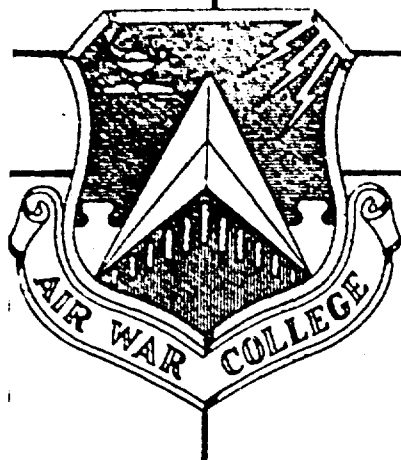




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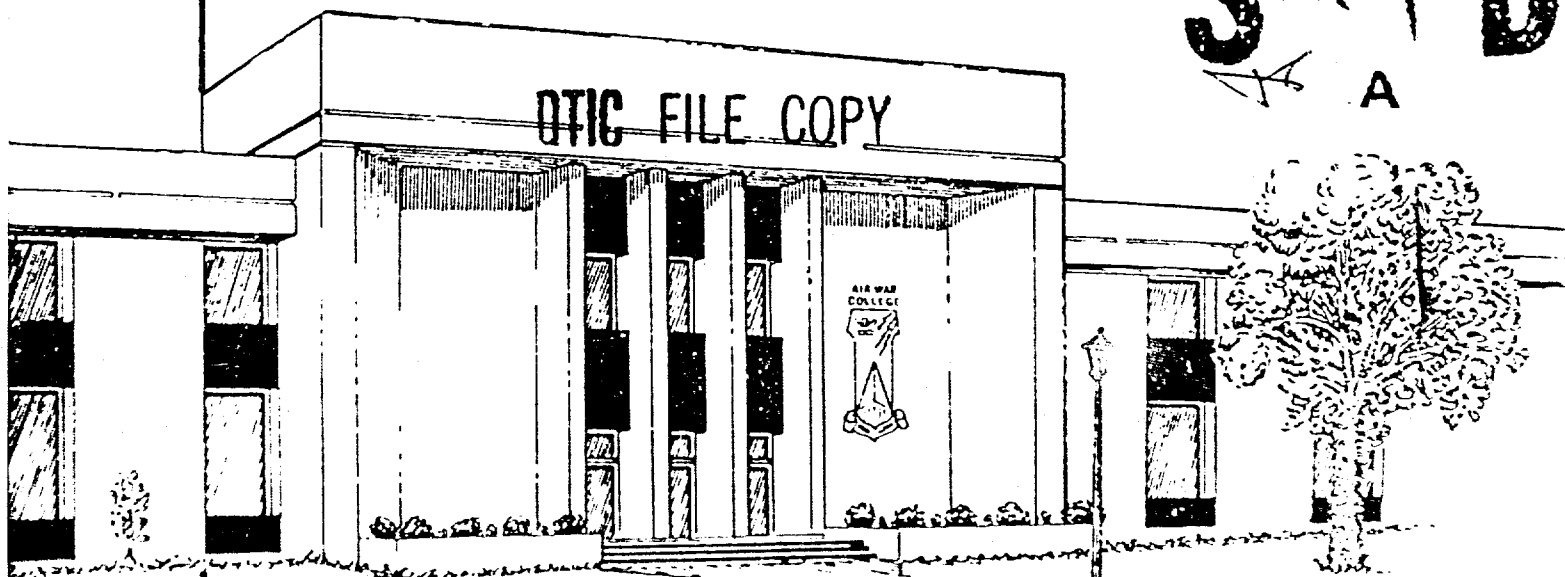
KASSERINE: THE MYTH AND ITS WARNING FOR

AIRLAND BATTLE OPERATIONS

By LIEUTENANT COLONEL ALAN M. RUSSO, USA

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AIR WAR COLLEGE

AIR UNIVERSITY

KASSERINE:THE MYTH
AND ITS WARNING FOR AIRLAND BATTLE OPERATIONS

by

Alan M. Russo
Lieutenant Colonel, USA

A RESEARCH REPORT SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY
IN
FULFILLMENT OF THE RESEARCH
REQUIREMENT

Research Advisor: Lieutenant Colonel Lorenzo Crowell

MAXWELL AIR FORCE BASE, ALABAMA

MARCH 1985

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AIR WAR COLLEGE RESEARCH REPORT ABSTRACT

TITLE: Kasserine: The Myth and Its Warning for Airland Battle
Operations

AUTHOR: Alan M. Russo, Lieutenant Colonel, USA

The paper traces the history of air and ground forces during the February 1943 battle of the Kasserine Pass. It briefly outlines the state of training of the Army and its Air Corps and their procedures for battle coordination. The report highlights the antagonisms between air and ground advocates--each attempting to wrest control of air-ground coordination responsibilities--and shows that these antagonisms coupled with the air advocates' desire for self-determination of air power led to centralized control of tactical air power under the guise of lessons learned in battle at Kasserine.

The paper shows that the close coordination and affiliation developed between air and land forces in World War II apparently has dissipated, and that this dissipation may cause a lack of effective air support to ground forces fighting on the modern battlefield. It suggests that the Air Force is not sufficiently concerned with how, and to what effect its support of the Army will be conducted.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Lieutenant Colonel Alan M. Russo (B.S., United States Military Academy; M.S., Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute) has served in the United States Army as an Infantry Officer and as an Aviator. He was a platoon leader with the 82nd Airborne Division in the Dominican Republic, and a section leader, platoon leader, and company executive officer flying O-1 (Birdog) and AH-1 (Cobra) aircraft in Vietnam with the 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile). Much of his experience in air-ground coordination was learned while commanding a combat aviation battalion in the Federal Republic of Germany. He is a graduate of the Army's Command and General Staff College. He holds the Silver Star, Distinguished Flying Cross, and the Air Medal. Lieutenant Colonel Russo is a graduate of the Air War College, class of 1985.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The battles fought by United States' forces during the North African Campaign of 1942 and 1943, particularly the Battle for the Kasserine Pass of February 1943, were a breaking and testing ground for much of the employment doctrine of those forces during the remainder of the Second World War. One key aspect of that evolving doctrine--and one which persists to this day--involves the command and control of air power: that all elements of air power should be centrally controlled by an air officer serving as the air component commander for the theater commander.

I will show that such a doctrine for control of air power was not the result of lessons learned during the fight for the Kasserine Pass as the United States Air Force insists. I will suggest that centralized control was a basic tenet of air power advocates of the era and that the announced "lesson learned" for command and control was the result of deeply held convictions which influenced their view of contemporary events. Even more significantly, I will argue that such centralized control of tactical air power may prove to be efficient but ineffective should the United States Army be required to fight a major land campaign in the future in accordance with its AirLand Battle operational doctrine.

To avoid confusion of function or qualitative difference, my thesis and its discussion and analysis centers only on tactical

air operations and tactical air support as defined in JCS Publication 1: i.e., air operations and employment of air power conducted in coordination with and for the support of land forces.

In order to support this thesis, a summary examination of the Kasserine battle will be presented. This examination will include events prior to and subsequent to that battle. Lessons drawn at the time pertaining to command and control of tactical air power will be examined.

An introduction to and summary of the Army's AirLand Battle doctrine will be presented to illustrate the Army's view of the nature of a future land campaign. An analysis of that doctrine vis.a.vis. the World War II lessons learned will then be presented. Included will be some personal observations on the nature of the command and control of army aviation operations based on my three years in command of an army combat aviation battalion in Germany. I will then form conclusions based on the historical perspective presented, the expected nature of a future land war and the Army's plan to conduct it, and the analysis.

