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TOWARD A SINGLE AIR FORCE:
WILL TACTICAL AIR BE PART OF
THE MARINE CORPS' FUTURE?

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BY

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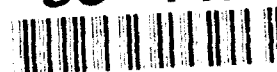
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In light of the demise of the former Soviet Union, Senator Sam Nunn (D-GA) called for a review of roles and missions within the Department of Defense. Nunn's central theme is the fundamental question of not what is best for a service, but what is best for America. Senator Nunn describes a world in which we have no more enemies and therefore no need for large standing forces that are forward deployed. In his quest to reduce spending within DOD, the Senator cited nine areas where there appears substantial duplication and potential opportunity for streamlining. One specific area that he targets are the four service air forces. This study reviews the philosophical basis of the air forces and compares their orientation to assigned missions. The review focuses on historical examples to explain why certain air forces have performed some missions better than others. Recommendations are made reduce redundancy and provide better warfighting capability. The suggestions contained herein are fiscally sound, operationally supportable and in concert with the Senator Nunn's central theme.

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TOWARD A SINGLE AIR FORCE:
WILL TACTICAL AIR BE PART OF THE MARINE CORPS' FUTURE?

AN INDIVIDUAL STUDY PAPER

by

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CHAPTER ONE

OPENING SHOTS

The fundamental question is not what is best for a service. The question is what is best for America?¹

On 2 July 1992, Senator Sam Nunn, (D-GA), using the opening quote as the central theme for a speech, fired the opening shot in the next round of roles and mission skirmishes. Senator Nunn describes America as being at a *unique point in history*, one in which the world security situation no longer demands the presence of American forces stationed overseas and no longer requires high states of combat readiness. His descriptions of the world can be summarized as one in which *we have no more enemies*. His assumptions may be a good starting point for a discussion, but the reality of the world security situation does not support his thesis. Furthermore, Senator Nunn cited numerous redundancies within the Department of Defense. Specifically, the Senator specified nine areas "where there appears substantial duplication and potential opportunity for streamlining:"

- o projection of air power
- o contingency or expeditionary ground forces
- o theater air defenses
- o space operations
- o helicopter forces
- o intelligence
- o functional organizations and activities
- o logistics and support activities
- o administration and management headquarters
- o guard and reserve components.²

This analysis will focus on the first issue, projection of air power. All four services indeed maintain their separate air forces. Senator Nunn highlighted the lack of commonality on future aircraft purchases, land-based versus sea-based power projection, redundant multi-role fighter capability, duplication between the Marine Corps and Navy, and parallel electronic jammer aircraft fleets.³ He has done his homework and raised significant questions that require in-depth analysis. His questions go directly to the heart of service roles and missions; ultimately, they raise the issue of maintaining separate services.

The basis for this controversy is as old as the United States military. The most recent constructive changes in the roles and missions have been enacted into law, most notably in the Goldwater-Nichols Defense Reorganization Act of 1986. This legislation substantially changed the power of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the role of regional Commander-in-Chiefs (CINCs). Additionally, the act specified that the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, would review roles and missions on a regular basis. These reviews should consider three specific issues:

- o Changes in the nature of the threats faced by the United States;
- o Changes in technology that can be applied effectively to warfare; and
- o Unnecessary duplication of effort among the Armed Forces.⁴

Hence, discussions of the consolidation of roles and missions is not a new topic. From the beginning of this nation,

the Army and the Navy have competed for missions and budget dollars. Internecine fighting has been a hallmark of service relationships during this century. The growth and expansion of technology has further separated the services. The Navy developed a technological advantage over the Army, and gained the capability to project power worldwide. The Army, a landlocked force, depended wholly on the Navy for its strategic mobility in the early part of this century. Later, Army's dependence for strategic mobility would also be shared with the Air Force. The Navy on the other hand, had its own army--the Marine Corps. The Navy and the Marines were married under the same organizational umbrella: Whereas the Marines were reliant on the Navy, the Navy was not much dependent on the Marines. Development of naval aviation, including Marine aviation, then added a third dimension to the Navy's power projection. This new technological capability further increased the Navy's sense of autonomy. The Army not to be outdone, also recognized the potential impact of aviation on the battlefield. The new Army Air Service was created in 1907 and found a home within the Army's Signal Corps. Rising from this organization was the Air Force as we know it today.

We have seen brief glimmers of hope for resolution of past roles and mission rivalries, but these isolated glimmers have not really cast much light on matters. Begrudgingly, the services come together in time of conflict, only again to go their separate ways during peacetime. Thus the issues raised by

Senator Nunn strike at the very foundation of our services; but current affairs and new fiscal constraints require that they be addressed and resolved within the Department of Defense, certainly with executive leadership and congressional oversight.

On 12 February 1993, the Chairman, General Powell, published his latest report on the review of roles and missions. Sadly, the review focused on "answering the mail." It did not offer any significant changes to roles and missions. The review simply responded to points raised in Nunn's speech of 2 July 1992, instead of taking on the overall problem of Defense Department reorganization. Even so, the Chairman's responses addressed the issue of redundancy of air power. Thus his 12 February report is germane to this analysis.

Responding to the question of "why do we have four air forces?", the Chairman stated,

the premise underneath the question being get rid of one of them or consolidate them into perhaps only two or only one. And the answer is the nation is well served by each one of our services having an aviation component in it.⁵

The report went on to make some recommendations relative to aviation assets:

- o elimination of Air National Guard squadron from the nuclear attack protection missions;
- o consolidation of Air Force and Navy "command and control" aircraft into the Navy.⁶

The Chairman went on to say that the Joint Staff is reviewing the question of whether the Navy should maintain its long-range bombing capability or transfer the mission to the Air Force.

This proposal is worth further examination, since long-range bombing is a strategic mission and can fit in nicely with existing Air Force missions, but the first problem that needs to be addressed is the definition of long-range bombing. The Navy publication ...from the Sea states that naval forces can conduct strike missions 650 miles from the carrier.⁷

The Chairman's failure to fully review roles and missions will make the issues more thorny as the current drawdown proceeds. The new President has made significant campaign promises on military structure. Avoiding the issues only allows those outside the Department of Defense to take on the job. The result could well be a force structure not to our liking, but one that we will have to lead and fight.

This paper will review the philosophical and historical roots of the four air forces.

CHAPTER TWO

EVOLUTION OF AMERICAN AIR POWER

Early in this century two bicycle mechanics from Ohio invented the airplane. This new-fangled machine was to change the nature of warfare forever. The Army and the Navy struggled as early as World War I to incorporate this new weapon into their arsenals. It was the outbreak of World War I that rapidly advanced the technology and military use of the aircraft. The horrors of stagnant trench warfare fueled the minds of tacticians, who sought ways to break the grotesque deadlock. The airplane offered relief from those horrors by expanding the battlefield. Post-war aviation philosophical debate on military aviation was dominated by the Italian Giulio Douhet, who in 1921 wrote The Command of the Air. Douhet's thesis and supporting strategy may be summarized as follows:

THESIS-The nation that can gain command of the air will win the war.

