

Updating a Cold War Relic

Ensuring That the New Air Force Doctrine Document 3 Reflects Current Air Force Roles and Missions

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The evolution of contingency operations, the rapid maturation of space and information warfare . . . have transformed the effectiveness of air and space power.

—Air Force Doctrine Document 1, *Air Force Basic Doctrine*, 17 November 2003

The United States Air Force is at a crossroads. In 2008 the secretary of defense dismissed the secretary and chief of staff of the Air Force and raised questions about the service's commitment to the US nuclear enterprise. Moreover, in light of the current counterinsurgencies in Afghanistan and Iraq, the other military services and defense analysts have openly questioned the need for a technologically advanced Air Force. Why have such actions and questions occurred? Why, specifically, does the Air Force seem to be losing credibility with senior defense officials?

One contributing factor could be that the Air Force has not revised and updated its doctrine to provide guidance on operational-level employment across the continuum of military operations; instead, those documents continue to favor kinetic operations during times of conflict. This bias tends to inhibit cross-domain integration of air, space, and cyberspace capabilities, thus placing Air Force planners at a disadvantage when they design joint operations.¹ Air Force doctrine serves as “a statement of officially sanctioned beliefs, warfighting principles, and terminology that describes and guides the proper use of air and space

forces in military operations.”² The key term here is *military operations*. During much of the Air Force's existence, it considered such actions major contingency operations against an adversary possessing significant conventional and/or nuclear military capability, an assumption that dictated the development of doctrine heavily favoring the wartime application of airpower.³ However, since the end of the Cold War, the concept of military operations has grown to include missions such as humanitarian assistance, disaster relief, counterinsurgency, irregular warfare, and theater-security cooperation with partner nations. The Air Force has published doctrine for these mission areas, yet the capstone publication for its operations—Air Force Doctrine Document (AFDD) 2, *Operations and Organization*, 3 April 2007—still reflects a narrow focus on kinetic operations that does not represent how the service contributes to the joint fight across the continuum of military operations.

During the process of updating and renumbering AFDD 2 to AFDD 3, doctrine writers should revise the content to provide Airmen a true capstone document that articulates foundational air, space, and cyber

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concepts and offers guidance for operational-level planning and synchronization during joint operations. Expanding this document to accurately reflect the capabilities that air, space, and cyber forces bring to the wide range of military operations will enhance our understanding of Air Force roles and missions, provide planning guidance to operational-level staffs, and create a single-source reference document that addresses the relationship among air, space, and cyberspace concepts, planning, and operations.

What Does Air Force Doctrine Document 2 Say?

AFDD 2, the capstone publication for operational-level doctrine, includes guidance for “organizing, planning, and employing air and space forces at the operational level of conflict across the full range of military operations.”⁴ Divided into eight chapters, it covers topics such as conducting operations, commanding Air Force forces (AFFOR), organizing air and space expeditionary task forces, nesting the air and space component within a joint force, and planning for joint operations; it concludes by discussing air and space operations centers and the AFFOR staff. This article confines itself to chapter 1, “An Introduction to Air and Space Operations”; chapter 2, “Operations”; and chapter 6, “Planning for Operations.”

Chapter 1 lays the foundation for understanding the nature of air and space power by noting that it “arises from the use of lethal and nonlethal means by air and space forces to achieve strategic, operational, and tactical objectives” and that “air and space power has the ability to conduct operations and impose effects across the entire theater, wherever targets or target sets might be found.”⁵ The chapter then describes how we should categorize targets by the effects we intend to produce as a result of engaging them rather than by their physical location. Such statements reveal that airpower intends to produce lethal and nonlethal effects throughout a theater of operations and

across the varying levels of warfare. Unfortunately, we find little support for these statements since the remainder of the chapter narrowly examines the kinetic application of airpower during major conflicts, drawing on examples from Operations Desert Storm and Iraqi Freedom. The chapter concludes with a brief discussion of the employment of air and space power utilizing parallel, asymmetric operations during offensive military actions.

Chapter 2 begins by declaring that “the overriding objective of any military force is to be prepared to conduct combat operations in support of national political objectives—to conduct the nation’s wars.”⁶ Even though many people may argue for a much more Clausewitzian objective—to support policy—and point out that conducting combat operations is a point along a broader continuum of state interaction, this opening statement accurately lays the groundwork for the follow-on treatment of an effects-based approach to operations (EBAO), the principal concern of the chapter. Framed within a construct of inducing change in an adversary to achieve a desired outcome, the well-balanced discussion of EBAO applies to operations during both peace and conflict, setting a baseline for expanding the topic in chapter 6.