In order to constrain the scope within the confines of this paper's thesis, the command, control, and application of strategic air power will not be examined. There are clear differences in application of tactical and strategic air forces and it follows with but a cursory mental exercise that the methods to command and control one do not necessarily apply to the other--but they may do so.

As James A. Huston noted in 1950, "Perhaps more than in most

other fields of current interest, persons in military affairs appeal to history for proof of the soundness of doctrine or the correctness of procedures. A great deal of care is necessary in interpreting evidence offered for far-reaching conclusions. Perhaps in no other field is it easier for one to find whatever he may be looking for." ² This is exactly the case existing today in the application of basic doctrine for the control of tactical air power.

CHAPTER II

THE BATTLE FOR THE KASSERINE PASS

After the defeat of Rommel in Egypt in the late months of 1942, the Allied Armies began the campaign to eject the Axis from North Africa. Montgomery's Eighth Army moved westward through Egypt and Libya while the British First Army commander General Kenneth A. N. Anderson led the Allies eastward from Algiers.

The terrain in central Tunisia is characterized by highly eroded rocky plateaus cut sharply by streambeds flowing from the northwest to the southeast. These plateaus, with mountains rising to add to the region's stark relief, sharply fall to near-sea level desert plains. Sharp passes link the plateau heights to the coastal plains. The three critical defiles of Tunisia which facilitate movement across the region are at Sbiba, Dernaia, and Kasserine.

The First Army suffered significant disadvantages which proved costly in the ensuing battles. Command and control was made particularly difficult due to the Allies' practice of subordinating American combat commands (brigade-equivalent maneuver commands of World War II Army divisions) to the major commands of other nationalities. French allegiance was transitory and vacillating due to the political climate between the Free French and the Vichy French. American forces were generally untested and had never been engaged in night combat. The encounters with

Axis forces through the end of 1942 had resulted in the mixing of Allied forces of differing nationalities. Of particular significance was the inability of either the Luftwaffe or the Allied air forces to gain air superiority.

The Axis forces in Tunisia similarly suffered from command and control difficulties but of a very different nature. These difficulties proved to be tactically debilitating but strategically disastrous. General von Arnim commanded the Fifth German Army which had repeatedly struck the Allied First Army during the Allies' advance across Algeria and Tunisia on the western front in North Africa. Arnim's superior commander was Field Marshal Kesselring of OB South, the German theater headquarters located in Italy. Rommel commanded the Africa Corps fighting the British Army on the eastern front in North Africa and reported to Mussolini in Rome through the Italian Comando Supremo. As the two major Axis forces retreated toward Tunisia, there was no superior-to-subordinate relationship between Arnim and Rommel and there was no similar relationship between OB South and the Comando Supremo. The Axis had plans to establish a unified commander when von Arnim's forces and those of Rommel converged, but the execution of those plans came too late to affect the outcome in North Africa.

Rommel, after being forced from Egypt and Libya, saw an opportunity in Tunisia to seize the initiative. His forces were strong, resupply across the short stretch of the Mediterranean Sea between Sicily and Tunisia was possible, his forces were

within the range of ground-based air units, and the Fifth Panzer Army was largely intact. He proposed attacking to the northwest, through Tebessa, in a vast turning movement to envelop the Allied First Army which had advanced from Algeria before Montgomery's arrival on the Tunisian battlefield. The central position of Rommel's forces would then permit him to turn on Montgomery as he reached the Tunisian battlefield and to attempt the latter's defeat in detail. If successful, Rommel predicted, the Axis would win control of the air facilities of Tebessa, capture the large Allied supply depot there, instill within the green American troops an inferiority complex not easily overcome, and drive the Allies from North Africa.

Unfortunately for the Axis, General von Arnim did not have Rommel's vision for delivering a coup de grace to the Allies. His Fifth Army had been successful in delaying actions against Anderson's advance eastward and, in his view, the army should continue in dealing these blows. The Axis' lack of unity of command permitted this ineffective use of combat power until the opportunity to be decisive was lost forever to the Axis Powers in Africa.

The Allied ground forces organization was somewhat muddled by the wavering French political situation. As that situation stabilized however, the organization became clearer--although not entirely unified due to French reluctance to serve under British command. Eisenhower was named the Allied Commander-in-Chief with Giraud the Commander-in-Chief of French military forces. Alexan-

der was made the ground forces commander on 19 February 1943 but his authority did not extend to the French. France's ground forces were subordinate to the French component commander, Juin. Subordinate to Alexander were Anderson (British First Army) and Montgomery (British Eighth Army). The British First Army included the 5th British Corps under Allfrey, the II U.S. Corps under Frendendall, and part of the XIX French Corps under Koeltz. At the XIX French Corps originated two command lines: one to Anderson (just discussed) and the other to Juin. None of the commanders mentioned here (nor their subordinates) commanded subordinate air forces.²

The Eighth Air Force was the theater air force for the European Theater of Operations and was placed in general support of TORCH in July-August 1942. It was Eisenhower's intention to stand down the Eighth in Europe so that its full air power could be used in Africa--an intention that Gen Carl Spaatz (commander of Eighth Air Force) successfully resisted. Eisenhower agreed not to stand the Eighth Air Force down but to support Spaatz's call for reinforcing units, thus allowing air support to both theaters. This arrangement, however, would not provide for a senior air commander subordinate to Eisenhower in the African Theater. In September 1942, this dilemma was eased when Gen H. H. Arnold in Washington advised Spaatz that he place his subordinate, MG Ira C. Eaker, in command of Eighth Air Force and that Spaatz be designated CG, Allied Air Forces in Europe. Arnold

reasoned that Africa and England constituted only one air theater and that ". . . the strategic bombing effort [against Germany] could be protected by securing for one of its outstanding exponents a command position at theater headquarters." ³ Spaatz initially rejected that advice, with Eisenhower's approval, since the air force to be organized to support TORCH (the Twelfth) was then subordinate to him and he was in fact the senior air advisor to the commander-in-chief. Eisenhower was not particularly receptive to the notion of an overall air force commander, although he appreciated the concept of an overall air theater throughout which assets could be flexibly employed. This latter appreciation led him to approve the theater air force concept in late October with Gen Spaatz in command. Eisenhower intended to postpone the implementation of this concept until Tunisia had been captured to ensure that sufficient air bases would be available to support it. He remained concerned about Axis air power and its capability to interdict naval forces in the Mediterranean. He was convinced that final success depended upon land advance and the establishment of a growing number of air support ⁴ bases. But in mid-November, Arnold wrote Spaatz and Eisenhower of his concern that ". . . unless we are careful, we will find our air effort in Europe dispersed the same way we are now dispersed all around the world." ⁵ Thus, the groundwork was laid for the merging of all air forces in Africa, and TORCH was begun with the Twelfth Air Force in general support. ⁶

Well before TORCH began in northwest Africa (November 1942),

the US Twelfth Air Force was organized and assigned the mission to support Allied invasion forces through Casablanca and Oran and, when practicable, through Algiers. The Twelfth consisted of service, fighter, bomber, and troop carrying subordinate commands. In addition to supporting the ground forces in the invasion, these commands would be required to maintain air superiority over the western Mediterranean against any threat from Spain. As Allied armies continued to advance to the east into Tunisia, the Twelfth Air Force would similarly advance through forward operating airfields to strike ground targets and to wrest command of the air from the Luftwaffe which was operating freely from Sicily.⁷

In Egypt, Montgomery's Eighth Army operated with support from the RAF-Middle East. After the defeat of Rommel at El Alamein, the Ninth's command of the skies over Egypt was established and maintained.

