50 Questions Every Airman Can Answer

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Author's Note

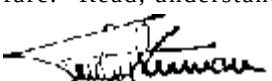
All airmen, present and future, are beholden to the efforts of those who have gone before. This particular work isn't especially profound, but the visions and ideas of past airmen that shaped my efforts are. Therefore, my first thanks go to *all* airmen that have spent their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honor to bring America and the United States Air Force to the threshold of the new aerospace millennium. My dad, Maj James F. Baier, USMC, was one of them. I would also like to say thanks to all my fellow aerospace power advocates at the Air Force Doctrine Center, most specifically Lt Col Bob Christensen, Lt Col Bob Poynor, Lt Col Scott Walker, Maj Tom Ruby, and Capt Bill Thomas, all of whom provided excellent inputs to this effort. I've attempted to answer the following questions simply for my own benefit; hopefully, it can be of service to you and other airmen.

Foreword

Airmen have a compelling responsibility to understand and clearly articulate our vision of aerospace power. In that vein, Air Force airmen are often challenged to answer the very basic questions that define our Service and what we do best. Despite our enthusiasm and passion, as a group, we don't always do so well in answering these kinds of questions. Unfortunately, airmen more often than not resort to one-liners, timeworn clichés, or sound bites that, when closely scrutinized, fail to satisfy our detractors, our sister Services, the idle or professionally curious, or even ourselves on occasion. Moreover, even though we have a professional obligation to know, understand, and advocate these basic concepts, being able to articulate these positions doesn't mean that everyone will be convinced. But we can and must continue to espouse the concepts that explain

how aerospace power is an integral part of American military power.

The tools we airmen most often use to capture and express our vision are words. While words like “flexibility,” “versatility,” or “integrated” are tools that only *describe* aerospace power’s attributes and characteristics, they can express essential truths in greater or lesser degrees. What follows is an effort to express some of those aerospace power truths. This information is intended to provide a quick, *informal* reference to the vital concepts found in Air Force doctrine that all airmen should have at their fingertips. Current Air Force doctrine documents can be reviewed on the Internet at **http://www.doctrine.af.mil.** In the end, doctrine “lies at the heart of warfare.” Read, understand, and debate it.



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1

Why is the Air Force a separate Service?

The US Air Force is a separate Service for one primary reason: a belief that airpower's full potential to contribute to war fighting could be realized only if airpower capabilities were a separate, functionally organized military service, coequal with the other military branches of the United States armed forces. On the practical and bureaucratic level, airmen recognized a need for our own service leadership that understood, from personal experience, the details involved with organizing, training, equipping, and fighting an air force. The thinking was that a

separate service would free airpower (now aerospace power) from being arbitrarily and unduly subordinated to the operational and tactical requirements of the other military services. Previous use of airpower by ground and naval commanders showed that airpower capabilities were not always fully understood nor properly exploited.

2

What is aerospace power?

Aerospace power is essentially the ability to create political and military effects using aircraft, spacecraft, and information. Aerospace power involves the effective use of the full range of the nation's resources to allow us to use the physical environments of air and space and our information resources to our national advantage. Air Force Doctrine Document 1, *Air Force Basic Doctrine,* defines the combination of air and space power as "the synergistic application of air, space, and information systems to project strategic military power."[1]

3

What is an airman?

The term *airman* is often used in a very narrow sense to mean pilot. This is far from adequate. Rather, an airman is any person who understands and appreciates the full range of aerospace power capabilities and can employ or support some aspect of aerospace power capabilities. As one airman put it, an airman is "one who exercises and believes in the fundamental truths regarding aerospace power. Not all who wear the blue suit are airmen; not all airmen wear the blue suit." *Airman* includes not just the pilots who fly aircraft but also space and missile operators and the full range of maintainers

and support people, as well as the researchers, designers, and builders of aerospace vehicles, both public and private. Air Force airmen are those people who formally belong to the US Air Force and employ or support some aspect of the US Air Force's aerospace power capabilities.