SUPPORTING STRATEGY- a) Command of the air is achieved by destroying the enemy air forces. The best way to destroy them is by bombing their planes and installations on the ground;
b) After gaining air superiority, offensive action should be directed to cut off the surface forces from their bases of support, and to attack the enemy industries and centers of population in the interior of his country;
c) The basic type of aircraft should be a dual purpose "battleplane" that can fight in the air battle and also launch air-to-ground offensives;
d) All resources should be put into offensive airpower, allocating the army and naval surface

forces enough for an adequate defensive posture;
e) The strategic importance of airpower requires an "Independent Air Force" and the three branches of service-land, sea, and air-should be organized under a "Supreme Command" which will have sufficient authority to determine needs and make proper allocation of resources.⁸

Douhet thus provided a foundation for the strategic thinking that would be the cornerstone of doctrine and philosophy for the proponents of an independent air force. From its first publication in 1921, little has changed in this theory. Airmen still profess it as gospel. The strategic orientation of the independent air proponents has never wavered. Interestingly, Douhet's theory assigns a defensive posture to the Army and the Navy, which supports the thinking that air power alone can win wars. Finally, autonomy became the overriding philosophy of the air force for years after Douhet's proclamation.

While Army aviation followed the theories of Douhet, the Navy relied more on the theories of Alfred Thayer Mahan. In 1890, Mahan published The Influence of Sea Power Upon History. In describing the influence of sea power, he developed two themes:

- 1) Sea power is an indispensable ingredient for national greatness. When properly used, sea power can bring wealth and power. When improperly used or understood, it can bring national decline and a loss of temporal power and greatness.
- 2) We must acknowledge the overriding importance of the political objective that is achieved by naval warfare.⁹

Douhet professes that air power alone can win wars; a strategic proposition. While Mahan stresses the relationship

that naval operations contribute to the outcome of the land battle; a tactical and operational proposition. While Mahan appreciated the strategic influence of naval power he also understood its contribution to the ground campaign, thereby acknowledging its tactical dimension. Thus, the difference lies in theoretical orientation: Maintenance of any service or technology for self-perpetuation is short-sighted and defeatist. We must all seek to develop those contributions which will most likely achieve the political goals of war. Air power for the sake of air power serves no useful, constructive purpose. Thus the differences between strategic (Douhet) and tactical (Mahan) orientations must be highlighted. Strategic air warfare is defined in Joint Pub 1-02 as:

Air combat and supporting operations designed to effect, through the systematic application of force to a selected series of vital targets, the progressive destruction and disintegration of the enemy's war-making capacity to a point where the enemy no longer retains the ability or the will to wage war. Vital targets may include key manufacturing systems, sources of raw material, critical material, stockpiles, power systems, transportation systems, communication facilities, concentration of uncommitted elements of enemy armed forces, key agricultural areas, and other such target systems.¹⁰

On the other hand, tactical air support is defined in Joint Pub 1-02 as:

Air operations carried out in coordination with surface forces and which directly assist land or maritime operations.¹¹

These definitions are key to understanding future discussions comparing the strategic philosophy of Douhet and the tactical philosophy of Mahan.

Since its inception, Army aviation has sought autonomy. Douhet's propositions offered them a guiding philosophy. He articulated all the principles they desired. The popularity of the book aided them in their quest. From March 1916 until the passing of the National Security Act of 1947, there were some 50 attempts to codify the independence of the Air Force.¹² Proponents of independence viewed their existence within the Army's organizational structure as an encumbrance. Their independent nature did not sit well with Army leadership. General "Black Jack" Pershing summarized such reservations: "an air force acting independently can of its own account neither win a war at the present time nor, so far as we can tell, at any time in the future."¹³ Congress was therefore not swayed by the initial attempt at independence. But it did grant the Army Air Corps separate status as a combat arm in 1920.¹⁴

Army leadership recognized the potential of the air arm and sought to establish doctrine to institutionalize aviation support. In 1923, the Field Service Regulations asserted the primacy of infantry, but specifically acknowledged a role for the air force:

the ultimate object of all military operations in the destruction of the enemy's armed forces in battle. Decisive defeat in battle breaks the enemy's will to resist and forces him to sue for peace...(1) Victory requires cooperation between air and ground

forces; (2) No one arm wins battles, but the coordination principle underlying the employment of the combined arms is that the mission of the infantry is the mission of the entire force; (3) The special missions of other arms are derived from their power to contribute to the execution of infantry missions; (4) The chief role of aviation is close air support.¹⁵

This document clearly indicates that the strategic orientation of Douhet was not making any headway with Army leadership. But Mahan's philosophy is apparent: He asserted that naval action should support army campaigns, much as these regulations state that air operations *should* support ground campaigns. The principle is vintage Mahan.

Douhet's theories were expanded between the world wars by such air power proponents as Billy Mitchell, an Army aviator. Mitchell incorporated Douhet's teachings in the U.S. Army Air Service Tactical School. At the Tactical School, Mitchell deviated from Douhet by stressing precision raids on enemy industry over indiscriminate industrial bombing and attacking population centers to break the will of civilians. This application of precision bombing would become a hallmark of American air power, while the British would apply Douhet more rigorously by attacking the enemy industries and centers of population.¹⁶ The new American philosophy of precision bombing focused on eroding civilian will by destroying their industrial capability and transportation system. Although the service regulations endorsed a tactical application of air power, the air

proponents of the Army still maintained the strategic orientation.

As World War II approached, the strategic orientation of Army aviation began to show some progress. On 15 April 1940, the War Department published Air Corps Field Manual 1-5, Employment of the Aviation of the Army. Subtle nuances of strategic thinking are evident:

complete control of the air can be gained and maintained only by the total destruction of the enemy's aviation. Since this is seldom practicable, counter air operations must be carried on progressively and intensely to provide security from hostile air...Support aviation generally is a theater of operations weapon...Combat aviation must be employed intensively against objectives of decisive importance and not *dispersed or dissipated* in other operations.¹⁷

Douhet would have been proud of this doctrinal progress. The italicized words dramatically reveal the centralized control and execution that the Army aviation desired. No one could tell them how best to utilize their aircraft. They knew best how aircraft could influence the battle--by interdicting and bombing the enemy at home, not near the battlefield.

Progress on autonomy was evident through in the establishment by the War Department of Army Air Forces (AAF), on 20 June 1941. Strategic orientation was furthered by the publication of Field Manual 11-15, which institutionalized the primacy of air superiority over close air support.¹⁸ With the commencement of hostilities on 7 December 1941, the doctrine of

FM 11-15 would guide the Army Air Force into battle. In this conflict the theories of Douhet would come to full fruition. Centralized control under a "Supreme Commander," with sufficient authority to determine needs and make proper allocation of resources, would be the norm. With the increased independence of the AAF the doctrine of 1923 would be diminished. The contribution of aviation through "their power to contribute to the execution of infantry missions" would almost become a lost art.

