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**Tactical Disruption  
The Key to Increasing Relative Combat Power**

**A Monograph  
by  
Major Arthur W. Finehout  
Aviation**



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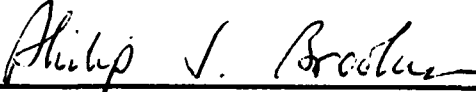
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## ABSTRACT

**TACTICAL DISRUPTION: THE KEY TO INCREASING RELATIVE COMBAT POWER.** By Major Arthur W. Finehout, US Army  
57 pages.

The outcome of a battle is often decided by the combat power the combatants can bring to bear on the decisive point. This relative combat power is forged by the commander from the capabilities of his unit, and his employment of them. Commanders strive to maximize their own capabilities and combat power, while degrading those of the enemy commander. This monograph argues that tactical disruption is an operational concept which will lead to superior friendly combat power at the decisive point.

The monograph first examines the military theorists and thinkers from which tactical disruption has grown, in order to understand the theoretical framework it operates within. The author argues that the opposing commander's decision cycle is the ultimate target of disruption operations. An historical example is used to demonstrate tactical disruption, and finally, U.S. Army doctrine is examined in order to determine the current role of tactical disruption.

The monograph concludes that tactical disruption is embedded through out Airland Battle doctrine. However, tactical disruption is not a formal strategy, and there is no coordinated disruption effort at the tactical level. The monograph closes with recommendations to adopt tactical disruption as a formal doctrinal concept.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The outcome of a battle is often determined by the relative combat power of the combatants at the decisive point. Combat power is the overall effect the commander forges through the development, application, and integration of his unit's capabilities. Each commander strives to maximize the effects of his combat power, while minimizing or degrading those of his enemy. The ability of a commander to bring his unit's capabilities to bear as combat power, and defeat the enemy's efforts to degrade those capabilities, is as important as the quantitative measure of potential combat power.

The recent emphasis on contingency operations points to the Army fighting with an austere logistics tail at the end of long lines of communications. Maximizing the capabilities and combat power of deployed units will be vital. The increasingly sophisticated third world threat means the U.S. Army can no longer assume a large firepower or technological advantage.

Disruption is introduced in this study as a means of gaining an advantage over the enemy, and increasing relative combat power. If the U.S. Army plans to fight a "come as you are war", fight outnumbered and win, then every conceivable means to increase relative combat power must be investigated.

New technologies have greatly expanded the commander's view of the battlefield, and synchronizing battlefield activities is more complex than ever. In addition, the capability now exists to acquire and attack targets through the depth of the battlefield. At the same time the command and control process has become more important, it has also become more vulnerable. This increases the potential impact of disruption on the battlefield. Disruption targets the command and control process.

A primary threat faced by the U.S. Army is the Soviet Army, or third world armies structured and trained on the Soviet model. Many studies have shown the Soviet decision process is susceptible to disruption and confusion.<sup>1</sup> Soviet combined arms operations work on the concept of critical time, adhering to precise schedules and requiring detailed lateral and vertical coordination among elements. One author concluded "the disruption of troop control is the key to defeating a Soviet regiment".<sup>2</sup>

The purpose of this paper is to examine tactical disruption and determine if it should be incorporated into U.S. Army doctrine for corps and division level operations.

This study will start by defining tactical disruption, it's goals and methods. The history of

disruption will be examined using appropriate military theorists and practitioners, in order to understand the theoretical framework it operates within. The tactical disruption model will be introduced and illustrated by a historical example.

Current U.S. Army doctrine is surveyed in order to determine disruption's philosophical "fit" with the guiding doctrinal principles of AirLand Battle. The current doctrinal role of disruption in AirLand Battle will be determined. Finally, conclusions and recommendations concerning tactical disruption as a doctrinal mission will be presented.

The term disruption is used hundreds of times in U.S. Army doctrinal publications and field manuals. It appears regularly in military publications and literature, and units are assigned the mission to "disrupt and delay" the enemy in training exercises.

There is no official military definition of disruption. Disruption does not appear in Joint Pub 1-02, Department of Defence Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms, AR 310-25, Dictionary of U.S. Army Terms, or other official sources.<sup>3</sup> Disruption is not found in unofficial dictionaries of military terms either.<sup>4</sup>

The Oxford English dictionary defines disruption as "the action of rending or bursting asunder; violent

dissolution of continuity".<sup>5</sup> For purposes of this study the author defines tactical disruption as the sum of all activities that influence the enemy commander's ability to effectively concentrate his combat power at the decisive point.

## II. Theoretical Framework

"Thus I say that victory can be created. For even if the enemy is numerous, I can prevent him from engaging."

SUN TZU<sup>6</sup>

"The destruction of command paves the way for the destruction of personnel."

JFC Fuller<sup>7</sup>

Tactical disruption is not a new concept.

Disruption, by whatever name, is a time honored means to gain an advantage over your enemy. When the Russians gave twenty squadrons of cavalry the task of killing the King of Sweden, Charles XII, at the Battle of Rajowka in 1708, they were practicing tactical disruption.<sup>8</sup> German infiltration tactics in WWI opened with a short, intense preliminary bombardment that "had as it's object not the smashing of field fortifications but rather the paralysis of the enemy's communications and artillery".<sup>9</sup> This disrupted the integrated,

combined arms nature of the enemy defense. In both cases the goal was to achieve an increase in relative combat power at the decisive point by attacking the means, (command, control, communications), by which the enemy commander could concentrate his combat power.

The theoretical framework of tactical disruption includes the concept that defeating the enemy is not limited to physically destroying his army. Clausewitz said, "the fighting forces must be destroyed: that is, they must be put in such a condition that they can no longer carry on the fight. Whenever we use the phrase "destruction of the enemy's forces", this alone is what we mean."<sup>10</sup> This is not to say that physical destruction of enemy equipment and personnel will not occur. It means that in tactical disruption, physical destruction will be a means to an end, rather than the end itself. You have defeated a commander when he can no longer command. An army is defeated when it can no longer act as a cohesive whole and bring it's combat power to bear on the decisive point.

The costly frontal assaults of World War One led military thinkers to develop methods to bring maneuver back to the stalemated battlefield. These military thinkers also looked for ways to increase their

relative combat power, other than bringing up more artillery.

JFC Fuller, the renowned British military thinker, believed that "the potential strength of a body of men lies in it's organization, if we can destroy this organization, we shall have gained our object".<sup>11</sup> He compared an army with a human body and reasoned that if the brain (Headquarters), could be cut off from the arms and legs (the units) by attacking the nervous system (communications, controls), the result would be a collapse of the soldiers that the headquarter's controlled. Fuller believed the command should be attacked before the main body of troops, "so that it may be found in a state of disorganization when attacked".<sup>12</sup>

In May 1918 Fuller produced "Plan 1919", which called for attacking and collapsing a sector of the German front. After a sudden penetration, squadrons of fast tanks would bypass enemy positions and drive to attack enemy headquarters and disrupt German command and control. At the same time all available airplanes were to bomb supply and road centers. Only after this phase had spread confusion and disorganization would the main attack hit the enemy's front.