4

What is airpower?

Airpower is the fundamental ability to use aircraft to create military and political effects. Another way of defining it is “military power that maneuvers through the air while performing its mission.” Airpower is a subset of aerospace power.

5

What is space power?

Much like airpower, space power is, in essence, the ability to use spacecraft to create military and political effects. Another way of defining it is “military power that comes from, resides in, or moves through space while performing its mission.” Space power, like air power, can place an adversary in a position of disadvantage. Space power is a subset of aerospace power.

6

What is doctrine?

Doctrine is the compilation of officially sanctioned beliefs about warfighting principles. Doctrine is the collective body of thought on the best way to employ a given system or perform a given task. Doctrine is a guide to action; it should not be applied arbitrarily but should be viewed as the collected wisdom of our predecessors. Doctrine is derived, for the most part, from experience, but it can also be derived from theory, simulation, and gaming. It is authoritative, but not directive. Think of doctrine as good advice.

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What is policy?

Policy is an official statement of intentions. It is, for the Air Force, directive in nature. Policy is the answer to the question, *"What* do we want to do?" Policy primarily outlines broad goals but may articulate certain procedures or objectives. Policy is not doctrine.

8

What is strategy?

Strategy is a methodology to accomplish objectives with the resources available. Strategy answers the question, "*How* are we going to do what we want to do?" Strategy is a plan of military action, ideally based on doctrine, originating in policy, and shaped by situation-specific variables. Strategy, like policy, is *not* doctrine.

9

What is an objective?

An objective is a specific statement of a desired end. Like policy, an objective articulates the *what* that we want to achieve, but in more concrete, specific terms. Normally, objectives are based on the overall desired end-state, and they should be measurable so commanders can quantify or qualify the level of success. The tendency to see objectives as merely geographic points is an inaccurate, narrow, and unnecessarily limiting perspective. The Air Force believes that objectives should be clear, concise, and attainable. Said another way, “clear” objectives can be easily understood; clarity eases the way for issuing mission-type

orders and also supports decentralized execution. “Concise” objectives are, literally, brief in nature and don’t drone on about irrelevant stuff. An advantage of being brief is that there is more collective brain space available to concentrate on what’s important. Finally, “attainable” objectives can be achieved given the available resources and proper planning. Generally speaking, poorly constructed objectives are either not clear or are not attainable under the current circumstances. A well-defined objective can be described in terms of an effect or effects.

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What is an effect?

An effect is the physical or psychological outcome, event, or consequence that results from a specific military action. Effects can occur at all levels of war (strategic, operational, and tactical) and may in and of themselves produce secondary outcomes. Effects can be described as direct or indirect. Generally speaking, particular military actions are planned and executed to create certain effects that help achieve specific objectives.

11

What is a target?

A target is a specific area, object, person, function, or facility subject to military action. A target is the “thing” on which we want to create an effect.

12

What is concentration of purpose?

Think of concentration of purpose as “keeping your eye on the ball.” Concentration of purpose is the tenet of applying the appropriate level of aerospace power in a deliberate, focused way against the most important strategic, operational, or tactical objectives. Concentration of purpose helps create overwhelming effect. Concentration of purpose keeps our focus on the main strategy and prevents local concerns from clouding our view of what must be accomplished to achieve the objective. It guards against distraction by peripheral events. It involves good

judgment about how to expend your resources: it is lost when aerospace power capabilities are arbitrarily scattered, dispersed, or diffused. Sometimes this happens simply to satisfy secondary, less important, requirements, often for no better reason than to establish "equal" shares of aerospace power capabilities among competing interests. Historically, airpower capabilities have often been fragmented and made much less effective when surface commanders have focused solely on airpower's ability to support tactical operations. Airmen must avoid this tendency. Concentration of purpose, mass, and economy of force work together to produce the appropriate effects that will achieve the objective.

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What is centralized control?