During the same time frame, the Navy struggled to bring naval aviation to maturity. Within the Navy the air proponents' struggle met considerable resistance. The battleship Navy resisted the growth of aviation. The competition between the battleship, submarine and aviation factions was an intramural parallel to interservice rivalry between the Navy and the Army. Oddly enough, the exploits of an Army aviator stirred the pot and contributed to the advancement of aviation as a viable force. Billy Mitchell demonstrated the power of aviation by sinking a captured German battleship. This act toppled doctrinal pillars and loosened the foundations of the battleship Navy. The technological advancement of aircraft thus contributed to the increased capability of carriers. The growth of Naval aviation was paralleled by the growth of Marine aviation. Whereas naval aviation focused on the maritime campaign, Marine aviation focused on the ground campaign while originating from the sea. The first Marine aviators, First Lieutenants Alfred A. Cunningham

and B. L. Smith, viewed the function of Marine aviation as a third dimensional means of supporting the Corps through a combined effort of Naval and Marine aviation.¹⁹ This early focus would prove to be a solid foundation for Naval and Marine aviation. In the years between the world wars, the Marines experimented with aviation in support of ground operations. Actual operations in Haiti and Nicaragua facilitated the development of tactical aviation. During these campaigns the perfection of dive bombing techniques and forerunner of close air support were established.²⁰

As we have seen the autonomy of the Navy was reinforced by its technological advantage over the Army in its power projection capabilities. The Navy had the ability to take the fight to just about any littoral region in the world. This autonomous attitude would prevail for many years to come.

CHAPTER THREE

COMBAT EXPERIENCE: LESSONS LEARNED AND FORGOTTEN

"Air power unsupported by the forces of the battlefield is a military means without and end."

-S.L.A. Marshall, Men Against Fire.

In the opening days of World War II, German forces utilized a new technique by integrating aviation into the ground scheme of maneuver. The overwhelming success of the German forces raised the stock of aviation and its proponents. With the sudden attack on Pearl Harbor, the power of aviation had come to the forefront. In North Africa, America's opening battles did not meet the success desired, partly because we did not enjoy the benefits of integrated air-ground capabilities. Integration of combined arms was the norm, but aviation was not a major component. However, on 20 June 1941, the role of air power was formalized in Field Manual 11-15. But close air support was relegated to a lesser priority.²¹ The strategic orientation of our doctrine now was clearly evident. Early battlefield encounters were hampered by our inability to coordinate aviation assets; both air and ground supporters cited examples to further their case. The centralized control of air assets did not mesh with the requests for support from ground units. One balanced argument was expressed by Assistant Secretary of War John McCloy:

It is my firm belief that the air forces are not interested in this type of work (close air support), think it is unsound, and very much concerned lest it result in control of air units by ground commanders. Their interests, enthusiasm and energy are directed to different fields...What I cannot see is why we do not develop this auxiliary to the infantry attack even if it is of less importance than strategic bombing. It may be the wrong use of planes if you have to choose between the two but to say that airpower is so impractical that it cannot be used for immediate help of the infantry is nonsense and displays a failure to realize the air's full possibilities. It is just as bad as was the tendency of ground forces, some time ago, to confine air operations to such work.²²

The AAF perspective was voiced by General Laurence S. Kuter, who countered that,

tactical air units were parceled out among the ground forces, and so scattered that their inherent flexibility and mobility were lost. Fighters were used almost wholly on local defensive cover and the capability of those air forces to strike the enemy is ignored. No use was made of opportunities to take the initiative. The air forces were tied to the local interests of divisions and corps, and no attention was given to the task of winning control of the air or assisting the theater as a whole.²³

In spite of tactical shortcomings, the Allies were successful in ejecting the Axis forces from North Africa. Follow-on operations in Sicily would provide an opportunity to refine our skills in making war. But lessons learned in North Africa were not incorporated into this campaign. The integration of air into the campaign was so poor that the problem was noted in a report published in January 1945 by the U.S. Army Air Forces Evaluation Board:

The swift movement of the Sicilian campaign disclosed forcefully the lack of coordination between the American ground and air forces. The Ground forces often failed to keep the Air Support Command posted of the current location of Bomb Safety Lines. Frequently targets for which air support had been requested were overtaken by our own rapid advance before aid from the skies arrived. From the airman's point of view, much of the Sicilian campaign must be classified as an example of inefficient and uneconomical employment of air power, due, in part to imperfect filtering of air support requests...²⁴

The Sicilian campaign offers a classic example of a lack of coordination at all levels. The ultimate testimony to the lack of coordination was the ability of German and Italian ground forces to evacuate the island and save 112,000 personnel, 227 vehicles and 41 artillery pieces. All this was accomplished by two small steamers and one ferry.²⁵

While the ground campaign progressed around the periphery of Europe, the Allied air forces were taking the battle deep into the heartland of Germany. Here true Douhet theory was applied, not the American derivation of precision bombing. The British had felt the brunt of German bombing on their industrial centers. But when the Germans transitioned to population centers, their anger rose. The theory that bombing would break the will of the people proved truly invalid. In actuality, the people resolved to weather the hardship of bombing. Their will was strengthened when the British then took their bombing campaign to the German population centers, it met with the same response. Churchill remarked that,

...air attack upon the civil population and upon factories producing munitions and upon the economic springs of the country...So far from producing panic and a wish to surrender, they have aroused a spirit of furious and unyielding resistance among all classes. They have united whole communities, otherwise deeply sundered, in a common hatred of such base and barbarous methods. I, therefore, remain convinced that where the strength of the air force is equal, the side which consumes its energy upon slaughter of the civilian population is likely to encounter surprising disappointment.²⁶

Churchill may have spoken too soon. The British had adopted the policy of bombing German cities before the war had even started, in hopes of forcing an early peace.²⁷ During the Casablanca conference in 1943, the policy was formalized. Their bombing became the primary objective in,

the progressive destruction and dislocation of the German military, industrial and economic system, and the undermining of the morale of the German people to a point where their capacity for armed resistance is fatally weakened.²⁸

The American precision bombing capability would be relegated to area or carpet bombing.

The bombing campaign in Europe grew to an awesome magnitude. The amount of men, material and money involved in this endeavor was remarkable. The British and the Americans dedicated 40-50 percent and 35 percent, respectively, of their wartime production to the air campaign.²⁹ From an investment of this magnitude, one would expect an equally significant return on the investment. Sadly, it was not the case. The military certainly found the bombing campaign worthwhile. General Arnold, head of

U.S. air forces stated, "Never in the history of aerial warfare has such destruction been achieved at such moderate cost."³⁰ Yet the U.S. Bombing Survey did not support this claim. Likewise, British studies came to the same conclusions. Not until the last year of the war did strategic bombing make any noticeable impact. Of even greater importance was that German production increased under this aerial bombardment. Quite obviously the bombing was not having the desired impact on the will of the German people.³¹ The futility of strategic bombing is best summarized by Richard Hobb's indictment:

as an experiment, the strategic bombing of Germany up to the spring of 1944 was an extravagant failure. Instead of shortening the war, its cost in raw materials and industrial manpower prolonged it.³²

So the first major application of Douhet's theories proved them weak, at best. Still the air proponents stuck to their *bombs* and argued the worth of massive strategic bombing. They seemed as unaware of the heavy casualties among bomber crews as they were oblivious to the negligible military impact of the bombing. Only the invasion at Normandy turned the tide of battle on the western front. Oddly enough, on the eastern front the Russians operated very little, if any, strategic bombing. They used air assets tactically, to the point of putting them under front command.