The second section of chapter 2 addresses air and space (but not cyberspace) power across the range of military operations.⁷ It includes an overarching discussion of the need for air and space superiority before and during offensive operations, devoting just a small portion to air and space operations in other types of military actions. Of note, other than a listing under the heading “Crisis Response Operations,” the section “Engagement, Cooperation, and Deterrence Operations” enumerates only general examples of operations, without mentioning noncombatant-evacuation operations, peacekeeping, or humanitarian assistance. The chapter concludes by briefly addressing the political dimension of smaller-scale contingencies and the “Termination, Transition, and Redeployment” of forces. Thus,

the second section of chapter 2 provides only a general discussion and a listing of considerations. It omits the linkage between the EBAO methodology presented in the first part and the missions described in the latter portion. Most of the chapter contains only a roster of operations and no discussion specific to air and space operations except those that occur during major kinetic campaigns.

Chapter 6 contains an overview of the joint planning process, with an emphasis on

document enjoys support from 27 subordinate two-series doctrine publications that comprise a compendium of operational-level guidance available to the planning staff.⁸ However, only limited guidance exists on synchronization of air, space, and cyberspace activities, and the lack of information about a representative air campaign along a continuum of military operations detracts from the overall value of the document. Instead, AFDD 2 needs rewriting to supply

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joint operations. However, seven of its 24 pages review Joint Publication (JP) 5-0, *Joint Operation Planning*, 26 December 2006, and 10 expand the discussion of EBAO in chapter 2. In the remaining seven pages, which offer an overview of the joint air and space estimate process, AFDD 2 should provide guidance on synchronizing cross-domain air, space, and cyberspace capabilities into a holistic air campaign plan. As currently written, however, this chapter examines three topics (planning processes, effects-based planning, and the joint air and space estimate process) without clearly presenting an architecture for linking or relating the processes to produce a joint air and space operations plan for theater operations. Chapter 6 mentions AFDD 2-1, *Air Warfare*, 22 January 2000, and AFDD 2-1.9, *Targeting*, 8 June 2006, thereby reinforcing AFDD 2's concentration on kinetic operations during major conflicts.

In sum, AFDD 2 fails to meet its stated objective of offering guidance for "organizing, planning and employing air and space forces at the operational level of conflict across the full range of military operations," mentioned above. At present, this baseline

more accurate guidance to operational planners and to better portray the roles and functions of air, space, and cyberspace forces during a campaign.

What Should Air Force Doctrine Document 3 Say?

The Air Force promulgates and teaches doctrine as a common frame of reference on the best way to prepare and employ air and space forces.

—AFDD 1, *Air Force Basic Doctrine*,
17 November 2003

The current AFDD 2 "describes how the US Air Force organizes and employs air and space power at the operational level across the range of military operations."⁹ The document does not reach this lofty goal because of its focus on the kinetic application of airpower during major conflicts. Furthermore, it fails to develop the following foundational doctrine statements: "air and space power operates in ways that are fundamentally different from other forms of military power"; "air and space forces can wrest the

initiative . . . anticipate the enemy, and take advantage of tactical and operational opportunities”; and “when employed aggressively, air and space forces can conduct operations aimed directly at accomplishing the joint force commander’s . . . objectives.”¹⁰ The rewrite, AFDD 3, should truly describe the employment of air, space, and cyberspace power across the continuum of military operations by incorporating the “best practices” outlined in the 27 supporting two-series publications. Ironically, the Air Force already possesses a construct for a holistic capstone document with multiple supporting documents—the three-series publications.¹¹

Highlighting Air Force tactics, techniques, and procedures, this series serves as “tactics manuals” for employing the vast majority of air and space platforms and concepts. At the forefront of this series is a capstone document divided into three sections, the first of which describes the fundamentals of airpower and the role of tactical command and control. From this baseline, the document covers tactical mission planning and mission-planner considerations using concepts taken from the supporting three-series publications and designed to convey general information that tacticians need to understand fundamental planning factors for carrying out the tactical mission. The final section offers an overview of various topics such as space and information operations. The three-series publications succeed in providing tacticians a well-organized, concise construct that explains basic planning factors for tactical-level integration augmented by detailed discussion in supporting publications.