Centralized control is the practice and principle of assigning the authority to a single airman to plan, organize, and execute operational/theater-level aerospace operations. The aerospace power tenet of centralized control, decentralized execution complements the principle of unity of command. Control in this sense means having the authority to organize and employ aerospace forces as well as to prioritize and assign tasks, designate aerospace objectives, and give authoritative direction necessary to achieve those objectives. Finally, centralized control grants

aerospace forces the ability to be both flexible and versatile.

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What is decentralized execution?

Decentralized execution is the practice of delegating the execution authority over tactical aerospace operations to subordinate tactical commanders. It means being able to execute aerospace operations from dispersed locations, allowing the execution of tactical operations to accommodate unforeseen circumstances, and allowing tactical commanders the flexibility to perform their missions without rigid direction from above. Ideally, decentralized execution can "foster initiative, situational responsiveness, and tactical flexibility."[2] Decentralized execution also helps "achieve ef-

fective span of control."[3] Proper use of decentralized execution helps keep the commander, Air Force forces (COMAFFOR) or joint force air component commander (JFACC) focused on the operational-level issues like apportionment and allocation of limited aerospace resources and the progression and management of the theater air campaign. There is a natural tension between the practices of centralized control and decentralized execution that manifests itself in the time required to complete the air tasking order cycle. Despite the tension, the air tasking order process does accommodate responsiveness, immediacy, and latitude in execution at the tactical level.

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Why is centralized control and decentralized execution important?

The Air Force believes the combined concept of centralized control and decentralized execution must be applied properly to achieve the necessary integration of aerospace efforts without rigidly controlling tactical execution. Airmen believe the most efficient use of aerospace power is to win wars rather than battles. Therefore, airmen also believe centralized control of aerospace forces under a single airman is vitally important if the joint force commander (JFC) intends to exploit the full potential of aerospace power to produce strategic- and operational-level effects on

an adversary. Airmen *do* understand that individual battles must also be won, but in the grand scheme of things it is more important to win the war. The evidence for this view is compelling and is underscored by the fact that well-constructed, effective operational strategies and supporting objectives always focus on war winning. The Air Force believes that in most circumstances aerospace power best contributes to the theater effort at the strategic and operational levels. Nevertheless, decentralized execution allows aerospace forces to be responsive to the tactical situation, either on the surface, in the air, or in space.

16

What is command?

Command is the legal authority and responsibility military leaders and the National Command Authorities have to organize and employ military forces.

17

What is control?

Control is the ability to maintain awareness of military planning and execution and the ability to adjust these actions while they occur. It involves the ability and the responsibility to organize and employ forces, assign tasks to those forces, determine objectives, and give appropriate direction to see that those tasks, when complete, achieve the objectives. Control is also a command authority that can be exercised by commanders or subordinate commanders when it is delegated to them. The commander's staff, working on behalf of the commander, often implements procedures designed to exercise control over forces.

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What is combatant command?

Combatant command is the legal, "can't give it away" authority and responsibility the unified commanders in chief (CINC) exercise. According to the *Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, combatant command is a "nontransferable command authority established by title 10 ('Armed Forces'), United States Code, section 164, exercised only by commanders of unified or specified combatant commands unless otherwise directed by the President or the Secretary of Defense."[4] It is the highest level of command assigned to the military leadership in the op-

erational chain of command. This also means that the CINCs can exercise operational or tactical control of their assigned forces at their discretion. These CINCs can and do exercise combatant command through their subordinate commanders, to whom they normally delegate operational control of forces. Combatant command authority also means the CINC can exercise operational control or tactical control over forces assigned or attached if he or she wants to, even though it may not be efficient, prudent, or appropriate.

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What is operational control?