During the Normandy invasion the air force could not provide sufficient aviation assets for air interdiction. A 1963 study disclosed that between the Normandy invasion and the termination of the war that "twenty-four percent of the 489,069

sorties...were for close air support. Only eighteen percent of the total fighter sorties were close air support."³³ Yet even this limited use of close air support may have been decisive. The ultimate testimony and first hand explanation of the power of air power, operating in the close air support role, came from General Marshall. "Reporting on the invasion of France, [General Marshall] spoke of Generals Keitel and Jodl pointing to Allied air power as the decisive factor in the German defeat."³⁴ When European theater operations were reviewed in detail in 1962, the American ground commanders expressed dissatisfaction with the support they received from the AAF. Specifically, their criticism was directed at air commanders who viewed the requests of ground commanders for air support as "unprofitable." In response, the air commanders clarified, "ground commanders were myopic in their outlook and were hobbling air power through their incessant objections to centralization of control."³⁵

In the Pacific theater the war was different, but there were some parallels and significant departures. The lessons of Europe were applied to Japan with a renewed vigor. The Army Air Force application of terror bombing would have surprised even the British with its concentration.³⁶ While the AAF continued its campaign of carpet bombing, another use of air power was playing an increasing role in this theater. Here over sixty percent of the sorties were dedicated to close air support.³⁷ The difference may have come from the central role of the Navy and Marines in the island campaign. The Marines had been perfecting

the techniques of close air support and had conducted training for the Army during the Philippine campaign. Their performance received high marks from Army ground commanders, such as "I have never seen such able, close and accurate close support as the Marine flyers are giving us."³⁸ In the Pacific, Navy and Marine flyers demonstrated their orientation and skill in the application of air power. The Navy, like the AAF, believed air superiority was critical to naval missions. But when it came to ground support, they viewed close air support and interdiction on equal footing. Their doctrine supported the way they fought! The conduct of amphibious operations demanded rapid processing and forwarding of air requests from ground units. The Marines had developed a system whereby Tactical Air Control Parties (TACP), led by Marine aviators operating as Forward Air Controllers (FAC), would forward air requests to the Tactical Air Control Centers (TACC), either afloat or ashore. These requests would be handled there and aircraft were allocated, as quickly as possible, for the mission. The aircraft would report to the FAC for final control onto the target. This system thus coordinated fire support at the lowest level. The FAC would discuss the tactical situation with the artillery forward observer or the naval gunfire spotter: they would determine which supporting arm could best neutralize or destroy the target. The system supporting this organization (centralized coordination, decentralized execution) was the best application of supporting arms. In this arena, aviation closely supported the ground

scheme of maneuver. Centralized control and decentralized execution became the hallmark of Marine air.

The development of Marine aviation had paralleled that of the Navy. Both services utilized similar carrier capable aircraft. This flexibility added dynamics to both naval and land campaigns. During the Okinawa campaign, the Marines demonstrated their ability to operate from either land bases or from carriers as they thwarted the dreaded kamikaze attacks. In order to prevent the kamikazes from penetrating the perimeter of the amphibious force, Marine Corsairs stationed aboard dedicated Marine escort carriers, were assigned picket duty to intercept the kamikazes. The Corsair offered a significant advantage in its ability to rapidly climb to an altitude where they could engage the kamikazes. Earlier, the Navy had given the Corsairs to the Marines while they transitioned to the Hellcat. The ability of Marine flyers to operate from either carriers or land would prove to be a deciding factor in future conflicts.

The Okinawa campaign demonstrated the tenacity of the Japanese soldier. He fought extremely well. He was defeated only in death, for few soldiers surrendered. The conduct of the Okinawa campaign supported estimates of significant battle losses in the forthcoming invasion of mainland Japan. But into this theater was borne the weapon that would end the war and utterly change warfare in the future. In the hope of saving an estimated one million American casualties, U.S. President Truman approved unleashing this new technology. The cities of Hiroshima and

Nagasaki were targeted. The employment of two atomic bombs devastated the two cities, causing deaths "from 70,000 to 80,000 at Hiroshima and 35,000 at Nagasaki, with higher numbers of injured."³⁹ Citing the teachings of Douhet, Generals LeMay and Spaatz proudly announced that,

our present Army is not necessary for the prosecution of the war in the Pacific, that invasion will be unnecessary, and that the future of Armies has been decidedly curtailed.⁴⁰

The atomic technology finally fulfilled the theoretician's prophecy. The philosophy would be proclaimed again and again.

Following World War II, America entered the Cold War era. New adversaries were armed with nuclear arsenals. America would reduce its armed forces. With the drawdown of manpower would go the corporate memory that was developed on the battlefield. The reduction in the armed forces fostered keen competition for scarce defense dollars. Tacticians were consumed with the integration of nuclear weapons into our armed forces. Theorists proclaimed that conventional war was obsolete. Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Omar N. Bradley went so far as to say, "I also predict that large-scale amphibious operations...will never occur again."⁴¹ In nuclear weapons, proponents of an independent air force found a weapon that would propel them toward their goal of a separate service. The National Security Act of 1947 fulfilled their dream. It established the Department of Defense, codified the Marine Corps mission and organization, and gave independence to the Air Force.

A year later, the Key West Agreement of 1948 delineated and defined future roles and missions for all the services. This agreement was the forerunner to DOD Directive 5100.1, Function of the Department of Defense and its Major Components, which is the basis for the Joint Chiefs of Staff Publication Two (Unified Action Armed Forces {UNAAF}).⁴²

To deliver the weapon of the future required dedicated aircraft and a special arm of the Air Force. The strategic bombers of the Air Force were the logical choice, and the Strategic Air Command (SAC) emerged. Douhet would have been impressed by this milestone. Besides competing with other services; the tactical arm of the air force was now competing with the strategic air force. With SAC receiving a majority of budget dollars, the tactical air force began to diminish. Tactical air forces were not the only military outfit to suffer. The Army was without an air force, although the aforementioned directive tasked the Air Force with the responsibility to "furnish close combat...support to the Army."⁴³

Lessons learned on the battlefields of World War II got their chance to be applied in June 1950, when the North Koreans invaded South Korea. Into this fight came an Air Force equipped to fight a nuclear war. Fortunately, the Navy and Marine Corps had steadfastly held the view that

limited, brush-fire wars, fought with conventional weapons, were the only practicable means of conflict as long as the United States maintained nuclear supremacy.⁴⁴