With the establishment of the RAF and Twelfth Air Force over northeast and northwest Africa, respectively, the campaign to deny the Axis any bases on the continent continued. The final Axis bastions existed in eastern Tunisia and Tripoli and their environs.

In January 1943, the Combined Chiefs of Staff met at Casablanca and ratified Eisenhower's approved concept for the theater air force. Air Chief Marshal Sir Arthur W. Tedder was designated as commander-in-chief of theater air forces with principal subor-

dinates Spaatz (northwest Africa) and Douglas (Middle East).⁸
The organization would become effective in February.⁹

Rommel's attacks in mid-February 1943 were directed toward Le Kef, however, and not to Tebessa as he wished. The change in direction (and thus the possibility of a strategic result) was caused by the previously mentioned discontinuities in the Axis command structure in the theater. This direction played into the hands of the Allies who expected Rommel to seek tactical victory and not a strategic decision. This anticipation caused General Alexander to place the U.S. 34th Division in the vicinity of Kasserine and its pass.¹⁰ On 20 February, Rommel forced the abandonment by the Americans of the Kasserine Pass, but only after bringing the 10th Panzer Division into the fight and only after severe hand to hand fighting. Much equipment and many prisoners were captured during the American withdrawal. As Rommel noted in his reflections on this historic battle:

Although it was true that the American troops could not yet be compared with the veteran troops of the Eighth Army, yet they made up for their lack of experience by their far better and more plentiful equipment and their tactically more flexible command.¹¹

Rommel further notes that the poor weather during the battle precluded the application of air power by either side. It was during his withdrawal from Kasserine that his forces experienced "hammer-blow air attacks. . . of a weight and concentration hardly surpassed by those we had suffered at Alamein. The attacks... gave an impressive picture of the strength and striking power of the Allied air force."¹²

During the Kasserine battle, Tedder began the reorganization ratified at Casablanca. He dissolved many existing major air organizations and formed the Middle East Air Command (Douglas), the Malta Air Command (Park), and the Northwest African Air Forces (Spaatz). The latter air forces included a coastal air force, troop carrier command, strategic air forces under Doolittle and tactical air forces under Air Marshal Sir Arthur Coningham. Coningham formed his tactical forces based on successful operations in the Egyptian-Libyan desert. He stressed the "marriage" of the air and ground, and he affiliated his major subordinate organizations to the First Army, the Eighth Army, and the U.S.II Corps. Coningham advocated a close union between air and ground forces.¹³

With the withdrawal of Rommel from the battlefield, the Middle East and Northwest African theaters of war were merged by the Allies. Eisenhower completed the organizational changes necessitated by the closure of the two armies and their supporting tactical air forces.¹⁴

CHAPTER III

LESSONS LEARNED FROM KASSERINE

Students at the Air University, the institutional schooling center for U.S. Air Force officers, are frequently reminded that the defeat at Kasserine led to centralized control of air power. Indeed, their research reports sometimes reinforce this notion. As one Air Force officer concluded in his report:

. . . the tactical air organizations were placed under the command of the ground units. . . . The error of this doctrine was clearly indicated in late 1942 and early 1943. In Tunisia . . . in November and December 1942, Allied air units were dispersed amongst the ground forces to which they were assigned and were no match for the oncoming enemy air forces.¹

[A major defeat at Kasserine Pass occurred because] local force ratios always favored the enemy [since] the air forces could not mass in time to concentrate their efforts against an enemy assault. This occurred because air units were assigned to ground forces that were spread out on the battlefield.²

Further illustrating the extent to which Kasserine's lessons have been applied, Dale O. Smith wrote in his study and appraisal of military doctrine:

Although there were more Allied than Axis aircraft available [when Rommel entered Kasserine Pass on 20 Feb 43], the dissipated air organization prevented Allied air power from concentrating in time. . . . we learned a lesson about employing air power as an entity which was not forgotten for the remainder of the war.³

Are these published lessons the real lessons of the campaign? What happened at Kasserine? Why were the Allies unsuccessful? What was the role of air power during the battle and in the events leading to the battle? Was the Casablanca Conference

in January 1943 a turning point in how air power is organized for combat? If so, what caused the turning point and why didn't the reorganization bring success to the Allies at Kasserine?

Kasserine should be considered an Axis tactical victory in only the most limited sense. Rommel succeeded in temporarily capturing the pass but with significant losses. The weather during Rommel's assaults played a key role in keeping Allied air power on the ground.⁴ In fact, the entire First Army's race to Tunis ". . . had been lost in large part because of the unseason-⁵able rains which turned the fields into morasses. . . ." Rommel was not able to continue his advances toward Le Kef and Tebessa, though, due to the increasing strength and resistance of the First Army--particularly the US II Corps. Allied counterattacks in the days immediately following the loss of Kasserine Pass achieved complete success and forced the withdrawal of Rommel from the battlefield. The weather during those counterattacks permitted, once again, Allied air forces to take to the skies and to dominate them. In fact, according to Blumenson's account of the period, ". . . the Allied [ground] units were in such disorder and their commanders so shaken that only aircraft could strike at the enemy in retreat."⁶ Many weaknesses were discussed by Allied commanders in their on-the-scene postmortem. Some weapons systems were not well-suited for battle, among them the light tank and the half-track. The commanders agreed that the Army's combat division structure must not be subdivided in combat

(as had been done with the combat commands of the American divisions) but should be fought intact.⁷ Some commanders were "relieved" of command due to their unimaginative and poor performance. But ". . . Kasserine produced the commanders who would gain . . . victory [for the Allies]."⁸

Additionally, and of no small significance, the battle at Kasserine reflected just how green the U. S. forces were. None of the major components of the United States Army--to include Army Air Forces--had been prepared in doctrine, organization, tactics, and training when the Germans demonstrated their Blitzkrieg against Belgium and France in 1940. Not only was the Army required to correct these deficiencies quickly, but training in air support coordination could not begin formally until equipment required (such as aircraft and communications systems) was obtained.⁹ Large scale testing of the emerging doctrine, organizations, and procedures did not begin until the Fall of 1941. Preliminary results, as drawn and surfaced by ground commanders and army bureau chiefs, included the issue of centralization of control for efficient use of scarce assets.¹⁰ This issue was not new. The Air Corps and the ground forces had been engaged in a struggle over command and employment of air power since World War I.¹¹ Other important issues pointed out in the maneuvers were the ineffectiveness of air-ground coordination procedures and the disregard of ground commanders for the air threat.¹² In the intervening time between the field testing and the North African Campaign, modifications to doctrine and procedures were insti-

tuted but the test of combat with the German Armed Forces was required to validate or further modify the corrections.¹³ That intervening time, however, had been insufficient to conduct required training across the army and to institutionalize the processes.*

General Eisenhower reflected on Kasserine in his book Crusade In Europe and attributed the Allied difficulties to the hastiness with which he tried to capture Tunis, faulty intelligence work, failure to understand the capabilities of the enemy,¹⁵ and the greenness of his soldiers--particularly the commanders. On hearing the oft-repeated questions asked by Allied soldiers, "Where is our Air Force? Why do we see only Germans?", he showed considerable insight and perspective in his response, "When the enemy has air superiority the ground forces never hesitate to curse the 'aviators'."¹⁶

Rommel wrote, of his advance through Feriana on 17 Feb 43, that "the Americans seemed to be pulling back to Tebessa. Their command appeared to be getting jittery and they were showing the lack of decision typical of men commanding for the first time in a difficult situation."¹⁷ He achieved considerable success with the Africa Corps--even under conditions of air inferiority. He

*The study of Blitzkrieg by Americans during and after the war has often been uncritical and non-analytical. Lessons drawn have sometimes been narrow and towards a desired end. The success of the Blitzkrieg in the Low Countries and France was not matched in North Africa. Apparently the factors accounting for this difference in outcomes do not include the command or employment of tactical air power by the Axis.¹⁴

made up for such inferiority in boldness and risk-taking, although Rommel was quick to point out that air parity, at least,¹⁸ is an essential condition for successful combat.