Operational control is the command authority usually delegated to subordinate service or component commanders from the CINC. It is the commander's legal and moral responsibility to exercise control over the general direction and operation of assigned or attached military forces. When these subordinate service or component commanders have operational control, they can organize their commands and employ their forces, assign tasks, designate objectives, and give authoritative direction necessary to accomplish the mission. As a rule of thumb, opera-

tional control is a middle tier of authority, allowing a commander authority to plan and execute the military operations of large war-fighting components. It is that level of control which is normally responsible for the day-to-day operations of a particular component or unit. We often talk about operational control as the commander's "ownership" over certain component-size forces like numbered air forces or aerospace expeditionary task forces.

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What is tactical control?

Tactical control is a command authority given by the CINC to subordinate commanders that they in turn can delegate to even lower-echelon commanders. Tactical control is that level of control that allows commanders to direct and control generally smaller-sized units to accomplish a specific task or mission. In general, it is the detailed, mission-specific control which is normally focused on accomplishing a single tactical objective. Again, generally speaking, tactical control is the lowest tier of command authority; it usually exists when there is no other formal echelon of command below the commander and his or her as-

signed or attached forces. When we think of tactical control in the Air Force, we tend to equate it to the authorities of the local commander or the commander of a wing or squadron.

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What is administrative control?

Administrative control is the authority and responsibility of a commander to tend to the personal and professional welfare of the forces assigned to him or her. This normally means being responsible for logistic support, readiness and training, and personnel management issues including discipline, budgeting, and other functions of that nature.

22

What is unity of command?

Unity of command is the principle and practice of making a single person legally and morally responsible for a particular military activity or organization. The Air Force, like our sister Services, values unity of command. In practice, unity of command helps ensure coherent, orchestrated purpose and action. The principle of unity of command, which puts all aerospace forces under a single airman, is the principle which allows aerospace forces to mass effects at the strategic and operational levels. For the Air Force, unity of command is an essential element for centralized control. Think “one task, one commander.”

23

What is a supported commander?

In simple terms, the supported commander is the commander responsible for the overall operation. To use an analogy, the supported commander is like a quarterback in football. The quarterback is responsible for getting the ball in the opponent's goal. A supported commander exists by virtue of his or her assigned responsibilities and the relationship legally established between commanders by lawful orders. A supported commander might be the CINC or one of the CINC's functional or service component commanders. The *DOD Dictionary* defines supported com-

mander as "the commander having *primary responsibility* for all aspects of a task assigned by the Joint Strategic Capabilities Plan or other joint operation planning authority. In the context of joint operation planning, this term refers to the commander who prepares operation plans or operation orders in response to requirements of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff" (emphasis added).[5]

24

What is a supporting commander?

Using the football analogy, the supporting commander is like an offensive lineman who provides some level of assistance (good blocking) to the quarterback. A supporting commander might be any commander from a CINC on down to the tactical commander who provides assistance to another commander by direction of lawful orders. The *DOD Dictionary* defines supporting commander as "a commander who *provides augmentation* forces *or other support* to a supported commander or who develops a supporting plan" (emphasis added).[6] Using another

analogy, think of the supported commander as a general contractor; he or she might contract out specific jobs, but the general contractor is responsible for the whole project. The supporting commander, on the other hand, is the guy responsible for installing the plumbing.

25

Why are supported and supporting relationships important?

From the Air Force's perspective, the supported and supporting relationship established by lawful orders can be critical to the successful, appropriate, and efficient use of aerospace power. An improper supported/supporting relationship can cost money, resources, and lives. Factors that can influence the relationship include experience, geographic location, and the forces and capabilities available. Imagine, for example, the most junior mailroom clerk attempting to run a *Fortune* 500 company successfully. More

than likely it would be extremely difficult. As a rule of thumb, the supported commander ought to be the person who has (1) the proper skills (experience and expertise) to do the job; (2) the proper tool for the job (the bulk of assigned, appropriate forces), and (3) the proper authority to do the job. The role of the supporting commander is to pitch in and help when asked, not to do the job himself.

26

What is maneuver?