A contemporary of JFC Fuller, Sir Basil Liddell Hart, became convinced of the power of disruption

through his study of military history. A prolific military writer and theorist, his major contribution to disruption theory was his Strategy of Indirect Approach. Broadly stated, this covers strategies and tactics which use the "line of least expectation", and exploit the "line of least resistance". In a tactical sense the indirect approach implies the offense should disrupt the enemy's defenses rather than wear them down in a battle of attrition.<sup>13</sup> Liddell Hart believed that to beat an enemy you first had to "dislocate" his physical and psychological balance. Liddell Hart advocated attacking command and control, but also the commander himself, by deceiving him, creating uncertainty, and adding to his fears. "It is through the distraction of the commander's mind that the distraction of his forces follows. The loss of his freedom of action is the sequel to the loss of his freedom of conception."<sup>14</sup>

Other military theorists of the time reached the same conclusions. Writing in the early 1930's in Russia, Marshal Mikhail Tukhachevski envisioned the destruction of the depth of the enemy's tactical defense by using tanks "to neutralize the enemy defensive fire system and disrupt his command and control system".<sup>15</sup> This prevented the enemy from

bringing his combat power to bear and allowed their destruction in detail.

Field Marshal Heinz Guderian is normally thought of as a practitioner of military art rather than a theorist. However, his organization of the German "Panzer" force and his subsequent leadership in the "blitzkrieg" across France in 1940 have left an indelible mark on disruption theory. Unlike earlier German doctrine, "blitzkrieg" aimed as much at the disorientation and dislocation of the enemy command system as it did at the annihilation of enemy forces.<sup>16</sup> Guderian wrote "everything is therefore dependent on this; to be able to move faster than has hitherto been done; to keep moving despite the enemy's defensive fire and thus make it harder for him to build up fresh defensive positions".<sup>17</sup> In 1940 he stayed inside the methodical French decision cycle, every decision the French made was already overcome by events. As an example, on 15 May Rommel's 7th Panzer Division drove west and passed through the new defensive line to which the French 9th Army had decided to withdraw, even before the French were there to begin forming it.<sup>18</sup>

Since World War Two there have been few military theorists advocating disruption, but several armies, (most notably the Israeli Army), have used it on the

battlefield. Disruption theory in some form has found its way into the doctrine of most modern armies.

Within the American military reform movement, disruption is touted as a smart way to fight, a replacement for costly attrition/firepower based theories of war. Among current military writers, the reformer William S Lind is foremost in advocating and advancing disruption theory through his concept of "Maneuver Warfare".

The purpose of maneuver warfare is to defeat the enemy by disrupting his ability to react, rather than by physical destruction of forces.<sup>19</sup> Maneuver warfare seeks to create uncertainty and generate confusion for the enemy commander, slowing down his reactions and decision cycle. It strikes at the enemy psychologically as well as physically. Maneuver is not done just to get in a position to fire on the enemy, but to create unexpected and dangerous situations for the enemy commander. The commander must react to each situation, (it poses a danger to his force), change his plan and timing, (it was unexpected), and make decisions. He slows down.

The basis for maneuver warfare is the Boyd Theory developed by U.S. Air Force Colonel John Boyd. At it's heart is the cycle of: Observe-Orient-Decide-Act, (the

Boyd Cycle). Conflict, in this case a battle, operates within a framework of time sensitive Boyd Cycles.

Each commander begins by observing himself, the environment, and the enemy. Using his observations he orients himself and creates an image of the situation. Based on this orientation, the image he perceives, the commander makes a decision. Then he acts, he puts the decision into action. The commander does this countless times, for every situation, for every decision large or small.

If one side can move through the Boyd cycle more quickly than the other, reaching the "ACT" stage of the cycle sooner than the enemy, they have the advantage. When the slower side finally acts, the faster side has moved on, and is doing something different than was originally observed. The slower sides actions are inappropriate and overcome by events. If the enemy falls behind in a series of related cycles, his responses become increasingly ineffective.

The enemy commander may panic, making quick decisions not founded on observation or orientation, in an attempt to regain the initiative. On the other hand, the enemy commander may become passive, stuck in the observe/orient phase and waiting for a clear picture to form. Both conditions make him vulnerable to defeat.

The goal is to generate a rapidly changing environment and inhibit the enemy commander's capacity to adapt to it. This is done by speeding up your own Boyd Cycles and stretching out the enemy's. You slow the enemy's Boyd Cycle by disrupting his connections, centers, and activities that provide cohesion and permit coherent observation-orientation-decision-action cycles.<sup>20</sup>

### III. Tactical Disruption Model

"This shouldn't happen."  
"This simply should not happen."<sup>21</sup>

Admiral Nagano, Japanese Navy Chief of Staff, on 18 April 1942. Just after the Doolittle bombing raid on Tokyo.

Tactical disruption is defined as the sum of all activities that influence the enemy commander's ability to effectively concentrate his combat power at the decisive point. Tactical disruption is an operational concept and a process. As a concept it is a unified way of thinking, a warfighting philosophy. As a process it is a purposeful activity directed at the enemy.

The goal of tactical disruption is to achieve superior friendly combat power at the decisive point. This is done by denying the enemy commander the ability

to concentrate his combat power at the time and place of his choosing. The process of tactical disruption is the planning and conduct of activities designed to reduce or diminish the enemy commander's ability to bring his combat power to bear.

Tactical disruption as defined by this study does not win the battle alone. By itself, it will not cause the collapse of the enemy. However, it is a powerful tool used to gain superior combat power at the decisive point.

Tactical disruption can be used to set the stage for the main effort by dislocating the enemy, disorganizing him, or denying him combat power. Tactical disruption can also be used to tip the scales at the critical moment by degrading the enemy commander's ability to command and control his forces when he needs to most.

Broadly stated, tactical disruption targets the enemy commander. Specifically, it attacks the command and control system which the commander uses to bring his combat power to bear. The command and control system is defined as "the facilities, equipment, communications, procedures, and personnel essential to a commander for planning, directing, and controlling operations of assigned forces pursuant to the missions assigned."<sup>22</sup>

Given this definition, the command and control system encompasses such obvious components as command posts, communications nets, intelligence acquisition assets, and the commander himself. Another level would include the commander's plan, synchronization, tempo, and coherence of operations. A third level would be the commander's decision cycle, span of control, and mental flexibility.

At the heart of the command and control system is the commander himself and his decision cycle, (Boyd Cycle), of Observe - Orient - Decide - Act. The commander's decision cycle is the bottom line target.

Each time you present him with a tactical surprise, disrupt his timetable, delay his units from reaching the fight, or introduce any new variable, you are forcing a change to the enemy commander's plan. He must gather information and run through the Boyd Cycle to reach a decision. Even if the decision is not to act at all, you have required him to run through the Boyd Cycle. Running the cycle takes time and resources.

When you jam the enemy commander's communications, destroy his intelligence sensors, target his command post, or create uncertainty, you are adding to the time and difficulty of running through the Boyd Cycle. Without intelligence sensors, the enemy commander has difficulty observing. Uncertainty degrades his ability

to orient, to be sure of the image he forms. Jamming his communications limits his abilities to put his decisions into action.