It is significant to point out Eisenhower's understanding of the requirement for unity of command, even as it applied to the air. In explaining why the Allied air forces were merged in North Africa, he cited the axiomatic: when operating in proximity¹⁹ there is a ". . . need for daily co-ordination." Significantly, Eisenhower expressed no disappointment in effectiveness or efficiency of the air forces during the African campaign. His only concern--even in the period of the Casablanca Conference of January 1943--was for unity of command.

Eisenhower expressed some regrets over the manner in which the air forces were constituted to support TORCH. His description is of air units hastily assembled, trained and retrained with missions being redrawn, and with some units being equipped with British Spitfires.²⁰ Clearly, there were growing pains even within the air forces. Greenness was not confined to the ground armies and lessons born in combat were to be learned by organizations large and small. As an example of such learning, Eisenhower cites a bombing mission by Fortresses over the Kasserine Pass: navigating purely by dead reckoning, the bombers unleashed their loads more than 100 miles from the Pass onto a town within²¹ Allied lines. There are many other examples pointing out the inexperience of the air forces in accomplishing their task. Some were directly the result of air commanders and their chain of

command structure. Until January 1943, ". . . AAF close support operations in the active sector of the North African front were directed by a command [XII Fighter Command] which was neither specifically trained for nor had the necessary equipment for the job of close support."²²

Thomas J. Mayock, presenting his study of the development of tactical air doctrine at a joint session of the American Historical Association and the American Military Institute in December 1950, was particularly critical of this period when he noted:

XII Air Support Command was ill-equipped to demonstrate the effectiveness of any tactical air doctrine. Its pilots by and large were inexperienced and no breaking-in period could be afforded. Proper employment of its light bombers and fighters was being worked out day by day. Worst of all, no air superiority had been won for it by any interceptor command and it lacked a radar net which could be used offensively.²³

Montgomery, a very successful commander in Africa and subsequent campaigns, drove Rommel from Egypt and Tripoli. His use of air power in support of his Eighth Army was extensive and positive. He understood how the RAF evolved and he understood the air-ground coordination system which the British had built in the Middle East. The centralization of command and control in the RAF followed patterns which would be duplicated in the development of USAF basic doctrine. The British Army, suffering painfully after its experiences in France, Belgium, and the Mediterranean in 1940, demanded its own component of ground support aircraft under Army control. The Air Staff resisted continually, fearing the evolution of an army air force. Air Marshal Sir

Arthur Barratt, Air Officer Commander-in-Chief of the Army Co-operation Command, formed in 1940, assumed the task of satisfying the Army and the RAF. Assisted by Brigadier Sir John Woodall and Group Captain Wann, four essential problems were identified: (1) the Army required an air formation for direct support, but under air force control; (2) air and ground liaison officers must serve on army and air staffs to ensure understanding by the Army and the RAF of each other's point of view; (3) a joint command post staffed by air and army officers must be established at the headquarters of the field army or army corps; and (4), a communications network linking every client was central to solving the other three essential problems. This network began deploying to Africa in December 1941 with the air headquarters collocated with the British Eighth Army headquarters. The fact that the Eighth Army suffered major setbacks by Rommel until late 1942 can be attributed more to the time required to establish the network²⁴ of tentacles than to its ineffectiveness and other factors.

Indeed, Montgomery concluded in his later writings (reportedly²⁵ authored in part by Coningham) that air power was one of his eight Principles of War and that: (1) any officer aspiring to high command must understand its application; (2) battles conducted on land or sea without first winning the air battle operate at a great disadvantage; (3) air power is extraordinarily flexible and thus should not be moved from base to base to accommodate the boundaries of ground commanders; (4) some army subordinate

commanders will occasionally be without air support in order to mass air forces in other areas; (5) any army commander should deal with only one air force commander; (6) air plans must be drawn concurrently with ground plans if support is expected; and, (7) air and ground commanders must understand each other's capabilities and limitations. ²⁶ It must also be noted that these aspects of his principles were developed philosophically and empirically, and were not brought about by failures in North Africa. As a matter of fact, Montgomery had only the highest praise for his Desert Air Force.

Montgomery's innovativeness and success in applying air power is often cited as a model for command, control, and employment of that power. In fact, the Army Air Forces official history records that:

The doctrines of air support current in the U.S. Army in January 1943 stemmed from War Department Field Manual 31-35. . . . The outstanding characteristic of the manual lay in its subordination of the air force to ground forces and to the purely local situation. By its prescription, the air support commander functioned under the army commander, and aircraft might be specifically allocated to the support of subordinate ground units. [emphasis added] . . . the manual recited that 'the most important target at a particular time will usually be that target which constitutes the most serious threat to the operations of the supported ground force. The final decision as to priority of targets rests with the commander of the supported unit.' Both as to command and employment of air power (which were nearly inseparable) the American doctrines were at variance with those . . . so successfully tested . . . by the Eighth Army-RAF, ME partnership. . . . ²⁷

Before leaving this extract two points should be noted. The official history does not document any systemic misutilization of

air power in the events leading into January 1943. There was, however, malutilization in the degree of control over target selection for air assets that army corps commanders held. This degree of control surely impeded (but did not prevent) the massing of large air units when and if required, but it evolved from lessons of the American Expeditionary Force in World War I and persisted through the years between the world wars. The Army Air Force disagreed with this decentralized control but could not overcome the ground forces insistence without combat experience

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to validate the AAF position. There is no case to be found in which any air unit was assigned or attached to a subordinate

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ground unit. The second point is that Montgomery himself was an army commander--and not a component or theater commander. Yet, the Middle East Air Force in effect worked for him as his Eighth Army was the only land force being supported by the RAF-Middle East. He had no competition for resources. As his Eighth Army converged with the First Army, that sole relationship would change.

Much is made in post-War writings of the doctrinal relationships between land and air forces existing prior to World War II. FM 31-35, Aviation in Support of Ground Forces, stated in its 1942 edition that "when the operation requires, aviation units may be specifically allocated to the support of subordinated ground units [but that] such designation . . . does not imply subordination to the supported ground unit, nor does it remove the combat aviation unit from the control of the air support

commander. It does permit, however, direct cooperation and association between the supporting aviation units and the supported ground unit. . . ."³⁰ Perhaps it is the word "support" that so rankles air power enthusiasts; but it may be that this doctrinal statement describes no more than the "marriage" that Coningham sought in his Northwest African Tactical Air Force. FM 31-35 created ambiguities in tactical air doctrine that were not well received by air power advocates. It created a perception among land force commanders that there was, perhaps, a "normal" amount of aviation which would be parcelled among their forces. To clear this misperception, Training Circular 37 was issued by General Headquarters of the Army on 29 June 1942. It stated that there was a "requirement-[necessitating] maintaining combat aviation under central control to be employed in mass as each situation dictates."³¹ This circular was published well before TORCH began; it established what the advocates would later label the lesson of Kasserine.

