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A SEAT AT THE TABLE

Lt Gen Mike Hostage's article "A Seat at the Table: Beyond the Air Component Coordination Element" (Winter 2010) is a refreshing and timely reminder from a highly respected, war-fighting Airman that leadership in war is ultimately a human endeavor, and that physical presence and personal relationships mean much in councils of war. That said, I very much appreciate his wise indication that centralized control of a high-demand, low-density capability such as airpower has real merit, especially in terms of exploiting airpower's inherent flexibility and range in service of economy of force.

My only concern with General Hostage's superb article is the statement that his intent "is to make the ground commander successful" (p. 20). I am uneasy with this remark because some readers might misinterpret it as precluding, ab initio, even the possibility that something other than a ground-centric approach would achieve the nation's strategic objectives in Afghanistan or, for that matter, any conflict. I believe that his comment is better interpreted as not diminishing focus on the intent to accomplish the mission (as opposed to simply enabling a particular component commander—ground or otherwise—to claim success). Put another way, fulfilling the mission is (or ought to be) a joint endeavor rather than one that focuses on a single military-service component. More broadly, for all the "joint" rhetoric, true jointness is at the lowest ebb I've seen in years. The Air Force's enormous (yet rarely reciprocated) effort to be deferent to its sister services has earned it little and, in important ways, has been counterproductive. In particular, I worry that Airmen increasingly think of themselves only as adjuncts to, and service providers for, ground commanders. This is not good for the nation. We should not forget that it was multiservice airpower, with the irreplaceable assistance of ground forces, that unhinged the Taliban in a matter of weeks in 2001. Unfortunately, thereafter a series of various ground-centric strategies that lacked sufficient jointness squandered that early success.

Perhaps it is time for a more air-minded (not "air-centric") approach. To clarify, at its core, "air-mindedness" is not about the Air Force or even airpower per se; rather, it is an intellectual approach that emphasizes the strategic goal, and—in its most basic interpretation—looks for opportunities to achieve it in ways that minimize the ability of the enemy to bring his weapons to bear. In this sense, it unapologetically contravenes the ground component's penchant for the often bloody and costly "close fight." To paraphrase Gen George Patton, it is about making the other guy die for his ideology—and if that occurs from the safety of afar, so much the better. Air-mindedness is about imposing upon the enemy the proverbial "unfair fight," and this often (but not always) means exploiting technological prowess that the enemy either doesn't possess or fails to grasp fully. Among other things, it embraces persuading the enemy that he faces a remorseless, impersonal machine that will relentlessly hunt and kill him without compunction. It aims to breed primordial terror. Properly employed, air-mindedness is a psychological endeavor that inflicts not only fear but also a sense of frustration, helplessness, and—ultimately—hopelessness on the adversary's mind-set. It either breaks his will or breaks his body; it ruthlessly forces the enemy to choose his fate.

Airmen, authentically thinking like Airmen, necessarily bring a different perspective to war fighting than do their brothers and sisters of the ground components. I suspect that ground commanders actually want that—as do others. It's worth remembering Undersecretary of Defense Michèle Flournoy's admonition: "During the 80s and early 90s, the

Air Force was on the leading edge in innovative strategic thinking within [the Department of Defense], driving the development of new concepts of operations and ways of war. The Air Force was the poster child for thought-leadership in the Pentagon. But that has become less and less true, even though we need such thinking more today than ever" ("Remarks to the US Air Force Senior Leader Orientation Course" [speech, Air University, 14 August 2009], http://www.au.af.mil/au/aunews/archive/2009/0419/Articles/USDPRemarks.htm). I found General Hostage's article a vitally important step towards helping Airmen recapture the intellectual initiative. Let's not allow it to be interpreted in a way I don't believe was intended.

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THE MUTABLE NATURE OF WAR

As a graduate of the School of Advanced Air and Space Studies, I eagerly read Col Phillip Meilinger's latest article "The Mutable Nature of War" (Winter 2010). However, in this piece, he erects and fells straw men that fail to support his thesis of mutable war. He asserts that "the role and *duty* of military planners from all services should involve doing everything in their power to plan operations that limit the exposure of American forces to danger" (emphasis in original, p. 28). Unfortunately, this puts the cart before the horse. The role and duty of military planners from all services should involve doing everything in their power to plan operations that efficiently accomplish the *mission*. Later, he compounds the error vis-à-vis grand strategy: "In facing any crisis, our leaders should take as their *entering premise* the goal of attaining such [bloodless] results" (emphasis in original, p. 28). Nonsense. This mirrors an enduring airpower fallacy which holds that airpower adds dignity to what would otherwise be an ugly brawl. I am an airpower enthusiast, but those who fancy that any technology will make war less awful are pursuing a chimera.

