

# Letter to Editor

## *Airmen and the Art of Strategy*

Gen T. Michael Moseley's article in *Strategic Studies Quarterly's* first issue entitled "Airmen and the Art of Strategy" was excellent; he challenged not only Airmen but, in a sense, everyone in the US government to think about and prepare for the future. Other articles from the same edition, such as "Busting the Icon: Restoring Balance to the Influence of Clausewitz" by Phillip Meilinger, also stimulate us to think differently. As I thought about fighting the next war, I began thinking about what kind of war we should be fighting. Technologic? Kinetic? Social? Political? The war of "hearts and minds"? The answer is that we need to think about fighting all of them, and we should think about the role each of us plays in fighting each different aspect of war. Many believe that the next century's war is already here and that it is one of "hearts and minds" as opposed to one based primarily on kinetics. General Moseley covered kinetics and technology extremely well in his article. My aim is to stimulate some thought regarding the soft power that must also be used as an enabler in this next war and to discuss a few actions taking place to fight on that battlefield.

In my role as the US Southern Command's command surgeon for more than two years, I have seen the world a little differently than from the backseat of an F-15 concentrating on air dominance. The perspectives change depending on where you are sitting! Here are some perspectives from this joint SOUTHCOM/SG (surgeon general) fighting position. Human touch and a handshake still make a difference in this region. Making promises and keeping them is important to long-term relationships. There have been too many "divorces" in the recent past with former regional partners. As anyone who has ever been married knows, it takes a lot of work by both parties to keep a strong relationship growing. In relationships, each partner has to give and take and continue to pay attention to one another. This interaction and caring are what make the relationship strong.

Should Airmen think about building relationships as much as we do kinetics? I believe the answer to that question is a resounding yes—and we do. As the health world often states, "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure." We all need to read and understand basic aspects of DoD Directive 3000.05, *Military Support for Stability, Security, Transition, and Reconstruction (SSTR) Operations*. It lays out many perspectives of what I believe is the next war and the one we are currently fighting. In both the command's and SG's strategic planning, we focus on the nonkinetic aspects of strategy and have identified these as objectives in our Theater Security Cooperation Plans and our 2016 strategy/vision document. These are specifically aligned with our higher DoD strategic documents and with those of, for example, the Department of State, United States Agency for International Development, Centers for Disease Control, and Pan-American Health Organization (under the UN). This gives us a robust look into the future and increases our chances of success.

How are we specifically fighting this “soft” aspect of war at SOUTHCOM? As the commander, Adm James Stavridis, likes to say, “We don’t launch cruise missiles into this region, we launch ideas.” Sending ideas and building partnerships are exactly the foci of this command. Technology plays a part but is a supporting component as opposed to the central themes of strategic communication and cultivating personal relationships. This is a “brain-on-brain” as opposed to a force-on-force contest. Here are a few examples of what is going on at SOUTHCOM and the role that the Air Force has played in forming relationships and fighting on this different terrain. In the past few months, we have supported multiple humanitarian relief operations, mostly with logistical and medical support (God bless our logistical and medical global reach!). After the recent earthquake in Peru, the Air Force had some of the first medics on the ground to support the population. Similarly, after Hurricane Felix ravaged Nicaragua, Air Force mobility and medical forces delivered much-needed humanitarian support. There were reports of comments from the population saying, “The US is here; where is our president?” Their president was there soon after the disaster, but his request for assistance had already opened the doors for US forces and US airpower to provide humanitarian relief quickly—the point is well made: delivering help rapidly (air logistics, medical care anywhere) makes a difference and needs to be part of our global strategy . . . not an afterthought. As General Moseley wrote: “An Airman’s perspective is, by definition, multi-dimensional, global, and strategic. We instinctively address problems in a comprehensive, three-dimensional, nonlinear manner, and we intuitively factor in the fourth dimension: time.” These characteristics are absolutely vital to formulating strategy for building partnerships.