Notice that tactical disruption does not key on destruction of forces, but on the means by which the enemy commander brings these forces to bear. As an example, within the concept of tactical disruption, deep attack of enemy uncommitted forces, or the destruction of a bridge that delays their movement has at least three effects. The most obvious is that the unit's combat power will not arrive when it's supposed to, or in the amount expected. You have physically removed enemy combat power from the decisive point.

The second effect is the damage to the enemy's plan. The loss of those assets will have to be compensated for by shifting other assets, changing the plan, altering the timetable, and adjusting goals and missions. The enemy commander will have to run numerous Boyd Cycles to reach these decisions and coordinate the actions. Resources, time and energy will have to be expended to make that happen. Potential combat power is not realized.

The third effect is the impact on the commander and the decision making process. His span of control has increased, (another situation now requires his attention), he must process much more information, and

he faces greater uncertainty, (more variables). This slows his decision cycle. Most of all, he is faced with evidence that a previous decision was faulty, his confidence is shaken. If this happens enough, confusion and disorganization will set in, his decisions are increasingly irrelevant, and he loses control of the battle.

Information processing is at the heart of the Observe - Orient phases of the Boyd Cycle. There is a limit to how much information a commander can process. A comprehensive study of human decision making and information processing is beyond the scope of this work. However, the existence of a threshold beyond which performance degrades rapidly has been established. This is the upper limit on the rate at which decision makers can process information satisfactorily.<sup>23</sup> Tactical disruption seeks to put the enemy commander in a situation where he has to cross that threshold. Each Boyd Cycle you force him to run, increases his information processing requirement.

The process of tactical disruption is summarized in the tactical disruption model, (See Appendix A). The friendly commander uses the means available, (fires, EW, maneuver), in conjunction with ways (deep operations, simultaneity, rapidity), chosen to force the enemy commander to react to a changing, threatening

environment. The targets are the enemy commander's plan, synchronization, and command and control system. These actions not only force the enemy commander to Boyd Cycle numerous times, they degrade his ability to quickly and effectively Boyd Cycle.

The enemy commander is now coping with confusion, broken timetables, uncoordinated efforts, and a battle tempo of our choosing. This inhibits his ability to bring his combat power to bear at the critical time and place. The enemy commander is forced to make changes and adjustments to his plan, processing information and Boyd Cycling for each.

The friendly commander has achieved the twin goals of burdening the enemy commander, (increasing his span of control, creating uncertainty, and decreasing his confidence), and disrupting the command and control system. At the very time the enemy commander has the greatest need to run Boyd Cycles quickly, he has the least ability to do so.

Timing is crucial to effectively employing tactical disruption. Slowing the enemy commander's decision process and degrading his command and control process must occur in concert with the critical events of the friendly plan.

Generally speaking, people want facts before they act. Commanders are hesitant to act in ambiguous

situations. When a "fact" is challenged or a plan goes awry, the situation becomes unclear. Then the decision maker attempts to reduce the uncertainty, and clear things up. He does this by gathering information which refutes or supports the conflicting observation. However, gathering facts and getting a clear picture takes time.

In addition, commanders become enamored of their plans. They believe in the plan they have built and are mentally unprepared to change it. "The officer in charge usually has his own definite opinion on how the battle is supposed to go. Any inputs that challenge an inflexible leader's concept of the battle will be resisted until the irreversible crisis occurs."<sup>24</sup>

At some point the commander will have the minimum essential information he needs in order to make a decision. Any time spent after this point is a search for certainty. Modern commander's surround themselves with systems and equipment that are designed to reduce the uncertainty of the battlefield. The search for certainty stretches out the time required to run through the Boyd Cycle. This tendency to search for certainty can be exploited through tactical disruption.

As depicted in the model at Appendix B, there are three windows in the decide phase of the Boyd Cycle. These are opportunity decisions, problem decisions, and

crisis decisions.<sup>25</sup> The beginning of the Decision phase is the time of opportunity decisions. As the situation continues, the commander has less options and less time - now he has a problem. If he waits long enough, he is faced with a crisis. As the commander continues his quest for certainty he stretches out his Observe - Orient phase, which moves him through the windows of the Decide phase. When finally forced to make a decision, he is making crisis decisions.

A goal of tactical disruption is to continually stretch out the observe - orient phase of the enemy commander's Boyd Cycle. This is done by degrading his means of acquiring and communicating information, creating uncertainty, and increasing his information processing requirements. This results in the enemy commander's decision being made during the crisis decision window.

If the enemy commander makes quick decisions based on uncertain, ambiguous situations, he has a greater chance of being wrong. If he waits for things to settle down, in order to gain certainty, his decisions are overcome by events.

"Typically, the victims of the Blitzkrieg were left only with the choice of paralysis or potential gross error in reading the battle. Flooded with reports of enemy across the width of the front and in considerable depth as well, the defending commanders either chose to wait for "the dust to settle"

or else they sent off their mobile forces in chase of the most credible sightings."<sup>26</sup>

#### IV. Historical Example

The concept of tactical disruption has been introduced, and the process of tactical disruption examined. But is tactical disruption just a theory? Is it a hope rather than a process which can be applied? A historical example of tactical disruption will serve to illustrate the process in action. The battle for Abu Ageila in the 1967 Arab-Israeli War will be used. This battle is instructive for several reasons. It not only is an example of tactical disruption integrated into the planning and execution of a division level operation on a modern battlefield, it involved the deliberate attack of a Soviet style prepared defense.

Structurally and philosophically, the Israeli Army in 1967 was well suited for the integration of tactical disruption into their operations. There had been major changes in the Israeli armed forces since the 1956 Sinai campaign, brought about by a new strategy calling for a short war fought by forces employing enhanced mobility and firepower. This rapidly moving army would be led by large armored forces. The objective of these forces would be "to strike into the enemy's rear,

causing its army to collapse through the disruption of its command and control system and lines of communication."<sup>27</sup>

Israeli doctrine and training placed great emphasis on flexibility and initiative, producing leaders adept at dealing with the changes brought on by the fog and friction of war. This flexibility and initiative at the lower levels allowed the Israeli Army to adapt quickly to tactical situations. Junior leaders trained to use their initiative keep the tempo of operations high, and run through Boyd Cycles at a lower command level, thus more quickly.

The Egyptian Army is often described as having a rigid command and control structure, characterized by a dogged adherence to its comprehensive plans.<sup>28</sup> The lack of initiative and mental flexibility in junior leaders, coupled with centralized command and control, have led to an army that is slow to respond, and slow to act. In the 1967 war "when plans were disrupted, most Egyptian units broke down into a leaderless mass of individuals, their officers failed to provide leadership in the absence of specific guidelines."<sup>29</sup>

The Israeli Army was aware of these weaknesses and planned to exploit them to their advantage. They had done so before. Moshe Dayan had planned the speed of his 1956 campaign to "enable us to press on before the

Egyptians can manage to adjust to the changes in their front."<sup>30</sup>

Before examining the role of tactical disruption in the battle of Abu Ageila, the military geography and force dispositions must be understood. Abu Ageila is an area of low hills and ridges overlooking flat terrain near the Israeli-Egyptian border. It sits astride the central east west route and best surfaced road in the Sinai, (See Map A). For Israel to make a quick strike to the Suez canal and resupply it's rapidly moving forces, it must control Abu Ageila. The Egyptians understood this and developed defensive positions to hold it. By 1967 the Egyptian army had developed Abu Ageila into a fortified strongpoint.