Maneuver is simply the ability to position yourself so that your adversary is at a disadvantage. Just as certain chess pieces can move over individual spaces on the chess board to compel the opponent to react in certain ways, so too can aerospace forces move far across the "board" to create effects that can compel the opponent to react in certain ways. For the Air Force, maneuver puts aerospace forces in a position to deliver overwhelming effect. In some instances, the act of maneuvering can itself create psychological effects on the adversary. Finally, when we consider the ability of aerospace forces to create both

physical and psychological effects in an adversary's rear, flanks, and front simultaneously and at various levels (tactical, operational, and strategic), it is clear that aerospace forces are premier maneuver forces—tools that can position themselves to put our adversaries at a disadvantage.

27

What is mass?

Mass is the principle and practice of concentrating combat power. For the Air Force, mass means concentrating the potential of aerospace power at a certain point in time and space to create a specific effect. Mass, the result of concentration of purpose, also helps create overwhelming effect. The Air Force emphasizes massing effects, not forces.

28

What is flexibility?

Flexibility is the ability to adapt to new or different environments or situations. Aerospace forces can quickly adapt to changing environments, requirements, or circumstances. For example, the immediate shift from counterair engagement to close air support or vice versa dramatically illustrates one facet of aerospace power's flexibility. In contrast to surface forces that must take an extended period of time to adjust to the change in mission, aerospace forces have the capability to adjust the focus of their operations from one objective to another in a matter of minutes, sometimes seconds. Several examples of such flexibility can be found in the history of Desert

Storm. Like airpower, space power is also flexible. The ability of space power forces to shift emphasis rapidly from one situation to another is an additional example of flexibility. It is important to understand that flexibility does not mean that aerospace forces can adapt to every conceivable situation or new environment. Aerospace power may play a limited role in some environments. Finally, when we say "flexibility is the key to airpower," we mean that the tenet of flexibility complements both centralized control and decentralized execution and is an integral part of mass and maneuver.

29

What is versatility?

Versatility means that a tool can be used in more than one way. Using a pocketknife to whittle a stick, then slice some bread, or later, even open a can of beans illustrates the idea of versatility. Aerospace forces can be used to do many different tasks, such as deliver supplies to austere locations, attack deep in enemy territory, provide close air support, provide global military communications capabilities, monitor adversary activities from air or space, assist in global navigation of all surface vehicles or vessels, or even help put out forest fires. For the Air Force, the tenet of versatility means the ability to conduct parallel opera-

tions. Understandably, aerospace forces do some things better than others, but the ability to perform a wide variety of missions underscores the versatility of aerospace forces. Versatility does not mean that aerospace power can be used for every job. In some cases, aerospace power may play a very minor role in achieving some objectives.

30

What is synergy?

Synergy is the idea that when different capabilities are combined they create more powerful effects than when used by themselves. Synergy is exponential growth of effect, not linear growth. Think of synergy in terms of multiplication rather than simple addition. When we airmen look at aerospace power's potential to create effects, we quickly realize that the secondary, tertiary, and succeeding effects (often described as "cascading" effects) result from the synergistic application of different aerospace power capabilities. Each one of our core competencies results from the synergistic nature of aerospace power.

31

What does integration mean?

Integration means that more often than not, different aerospace forces' capabilities are blended together and used in combination to create specific effects. In Air Force parlance, integration is about putting different capabilities together for a specific purpose. In practical terms, it means putting forces from multiple units or components together into a seamless plan of employment. Think of integration in the same way you might consider an artist's palette. The palette may have only the primary colors—red, blue, and yellow—and perhaps two tones, black and white. The skillful artist, however, can cre-

ate a nearly inexhaustible number of shades from these basic ingredients. Orchestrating the different capabilities of aerospace power together in myriad different ways to create meaningful effects that help achieve objectives is the first job of the COMAFFOR or JFACC. Again, in practical terms, integration applies to the relationship among components at the operational level of war. If the different components' capabilities are blended in such a way as to achieve complementary, synergistic effects, then they are integrated. The Air Force stresses the integrated nature of aerospace operations because the word *integration* underscores the conscious act of properly combining diverse aerospace power capabilities necessary to exploit the full potential that aerospace power can bring to the fight.

