff until approved through two chains: the U.S. and NAC. Target approval was piecemealed."[37] Worse, following US and NAC approval, targets were subject to scrutiny through the US European Command and the JTF staff in a trickle-down manner. The result was an incremental bombing campaign roughly framed around a phased strategy that lacked decisive effects. As Admiral Ellis concluded, "The political environment caused an 'incremental' war instead of decisive operations."[38]

NATO's fear of collateral damage exacerbated the target-approval quagmire. Four major collateral-damage events occurred during the air campaign: the AGM-130 rocket-powered bomb that hit a moving passenger train; the unintentional bombing of Kosovar refugees and the mistaken destruction of a

passenger bus; the inadvertent opening of a cluster bomb; and the mistaken bombing of the Chinese Embassy. All four instances of collateral damage threatened to fracture NATO cohesion and cause a halt to the air campaign. As Dana Priest of the *Washington Post* noted, "When bombs accidentally hit Albanian refugees or Serbian civilians, the international outcry was swift, and popular support for the war waned. So political leaders became deeply involved in the nitty-gritty of targeting decisions."[39] This meant tighter restrictions on the types of targets hit, narrowly specified types of bombs for certain targets, controlled timing of air strikes, restrictive avenues of approach for NATO aircraft, and an overall political micromanagement of the entire target approval process.

Initial Absence of a STRAT/GAT Cell at the CAOC. There was yet another obstacle in the 40-day delay in implementing a doctrinally aligned targeting approval process: the initial absence of a STRAT/GAT cell at the CAOC. On the first night of Allied Force bombing, the existing CAOC STRAT/GAT cell was manned with a temporary and untrained staff. As a result of CAOC senior leadership expectation for a short air victory, there was little forethought in establishing a doctrinally robust STRAT/GAT cell. General Short, schooled in CFACC staff requirements, recognized the deficiency:

> We were prepared to fly a few sorties and bomb them for a couple of nights. Here are your targets; don't think, just execute. I fault myself for waiting four weeks to stand up the STRAT/GAT cell. It made an incredible difference. I should've realized that's what was needed in the beginning.[40]

The absence of a robust STRAT/GAT cell had long-term effects on the unity of effort within the CAOC. Also, against sound airpower doctrine, the CFACC did not produce a daily air operations directive (AOD) outlining the apportionment and weight of effort for the air tasking order. Granted, the intense political interplay on target approval inhibited a clear sense of guidance for the first week of operations, but the JFC and CFACC fell significantly behind in their obligation to formulate and transmit daily written guidance to planners and operators on the CAOC warfighting staff.

Effects of Dual ATOs. The lack of a doctrinally based joint/combined target-guidance and approval process caused undue difficulties as the CAOC tried to produce a timely and accurate ATO. The creation of two parallel ATOs, instead of a traditional centralized ATO, complicated an already frustrated and confused CAOC warfighting staff and violated the fundamental doctrine of unity of command.

The original purpose of a separate ATO stemmed from US desires to cloak (even from NATO) the use of stealth aircraft, and to control the use of cruise missiles. Colonel Koch concluded that the "dual ATO" process caused dangerous confusion:

> I could not manage the battle. I had aircraft which I did not know when they were to show up, what support they needed, and what route they were flying. We had several situations where some assets on the U.S.–only ATO were flying at the same time and in the same airspace as NATO assets executing air strikes. The secrecy of the U.S.–only ATO kept important information from the NATO battle staff. This was a major shortfall of the two ATOs. If you don't tell the battle managers whose [*sic*] flying, it's dangerous.[41]

As with the targeting-approval process, SACEUR reached a comfort level with the US Air Force–sponsored dual ATO process because he was shielded from the confusion. As a consequence, the doctrinally indecisive dual ATO shattered unity of command, created tactical and operational confusion, and caused an indecisive application of aerospace power.

Conclusion

Operation Allied Force was indicative of the debilitating influence of negative political objectives on positive military objectives. Additionally, faulty command structures, conflicting senior leadership dynamics, and a

lack of doctrinally sound target guidance and approval diluted the decisive application of airpower. The dual ATO system shattered all doctrinal notions of unity of command. General Clark conceded that "the air campaign was an effort to coerce, not to seize."[42] General Clark's admission suggests the broader need for airmen to understand that although airpower can be potentially decisive, in the larger context and frequency of nontraditional conflicts, airpower is most pragmatically a coercive tool seen as likely to be restricted by the politics of war and influenced by senior leaders' capacities to function efficiently within the complex combat environment. Pape dispels the assumption that "coercive punishment" would have been more effective than a "denial" campaign:

> The evidence shows that it is the threat of military failure, which I call denial, and not threats to civilians, which we may call punishment, which provides the critical leverage in conventional coercion. Consequently, coercion based on punishing civilians rarely succeeds. The key to success in conventional coercion is not punishment but denial, that is the ability to thwart the target state's military strategy for controlling the objectives in dispute.[43]

The coercive nature of Allied Force was, in effect, the most likely method for success. This suggestion is objectionable to airmen and is the antithesis of US Air Force aerospace-power doctrine. However, it is the probable reality for future conflicts.

Allied Force and the historic prerogatives of political objectives in war raise two questions: Should US Air Force aerospace-power doctrine be more coercively oriented? and Is the gradualistic application of aerospace power the norm for future conflicts?

The answer to the first question is an emphatic yes. US Air Force aerospace-power doctrine should be more coercively oriented than idealistically decisive. Coercive airpower is the most likely reality in future wars (outside of nuclear conflict). Allied Force is but one example where aerospace power was subjected to recurring, predictable, and legitimate political constraints. Airpower is wholly an extension of coercive military force.