The Egyptian 2nd Infantry Division defended the Abu Ageila - Qusaymah area, the sixteen thousand men about equally split between the two positions. The 12th Infantry Brigade occupied the Abu Ageila defense with a force of four infantry battalions, five artillery battalions, and a tank regiment.

The 12th Inf Bde defensive positions are depicted on Map B. Two infantry battalions defended the forward positions, occupying three successive lines of trenches at Umm Qatef, astride the main road.<sup>31</sup> Trench systems ran between positions in a continuous line for several miles. The front of the forward positions was covered

by an extensive minefield, wire, and obstacles. Each infantry battalion had a platoon of dug in tanks and anti-tank weapons. Behind these positions were two battalions of artillery, each in direct support of an infantry battalion. The 288th Tank Battalion of the 6th Tank Regiment was positioned to counterattack any breakthrough of the forward positions or to reinforce them if needed. Approximately ten kilometers behind the forward positions, (near the Ruafa Dam), the 12th Bde command post was positioned with an infantry battalion and two artillery battalions. This force was to reinforce the forward positions or act as a second line of defense. Eight kilometers to the northwest of the 12th Bde command post, the 6th Tank Regiment (-) was the brigade reserve. To block the track through the sand dunes on the northern flank, a large force defended position 181 astride the Batur track. (See Map C). The main defensive position at Abu Ageila held sixty six tanks, twenty two self propelled antitank guns, and seventy artillery pieces.

The position's flanks rested on deep sand dunes to the north and low cliffs to the south, both areas deemed impassable. The Egyptian plan envisioned a frontal assault down the road by the Israeli's. Israeli forces would take losses as they passed through the pre-planned artillery zone, then get hung up in the

obstacles and minefield. Indirect and direct fires would pound them, preventing breaching operations. The 288th Tank Battalion was to be a mobile force within the main perimeter, counterattacking any Israeli forces which broke through.

The Israeli Ugdah (Division) commanded by Brigadier General Ariel Sharon was assigned the mission of taking Abu Ageila. At nineteen thousand men, it was slightly larger than the Egyptian's 2nd Infantry Division. The Ugdah was tailored for the mission, a true combined arms force containing paratroops, infantry, artillery, engineers, and armor units.

General Sharon did not have a significant numerical or firepower advantage over the Egyptians. The Egyptians were good defensive fighters and in a strong position. General Sharon would have to use some means to gain an advantage over the enemy and achieve superior combat power at the decisive point.

General Sharon knew the Arab's could fight bravely, but he understood their vulnerabilities. "The key to beating them was to put them off balance. The necessity was not to let them fight their battle, but always to do the unexpected."<sup>32</sup> "Their battle" can be read "their plan". Do not conform to their plan, attack it, and force them to change it. The slow Egyptian decision cycle meant their reactions would be too late, another

event would now require their attention. Their actions would be ineffective.

General Sharon's plan attacked the Egyptian commander's plan and exploited it's vulnerabilities, (Map D). He employed deception, surprise, simultaneity, and the indirect approach. In his autobiography General Sharon says "I wanted these attacks to develop in a continuous unfolding of surprises."<sup>33</sup>

First, a deception would be conducted against the Egyptian 10th Inf Bde at Qusaymah on the southern end of the 2nd Inf Division's position. This would mask the main effort, direct the Egyptian division commander's attention away from Abu Ageila, present him with an additional threat, and deter him from sending reinforcements to Abu Ageila.

Then Sharon would isolate the battlefield, blocking the routes by which reinforcements or reserves could enter the defensive position at Abu Ageila. An independent tank battalion would move around the northern flank, attacking the Egyptians at position 181, then moving to the rear of the Abu Ageila defense. This battalion would assault the Egyptian's rear in conjunction with the main attack.

The attack itself would hit the entire depth of the Egyptian defense simultaneously. This simultaneity would force the Egyptian commander to react to multiple

threats, disrupt the combined arms nature of the defense, and increase uncertainty and confusion. General Sharon wrote "this would be the shock that would unbalance the defenders."<sup>34</sup>

His plan utilized indirect approaches to surprise the Egyptians, avoid their strengths, and negate their plan. A battalion of paratroopers would be helicoptered onto a flank of the defensive position, then proceed on foot over "impassable" terrain to assault the artillery positions supporting the Egyptian infantry. An infantry brigade would walk approx ten kilometers through "impassable terrain" to positions on the Egyptian's northern flank. They would enter the Egyptian trenches and assault down their length. Israeli artillery would fire on the trenchline just ahead of the attacking infantry and on positions not under direct attack.

While the paratroopers silenced the Egyptian artillery, and the Egyptian infantry was busy fighting for survival in its own trenches, the Israeli engineers would clear lanes through the minefields. The tank brigade would then penetrate the front of the defense.

At the same time the independent tank battalion that had made its way to the rear of Abu Ageila would assault the rear of the Egyptian defenses. The attack would be conducted at night.

The Israeli attack worked as planned. An infantry brigade with attached tanks took up attack positions opposite the Egyptian 10th Inf Bde at Qusaymah. The Egyptian 2nd Inf Div commander, located at Qusaymah with the 10th Inf Bde, was presented with multiple threats, focused on "his" close battle, and did not send reinforcements to Abu Ageila.

The units assigned to isolate the Egyptian defense took up positions on avenues of approach and tracks leading to it. The independent tank battalion under Colonel Nir defeated the Egyptians at position 181, then moved around the northern flank to block their rear.

The paratroops assaulted the artillery positions. The Egyptians had not expected an attack from the north, or an infantry assault on the position. No minefields or barbed wire was in place, and the battery positions were not designed to defend against ground attack. The paratroopers achieved a major success by effectively disrupting Egyptian artillery fire.<sup>35</sup>

A second tactical surprise was gained when the Israeli infantry attacked the Egyptian trenches. The Egyptians believed that the sand dunes in the north presented an insurmountable barrier. They did not mine or protect the left flank. By attacking down the length

of the trenches, the Israelis did not allow the Egyptians to mass fires at the point of attack/defense.

While the battle in the forward defensive position was being fought, Colonel Nir attacked the Egyptians rear with his tank battalion (-). He assaulted the Ruafa Dam area which contained the 12th Inf Bde Command Post. "The Egyptian commander was experiencing immediate problems just as his troops were entering the most chaotic stage of the battle."<sup>36</sup> Colonel Nir continued his attack to the east, trapping the Egyptian mobile reserve between himself and the tanks pouring through the breached Egyptian minefield. At 0600 hours, seven hours after the Israeli artillery kicked off the attack, Abu Ageila had fallen.