During the Axis attacks on French positions in late January, there were instances where the XIIth Air Support Command did not fly any missions in its area of responsibility.³² Further documented is at least one case where the U.S. II Corps disapproved a reconnaissance request in the French sector because that Corps had ". . . no responsibilities or interest in that area."³³ Incidents such as these caused General Spaatz to accelerate part³⁴ of the air organization planned in Casablanca. Was this an

adaptation because of a learned lesson or because of combat verification of a preconceived doctrine? The successes of air power in late January are seldom heralded. Close and coordinated air-ground operations played an important role in preventing the Axis from destroying large French units on 18 January 1943.³⁵

Concurrent with the Spaatz reorganizations (18 February 1943), Coningham arrived to assume command of the Allied Air Support Command. Among his first actions, he reviewed the operations summaries describing the employment of air forces during the developing Kasserine battle. He was appalled at the proportion of sorties that had been defensive in nature--this appears to be a colloquialism for close air support and/or Combat Air Patrol--and cabled his command that "umbrellas were being abandoned unless specifically authorized. . . ." He went further to say that ". . . an air force on the offensive automatically³⁶ protected the ground forces."

Was this a lesson learned, or was this evidence of a preconceived doctrine? The only vocal dissenter of senior rank among ground force commanders was Patton, commander of the US II Corps, but he could not prevail over Coningham who, drawing on his experience in the Western Desert, maintained that ". . . containing the enemy at his bases and running sweeps against him was the proved remedy [emphasis added] and would be continued: [his³⁷ command] would not revert to defensive tactics."

In addition to Patton's concern, it should be noted that the campaign in Tunisia (including the subsequent capture of Tunis)

left air and ground commanders in disagreement over the proper relationship between air and ground forces. Air advocates' insistence on air supremacy was certainly shared by the ground components; how to deliver effective support to ground gaining arms remained in dispute.³⁸ Even as late as April 1943, the new organization for air support had not conclusively remedied this problem. The skies over the U.S. II Corps were as likely to bring the Luftwaffe as the Allied Air Force.³⁹

Commanders and aviators within the Allied air forces were similarly frustrated that the Luftwaffe dominated the skies for as long as they did in Algeria and Tunisia. Ports in Sicily and Italy were being bombed--particularly in the opening days and weeks of TORCH--but Axis tactical airfields were not impeded by Allied air power.⁴⁰ The scope of my research does not permit exploration of these frustrations except to suggest that the separation of strategic and tactical air forces within the theater created an organization where coordination of objectives was hampered. It may also be that targeting should have been a lesson learned by these green forces.

The issue of tactical air targeting by ground force commanders is not highlighted as a lesson learned in the writings during and subsequent to the war. It should have been a significant lesson, because it is the root of the problem and had little to do with the centralized control issue. Ground commanders little understood the potential of air power, but that is

understandable given the doctrinal and training voids existing prior to TORCH. The insistence on defensive air umbrellas over land forces required that the meager air assets could not be employed against more profitable targets such as enemy airfields and formations. This insistence left the Wehrmacht generally free to reinforce its ground and air bases and to move freely against limited opposition.⁴¹ Correctly prioritizing targets by senior air and ground commanders could have solved this deficiency without centralizing command and control. This, however, could not satisfy those desiring autonomy for the Air Force because, as General Brereton wrote in his published diaries, ". . . there existed a school of thought prior to our entry into the war which considered [ground support] uneconomical and ineffective."⁴² Brereton's comments were shared by John J McCloy, the Assistant Secretary of War, who concluded ". . . that the Air Forces are not interested in this type of work, think it is unsound, and are very much concerned lest it result in control of Air units by ground forces."⁴³

It is instructive to remind the reader of the intense clashes of philosophy and doctrine between major factions within the Army Air Force. These clashes originated well before World War II and continued through the War to the present, but in extreme simplicity the opposing positions can be reduced to those of the strategic bombardment faction against all others. Corollaries to the belief that bombardment by itself could be decisive applied to the employment of all air power. Well before the launching of

the North African campaign, there was fear among the strategic bombing advocates that air power would be dispersed in support of tactical or ill-defined strategic objectives that would render that power ineffective or token. General Arnold remarked in August 1942 that success in the air required concentration against "critical objectives", a point that could hardly be disputed even today. These fundamental arguments laid the foundation, however, for Eisenhower to agree to theater centralized control.⁴⁴

In early December 1942, General Arnold wrote: "The recent air operations in North Africa have confirmed my opinion that the United Nations air effort . . . should be unified under the command of one supreme commander."⁴⁵ Operation TORCH was barely 30 days old, the Casablanca conference still a month in the future, and the Battle of Kasserine even further in the future. Arnold wrote to Spaatz, during the same time frame that "without such unification the North African front is apt . . . to prove a seriously deterring factor in the effective employment of our air arm as a striking force."⁴⁶

Thus, to complete the answers to the questions posed early in this chapter, one must conclude that the North African campaign was a learning ground in coordination between Allies as well as the various arms of their forces engaged in land and air warfare. Air forces had several roles in the periods immediately preceding and following Rommel's attacks at Kasserine. Experience

demonstrated that some roles (air superiority, for one) were better accomplished by centralized direction at a high level. In fact, one might argue that this lesson was learned by Billy Mitchell in World War I.⁴⁷ But experience in other roles (close air support, for example) was incomplete, generally not evaluated, or inconclusive insofar as the proper level of control. Casablanca was a turning point only in that it affirmed the coalition strategy subsequent to the North African Campaign. The air organization approved finally at Casablanca had been approved in concept months before and nothing in the intervening time caused significant changes to that concept. The reorganization certainly did not bring success at Kasserine, perhaps because it had not been fully implemented. Its performance in the months following was not universally accepted as successful. Furthermore, the numbers of aircraft available to the Allies at the beginning of the North African campaign, relative to those available at the conclusion certainly, ought to be considered in evaluating the success or failure of any organization, doctrine, or procedure. Even the British experience in the Western Desert, under centralized air control since early 1942, recognized that ". . . the Desert Air Force . . . only began to grow the necessary muscle when the flow of good American light and fighter-bombers began to reach it in 1942."⁴⁸

The Kasserine battle proved the need for many modifications of doctrine, procedures, organizations, leadership, training, and equipment, but not for centralized control of all tactical air

power. FM 100-20 was published nevertheless in July 1943 without
the concurrence of Army Ground Forces.⁴⁹ As Goldberg and Smith
point out in their detailed study of the close air support issue
for the Air Force and Rand:

The experience of the North African campaign had hardly been conclusive enough to validate the complete turnabout in doctrine that FM 100-20 represented. The AGF and some of the ground force commanders in the field felt that the Army concept of CAS had not received a fair trial because of the very limited air resources available in the early stages of the campaign, from November 1942 to March 1943. It was in the last few months of the campaign in the Spring of 1943, when Allied tactical air strength far exceeded that of the enemy, that the Air Force concept had been applied. The experience of the last two years of the war--1943 to 1945--was such that the underlying irreconcilability of the air and ground positions on CAS never came to a head. AAF tactical air resources in most theaters proved to be ample for all tasks, including close air support. Success tended to stifle dissent. Moreover, the AAF was a part of the U.S. Army, and the ground force commanders shared in the joint determination of use of tactical air resources at the higher echelons of command--Army-Tactical Air Command and Army Group-Air Force levels.⁵⁰