A proposed construct for AFDD 3 would follow the same guidelines and include three separate sections, the first of which would present an overview of airpower and its relationship to joint forces. It would retain topics such as commanding and organizing AFFOR, given their overall consistency across the continuum of military operations, but omit any mention of the AFFOR staff as well as the air and space

operations center since the supporting two-series publications could address staff functions. The first section would also address the joint authorities that the joint force commander could delegate to the AFFOR commander. Such authorities should include the joint force air component commander, area air defense commander, airspace control authority, and space coordinating authority—all foundational with regard to operational-level planning. Thus, this section of AFDD 3 would offer baseline guidance on how to organize and command AFFOR as well as integrate those forces into joint operations.

The second section would concentrate on guidance for planning full-spectrum air, space, and cyberspace operations. Because no Air Force doctrine manual dedicated to planning exists, the content of this section would resemble that of JP 5-0 and JP 3-30, *Command and Control for Joint Air Operations*, 12 January 2010. This section would discuss three related topics: the joint operation planning process-air (JOPP-A); the phasing of Air Force operations across the continuum of military operations from “phase zero” to the postconflict environment; and specific operational-planning factors for operations currently defined by AFDD 2 as “smaller scale contingencies,” “crisis response operations,” and “engagement, cooperation, and deterrence operations.”¹² As previously mentioned, given the absence of an Air Force doctrine manual dedicated to planning, the JOPP-A material would give the reader step-by-step guidance. The information on phasing, though closely related to the methodology of JP 5-0, would emphasize the planning of theater campaigns instead of major contingency operations. Thus it would present air and space power as a strategic asset able to generate theater effects ranging from deterring adversaries, through guaranteeing the security of partner nations and conducting kinetic operations against an adversary, to planning possible postconflict scenarios.

Additionally, the second section would build on the command relationships and authorities described in section one of the proposed AFDD 3 to deliver guidance on developing command relationships and synchronizing requirements for the various authorities into an operational campaign or task force.

The third section should focus on operations, offering a concise, general overview of the employment of air, space, and cyber forces in specific mission areas such as major combat operations, counterinsurgencies, disaster relief, space situational awareness, and cyber network defense. The format of this section would draw on important information from supporting publications—such as AFDD 2-1, *Air Warfare*, 22 January 2000, and AFDD 2-2, *Space Operations*, 27 November 2006—and therefore serve as a single-source reference for air, space, and cyberspace operations. Because this section would rely heavily on the supporting publications, extensive links should join it to the detailed information contained within those publications.

Conclusion

This recommended construct should move AFDD 2 beyond its current deficiencies, transforming it into a document—AFDD 3—that clearly links the foundational principles of air, space, and cyberspace; operational-level planning; and employment. This update is especially relevant since the concept of military operations continues to encompass more than major contingency operations and since requirements for joint operational planning continue to increase proportionally. We can leverage the Air Force's rich history of operations to design AFDD 3 as a document relevant to today's operational planners. As noted by AFDD 1, "doctrine shapes the manner in which the Air Force organizes, trains, equips, and sustains its forces."¹³ Consequently, this capstone guidance document for planning and employing air, space, and cyberspace forces at the operational level must include a holistic discussion that is relevant across the continuum of military operations. ✪

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Notes

1. The author experienced this problem as a long-range planner for US Air Forces Central from 2008 to 2010.
2. Air Force Doctrine Document (AFDD) 1, *Air Force Basic Doctrine*, 17 November 2003, 3, http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/jel/service_pubs/afdd1.pdf.
3. For a comprehensive discussion of the development of Air Force doctrine, see Robert Frank Futrell, *Ideas, Concepts, Doctrine: Basic Thinking in the United States Air Force*, 2 vols. (Maxwell AFB, AL: Air University Press, 1989).
4. AFDD 2, *Operations and Organization*, 3 April 2007, vii, http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/jel/service_pubs/afdd2.pdf.
5. *Ibid.*, 1.
6. *Ibid.*, 13.
7. The publication date of AFDD 2 (3 April 2007) may explain the absence of any discussion of cyber-

space. However, this omission underscores the need to revise and update the document to reflect cross-domain integration and planning of air, space, and cyberspace.

8. The term *two-series* refers to the fact that each manual's designation begins with the number 2 (e.g., 2-1, 2-2, etc).
9. AFDD 2, *Operations and Organization*, [i].
10. *Ibid.*, xi.
11. The term *three-series* refers to the fact that each manual's designation begins with the number 3 (e.g., 3-1, 3-2.28, 3-3.4, etc.).
12. AFDD 2, *Operations and Organization*, 22-24, and 29. The 705th Training Squadron compiled a "Commander's Handbook for Joint Operation Planning Process-Air" that could be incorporated into AFDD 2 planning discussions.
13. AFDD 1, *Air Force Basic Doctrine*, 3.

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