Official Israeli Army records pertaining to this battle have not been declassified. The written operations orders cannot be examined in order to determine what role tactical disruption played in the formal planning.<sup>37</sup> However, a review of Israeli doctrine, General Sharon's philosophy, and the planning/conduct of the battle point to tactical disruption as an integral part of the operation.

General Sharon used tactical disruption to gain an advantage over the Egyptians and gain superior combat power at the decisive point. The deception plan kept the 10th Inf Bde at Qusaymah out of the battle, and

reinforcements were blocked from entering the area. Combat power was denied the Egyptians at the decisive point.

In the Egyptian Plan the engagement area in front of the trenches was the decisive point for the attacking Israeli armor. The Egyptian defenses concentrated combat power on this engagement area. The Israelis attacked the plan, taking out the artillery, and assaulting the infantry trenches first, creating their own decisive points. The Egyptian's could no longer mass combat power in the form of indirect and direct fires on the decisive point - the engagement area. As a result Israeli engineers worked virtually unopposed to get the armor through the minefield.

The combined arms nature of the defense was ruined by taking the artillery out of the equation and fixing the mobile tank reserve with the rear attack. The Israeli infantry captured the Egyptian colonel in charge of the infantry defense. To stop the Israeli penetration, the colonel had been trying to communicate with his artillery in order to direct fire onto the Israeli section of the trenches."<sup>38</sup>

The simultaneous attacks through the depth of the Egyptian defense presented the Egyptian commander with multiple, unexpected threats, stretching his span of control. Attacking the northern flank over terrain

deemed impassable presented the Egyptian commander with a situation he was mentally unprepared to face, and one for which no branch existed in his plan.

The Israeli plan presented the Egyptian commander with much information to process, threats to counter, uncertainty, and decisions. This forced him to abandon his plan, react, wait for things to become clear, and ultimately lose control of the battle.

According to official Egyptian military sources the Israeli attacks in the rear of their defense "demoralized Egyptian troops in the trenches and adversely affected their fighting performance."<sup>39</sup> Before the main blow was struck by the tanks, the Egyptians had been physically and psychologically dislocated in the tradition of Liddell Hart.

In his study of the battle for Abu Ageila, Dr. George Gawrych concluded: "When the Israeli force attacked Abu Ageila with a daring plan incorporating two tactical surprises, the confused Egyptian command suffered a brief, but fatal paralysis."<sup>40</sup>

## V. U.S. Army Doctrinal Survey

If tactical disruption is to be more than a theory, or an unintended effect, it must be an integral part of an army's doctrine and philosophy. Has this occurred?

The British military thinker Richard Simpkin feels that the German "panzertruppen" of WWII were designed to fight physically or morally weaker opposition. Their organization, equipment, and logistics were not designed to withstand attrition by an enemy they could not physically or psychologically disrupt. "When they failed to win the initial battle for the opposing commander's mind, they tended to lose the subsequent physical contest on the ground."<sup>41</sup>

The Israeli army acknowledges the influence that the writings of JFC Fuller and Liddell Hart had on the formation of their strategy and doctrine.<sup>42</sup> The indirect approach, taking the line of least expectation, and setting the stage for battle by disrupting enemy command and control are trademarks of Israeli operations. The directives for the operational order written for the 1956 Sinai campaign by the Israeli Chief of the General Staff, Moshe Dayan, had as it's intention: "To confound the organization of the Egyptian forces in Sinai and bring about their collapse".<sup>43</sup>

The modern Soviet Army "will use extensive radio electronic combat measures to disrupt enemy command and control, in order to sow confusion and paralyze the enemy command and control structure."<sup>44</sup>

Does tactical disruption play a role in the U.S. Army's AirLand Battle doctrine? FM 71-100, Division Operations, certainly gives the impression that tactical disruption is part of our warfighting doctrine. It tells us to "present several dangerous situations in unexpected locations, and use a combination of deception and electronic warfare to disrupt the enemy's ability to focus and react, creating command paralysis."<sup>45</sup> A closer look at U.S. Army doctrine is needed in order to answer the question.

The U.S. Army's capstone warfighting manual is FM 100-5, Operations. It explains how the Army will plan and conduct combat operations from engagements through campaigns. FM 100-5 is more than a starting point for doctrine, it contains the philosophical framework that the U.S. Army operates within. An attempt to determine the role of tactical disruption in current doctrine must start with FM 100-5 and AirLand Battle doctrine.

Central to understanding AirLand Battle are its four basic tenets of initiative, agility, depth, and synchronization. In determining the compatibility of

tactical disruption with AirLand Battle, a look at the four tenets is in order.

The first tenet, initiative, is defined as setting or changing the terms of battle by action. Once an enemy commander is committed to a particular course of action, you must deny or change that course of action. Your plan should also thwart his most obvious branches. This forces him to react to you, change his plan, and gives you the initiative. "The goal is the creation of a fluid situation in which the enemy steadily loses track of events and thus coherence."<sup>46</sup> This is a good fit with tactical disruption's goal of setting the terms of the battle at the decisive point, and degrading the enemy commander's ability to monitor events and make decisions.

Agility is the ability of friendly forces to act faster than the enemy, it is both a physical and mental quality. You have to observe, orient, decide, and act faster than your opponent. This must be done repeatedly so that by the time the enemy reacts to one action, another has already taken its place, disrupting his plans and leading to late, uncoordinated enemy responses.<sup>47</sup> This could be generically termed "getting inside the enemy decision cycle". Tactical disruption increases the relative agility of friendly forces by degrading enemy agility, slowing the enemy decision

cycle. Agility allows you to concentrate combat power at the decisive point before the enemy.

The third tenet, depth, is the extension of operations in space, time, and resources. Fighting the enemy throughout his depth upsets his plans and coordination, and keeps uncommitted forces out of the fight. It does not let the enemy commander focus his attention or combat power on the decisive point. Attacking through the enemy's depth forces him to react, (observe orient decide act), to simultaneous not sequential actions.

Synchronization, the final tenet, is "the arrangement of battlefield activities in time, space, and purpose to produce maximum relative combat power at the decisive point".<sup>48</sup> Synchronization is accomplished through various means, (command, control, communications, coordination, and planning). Tactical disruption attacks these means in order to degrade and interrupt the enemy's synchronization efforts.

Our warfighting doctrine does not insist on physical destruction of the enemy as the sole means of achieving success. In fact FM 100-5 states that inflicting physical damage is frequently incidental to offensive success.<sup>49</sup> Destroying the coherence of enemy operations and ruining his combined arms synchronization are the objectives of operations.<sup>50</sup>

Deep operations are introduced as a means to gain superior combat power in the close fight by altering the tempo of enemy operations, limiting his freedom of action, and degrading his ability to control forces at critical times. The objective is usually not attrition or destruction of forces, but disruption and degradation of command and control, fire support, and communications with which the enemy commander synchronizes his battlefield activities.