32

What does synchronization mean?

Synchronization means arranging events or activities to occur at the same time. Synchronization is important in the conduct of military operations and complements integration. At the operational level, airmen view synchronization among components as an essential step in working together towards common objectives. However, in many cases, synchronization implies little more than deconfliction, and falls short of providing the synergy that can result through true integration. The *DOD Dictionary* emphasizes the time-coincident nature of synchronized op-

erations so that combat power is focused on a “decisive place and time.”[7]

33

What is the difference between integration and synchronization?

Integration stresses the coherent blending and management of different capabilities; synchronization stresses the management of actions where time is the most critical variable. Neither is more important than the other. The Air Force avoids the use of the word *synchronization* primarily because it connotes operations conducted in a serial or linear fashion often associated with surface operations, even though the strict definition of the word does not necessarily imply linear or serial activity. From the airman's per-

spective, the term synchronization best describes those measures taken to keep different military components on the “same page of the playbook” when the structures and tools that provide for true integration do not exist. Despite our reluctance to use the word, no knowledgeable airman would say that timing isn’t important to aerospace operations.

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What does expeditionary aerospace force mean?

Simply, expeditionary aerospace force means the Air Force will conduct the vast majority of its important business away from our garrison locations. Use of the word *expeditionary* is purposefully designed to encourage a new way of thinking among Air Force airmen about conducting aerospace operations with minimal notice from generally austere, remote locations with minimal support. In sum, the words *expeditionary aerospace force* or EAF are being used to capture an idea; these words should not be used to describe a particular organization.

35

What is an aerospace expeditionary force?

Aerospace expeditionary force (AEF) is a general term used to describe a broad classification of aerospace forces organized and tailored to perform certain missions, generally from austere, remote locations, with minimal support. In general, an AEF is a packaged set of forces on a common training and deployment cycle, from which expeditionary wings, groups, and squadrons can be drawn. The words *aerospace expeditionary force* refer to a general kind of organization, not the specific bits and pieces. Finally, the specific form of an AEF (once the

bits and pieces are identified, organized, and deployed) is called an "aerospace expeditionary task force" (ASETF). In its simplest form, an ASETF has three key elements. These include (1) all Air Force forces assigned or attached to a specific joint operation, (2) a single airman commander (the COMAFFOR), and (3) a means to exercise command and control over those forces. Think of an ASETF as a very specific expeditionary organization designed for a very specific mission.

36

Why is a joint force air component commander (JFACC) important?

The short answer: A JFACC provides unity to the overall air effort. The long answer: A joint force air component commander is important because we Americans are generally a thrifty, efficient people, and we deeply respect the intrinsic value of certain things. We Americans don't like waste; we want the most out of what we have. Aerospace power, like many things, can be used properly or improperly. It is important to have the right tool for the right job and the right person to do the job.

Airmen (at least wise airmen) seldom pretend to know the intimate details and various considerations necessary to employ armor or artillery, or how to employ naval forces to provide sea control. Likewise, it is foolish to believe that a surface commander understands those equally important intimate details and considerations necessary to employ aerospace forces to their full potential. That's primarily why we want a single airman in charge of aerospace forces—we want more bang for our buck. In sum, the Air Force understands that (1) we always fight jointly, (2) aerospace forces are best organized and employed functionally, and (3) a single commander of aerospace forces supports the principles of unity of command and simplicity and enables cen-

tralized control, flexibility, and versatility. It is the right thing to do from the Air Force perspective, even if in some circumstances the JFACC comes from another Service.

37

Why does the Air Force believe that the JFACC, the area air defense commander (AADC), and the airspace control authority (ACA) should be the same person?