People in need will not forget those who show up time and time again to help with no motive other than to relieve suffering and improve living conditions. I have participated in Pandemic Influenza (PI) collaborative conferences with NORTHCOM that included Canada and Mexico. These meetings concentrate on the collaboration and interdependency needed to defeat this “enemy.” The NORTHCOM team did an extraordinary job laying the foundations for long-term relationships with military and civilian partners from these other countries. My SG shop organized two other separate PI conferences concentrating on the subregions of Central America and the Caribbean that included over 30 participating regional, key US government, and United Nations partners. Again, these events went extremely well and exemplify the American partnership with the region and the understanding that we are all in the same world working on transnational issues that require transnational solutions with many partners beyond the United States. We have also been in a long-term relationship with the Chilean medical community, setting up a combat casualty care course for its medics deploying in support of peacekeeping operations. The Chileans now run this program, with our medics being part of the faculty; well over 500 personnel have been trained, including civilians and medics from other nations. The Air Force has a physician medical liaison exchange officer to Chile; this physician has been essential to this effort, and these personal relationships are long lasting!

The USNS *Comfort* mission, visiting 12 ports in four months, is another great example of building partnerships on multiple fronts. This mission provides clinical medi-

cal, engineering, technical, and teaching support to the region. It is also a partnership with our nongovernmental organization partners—Operation Smile, Project Hope, and others. All services (Air Force has 60 medics on the ship) have been involved, along with our Public Health Service brothers and sisters. What a wonderful example of what the “good old US of A is all about”! Many host-nation comments were, “This is what the US should be doing; this is the USA that we used to know.” SOUTHCOM’s humanitarian assistance projects build partnership capacity and capability in the region through disaster response; building resources like clinics, schools, and wells; and medical readiness training exercises (MEDRETE). We conduct around 60 MEDRETEs each year (mostly split between the Air Force and Army) to deliver needed health care to remote local populations while training our members for deployments and redeployments. Between the USNS *Comfort* and the MEDRETEs, SOUTHCOM personnel will have “touched” over 350,000 people this year in a positive way.

SOUTHCOM has also helped move and distribute millions of dollars worth of gifts-in-kind from private industry (not an Air Force effort, but one that we need to pay attention to). This public-private partnership is another untapped resource that the US government needs to incorporate into the strategic effort. Lastly, I would like to mention the Air Force Medical Service’s International Health Specialist program, an idea of a visionary Airman, former Air Force surgeon general Lt Gen P. K. Carlton. This program dedicates approximately 50 authorizations to support the combatant commands (COCOM) with language-proficient, culturally sensitive/aware Airmen to carry out the nonkinetic mission. These Air Force medics are downrange all the time, forming long-term relationships and leaving a lasting, positive regard for the United States. COCOM surgeons general have clearly stated that this program represents a vital commitment to executing the present and future mission of winning hearts and minds. In conclusion, with the belief that the next century’s war will be about hearts and minds as much as kinetics, Airmen need to keep that perspective in play and put thought and resources into how this soft-power enabler synchronizes with Air Force kinetic capabilities.

Sean Murphy, Colonel, USAF, MC, FS  
SOUTHCOM/SG

#### Corrections

“Airmen and the Art of Strategy,” p. 7 (Fall 2007), epigraph attributed to Thucydides’ *History of the Peloponnesian Wars* is actually a paraphrase of a quotation from Lt-Gen Sir William F. Butler, *Charles George Gordon* (London: MacMillan, 1907), 85. Butler wrote: “The nation that will insist upon drawing a broad line of demarcation between the fighting man and the thinking man is liable to find its fighting done by fools and its thinking by cowards.”

“Through the Glass Darkly,” p. 114, n. 30 (Fall 2007), should read: The roots of this argument stem from Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, chap. 7. Kenneth N. Waltz develops this argument further in “Globalization and Governance,” *Political Science and Politics* 32, no. 4 (December 1999): 693–700; and “Globalization and American Power,” *National Interest*, no. 59 (Spring 2000): 46–56. Geoffrey Blainey also discusses this theme in *The Causes of War* (New York: Free Press, 1988).