The concept of tactical disruption certainly appears in the Army's capstone warfighting manual, but is the concept and process of tactical disruption found in tactical level doctrinal publications? The corps is the largest tactical unit in the U.S. Army, it plans and conducts major operations and battles. The corps must create the conditions for successful battles and synchronize all the battlefield activities to bear on the decisive time and place. The corps operations manual states that defeating the enemy may not mean the destruction of his army, "the objective is to either disrupt or nullify his plan and/or subdue his will to fight".<sup>51</sup> One way to disrupt the enemy commander's plan is to operate within the enemy's decision cycle. "The corps command and control cycle must operate more quickly than the enemy's".<sup>52</sup> There are two ways to make the command and control cycle operate faster than

the enemy's, speed yours up or slow his down. Command, control, and communications countermeasures (C3CM), are introduced as the means to slow the enemy's cycle. "It describes how the corps will disrupt the enemy's C3I capability through deception and targeting his command and control functions for fires and jamming".<sup>53</sup>

Corps deep operations are conducted against forces not currently engaged in close operations, but capable of influencing future close operations. The mission of corps deep operations is described as "breaking the enemy's plan".<sup>54</sup>

The division is the largest fixed organization that fights as a tactical team. Division level tactics involve positioning maneuver forces on the battlefield in relation to the enemy and concentrating superior combat power at the decisive point.

The role of tactical disruption is evident. "The goal of division tactical operations is to act more rapidly than the enemy, keeping him off balance by changing the situation so rapidly that his reactions are inappropriate and he remains at a disadvantage."<sup>55</sup> Deep operations are designed to delay and disrupt uncommitted forces to prevent the enemy from utilizing them where he wants to in the battle. C3CM is employed by the division to "disrupt the enemy's troop control

process, increase his decision times, and reduce his ability to concentrate forces."<sup>56</sup>

It seems clear that the concept of tactical disruption fits well within the philosophy of AirLand Battle. They spring from the same theoretical background. The tactical concepts of Liddell Hart and JFC Fuller are found in AirLand Battle. The indirect approach, attacking the enemy's command and control, and breaking the enemy's plan are all found in our doctrinal manuals.

Some writers have gone as far as stating that in AirLand Battle, "the key is for numerically weaker forces to use the tenets of agility, initiative, depth, and synchronization to disrupt the enemy commander's decision cycle by attacking his command and control system."<sup>57</sup>

Tactical disruption is embedded throughout AirLand Battle doctrine. Setting the terms of battle, acting faster than the enemy, thwarting his synchronization efforts, and destroying the coherence of the enemy organization all require tactical disruption in order to happen. Deep operations are tactical disruption, "the sum of all activities that influence when, where, and in what condition the enemy forces can be committed against corps close and rear areas."<sup>58</sup> C3CM is tactical disruption, "the actions taken which are intended to

confound the enemy's decision making and direction of his forces."<sup>59</sup>

AirLand Battle stresses creation of opportunities to fight on favorable terms by capitalising on enemy vulnerabilities. Tactical disruption creates those vulnerabilities.

Although the philosophy and concept of tactical disruption permeates AirLand Battle doctrine, tactical disruption is not a recognized strategy, it is not doctrine. Tactical disruption is treated as an effect rather than a process, a desirable goal, but not a system or strategy.

The only place where disruption is discussed as an entity is in Chapter Eight, Defensive Operations, of FM 100-5, Operations. Disruption is presented as one of the four characteristics of defensive operations. Disruption as an effect, goal, or characteristic is disruption as an end. Tactical disruption is a desirable end in AirLand Battle.

The corps and division operations manuals introduce two means of tactical disruption: deep operations and command control communications countermeasures (C3CM). Both are processes or activities by which tactical disruption can be utilized or achieved. Both are focused activities that do not encompass the whole. Deep operations target only uncommitted enemy forces,

and C3CM has a dual mission of attacking enemy command control and communications, while protecting our own.

Contrast this with tactical deception, a means of attacking the enemy's command and control system and gaining superior combat power. Deception is a subset of C3CM, one of the means of tactical disruption.

Deception is designated a major functional area in FM 100-5, Operations, and staff sections are assigned responsibility for it's planning and conduct. Most operations plans and orders have deception plans and annexes.

The U.S. Army recognizes the value of deception and emphasizes it's importance in the fight. The process of deception is not left to chance, we do not hope that each commander will put their own deception plan together. For tactical deception or tactical disruption to be effective, it must be integrated into the tactical plan, resources designated, and the efforts of many different activities coordinated.

Most of the tools for conducting tactical disruption are in place already. Deep fires will be used as an example.

A new approach to identifying and prioritizing fire support requirements, Target Value Analysis, was developed in order to support maneuver centered doctrine. " Target value analysis identifies high

payoff targets in terms of the impact of their destruction, not only on enemy capabilities, but also on probable enemy actions."<sup>60</sup>

The U.S. Army commander has at his disposal a number of reconnaissance, surveillance, and target acquisition systems which enable him to acquire and process targets for attack. The means to deliver fires are also available to him in a variety of forms. FM 6-20-10, The Targeting Process, prepared jointly by the field artillery and intelligence community, addresses the formation of targeting cells or elements built from the operations, intelligence, and fire support sections.<sup>61</sup>

Current doctrine has fires operating under the Decide - Detect - Deliver cycle. Today's commander certainly has the assets and procedures to conduct the detect and deliver phases, but what ties together and drives the decide phase? Tactical disruption would be the strategy driving the decision process and ensuring the targeting effort was integrated with the tactical plan.

AirLand Battle makes the ends of tactical disruption a necessity, and presents us with several means, what is missing is a formal designation of tactical disruption as a way.

## VI. Conclusions and Recommendations

The outcome of a battle is determined by the relative combat power of the adversaries at the decisive point. Combat power is developed and brought to bear by the commander using his command and control system. Each commander strives to maximize his capabilities and combat power, while degrading those of his enemy.

Tactical disruption is the sum of all activities that influence the enemy commander's ability to effectively concentrate his combat power at the decisive point. Tactical disruption attacks the commander's command and control system, specifically his decision cycle.

Tactical disruption is more than a hope. It is a concept that has been incorporated into the doctrine of armies throughout history, and has proven it's worth on the battlefield.

The stated purpose of this paper was to examine tactical disruption and determine if it should be incorporated into U.S. Army doctrine for corps and division level operations. An examination of AirLand Battle doctrine reveals the question to be moot. The concept of tactical disruption, tactical disruption as a warfighting philosophy, is an integral part of

current doctrine. In fact a case could be made that tactical disruption is necessary in order for AirLand Battle to work at all.

However, tactical disruption is treated as an effect, not a formal process. Everyone is admonished to create the effects of tactical disruption, but no one is given the responsibility for getting it done. Targeting and timing are crucial to tactical disruption, but no focused, coordinated targeting effort is established or resourced. Effectively implementing tactical disruption as a process is not possible unless the concept of disruption is incorporated into the planning and execution of all missions.