In facing any crisis, our leaders should take as their entering premise the goal of attaining the political objective: a better state of peace (obviously, not my original thought). Trying to get there on the cheap will always cost more over the long haul. Therefore, our leaders must soberly estimate (and frequently update) the value of the political objective in light of the probable cost in lives and treasure to the very citizens they purport to serve. In doing so, they will achieve—over the course of numerous battles and campaigns—what the author advocates: "limit[ing] the exposure of American forces to danger."

Col David Gurney, USMC, Retired
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It strikes me that Colonel Meilinger and many of the people he quotes are confusing method and nature. War and violence are inseparable. More precisely, war is inseparable from the willingness to employ—and, when necessary, absorb—violence, both organized and applied to achieve some end. The fact that some operations do not involve physical combat or that technological advances make it possible to inflict more damage and casualties on an adversary than we absorb is neither new nor changes the nature of war. Colonel Meilinger's own examples highlight this fact.

Blockades and sanctions may not involve sustained combat, but their effectiveness often involves willingness to employ violence to enforce or breach them. Much naval history has been made by clashes between blockade runners and blockading warships—participants would disagree that those actions were not violent and bloody on their own scale. The Berlin airlift—arguably one of history's more effective air campaigns—succeeded because the Allies were willing to risk combat to breach the blockade, whereas the Soviet Union was not willing to do the same to enforce it. The US blockade of Cuba in 1962 succeeded on the same principle. That neither actually came to violence does not change the fact that willingness to employ it—"to put our own

skin on the line," in Gen James Mattis's words—was immutably part of both.

Cyberwar—or, more appropriately, cybercombat—also doesn't negate the violent nature of war. Although hacking into computer infrastructure can certainly cause short-term havoc with communications, transportation, power, and economic information, similar disruption due to natural disaster, accident, and criminal activity indicates that such action is unlikely, by itself, to bend a country to another's will. Just as electronic warfare evolved during the latter part of the twentieth century to negate or enhance combat operations, so were the Russians' network attacks on Georgian information systems designed for the same purpose—to render their opponent more vulnerable to combat action. Chinese writings on the subject follow the same theme.

Last, equating our ability to employ violence without absorbing an equal amount as a change in the nature of war is a bit startling. Minimizing unnecessary casualties or damage is not a new principle in war. Certainly the image of Predator crews launching air strikes from half a world away is less gritty than that of an infantry platoon in a firefight. Physical stress and suffering are often less a factor for an aircrew member than an infantryman, but that does not negate the fact that both are involved in applying—and, at times, receiving—violence. The same dichotomy has applied since the sling allowed one man to kill another at greater than arm's reach. War is the application of, or willingness to apply, organized violence to achieve a specific end. Good leadership in war involves controlling the level and application of violence while minimizing exposure to the same. Both principles have survived the test of time.

Col Jamie Sculerati, USAF
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GLOBAL POWER

Lt Col Bruce Cox's article "Global Power Requires a Global, Persistent Air-to-Air Capability" (Winter 2010) identifies the key limitation in our air-to-air power projection—the vulnerability of bases "within range of the area of interest" (p. 48). Fortunately, we have overcome this problem in recent conflicts, but there is no guarantee that we can do so in the next one. The author's proposed solution—arming B-1s with air-to-air capability—is not viable for the following reasons.

First, modifying a B-1 as the author proposes would create the equivalent of an F-15E with 48 missiles, albeit with far less maneuverability to defend itself. Consider what would happen if we sent this "Super Strike Eagle" up against, say, eight Su-30s in the Taiwan Strait. Unfortunately, the Strike Eagle's radar is not magic, and neither is the advanced medium-range air-to-air missile, or any other. There is no doubt about the outcome of the engagement: the B-1 would either run away or find itself at the bottom of the ocean. If anyone thinks otherwise, he or she can hop in an F-15 (C or E) simulator, set the missile load to infinite, and try it. Oh, and this includes setting a limit of no more than three-G turns. Much more goes into air-to-air combat than the number of missiles carried. The enemy probably will operate from his home airfields, so his problem set will not include range, numbers, and persistence.

Second, we have a very limited number of B-1s left in the inventory—how many should we modify for air-to-air combat? What impact would this have on our intercontinental strike capability? Is that acceptable? The counterargument to my first point would involve creating the large numbers of B-1s that we would need to actually gain and maintain air superiority. Unfortunately, I don't believe we can do that because of our small fleet.