The Air Force thinks that these jobs should normally (meaning in most cases, with rare exception, etc.) be done by the same person because the duties of each significantly overlap those of the others, and all revolve around the efficient integration of different aerospace capabilities. To split these duties up among several different persons, in the Air Force's view, is a

gross inefficiency, especially from a communications, support, and execution perspective. Further, separating these functions creates a potentially dangerous environment that can easily increase complexity and uncertainty, jeopardize lives, and finally, dramatically violate the principles of unity of command and simplicity. In short, the responsibilities for all three are intertwined; therefore the authority should be intertwined as well.

38

What is a commander, Air Force forces?

A COMAFFOR is the designated Air Force commander presenting aerospace forces to the theater CINC or JFC. The rank of the officer, number of COMAFFORs in a theater, and specific duties of any given COMAFFOR can vary. The kind of joint operation can vary. The size and subordination of a joint force can vary. In addition, the size and capabilities of the Air Force component assigned to the joint force can be tailored to the particular circumstances and mission of the joint force. The key here is that the role and responsibilities of a COMAFFOR physically

demonstrate the Air Force's belief that a single commander provides unity of effort and purpose. The COMAFFOR expresses the Air Force's war-fighting belief in the principles of unity of command and simplicity. The COMAFFOR is the "single Air Force face" that the JFC can and should turn to for aerospace power capabilities and effects. Finally, perhaps even more important than that, the COMAFFOR is the single Air Force commander that airmen can point to and say, "there's the boss."

39

What is an area of responsibility (AOR)?

An area of responsibility, or more often AOR, is a defined geographic space directly associated with particular combatant commands. The combatant commander has the authority to plan and conduct operations in this space.

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What is an area of operations (AO)?

An area of operations is a subdivision of an AOR. An AO is an arbitrarily defined (not in a meaningless or irrational way, but as a matter of the JFC's or CINC's judgment or discretion) geographic space which the JFC or CINC determines to be sufficient and appropriate for a land or naval force commander to employ his or her forces. The Air Force takes great interest in what responsibilities the subordinate component commanders exercise within their AOs because aerospace forces are best employed with a theater and functional perspective in mind, not as

a geographic component like the surface forces that are assigned an AO. Said another way, aerospace forces are the JFC's or the CINC's tools. The CINC's prerogatives are always paramount and supersede the subordinate surface component commander's interests. When aerospace forces operate directly in support of the JFC's or CINC's interests, the single airman in charge of aerospace forces should not be constrained from accomplishing missions that support the CINC's objectives by either (1) established arbitrary boundaries or (2) the limited authorities subordinate AO commanders exercise that do not directly influence the organization or employment of aerospace forces. Again, aerospace forces are functionally organized and employed rather than assigned a specific area of water or

land to operate above. It is important to note that only CINCs have AORs—areas for which they are *responsible*. Surface commanders at the operational and tactical level are given AOs—areas in which they *operate*. In sum, constraining aerospace power to assigned geographic AOs is inefficient and limits the ability of the JFACC or COMAFFOR to exploit the full potential of aerospace power, ultimately creating more dangers for surface forces.

41

What is the battlespace?

The battlespace is an artificial, conceptual way for a commander to look at his or her projected military operations. The battlespace is not a defined geographic area. It is only a way (or a thinking methodology, if you will) for commanders to consider all the relevant aspects of their operations. This includes not only specific concepts like the area of responsibility or the area of operations but other more elusive factors such as the threat, logistics, information flow, force protection issues, political considerations, and a wide variety of other variables that could have some impact on a commander's decision making.

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What is the difference between AOR, AO, and battlespace?

An AOR is a large geographic area assigned to a combatant commander. An AO is the smaller geographic area assigned to a commander subordinate to the JFC or CINC. “Battlespace” describes an imaginary construct designed to help commanders think about what they have to do and what factors can positively or negatively influence the mission.

43

What are parallel operations?

The term *parallel operations* describes the idea that aerospace operations are most effective when they create effects that help achieve different levels of objectives at the same time. The notion of simultaneous attack is imbedded in the idea of parallel operations. Generally speaking, aerospace forces can attack strategic, operational, and tactical targets at the same time more efficiently than surface forces can. This is not to say that surface forces cannot conduct parallel operations; instead, the belief is that for surface forces to engage in parallel at-

tacks is often a less efficient use of their potential combat power.