James A. Huston wrote of the army experience in Military Affairs in 1950. He concluded that:

It is difficult to appraise anything at once so broad and so varying from time to time and from place to place as was the use of tactical air power in World War II. As in most human affairs, almost never is it possible to separate the multiplicity of factors present in a given situation. What results would have been obtained by a different use of tactical air power--with more, or less planes--with different types of aircraft--with different methods of attack--with different organization--cannot be said with any finality.⁵¹

That the centralized control issue was preconceived in that a belief in such doctrine existed prior to the war can be shown almost conclusively. How deeply such belief permeated the lead-

ership of the Air Corps can only be surmised. Lieutenant General Harold L. George, an instructor at the Air Corps Tactical School, (and later Assistant Chief of Staff of the Air War Plans Division during the early years of the war) delivered the opening lecture in a series to that school in the period 1938 to 1940 on the nature and objectives of war. His lecture was followed by one delivered by Haywood S. Hansell, Jr. (now a retired USAF major general) in which he concluded that the ". . . optimum employment of . . . airpower in any of its roles required centralized control and separate organization."⁵² In 1938, the Chief of the Air Corps, Major General O. Westover lectured to the Army War College at Fort Humphries in Washington, D.C. that the "GHQ Air Force should never be detached for piecemeal operations . . ." and that "tactically, the combat airplane is an offensive weapon."⁵³ He went on to predict that, if the Army did not train its air and ground components to work in harmony, ". . . by popular demand and insistence, we shall be forced into a permanent unity of air command."⁵⁴ George, Hansell, and Westover are all honored today as being among the USAF's founding fathers.

That harmony was not to be won before North Africa for the reasons I have already shown. The true lesson of Kasserine was not recorded: Never send untrained combat forces to battle!

CHAPTER IV

UNITED STATES ARMY AIRLAND BATTLE DOCTRINE

There is some argument in service circles about the role and nature of doctrine; how it is derived?; what is its role in shaping thought and critical analysis?; what constitutes a basis for changing doctrine? These questions and their arguments are handled very differently in the different services. But in the United States Army, there is only one doctrine for conducting land operations. Recognizing that all warfare is by no means identical--even warfare conducted in the same instant of time--the Army's doctrine requires flexible application depending upon the mission, geography, forces available, and most importantly the threat.

AirLand Battle doctrine has evolved analytically, intellectually, and historically. Its evolution has been both inductive and deductive, and it will most likely continue to evolve as the environment of warfare changes.

The doctrine sees the present battlefield as much different from earlier American experience. It characterizes the battlefield as one dominated by firepower and maneuver, with considerable decision making conducted at very low levels, with no clear distinctions of lines but with blurring of forces at the front and in the rear. Weapons will be extraordinarily lethal, and command and control may at times be quite tenuous. The battlefield will be dominated by forces which retain the initiative and

which maintain pressure on the enemy deep and close, denying him¹ the capability of organizing his forces in depth.

AirLand Battle doctrine, in view of the lethality of the modern battlefield, presents imperatives for the commanders of today's forces. In this doctrinal perspective, the force which will be decisive on the modern battlefield will be that having agility, responsive capability, and depth while retaining (or capturing) the initiative and synchronizing its simultaneous battles deep, close, and rear. Each of those battles must be fought successfully! The failure of either will spell unacceptable force ratios, high attrition, and insufficient sustainability, respectively. The force must clearly be capable of independent operations based on complete understanding of the higher commander's concept for executing his mission. It must be capable of organized self defense against reasonable threat. It must be capable of orchestrating and conducting combined arms action. The force commander (at every level) must understand and fully use terrain to his favor. He must seek out and keep track of adjacent units, forward units, and those to his rear. His force must successfully monitor the locations of his supporting services. The commander must expect interrupted communications within and without his organization and he must cut through such interruption to accomplish his task. These imperatives for commanders and their units are applicable to all organizations, not simply to ground gaining forces. The decisive force must be capable of both offensive and defensive operations on the modern

battlefield. It must not rely on extensive use of lateral movement due to the ease of interdicting such movement. It must judiciously plan for counterattack with small reserves at lower levels of the organization.²

The modern battlefield will be a joint one requiring skills analogous to those of a surgeon to bring combined effects of other arms and services to bear at the critical place and time. There are some misconceptions within the Army and the Air Force that air power's role will be primarily to conduct the deep battle. These misconceptions grow from a myopic view of the modern battlefield. Air assets, both Army and Air Force, will necessarily fight deep, close, and rear battles--as will ground and reserve assets. Airspace management implications in conducting and synchronizing the entire battlefield are numerous, as are the information flow requirements! A failure to understand the nature of the battlefield or of each other's doctrine may not be correctable on the battlefield.

The evolution of AirLand Battle doctrine recognized the difficulty in marking the fine line which separates strategy and tactics--and thus the level(s) of command responsibility. General Glenn Otis, currently CINCUSAREUR, assisted in marking this line when he was the commander of the Army's Training and Doctrine Command. In his Doctrinal Perspectives On War, he defined three levels of modern warfare: Strategic, Operational, and Tactical. The strategic level sets force goals and objectives to

achieve national objectives. The commands responsible for this level of warfare are the National Command Authority, NATO, and the army group. At the operational level the commander seeks to gain advantage over the enemy by virtue of the position of his forces. The commander at this level must anticipate opportunities in order to appropriately position his subordinate units; he must boldly plan and maneuver to gain the leverage he seeks. Both the army group and the corps commanders practice the operational level of war. The tactical level is exercised by commanders who fight battles. The tactical commander employs the combined arms and services to achieve decision; he does this at organizational levels of division and below.³

In Field Manual 100-5, however, Army doctrine recognizes that in practice we clearly cannot always so finely define General Otis' demarkation between operational and tactical levels. The manual states that there are occasions when the division commander may be conducting operational art.⁴ Clearly, the national objectives, mission, strategy, theater, and threat play some role in assigning the level of warfare to the appropriate commander. This blurring of the operational versus the tactical must therefore be necessary to adapt FM 100-5 to worldwide applications. While General Otis was addressing the European battlefield, the manual stresses the mental and physical requirements for success in any region: agility, initiative, depth, and synchronization.

In AirLand Battle doctrine, the corps commander is the

architect of the campaign. His operational level campaign plan forms the basis for divisional commanders' tactical plans. Echelons above corps define the strategies and provide large forces for the corps commander to develop his plan. The corps headquarters is the lowest level of army organization possessing intelligence fused from national assets, other services, and tactical levels. "The corps is the primary command and control headquarters⁵ for the conduct of the land battle within the theater."

The corps commander is the first level of command to define the area of interest for himself and his area of influence. The area of interest extends forward and laterally from the line of forward troops so as to provide 96 hours notice of the approach of enemy divisions and armies. The area of influence ideally would permit engagement of enemy forces when they approach within 72⁶ hours of the forward line of our troops.

Commanders subordinate to the corps commander have their areas of influence defined by the corps headquarters. This "line" on the battlefield may become (but not necessarily) the battle handoff line--the plane through which the enemy must pass to close on the main battle. Enemy forces within the division commander's side of the plane must be engaged by his organic or supporting assets. Such a handoff accomplishes at least two important tasks: the division commander knows which forces he is expected to engage in depth, and the corps commander can reposition reserves as necessary to continue his anticipation of the

battle.