But the Air Force came to the fight ill-prepared to conduct conventional operations. So much for applying lessons learned! The Air Force consisted primarily of B-26s, B-29s and some new jet fighters. Tactical aircraft remaining from World War II had been mothballed or preserved in the desert. Recognizing this shortfall, the Air Force resurrected the P-51, redesignated it the F-51, and sent it to Korea in hopes of rekindling its World War II fame. Utilized in the close air support role, the F-51 suffered due to poor design. Its liquid-cooled engine was not rugged enough for the mission. The Air Force then turned to jet fighters to carry the close air support role. But the jets did not offer the mission endurance of propeller driven aircraft, nor the ability to identify ground targets due to their increased airspeed.⁴⁵

Doctrinally the Navy and Marines differed significantly from the Air Force. The Navy-Marine organization, coupled with naval aviation command and control doctrine, ensured the timely presence of aircraft over the battlefield. The system, perfected in World War II, was utilized again in war as it had been trained since the end of that conflict. Carrier aviation proved its worth again at Pusan. Due to their close proximity to the front, the carriers could generate significant sorties and keep aircraft over the battlefield longer. Air Force aircraft based in Japan sacrificed ordnance for fuel to make the long transit to Korea. The preponderance of Navy/Marine aircraft over the battlefield

generated some admirers in Army units adjacent to Marines. They proclaimed,

the Marines on our left were a sight to behold. Not only was their equipment superior or equal to ours, but they had squadrons of air in direct support. They used it like artillery. It was 'Hey, Joe this is Smitty, Knock the left off that ridge in front of Item Company.' They had it day and night. It came from nearby carriers and not from Japan with only 15 minutes of fuel to accomplish the mission.⁴⁶

After the Marines made their amphibious landing at Inchon, the Navy/Marine system was highly visible. Control of air transitioned from ship to shore, and Marine TACPs were distributed to all Marine infantry battalions, and to some Army battalions. Not all Army battalions had FACs due to a shortage in the Air Force. The Marines had their admirers in Army leadership, specifically in General Almond, Commanding General of X Corps. He became an avid fan of Marine air support and did not hesitate in letting the press and the Air Force know it.⁴⁷ As the peninsula came under United Nations control, more airfields became available for the Air Force. Marine and Navy aircraft began to use the same airspace as the Air Force, so the Air Force established a Joint Operations Center (JOC) for a single control for all aviation assets, both on land and aboard carriers. General Almond did not encourage the Marines to participate in the organization. General Almond was enjoying air support as it was practiced by the Marines. In fact, many believed the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing (MAW) was the tactical air command for X

Corps. Almond allowed the Marines to integrate their air into the X Corps scheme of maneuver. The situation can best be summarized as follows,

In practice the 1st MAW functioned as a tactical air command for X Corps. So close was air-ground integration in X Corps that Air Force commanders mistakenly believed the 1st MAW was commanded by Maj. Gen. Oliver P. Smith, 1st Marine Division Commander, although he and Maj. Gen. Field Harris, Commanding General, 1st Marine Air Wing, had coequal status and shared a common task force commander, General Almond. Even though the Fifth Air Force JOC system had undeniably improved by October 1950, X Corps wanted none of it, and even the Eighth Army corps and division commanders expected even more destructive results from the Air Force's fighter-bombers.⁴⁸

As the JOC was geared up and became operational the Navy elected not to participate. They maintained their normal operational mode at sea and maintained radio silence. Marines attempted non-participation without any luck. Air support under the JOC system did not improve. In fact it slowed down and problems arose not only for the Army, but for the Marines as well. The refined air support system developed by the Marines had to be integrated into the Air Force system. It did not neatly dovetail. In November 1950 the pot boiled, General Almond and the Chief of Army Field Forces, General Clark, approached the Army Chief of Staff General Collins with the problem of lack of air support. The issue went to General Vandenberg, Air Force Chief of Staff who faced this problem:

The Air Force's apparent lack of interest in ground attack missions had created an

unsatisfactory situation...proposing a revision of air-ground doctrine providing field army commanders and their corps subordinates operational control of fighter-bombers on a scale of one air group per division...also insisting that the Air Force enlarge the number of TACPs it provided to tactical units.⁴⁹

General Almond enjoyed the support the Marine system had provided and wanted it incorporated into the Army, but the Air Force insisted that close air support missions had its attention. The problem gained visibility in Congress, so studies were undertaken. The findings revealed the following short-comings, in that Congress:

could not envision an Air Force that could provide the number of either close-support aircraft or TACPs corresponding to the number per unit serving the Marines, for an Army large enough to fight the Russians in Europe. In sum, the close air-support doctrine required only more aggressive implementation.⁵⁰

The problem with that approach was that the Army was not fighting the Russians. They were fighting the Chinese and the North Koreans. As the year closed out, the Army and the Marines were pushed back by the Chinese. The difference in the application of air support was found in the retrograde. While the Eighth Army, consisting of the 2d, 24th and 25th Divisions, withdrew it did so without any ground control system and suffered the consequences. A popular radio announcer of the period succinctly summarized the situation: "If you have a son overseas, write him. If you have a son in the Second Division, pray for him."⁵¹ The Chinese made the Eighth Army pay the price for not

having integrated air support. On the other hand, the 1st Marine Division as part of X Corps, withdrew from the Chosin Reservoir under pressure from seven Chinese divisions. The Marine air support doctrine and system proved itself capable of handling the task. The air wing covered the withdrawal by providing almost continuous daytime air support. This fighting withdrawal was to be a notable event in the history of the Marine air-ground team. The Marines came out with all their equipment and their wounded. The annals of this action had its impact on the Army as well, for it

simply reinforced the conviction of X Corps from General Almond to the lowliest rifleman that the Marine system surpassed the Air Force system in every way. If the Chinese intervention dampened Eighth Army's satisfaction with Fifth Air Force, it sent X Corps' expectations for close air support soaring.⁵²

Sadly the disagreement between the Army and the Air Force over the effectiveness of air support would continue throughout the Korean conflict. Once again the strategic orientation of the Air Force proved to be detrimental. The Air Force tried to provide air support to the Army. But their air request system was cumbersome, slow, and layered with too many levels of control. When aircraft did arrive over the battlefield they were restricted to targets beyond the "bombline," a line that corresponded with the maximum range of artillery.⁵³ The Air Force felt that any other format would lessen their control of aviation and ultimately jeopardize their independence. The

philosophy of a separate and independent Air Force was so inbred they became totally inflexible. The Army suffered needlessly; they should not have had to endure such hardships and lack of air support. T.R. Fehrenbach, in This Kind of War, summarizes the entire mess:

Americans in 1950 rediscovered something that since Hiroshima they had forgotten: you may fly over a land forever; you may bomb it, atomize it, pulverize it and wipe it clean of life--but if you desire to defend it, protect it, and keep it for civilization, you must do this on the ground the way the Roman legions did, by putting your young men into the mud.⁵⁴

And those young men deserved the best close air support available. The lessons learned in Korea would soon be forgotten and the process would start all over again. This time the location would be different, but the story much the same. America entered the Vietnam War with an Air Force ill-equipped for this type of fighting. The years between Korea and Vietnam were ones marked by refinement of the capability of the Air Force to fight the Soviet Union in Europe, probably in the nuclear arena. The past lessons became distant memory, to the point that the Air Force "ignored the basics of tactical aviation ever since the end of Korea in favor of atomic weapon delivery."⁵⁵ During this period SAC would dominate the Air Force. Within the defense establishment, such proposals as follows were discussed:

While SAC's nuclear forces deterred major war, 'the Army [should] be converted into essentially a home guard-civil defense force and that the major responsibility for limited wars [should] be assigned to the Navy and the Marine Corps.'⁵⁶

Supported by President Kennedy, the Army began to increase its capability in the area of limited or counter-insurgency warfare. Within the Army, a ground swell of support developed for an Army aviation capability. A joint document in 1949 had placed limits on Army aviation. Joint Army-Air Force Adjustment Regulations 5-10-11, titled Combat Joint Operations, Etc.: Employment of Aircraft for Performance of Certain Missions, which "set weight limitations and outlined certain specific functions for the use of Army aircraft in ground combat operations."⁵⁷ Thus in a quest for more mobility on the battlefield, the Army established the Howze Board in 1962. Its charter was, "to develop a plan for implementing fresh and perhaps unorthodox concepts which would give a significant increase in mobility."⁵⁸ The Howze Board recommended the development of the air assault division, which was based on organic helicopters for mobility and fire support. This recommendation was made despite a 1959 JCS agreement that the Air Force was the executive agent for doctrine on close air support.⁵⁹ The Air Force countered with the Disoway Board which refuted the findings of the Howze Board.

The differences between the two services were further amplified by the Army and Air Force Close Air Support Boards that were organized in 1963. Convened at the request of Defense Secretary McNamara, the board concerned itself with the following issues:

- 1) procedures, tactics and techniques;
- 2) training and indoctrination;
- 3) resources;
- 4) command relationships; and

5) type of aircraft.

Progress was made on the first three issues, but the last two required further study. These issues were a harbinger of larger issues that hampered inter-service relations. The services specified several points of disagreement:

- (1) command and control-the Army wanted control of aircraft down to the company level, if necessary.
- (2) amount of close air support-the Army wanted a guarantee of a substantial number of dedicated sorties per day.
- (3) mobile assault capability-the Army felt the Air Force was not capable of supporting their new mobile assault divisions, so the Army wanted to arm helicopters for close support of air-mobile assaults.
- (4) dedicated close air support aircraft-the Army wanted its own aircraft dedicated to close air support.⁶⁰

In short, the Army wanted to take care of tactical air support itself. They did not want to rely on the Air Force for close air support.

Defense Secretary McNamara eventually encouraged the Army to proceed with the Howze Board recommendations.⁶¹ The helicopter, with its versatility would serve the Army's purpose. The Army, Navy and Marines had used helicopters in Korea with dramatic, but limited success. In the sixties, the helicopter came of age.

In addition to its growing fleet of helicopters, the Army acquired two types of fixed wing transport aircraft: the CV-2 (Caribou) and the CV-7 (Buffalo). This growth of Army aviation, threatened the Air Force's status as an independent service. In 1966, Army Chief of Staff General Johnson and Air Force Chief of Staff McConnell established an agreement whereby certain responsibilities were defined. The Army transferred the CV-2 and

the CV-7 to the Air Force, which became the responsible service for intra-theater fixed-wing tactical airlift. The Army assumed the responsibility of helicopter support for intra-theater movement, *fire support*, and supply of the Army. This agreement closed down the Army's excursion into transport aviation, and the Air Force retained some helicopters for search and rescue, administrative and other limited functions.⁶² The key word of the agreement is *fire support*; the Army now had the authority to continue using armed helicopters. The Army found new freedom; it had not forgotten the lessons learned from their experiences with the Air Force.

Initial development of armed transport and utility helicopters led to the development of dedicated armed attack helicopters. These attack helicopters enabled the Army to control some of its own air support destiny. The Army still relied on the Air Force for heavy support, but the recent lessons of Korea were fresh in their minds. The Air Force came to the Korean conflict without a dedicated close air support aircraft. The Air Force inventory consisted of fast tactical jet fighter-bombers, manned by aircrews trained for the nuclear war. To provide close air support, the Air Force had to acquire aircraft from the Army and the Navy, O-1s and A-1s, both propeller driven aircraft.

One lesson from Korea was formalized in 1965: a joint agreement that established FACs directly within Army battalion organizations. In Vietnam this capability was short-lived, for

the Air Force wanted their FACs to be airborne so they could see the target better, where the FAC could better control air strikes. Even so, the Marines found that ground FACs still made a considerable contribution in controlling strikes, in conjunction with the intent of the ground commander. The Air Force FACs soon found themselves in the 0-1s that the Army gave them. As the war progressed, the Air Force developed some innovative concepts to increase their effectiveness in the close air support mission. The AC-47, AC-119 and AC-130 made notable contributions, along with the OV-10, the follow-on aircraft of the 0-1 and 0-2. In April 1965, the Commander-in-Chief, Pacific (CINCPAC) established close air support as the primary mission, specifically for troops in contact. Air support sorties dedicated to this mission increased significantly from that point.⁶³

To the Army's credit, it increased the capabilities and refined the utilization of the attack helicopter. They had wanted this kind of vehicle since the inception of aviation in the Army--a dedicated close air support aircraft. In the 1st Cavalry Division, the AH-1 (Cobra) averaged a response time of twelve minutes; usually the support showed up in less than ten minutes.⁶⁴

Similarly the Marines were finding the attack helicopter was an appropriate vehicle for close air support, but that term was nonetheless reserved for fixed-wing aircraft. Instead Marine attack helicopters were assigned the close-in-fire-support (CIFS)

mission. The Marines still provided close air support from jet fixed-wing aircraft. Their training, doctrine, aircraft and support establishment was geared to close air support --specifically, to its contributions to the ground battle. Additionally, the Marines provided the capability for the Air Force to communicate with Navy carriers at sea. This Air Force shortfall became critical in operations over North Vietnam, where lack of interoperability between the two services hampered operations. Ultimately the problem was solved through the Marine tactical air control system. This capability would prove itself again in later conflicts.

Early in 1968, the Marines were operating in and around the Khe Sanh combat base. The Marines were supported by their organic tactical air. As the threat of a major confrontation developed between the Marines and North Vietnamese forces, General Westmoreland, Commander, Military Assistance Command, Vietnam, sent in two Army divisions with Air Force tactical air support. Consequently, problems arose over control of the airspace and aircraft operating around Khe Sanh. The issue was resolved by the establishment of a single manager of all U.S. tactical air in Vietnam, the Air Force. The Marines resisted. They cited historical examples of lack of support that occurred under the same arrangement in Korea. The policy stood and the Marines eventually cooperated. Marines on the ground experienced a degradation in air support and a loss in responsiveness. This agreement closely parallels current JCS policy.