Finally, the aircrew training required to maintain proficiency in the air-to-air role is far more demanding than that for the air-to-ground role (ask any multirole-fighter aircrew). Lieutenant Colonel Cox's solution would create at least a doubling of B-1 crews' training—is that really vi-

able? What happens to their (primary) air-to-ground proficiency? The rest of the article is interesting, and I feel that remotely piloted aircraft will likely assume the air-to-air role in the future. For now, though, improving access to defendable airfields in high-threat areas is a more tenable solution than arming B-1s with air-to-air capabilities.

Lt Col Paul Matier, USAF
Washington, DC

FALL 2010 ISSUE

Once again you have produced a fantastic quarterly issue that contains a terrific variety of articles that are well written and nicely sourced. That issue was an outstanding team effort. I truly appreciate and find very useful the leadership articles by Gen Stephen R. Lorenz, USAF. Well done!

Daniel McDowell
St. Paul, Minnesota

REENABLING AIR FORCE COMMAND AND CONTROL FOR TWENTY-FIRST-CENTURY PARTNERSHIPS

"Reenabling Air Force Command and Control for Twenty-First-Century Partnerships" by Lt Gen Philip Breedlove and Maj Brian Tyler (Fall 2010) is a great article that highlights the requirement for building personal relationships and flexibility in our command and control (C2) structures. My one concern is the authors' statement "With regard to the former [joint trust], relationships between commanders are often more important than command relationships" (p. 13). I fear that some people might misconstrue that statement as minimizing the importance of command relationships or else justifying not taking the time required to think through command relationships and get them correct. I believe it is more correct to say that both command relationships and personal relationships are important because one without the other would make our C2 structures less effective.

Col Edward J. Groeninger, USAF, Retired
Hurlburt Field, Florida

Kudos to Lt Gen Philip Breedlove and Maj Brian Tyler for their well-written article. It is a good discussion of how joint force air component commanders (JFACC) exercise C2, but it didn't fully bring to light the issue of US Air Force C2 at the operational level because it concentrates on how joint air operations centers support JFACCs. That is only half of the story. I wish the authors had also discussed the importance of Air Force forces support to both plan development and the sustainment of mission operations, as well as the importance of reachback to headquarters units to support the mission.

Col Patricia Battles, USAF
Pentagon, Washington, DC

CIVILIAN LANGUAGE EDUCATION IN AMERICA

I fully agree with retired Air Force colonel John Conway's article "Civilian Language Education in America: How the Air Force and Academia Can Thrive Together" (Fall 2010). When it comes to languages, there is indeed a disconnect between ROTC, Officer Training School, and the Air Force Academy on the one hand, and the rest of the Air Force on the other. One of my majors at Virginia Military Institute (one of the five military schools Colonel Conway mentions) was French. I graduated in 1994 when the world differed noticeably from today's post–11 September 2001 environment. I began studying French in the eighth grade and wish I had started even earlier since I'm almost fluent.

In my opinion, the military is appropriately targeting Farsi and Pashtoon capabilities because those languages are the "soupe du jour" for the current war effort. Meanwhile, the military seems to be deemphasizing other languages, as evidenced by its disallowing foreign language proficiency pay for military members who speak the "Big Three" languages unless they are assigned to jobs that specifically require them. However, we still need the Big Three to maintain ties to valuable allies in both Europe

and Asia. Opportunities to hone skills in these languages are available only on our own time and expense while we're away from the office.

Maybe I'm just one of the too many French-speaking officers, but I'll take my commentary a step further. I have found that when I use French with native speakers, the dialogue—thus, the relationship—becomes that much stronger because I made the effort to speak their language rather than assuming that my international counterparts would speak English (i.e., the quid pro quo is vastly improved). Additionally, I perceive that the Air Force's developmental team construct, at least in the combat air forces, barely emphasizes language capabilities unless the teams need to fill a particular quota for an intermediate or a senior developmental education school. Based on feedback from people I have mentored during the professional military education process, I think that members who have no capability or interest in foreign languages are often handed opportunities to fill those quotas and that they accept those assignments reluctantly. Individuals clamoring to use language capabilities they acquired prior to joining the Air Force have few opportunities to do so. I think that the Air Force is not looking at the whole skill set of officers and is not leveraging those personnel who already possess language capabilities. I'm a qualified attaché working in the Air Staff while my language skills sit on the shelf because my attaché assignment was cancelled three years ago. I welcome opening up dialogue on this topic.

Lt Col Timothy P. Lyon, USAF
Pentagon, Washington, DC

I read Col John Conway's article with interest. My background includes graduating from the Defense Language Institute's (DLI) Korean language program and then serving as a Korean linguist, signals intelligence officer, and associate dean of three different schools at DLI's Foreign Language Center. I retired in 1998. Although Colonel Conway makes many good points, I believe that the best way to get Air Force officers who are qualified in less commonly taught languages is to send them to DLI.