44

What is simultaneity?

Simultaneity is the principle and practice of conducting aerospace operations against a certain kind of target at the same time. Simultaneous operations are not necessarily parallel. For example, directing that all sorties for a single day attack all enemy armor formations at the same time would be an example of simultaneous attack, not parallel attack. The best use of aerospace power, from an Air Force view, is that simultaneity and parallel operations go hand in glove.

45

What is air superiority?

Air superiority is a relative standard of freedom of action that describes the ability to conduct operations against an adversary without the adversary's forces creating insurmountable obstacles to our actions. Air superiority is determined on a sliding scale based on both objective measures and subjective factors; its presence or absence is determined by the appropriate commander's judgment and experience, often supplemented by recommendations from his or her staff or subordinates. History tells us that air superiority ultimately provides much more than just freedom of operation for aerospace forces. It provides the

entire joint force the freedom from attack, the freedom to maneuver, and the freedom to attack.

46

What is air supremacy?

Air supremacy is a term that describes virtually absolute freedom to conduct operations without opposition from adversary aerospace forces.

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What is space superiority?

Like air superiority, space superiority is a relative standard of freedom of action that describes the ability to conduct space operations against an adversary without the adversary's forces creating insurmountable obstacles to our actions. It is determined by the commander on a sliding scale based on the commander's judgment and experience, often supplemented by recommendations from his or her staff or subordinates. Finally, airmen also know that space superiority helps provide the joint force the freedom from attack, the freedom to maneuver, and the freedom to attack.

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What is information superiority?

Like the other forms of operations superiority, information superiority is a relative standard of freedom of action defined in part by the commander's judgment and experience that describes the ability to conduct information operations against an adversary without the adversary's forces creating insurmountable obstacles to our actions. Imbedded in the meaning of information operations is the critical requirement to assure confidence in friendly information for friendly forces. Information superiority uses a sliding scale based on both objective measures and

subjective factors, and its presence or absence is ultimately determined by the appropriate commander. Like air and space superiority, information superiority also helps provide the joint force the freedom from attack, the freedom to maneuver, and the freedom to attack.

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What does decisive mean?

Decisive means having the power or quality to bring about a conclusion. It may refer to the deciding factor among multiple factors. Aerospace power is decisive—just as much or as little as any form of combat power when used in joint operations. Applying the adjective *decisive* to one form of combat power or another is entirely subjective and is often a source of heated, emotional debate among the Services. Decisiveness is difficult to prove and is always in the eye of the beholder. The problem with discussions on decisiveness is that historically we can always point to any number of steps along

the way to success that, had they not happened, might have derailed the ultimate victory. What is important here is that we should focus on those components that are *required* (not *decisive*) parts of a successful joint force. The fact is that in today's world, the USAF fights jointly. But fighting a joint fight doesn't mean the quantities or qualities of people, resources, or capabilities presented by the individual Services to the CINC or JFC are equal. The real, compelling, life-and-death issue in war fighting is whether we win or lose; if the team loses, does it matter which player gets the most valuable player award? Bottom line: The Air Force, first and foremost, wants the joint force to be decisive. In short, the issue of decisiveness is moot if the joint force loses.

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What question did I forget?

Please answer here, and tell another airman the answer while you're at it. Tell the Air Force Doctrine Center, too, so we can start the next 50 questions. Give us your thoughts at **http://www.doctrine.af.mil.**

Notes

1. Air Force Doctrine Document (AFDD) 1, *Air Force Basic Doctrine,* September 1997, 78.
2. Ibid., 23.
3. Ibid.
4. Joint Publication (Joint Pub) 1-02, *Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms,* 83.
5. Ibid., 429.
6. Ibid., 430.
7. Ibid., 433.

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