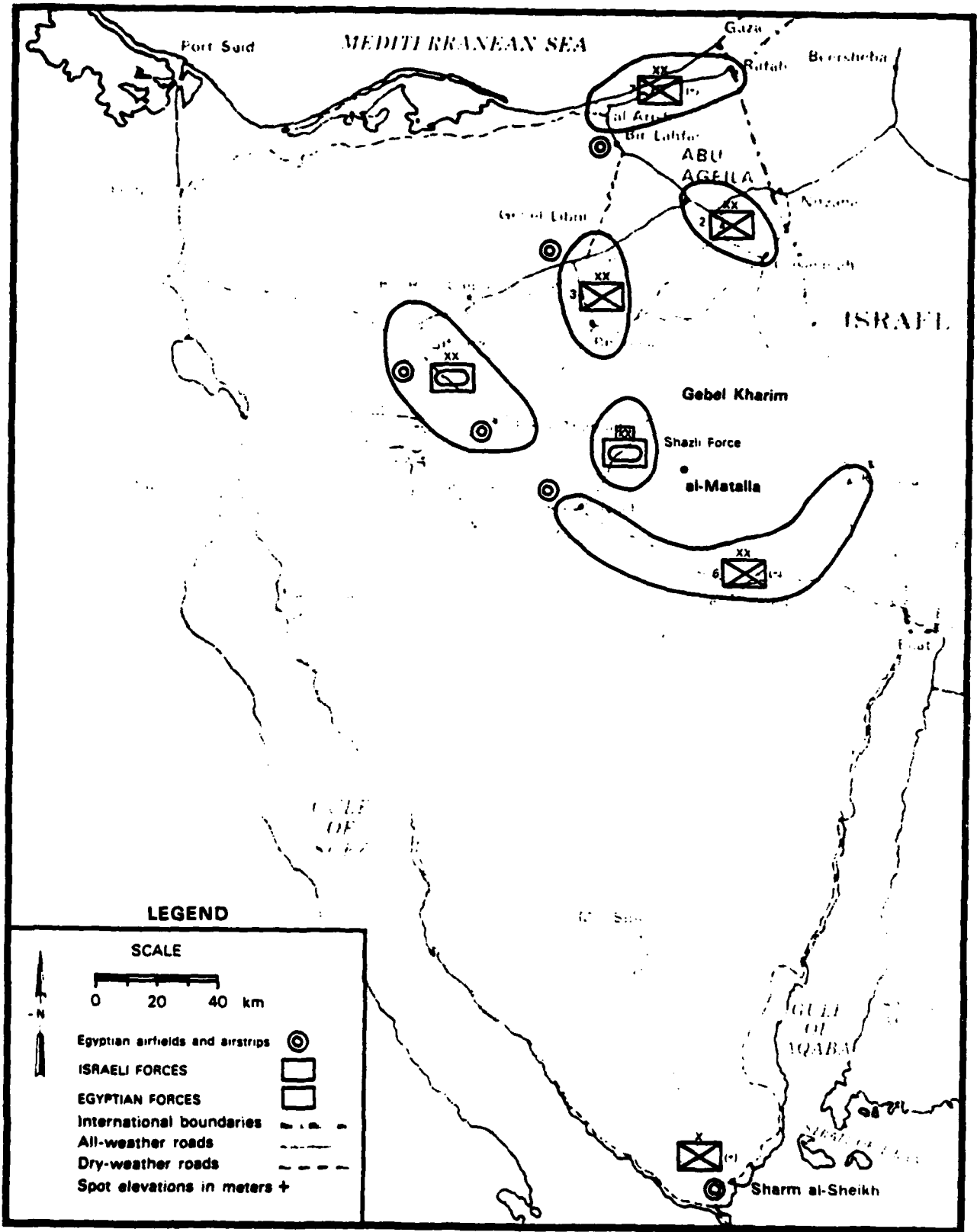
The services recognize this deficiency. The C3CM Joint Test Force was tasked to examine current C3CM strategy and doctrine implementation and "provide information that could be applied by combat commanders to improve the effectiveness of their forces, by disrupting the enemy's command, control, and communications system."<sup>62</sup> The study identified the lack of a dedicated C3CM staff as a problem area.

Tactical disruption should be formally adopted as doctrine. FM 100-5, Operations, should directly address tactical disruption as a key warfighting concept, and designate it as a major functional area. Tactical

disruption should be presented as a unifying operational concept and a formal tactical process in the Corps and Division operations manuals. Tactical disruption must be the base concept around which a doctrine and its associated tactics are developed.

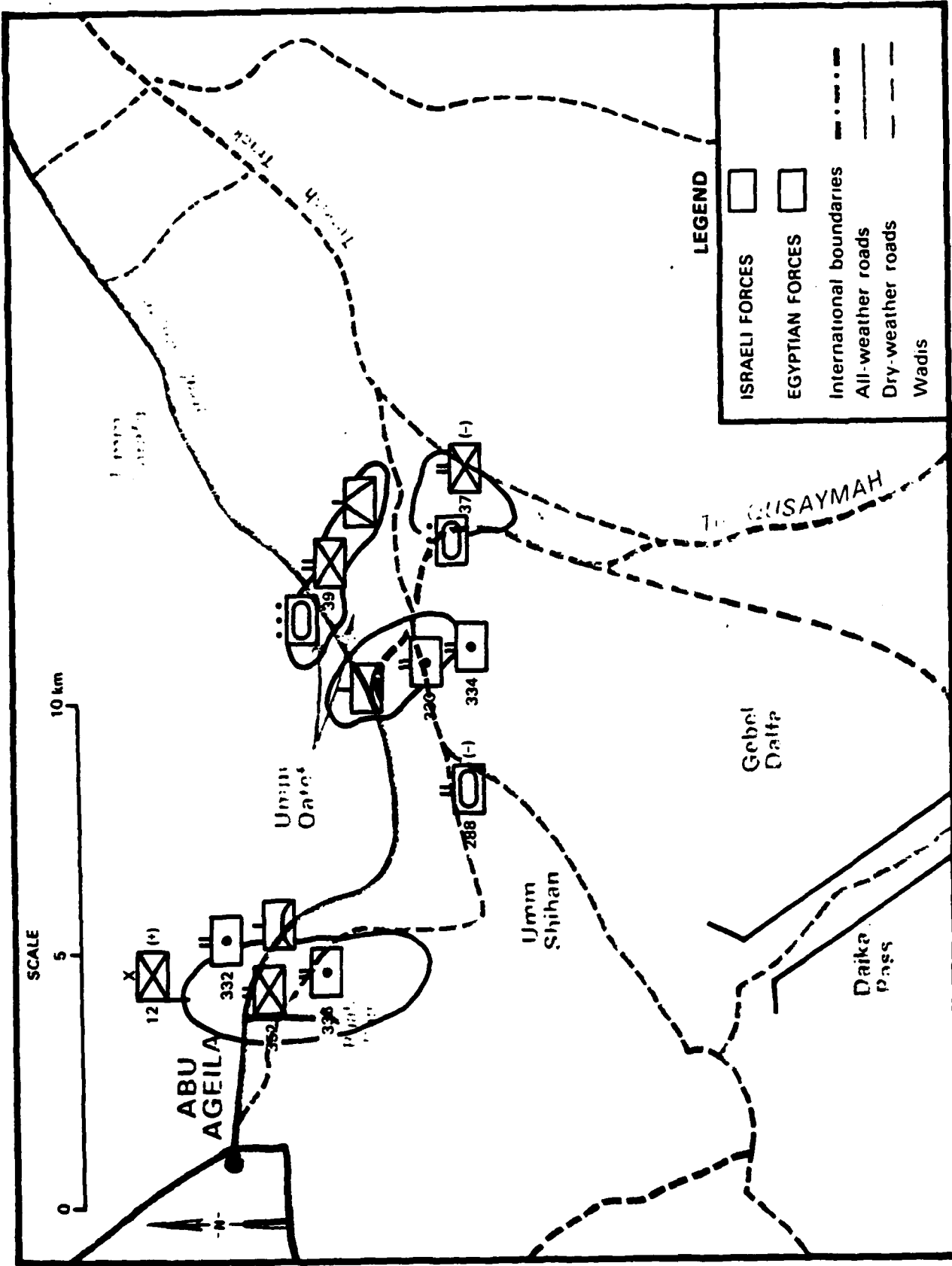
As powerful as tactical disruption is when embedded throughout Airland Battle, it's impact as a focused, coordinated strategy would ensure superior combat power.