Current aerospace-power doctrine is a two-edged sword. One edge utilizes doctrine as a marketing tool to compete in the joint service arena for future military programs, while the other edge attempts to guide airmen in sound warfighting principles. The challenge is to minimize the marketing utility of doctrine and maximize the operational relevance to the warfighter.

Whether or not the gradualistic application of aerospace power in Allied Force serves as a template for future conflicts is more problematic. During an Eaker Institute forum on Allied Force, General Jumper endorsed the probability that gradualism may be the required strategy of future conflicts:

> From the air campaign planning point of view, it is always the neatest and tidiest when you can get a political consensus of the objective of a certain phase, and then go about achieving that objective with the freedom to act as you see militarily best. But that is not the situation we find ourselves in. We can rail against that, but it does no good. It is the politics of the moment that is going to dictate what we are able to do. . . . If the limit of that consensus means gradualism, then we are going to have to find a way to deal with a phased air campaign with gradual escalation. . . . We hope to be able to convince politicians that is not the best way to do it, but in some cases we are going to have to live with that situation.[44]

General Jumper is not alone in his recognition that gradualism may be the template for future air campaigns. Gen Joseph Ralston echoed this notion:

> In spite of what might indicate the success of a gradualism strategy, the U.S. Air Force no doubt will continue to maintain that the massive application of airpower will be more efficient and effective than gradual escalation. Yet when the political and tactical constraints imposed on air use are extensive and pervasive—and that trend seems more rather than less likely—then gradualism may be perceived as the only option.[45]

The US Air Force should focus on maximizing airpower responsiveness and efficiency

within the constraints of political gradualism. US Air Force aerospace-power doctrine should endorse a less idealistic decisive philosophy and favor a more rational and realistic view of the coercive use of airpower. The result of educating leaders on realistic coercive airpower application will be a smarter, more efficient, more rapid, and a more effective use of lethal aerospace power across the spectrum of conflict. □

Notes

1. Mark Clodfelter, *The Limits of Air Power: The American Bombing of North Vietnam* (London: Collier Macmillan Publishers, 1989), xi.
2. Ibid.
3. Air Force Doctrine Document (AFDD) 2-1, *Air Warfare*, 20 February 2000, 63.
4. Ibid., vii.
5. Robert Pape, *Bombing to Win: Airpower and Coercion in War* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1996).
6. Ibid., 19.
7. Ibid., x.
8. Ibid., 15.
9. Ibid., 2.
10. Interview with Col William L. Holland, chief of staff, CAOC, 5ATAF, Vicenza, Italy, 22 June 1999.
11. Dana Priest, "United NATO Front Was Divided Within," *Washington Post*, 21 September 1999.
12. Interview with Lt Gen Michael C. Short, Air Forces South commander, NATO Allied Forces South, Naples, Italy, 16 June 1999; see also John A. Tirpak, "Short's View of the Air Campaign," *Air Force Magazine* 82, no. 9 (September 1999): 43–47.
13. AFDD 2, *Organization and Employment of Aerospace Power*, 28 September 1998, 6.
14. Priest, "United NATO Front Was Divided Within."
15. Ibid.
16. Holland interview.
17. Briefing, United States Air Force, subject: Organization and Employment of Aerospace Power, AFDD 2, briefing slides 29 and 30, 2 September 1998.
18. Air South Command briefing (Vicenza, Italy) presented to Air University, Air War College, Maxwell AFB, Alabama, 23 October 1999. Operation Allied Force command relationships showed dual NATO and US command lines. SACEUR , JFC, and CFACC were dual-hatted to NATO and US command chains. On the US side, as part of the NSC, the Joint Staff added complexity to the US command structure, while individual national ministers of defense added complexity to the NATO chain of command.
19. AFDD 1 and AFDD 2 effectively warn of the consequences of disjointed unity of command.
20. Holland interview.
21. Adm James O. Ellis, commander, Allied Forces Southern Europe, "A View from the Top," briefing to the secretary of defense (SECDEF), 21 October 1999.
22. Short interview .
23. Priest, "United NATO Front Was Divided Within."
24. Short interview.
25. Priest, "United NATO Front Was Divided Within."
26. Ibid.
27. Ellis briefing.
28. AFDD 2, 65.
29. Stephen P. Aubin, "Operation Allied Force: War or 'Coercive Diplomacy'?" *Strategic Review* 27, no. 3 (Summer 1999): 10.
30. Ibid.
31. Holland interview.
32. Maj Gen Charles D. Link, USAF, Retired, "Airpower?—Why Not? *Daedalus Flyer* 39, no. 2 (Summer 1999): 9.
33. Short interview.
34. Interview with Col Hans-Peter Koch, German Air Force, battle staff director, CAOC, 14 June 1999.
35. Aubin, 6.
36. Short interview.
37. Holland interview.
38. Ellis briefing to SECDEF.
39. Dana Priest, "France Acted As Group Skeptic," *Washington Post*, 20 September 1999.
40. Short interview.
41. Koch interview.
42. Priest, "United NATO Front Was Divided Within," 7.
43. Ibid., 10.
44. James A. Kitfield, "Another Look at the Air War That Was: An Eaker Institute Panel Weighs the Implications of Operation Allied Force," *Air Force Magazine* 82, no. 10 (October 1999): 39.
45. *Early Bird*, "Ralston Sees Potential for More Wars of Gradual Escalation," *Inside the Pentagon*, 16 September 1999, 1.