The Army has a robust foreign area officer program and sends many officers there for foreign language training. During my active duty career, the Air Force sporadically attempted to start a foreign area officer program, but without much success. I don't know if that situation has since improved. Colleges may institute programs in certain languages, but financial and other constraints may not allow those programs to exist for long. If a military service needs language training for its members, DLI gets the resources to start and sustain programs for as long as needed. In addition, DLI can send out mobile teams to conduct refresher training.

One very good potential source of Air Force officers with language abilities in less commonly taught languages is the existing pool of enlisted cryptologic linguists. I don't think that linguist retention rates after the first term of enlistment are very high. Why not try harder to recruit those qualified enlisted linguists to become officers? As an instructor for a signals intelligence officer course in the 1980s, I trained many prior-service linguists to become signals intelligence officers. This program virtually stopped when higher levels of command became concerned that many of these officers would retire before serving long enough to attain field grade rank and become eligible to fill managerial and command billets.

Although civilian education can certainly be helpful to the military, if a service really wants officers who possess top-notch language skills, it sends them to DLI one way or another; ensures they get jobs that actually make use of these languages; and makes sure they get the time and resources to maintain their language proficiency. Perhaps foreign language qualifications and ability should become a factor in promotions as well.

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SEEING THE WHOLE ELEPHANT

Lt Col Michael Pietrucha's article "Seeing the Whole Elephant: Envisioning a Successful Light Attack Program for the US Air Force" (Fall 2010) reminded me of an experience during the Vietnam War. During the early 1970s, while on the Air Staff, I participated in a project called Credible Chase, which involved substituting a simple aircraft for an AC-130 gunship and providing village or regional fire support. Various manufacturers came forward with alternative design proposals. The project eventually involved two small short-takeoff-and-landing cargo airframes with fixed miniguns. The results were mixed, and funding problems eventually caused the program to be cancelled. One additional proposal that was particularly attractive involved an updated F-51 with a turboprop, which might be worth another look today. Good luck with this one.

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FINISHING STRONG IN IRAQ

Assuming that the US government's commitment to withdraw it troops from Iraq is not overturned by political or military uncertainties, US armed forces will complete their pullout in about one year. As we know, the withdrawal process has already begun. In the eyes of many people, however, the war in Iraq, along with the withdrawal announcement, has left unanswered questions about the war's purpose, whether it was worth all the effort, and who won. After the US military pullout, more questions will arise concerning whether the war is really over and what will happen after the US withdrawal. With all these questions in mind, I read Lt Col William Martin's article "Finishing Strong in Iraq: Why the Air Force Must Be the Last to Leave Operation Iraqi Freedom" (*ASPJ*, Summer 2010; *ASPJ in Chinese*, Fall 2010).

There is no doubt that the US Air Force has played crucial roles in all the wars and military operations since the first Gulf War. Without sustained intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance coverage, preparation of operational environments (such as airborne electronic attack), personnel and material transport, and close air support, US surface forces would be fighting very different wars with very different results. Indeed, Lieutenant Colonel Martin builds his argument mainly on the basis of such primarily US Air Force functions. I agree that withdrawing military forces before the war is won will require a strong air force to serve as a rear guard. Additionally, as the author puts it, the Iraq war is "not the war we might want or wish to have at a later time" (p. 46). Put differently, although the US military can influence the withdrawal timetable, it cannot determine the withdrawal environment. We already saw that the first US withdrawal in August 2010 occurred quietly. An unfriendly environment is the most straightforward and logical reason for the US Air Force to be the last military force to pull out.

If I understand correctly, both Pres. Barack Obama and Secretary of Defense Robert Gates intend to withdraw only combat forces. A large number of other US personnel, including active service members, will stay in Iraq to support stability operations and foreign internal defense. Who then will protect these other US personnel? Further, who will continue to fulfill the yet-to-be-realized US national objectives? These two questions actually relate to the questions I raised at the beginning. The author stops short here and fails to move further in this direction, but we can surmise that these responsibilities will be shouldered primarily by the US Air Force in the next phase of the operation.

It is easy to expect that even if the US Air Force eventually pulls out, it will not stay far away from Iraq. Operations similar to Southern Watch and Northern Watch will continue to occur. Although US Army boots may no longer tread on Iraqi ground, US fighter jets will maintain control of the Iraqi sky. So, in the foreseeable future, I think the US Air Force will not leave Iraq, at least not in the true sense of the word "withdrawal."

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