Map A: Egyptian deployments in the Sinai, June 1967



Extracted from Key To The Sinai

Map B: Egyptian Army Deployments at Abu Ageila



Extracted from Key To The Sinai





Appendix A: The Tactical Disruption Model

TACTICAL DISRUPTION MODEL

The Friendly Commander Uses

AIRLAND BATTLE TENETS

Agility  
Initiative  
Depth  
Synchronization

WAYS

Deep Operations  
C3CM  
Rapidity  
Simultaneity  
Indirect Approach

MEANS

Fires  
Electronic Warfare  
Deception  
Maneuver  
Targeting

IN ORDER TO

Attack the Plan  
Create Surprise  
Multiple Threats

Attack Synchronization  
Deceive  
Attack the C2 System

Force Changes  
Deny Intelligence  
Degrade Coordination

THIS FORCES THE:

Enemy Commander to React  
Enemy Commander to Boyd Cycle

WHICH LEADS TO

Slowed Tempo  
Confusion  
De-synchronization

Broken Timetable  
Disorder  
Uncoordinated Effort

Disruption of Combined Arms  
Lack of Coherence  
Lack of Combat Power

THIS FORCES

The Enemy Commander to React  
The Enemy Commander to Boyd Cycle  
Changes and Adjustments to the Plan

Effects of Friendly Commander's Actions

BURDENS THE ENEMY COMMANDER

Increased Span of Control  
Creates Uncertainty  
Decreases Confidence  
Increased Information Processing

DISRUPTS THE C2 SYSTEM

Degrades Communications  
Degrade Intell/Recon  
Destroy CP Facilities  
Disrupt Procedures

RESULTS IN

Slowdown of Boyd Cycle  
Outdated Information  
Late Decisions  
Irrelevant Actions

FORCES THE

Enemy Commander to Boyd Cycle

DECISION

PANIC

PARALYSIS

Quest For Certainty  
(More Boyd Cycles)

POOR DECISIONS

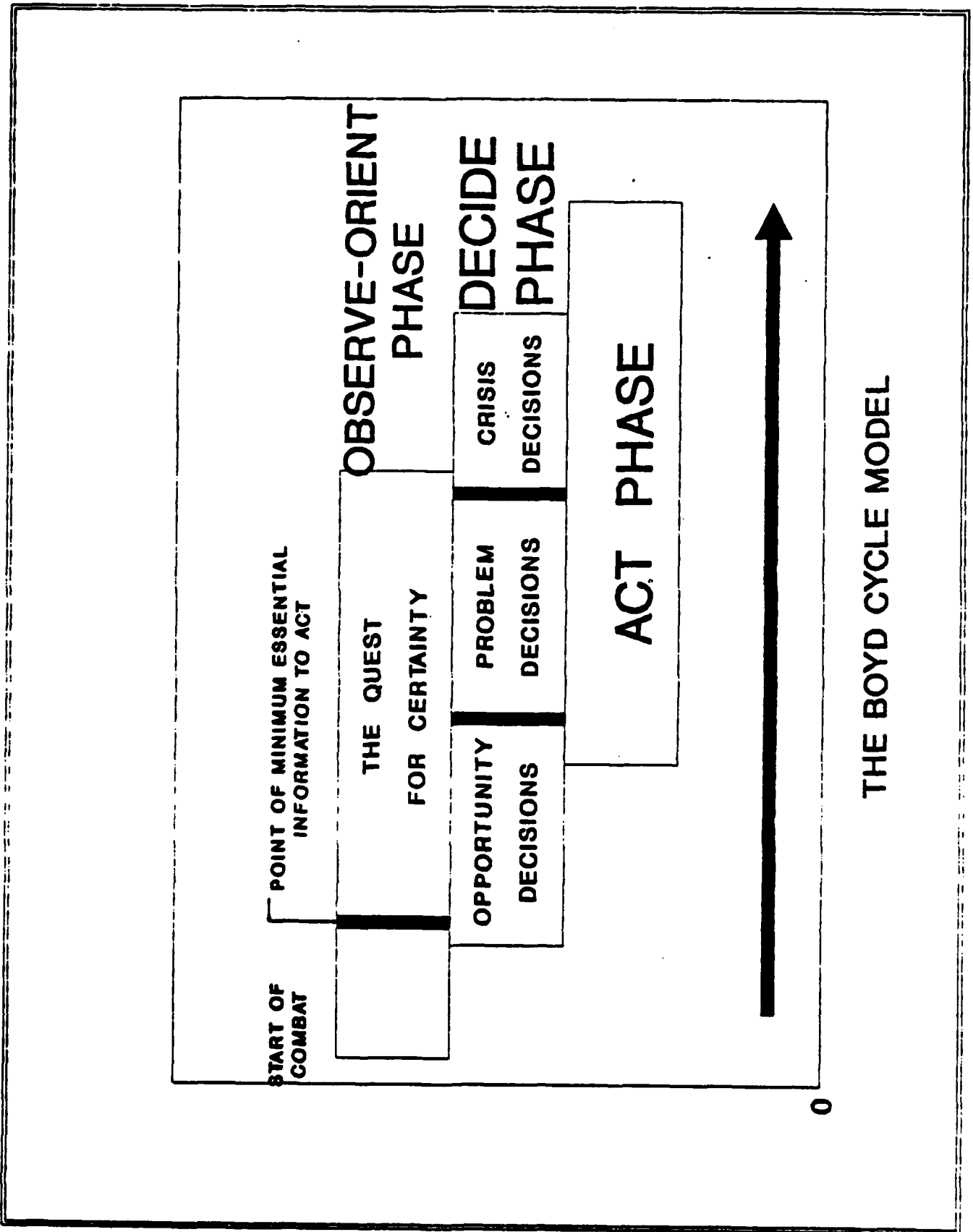
CRISIS DECISIONS

RESULTS

Decisions Too Late  
Actions Irrelevant

LOSE CONTROL OF THE BATTLE

Appendix B: The Observe-Orient-Decide-Act Loop Model



THE BOYD CYCLE MODEL

Source: Combat Information Flow, Kevin Smith, April 1989 Military Review.

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