The Vietnam War was a very unique conflict in many ways. One particular oddity was the employment of tactical aircraft to bomb strategic targets in North Vietnam, while strategic bombers were attacking tactical targets in South Vietnam. Only late in the war did strategic bombers (B-52s) strike North Vietnam. They paid a heavy price in lost aircraft, because Air Force bombers entered the target area on same route, altitude, heading and airspeed for eleven straight days.⁶⁵ Surely the Air Force played a significant role in the Vietnam War, but they overlooked the contributions of the other services. Air Force General Momyer asserted that

The North Vietnamese responded [by negotiating a peace accord] to the potential threat of continued air attacks to the economic, political, social, and military life of their country. It was apparent that airpower was the decisive factor leading to the peace agreement of 15 January 1973.⁶⁶

While the Air Force made giant strides in supporting the Army, the old theories of Douhet persisted. The continuing claim of air power winning the war was promulgated, but the claim did not sell. Nonetheless, it continues to influence the conduct of war.

The Korean War ended in a military stalemate dictated by political constraints. The Vietnam War ended with the U.S. averting defeat on the battlefield, but politically rebuffed. If the strategic bombing of North Vietnam did indeed lead to a "peace" agreement, that agreement did not more than allow U.S. ground forces to evacuate the country. Then it was only a matter of time until the North Vietnamese won the war on the ground and

achieved their political goal of unifying Vietnam under a communist regime. A conversation between an American and North Vietnamese negotiator in Hanoi summarizes this outcome:

'You know you never defeated us on the battlefield,' said the American colonel. The North Vietnamese colonel pondered this remark a moment, 'That may be so,' he replied, 'but it is also irrelevant.'⁶⁷

Following its return from Vietnam, the Army began to apply the lessons learned in close air support. The success of the attack helicopter led to a follow-on aircraft. From the drawing boards of Sikorsky Aircraft emerged an aircraft that seriously challenged the capabilities of fixed-wing aircraft--the Cheyenne. This new technology was a breakthrough for rotary wing aviation. The Cheyenne offered the speed of a fixed-wing aircraft, increased ordnance carrying capacity, thermal imaging, an armored cockpit, a laser range finder, fire control, self-contained navigation and dive brakes. This aircraft made the Air Force take notice.

Although tasked by doctrine to provide close air support to the Army, the Air Force was reluctant to procure a dedicated aircraft for the mission. They felt that a single mission aircraft was uneconomical, even though the Army had made it a standing requirement since World War II. The capability resident in Cheyenne nonetheless posed a threat to the Air Force. The issue was complicated by the development of a dedicated close air support aircraft--the Lockheed A-X or A-10. This aircraft was supported by Congress in its concern for proper support for U.S.

troops. But the Air Force resisted Congressional support and pressure. The Air Force felt that procurement of a single mission aircraft, would weaken their commitment a multiple capability aircraft--that is, the Air Force would lose central control of tactical aviation missions. The interservice battle over which aircraft to procure came down to a dollar decision. The cost of the Cheyenne was too expensive for the times. The A-10 won the battle, and the USAF became--reluctantly--more involved in the close air support mission. The A-10 then became the step-child of the Air Force, and the Cheyenne program was terminated. While the Air Force became involved in the close air support business by default it held the mission and the aircraft "at arms length," never fully embracing either.

Even so, the Army finally had a dedicated close air support aircraft. They went about formulating battle doctrine to maximize its capability. The new doctrine was called the AirLand Battle Doctrine. This doctrine supported axioms of agility, initiative depth and synchronization. It dictated the Army's emergent fighting methodology. This doctrine relied heavily on the integration of tactical aviation into the ground battle. Again the Air Force kept to its proven methods. By 1966, the situation had come to the attention of the House of Representatives, which stated in a report on close air support,

We are aware that our Air Force has the responsibility of providing the nuclear deterrent...is also responsible for maintaining air superiority...the Air Force also has the mission of providing close air support for our Army on the ground...While we

honor the Air Force for its accomplishments in the strategic field, in the field of air superiority...we feel that in its magnificent accomplishments in the wild blue yonder it has tended to ignore the foot soldiers in the dirty brown under.⁶⁸

Despite this critique, the Air Force remained intransigent. As late as the 1980s its failure to accept AirLand Battle Doctrine remained evident. Consider the comments of Air Force historian Robert Futrell;

The name AirLand Battle implied that there was cooperation between the Army and the Air Force but in fact the doctrine was a unilateral development of the Army. He went on to quote an unnamed Air Force officer who said, 'what we are saying is that we agree that concept is a good concept for the Army.'⁶⁹

The Army has asked for but never received the desired level of air support they require. To the Army's credit they have developed a significant attack helicopter, command and control and a supporting arms force to make up for this shortfall.

The Air Force position is reflected in Air Force Manual 1-1: "the first consideration in employing aerospace forces is gaining and maintaining the freedom of action to conduct operations against the enemy."⁷⁰ This doctrinal statement is succinct, but should not exclude the requirement to provide close air support in subsequent operations. The ability to conduct air superiority and close air support is the basis for having multi-mission aircraft. But this dominant priority impacts the Air Force capability to carry out the close air support mission. A single

mission aircraft such as the A-10, detracts from an aircraft that conducts multi-missions. But in a given operation, just when does the Air Force transition to supporting the ground battle? The Air Force response resides in the Douhet axioms--air power is the dominant force on the battlefield, that air power alone can win the battle. That is, they avoid the issue by declaring the ground war almost irrelevant.

The quest for an independent Air Force has been attained. Their next goal was to control all air power in future American conflicts. As discussed previously, such control of air was attempted in World War II, Korea and Vietnam. During the battle for Okinawa, land based air power (USAAF and USMC) were under control of the AAF. In this campaign it was essential that there be joint air control due to the limited size of the battlefield. The Navy and some Marine air remained at sea and did not participate in any joint control arrangement. In Korea all land-based air ultimately came under USAF control. During the battle of Khe Sahn, General Westmoreland, established a single manager system for air. The single manager was again the Air Force. After the Vietnam War the Air Force sought to formalize the arrangement and make it doctrine. This doctrine was codified under the Joint Force Air Component Commander (JFACC).

Under this doctrine the JFACC derives his authority from the Joint Force Commander (JFC), who has the authority to exercise operational control, assign missions, direct coordination among his subordinate commanders, redirect and

organize his forces to ensure unity of effort in the accomplishment of his overall mission. The JFACC's responsibilities are assigned by the JFC. These responsibilities normally include, but are not limited to, planning, coordination, allocation and tasking based on the JFCs apportionment decision. Using the JFCs guidance and authority, and in coordination with other service component commanders and other assigned or supporting commanders, the JFACC then recommends to the JFC apportionment of air sorties to various missions or geographic areas.

Under this doctrine the U.S. entered into its next conflict, the Persian Gulf War (Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm). This conflict was unique in many aspects. Air power was unquestionably a key to the success of the operation. The unique topography of the desert deprived the enemy of any significant cover and concealment. As a result the enemy was exposed to an unprecedented assault from the air power by coalition forces. The JFACC system worked extremely well.

Air power was the first force to counter any further advance of Iraqi forces. Had Iraq elected to continue its assault into Saudi Arabia, air power would have been the only major force to stop the advance. As coalition forces built up their forces and prepared to eject Iraq from Kuwait, air power commenced their aerial bombardment.