Division commanders similarly designate areas of influence for subordinate brigade commanders. This process continues to battalion level. No operational or tactical commander can thus afford to focus his sole attention on the close battle.

While in Europe, I commanded an army combat aviation battalion in a mechanized infantry division for three years. Air-Land Battle operations were planned in great detail flowing from the corps commander's campaign plan for his general defensive positions. Large scale exercises employing that doctrine were conducted twice each year and NATO Reforger Exercises capped the fiscal cycle.

U.S. Army aviation was totally integrated within the division, as it is in each army division, and aviation forces planned and practiced the execution of doctrine combined with ground maneuver and support forces. The division commander understood the flexibility contained within his aviation battalion and he further understood (and practiced) massing the subordinate units of that battalion--and frequently the entire battalion--to take advantage of its mobility, firepower, and flexibility. Air-Land Battle doctrine and the supporting "How To Fight" tactics and techniques publications require massed fire and maneuver of aviation units. These units (companies) within my combat aviation battalion, in numbers of aircraft at least, are similar to USAF squadrons. They were never employed with mass less than unit, although ground company and battalion commanders (and oc-

casionally brigade commanders) attempted to violate this precept. The division commander employed my forces across the battlefield in his area of influence--deep, close, and rear. Occasionally, the corps commander in anticipation of "threat" initiatives withdrew all or part of my battalion from the division commander for employment elsewhere. In general, army aviation combat power was responsive within 30 minutes to a new mission in a new area of operation. Such combat power included the relocation of service support (Forward Arming and Refueling Points--FARPS) to sustain the new fight.

But this quick response time was gained from a continuous knowledge of battlefield conditions and operations: seeing the battlefield, anticipating future missions, knowing the tactical situation across the division, and communicating constantly with forward forces whether aviation was engaged or not. This fast response was generally successful although significant impediments existed which are likely to exist in much greater magnitude in a shooting environment. The most significant impediments were communications and inaccurate knowledge of current operations. The most benign and dependable communications systems were inoperative or jammed at crucial times. Redundant systems and procedures assisted in overcoming this impediment.

No commander has an accurate knowledge of current operations, I am convinced. Inaccuracies become greater and time delays more significant the further one removes himself from the

infantryman or tanker. The company commander has more accurate information than the battalion commander who has a similar advantage over his superior. This can never be corrected and only becomes worse in warfare: it is an element of Clausewitz's friction and fog. Accuracy in knowledge of tactical operations can only be improved as one comes closer to the forward line of committed forces, and the employment of army air power required continuous and forward monitoring of the battle for its effective employment at the right time. At the same time, higher commanders have a better view of the big picture. The two views must be combined and balanced.

The current doctrine, organizational structure, and procedures existing today in the U.S. Air Force place air power commanders far from this line of committed troops and overemphasize the view from the top (the big picture). The Air-Ground Operations System places Air Force representation as low as ground maneuver battalion level, but the lowest level air commander is found at the tactical air force level. Even at this level, full command and control of aircraft does not exist, nor is the tactical air force commander formally affiliated and collocated with the army group commander. Timely and accurate tactical information regarding committed battalions and brigades cannot exist with this organizational arrangement.

Clausewitz's fog and friction were no less important on the simulated AirLand Battlefield as they were in the 19th Century. My experience convinces me that only near real-time tactical

information helps clear the fog. Fighting the rear battle was the greatest challenge as the problems of fighting deep and close all existed together. Accurate position reporting of all service support units to a central headquarters and the dissemination of this information to those subordinates requiring it only presented a partial solution. Because of the nature of support activities ongoing in the rear at all times, the rear battle posed (and continues to pose, in my view) the greatest challenges for effective, responsive air power.

My discussion in this chapter is included for three reasons. First, an AirLand Battle doctrine primer brings the reader to a common denominator in how the Army is preparing its corps and divisions to fight. Second, since FM 100-5 presents a widely accepted view of the nature of the future battlefield (which is not commonly understood by professionals in the land and air forces), an understanding of that battlefield is required to accept the necessity for current Army doctrine. And third, by presenting my personal command experience, the reader may understand that flexible, responsive, and effective combat aviation can be brought to bear on enemy formations when and if the commander of that aviation is informed of and responsive to the plans and operations of battalion, brigade, division, and corps commanders. In summary, the success of the land battle will require extensively detailed planning but extraordinarily decentralized control and execution. The initiative, training, and competence of subordinate leaders will decide the outcome.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS

Army Major Robert A. Fitton, in his Military Review article, "A Perspective On Doctrine: Dispelling the Mystery", defined doctrine as:

Fundamental principles by which the military forces or elements thereof guide their actions in support of national objectives. It is authoritative but requires judgment in application.¹

Lt Cdr Dudley W. Knox, Jr. outlined the role of doctrine for the U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings in 1915. He said:

The object of military doctrine is to furnish a basis for prompt and harmonious conduct by the subordinate commanders of a large military force, in accordance with the intentions of the commander-in-chief, but without the necessity for referring each decision to superior authority before action is taken.²

Air Force Manual 1-1 obliquely defines basic doctrine as stating:

. . .the most fundamental and enduring beliefs [emphasis added] which describe and guide the proper use of aerospace forces in military action.³

And General George H. Decker, former Chief of Staff of the United States Army had this to say:

Doctrine is indispensable to an Army. . . . Doctrine provides a military organization with a common philosophy, a common language, a common purpose, and a unity of effort. Doctrine is founded on the past while focused on the future.⁴

These quotations present different views of doctrine, with two of the statements attempting to define it.

Each quotation is fundamentally different, though, in one regard or another, and my purpose is not to argue semantically --

or even to define doctrine. The thesis of this paper is that: USAF Doctrine for the control of air power (centralized control of all theater air) was not the result of lessons learned during the fight for the Kasserine Pass in 1943. The thesis continues: Centralized control of tactical air power may prove to be efficient but ineffective should the United States Army be required to fight a major land campaign.

Is doctrine a set of principles, such as the principles of war? Is doctrine a set of intuitive or analytically-derived beliefs based on historical precedent and bitter lessons? Is doctrine a framework for planning and execution which must be reshaped as necessary depending on the threat, the forces to be applied, and the environment? The United States Air Force neatly (but possibly correctly) sidesteps the semantic difficulty by defining three types of doctrine: basic, operational, and tactical.

But the centralized control of air power is contained in basic doctrine--fundamental and enduring beliefs. And here lies the proof of the first part of my thesis. The Kasserine Battle, I have clearly shown, contained few lessons for air power except those that pertained across the board to Eisenhower's forces at that point in time. They include greenness, unfamiliar procedures, coalition inexperience, and equipment malfunction, quantity, or unsuitability. Some military historians believe the battle at Kasserine Pass was lost because the U.S. Army did not know how

to use armor, and there may be some truth to that.

I expanded the scope of my thesis to look earlier in time before February 1943 to provide a fairly rigorous examination of the centralized control doctrine. Clearly there were some (but few) examples of the misuse of air power in that timeframe. (Two of the three misuses stated in Chapter III are the only ones cited through most historical texts.) The quest for air superiority in North Africa was clearly hampered by difficulty in massing air power and in taking advantage of its flexibility. Some historians believe that ". . . the most influential factor [preventing Allied success in Tunisia through the end of November 1942 was] the Allied inability to gain air superiority over the Luftwaffe."⁵ Was this failure a function of equipment, of communications, of organization, of inexperience? Did the Axis' capability to fight on interior lines by virtue of its central position play any role? Critical analysis of these and other questions is not to be found. The U.S. Army and its tendency to parcel out and fritter away air power is the air power advocates' lesson learned from North Africa. Analysis does not support this conclusion. However, American air enthusiasts were bolstered by similar belief in centralization by the RAF. This belief in centralization pre-existed the North African Campaign. It pre-existed World War II.

Bernard L. Montgomery proved a great boost to those desiring centralized control. The influence of Tedder cannot be discounted, but Montgomery recognized that the massing of air forces

would be frequently required. He warned against unnecessarily frittering away assets. But Montgomery, as he wrote of air power as one of his principles of war, explained ". . . it may be advantageous and at times will be essential [emphasis added] to decentralize control of a proportion of the effort in order to bring about quick and immediate air attacks closely related in time and space to the action on the ground."⁶

This last part of Montgomery's dictum should be especially and rigorously analyzed given the probable nature of the modern battlefield. Even in FM 100-20, published in 1943, the same caution was added by the air power advocates:

The superior commander will not attach army air forces to units of the ground forces under his command except when such ground force units are operating independently or are isolated by distance or lack of communication. [emphasis added]⁷

Here was recognized the importance of a doctrine and of a command and control structure which would prove flexible and effective in providing support to land forces. The clause beginning with "except when" showed considerable foresight in the unpredictability of future battlefields. Clearly the authors did not intend (or could not say so if they did intend) that air forces would never become attached (or controlled or affiliated) to ground force units.

Montgomery's explanation is important for it brings us to the present and to future conflict as we understand it to be. Albert F. Simpson, a noted air historian, examined tactical air

doctrine in 1951. In his examination of North African battles, he noted that the centralized organization:

"...resulted in far better cooperation than had previously been the case in Tunisia, cooperation of the Western Desert Air Force--Eighth Army sort. For the tactical air arm was there to further the ground campaign, and neither then nor later did the air commanders forget that fact nor did they fail to work hand-in-glove with the ground commanders."⁸

Have we forgotten that fact today? The U.S. Navy and U.S. Marine Corps maintain a tactical capability linked to ground forces. The organizations and missions of both forces are of course different from those of the Army and Air Force, but their lessons of World War II, Korea, and Vietnam have not led to centralized control. Can we really expect to support land forces on the battlefield as described in Chapter IV in a combined arms application of combat power? Or do we staunchly support the bomber theory rationalized to tactical application as Tedder and Coningham did that offensive air power automatically supports ground forces? Clearly, Offensive Counter Air (and probably Defensive Counter Air) operations can be efficiently and effectively conducted by centralized control. The nature, scope, and range of the air battle beg that conclusion. But shouldn't we organize an air force tactical headquarters responsive to the operational requirements of the corps commander but with a command line, and therefore a short string, to the higher level air force commander? Do we not believe in "Unity of Command" at the lowest possible level consistent with resources and mission? What happened to the "marriage", the affiliation? BG Billy Mitchell

collocated his headquarters with that of Pershing's.⁹ The German Wehrmacht linked their corps headquarters with a tactical air¹⁰ headquarters during the Blitzkrieg. The Fifth Army and XII Tactical Air Command collocated in Italy in 1944-1945 and held joint staff meetings daily. These two commands worked out "arrangements" for closer cooperation--even though some of these may¹¹ have been in contravention of FM 100-20. The Ninth Air Force in Europe affiliated its Tactical Air Commands with the First,¹² Third, and Ninth Armies. Indeed, in 1944, one fighter-bomber group of the XIX Tactical Air Command worked with each armored division of the Third Army. The elements of these groups worked and communicated directly with tank battalion commanders engaged¹³ in offensive operations.

Current organization of tactical air power probably will not be effective in supporting the ground-gaining army. We have lost track of our interdependence. The system for applying air power on the battlefield is too hierarchical and too similar to the inverse pyramid in that command and control authority resides at the top. It is too slow and requires too much anticipation of enemy intentions; too dependent on several communications links with little redundancy, and too expectant of quick and accurate information at too high a level. The battlefield will be too diffused--and we fail to universally understand that.

In World War II, the numbered army was the fundamental strategic maneuver unit of land forces. The corps conducted tactical

operations based on instructions in the army strategy.¹⁴ In North Africa, Coningham affiliated his XII Air Support Command with the U.S. II Corps and the French XIX Corps; the Desert Air Force with the British Eighth Army; and the RAF 242 Group with the British First Army.¹⁵ And later, ". . . by the time of the Normandy invasion, numbered tactical air commands had been created to work with each of the field armies, and numbered air forces with army groups."¹⁶ In the organizational changes made during the Korean War, the army group doctrinally planned on the strategic and tactical levels. The numbered army only occasionally "entered the field of strategy."¹⁷ We have seen in Chapter IV that U.S. Army organizations today have a substantially different purview for conducting the strategic, operational, and tactical levels of warfare.

Should that part of our air forces which are interdependent with the army therefore reconsider how to support effectively (not merely efficiently) United States ground forces? The Army believes, as Major Fitton concluded in his Military Review article, that:

Doctrinal concepts must change as reality changes. Changes in . . . technology, weapons, force structure, threat . . . necessitate concomitant changes in doctrinal concepts.¹⁸

The advocates of land power and air power each have valid support for their point of view. Their disagreement focusses only on Offensive Air Support, with Close Air Support being the subject which at present draws the more emotional responses. This disa-

greement is not new and it existed even within ground forces prior to the adoption of FM 31-35 in 1942. Following the Fall 1941 large scale maneuvers to test air-ground coordination procedures, the issue surfaced. The official Army post-War history summarizes the dispute:

The principles of centralization and decentralization of air support strength were in conflict. Centralization would require the attachment of air forces to the highest Army commands, allotting these forces only temporarily to lower units as occasion required. This method preserved the fluidity and mobility of support aviation and made possible the assembling of mass striking power against the most important objectives. This was the principle urged by General McNair [Chief of Staff, General Headquarters, United States Army] for the organization of tank destroyer units. Decentralization, through attachment of air support to lower commands, would speed up the local delivery of support. The bad feature of decentralization was that it immobilized air strength in places where it might not be needed or frittered it away on local and insignificant missions. The bad feature of centralization was that it set up long command and liaison channels and slowed down the process of getting air assistance to ground troops.¹⁹

This is also a summary of the disagreement today. In their study of close air support, which is only part of the issue now, Goldberg and Smith outlined the future as they saw it in 1971.

The prospect for the future seems to be continued resistance by the Air Force. . . . But such resistance can be effective only if the Air Force demonstrates willingness, imagination, and responsiveness to the Army and provides more versatile capabilities to perform the function [of CAS]. At times in the past, the Air Force could, and in retrospect, should, have exercised greater initiative in meeting Army requirements. . . . the Army concept of the land battle which, after all, is the basis for tactical air as well as ground forces, will probably prevail, whether the Air Force agrees or not.²⁰

Several Air War College students, and at least one Army general officer, have suggested to me that the Air Force desires

that the U.S. Army reinstitute the field army command level to more appropriately dovetail with Air Force thinking and organizational doctrine. The Army is interested in flexible supporting organizations which are effective and responsive in prosecuting the land battle. Adding another level of command for the convenience of the Air Force would not, in the Army's view, substantially enhance U. S. combat capability--and probably would be a liability. Critical analysis of basic doctrine is well overdue but apparently is not welcomed within the Air Force because the Air Force fears the loss of any of its independence.²¹ Both ground and air partners are long overdue in renewing their "marriage vows."

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