The overwhelming impact of air power in this conflict has been praised by Douhet proponents as the high point of air power.

Indeed it was. If lessons are to be learned from this encounter they need to be taken in context. This war was unique in the following ways: unique terrain, unique foe, unique infrastructure and a unique war. The terrain did not favor a defensive posture which the Iraqis maintained after seizing Kuwait. The armed forces of Iraq did not fight aggressively or in any combined effort. The war took on a different aspect: the Iraqi air force escaped to Iran without putting up a fight; those forces deployed in Kuwait elected not to present any viable defense when attacked by coalition forces; and the Iraqi government did not support its own forces in Kuwait. Coupled with all these factors was Iraq's inability or refusal to hinder the build up of combat power by coalition forces over a six month period. Additionally, resident in the regions was an infrastructure designed by the U.S. specifically for this contingency. Many false assumptions can be made, if these factors are not carefully taken into account.

The success of air operations in the Persian Gulf War brought out air power proponents who have extolled the dominance of air in this and future battles. The most notable proponent was Air Force Chief of Staff General Michael J. Dugan who proclaimed that

ground forces may be needed to reoccupy Kuwait, but only after air power has so shattered enemy resistance that soldiers can walk in and not have to fight a pitched battle.⁷¹

In an era of joint operations General Dugan's comments were not well received. General Dugan was fired by the Secretary of

Defense Dick Cheney for making those comments and others that were not the views of the administration.

Probably the most blatant example of Douhetism may be found in an article published in the Naval War College Review by Air Force Lieutenant Colonel John F. Jones, who summarized air operations in the Persian Gulf War under the title "Guilio Douhet Vindicated, Desert Storm 1991." Lieutenant Colonel Jones makes statements such as,

He [Douhet] was right all along.

...He [Douhet] introduces the concept that there is no defense against aerial attacks-- 'nothing mankind can do on the surface of the earth can interfere with a plane in flight, moving freely in the third dimension.' [Note: North Vietnamese anti-aircraft gunners would argue that this axiom is not true, since they had a major role in contributing \$6 billion to our budget deficit.]

This is the essence of Douhet's concepts: air power so powerful that it alone could defeat an enemy. It happened in Desert Storm.

Did we need a ground war at all?

The airplane is the supreme offensive weapon. It is not an inherently supportive creature-- it can win wars all by itself.⁷²

However, the lessons learned in this conflict need to be analyzed in the proper context. This war was tailor made for the application of air power. If America's next conflict is fought in the jungles of Southeast Asia, will the results be the same? These are lessons that must not be forgotten! Perhaps Harry Summers, in A Critical Analysis of the Gulf War was succinctly

apt in his remark that Air Force thinking and doctrine are schizophrenic.⁷³

What does the future hold? America is in stringent financial straights. President Clinton has taken up residence in the White House and has begun to fulfill his campaign promises of deficit reduction and downsizing of the armed forces. Changes to the Department of Defense are inevitable. If Senator Nunn continues his efforts to thoroughly review roles and missions, then he must take a detailed look at the capability that will provide the nation the greatest combat power, cost effectiveness, mission orientation--and backed by a proven record. The answer will lie in what is best for the nation.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE FUTURE: WHAT IS BEST FOR THE NATION

"Where are the carriers?"

- Franklin D. Roosevelt, 7 December 1941
- Harry S. Truman, 25 June 1941
- Dwight D. Eisenhower, 14 July 1958
- John F. Kennedy, 22 October 1962
- Lyndon B. Johnson, 2 August 1964
- Richard M. Nixon, 6 October 1973
- Gerald R. Ford, 12 May 1975
- J. E. "Jimmy" Carter, 3 November 1979
- Ronald W. Reagan, 14 April 1986
- George H. W. Bush, 2 August 1990⁷⁴

The force that offers the nation the greatest capability in terms of power projection, sustainment, mission orientation and doctrine are the Naval forces--the Navy and the Marine Corps. Historically, this force has operated as the nation's first line of defense and offense. The opening quote indisputably indicates that the first call has always been for the naval force. As an island nation, America has come to rely on its naval forces to keep sea lines of communication and commerce open. As forward deployment is reduced through drawdown, forward presence must take on a greater importance. Naval forces offer the greatest capability for maintaining a visible presence when one is required, or a passive one when the situation dictates. The naval forces are the only permanent joint military establishment in the United States armed forces; they encompass air, land and sea arms. Naval forces have the ability to project power in a

multitude of forms--nuclear, surface naval, sub-surface naval, aviation, conventional and unconventional warfare, providing military assistance or humanitarian relief. The philosophical basis for this force resides in the teachings of Mahan. The force's orientation can best be described as a customer orientation.

This customer orientation is evident in how aviation is integrated into the Marine Corps. The Marines have integrated aviation into its ground scheme of maneuver, it is thus not separate and autonomous. This unique integration is manifested in the Marine Air-Ground Team (MAGTF), a mini-joint force in its own right. Marine air plays a central role throughout the spectrum of Marine Corps combat operations--whether in the initial amphibious assault, in subsequent operations ashore, or for the conduct of such land operations as may be essential to the prosecution of a naval campaign. These varied operations are supported by a set of criteria to which the supporting air component must conform. In other words, these criteria ultimately determine the identity of the supporting air component. For example:

- All types of Marine tactical air operation must be fully integrated with the operations *of the Marine ground forces*. Marines believe this can only be assured if both are controlled by a single commander.

- Some types of tactical air operations, principally close air support and heliborne operations, must be closely and

continuously coordinated with the fire and maneuver *of the ground forces*, and with the fires of other supporting arms. This requires a high degree of air-ground integration down to and including the company level.

-Tactical air support *for Marine ground forces* is required around the clock and in all kinds of weather. Therefore, the supporting air component must include the full range of tactical air capabilities.

-Tactical air support must be timely and fully responsive to the requirements *of the ground commander*. The supporting air component is geared to respond *to the ground commander's* needs and cannot be run to suit the needs of the aviation commander. Required responsiveness can best be achieved from airfields within the area of operations.

-The supporting air component must identify its interests with those *of the ground forces*. A sense of team spirit is essential. The supporting air staff must be professionally knowledgeable and view themselves as an extension of the platoon leaders and his men. *Both air and ground must train as a team.*

While the aforementioned examples reflect the orientation toward ground combat, the unique aspect of Marine operations is that any one of the components of the force, air, ground or combat service support can be the main effort. Further examples are: a ground force seizing an island in the Persian Gulf to conduct air operations (main effort) or; operations in Somalia, where air and ground forces provided logistical support and

security for combat service support units (main effort) distributing food. In summation, any component of the MAGTF writes operation orders in support of the MAGTF commander's mission.

During the transition of forces from the sea to land that is uniquely characteristic of amphibious operations, tactical air support must be provided without interruption or loss of continuity. As a result, the supporting air component must be naval in origin, yet not permanently bound to the sea. Put another way, as Navy carrier tactical aviation is redirected to its primary mission of sea control, a Naval air component capable of operating from austere land bases within the amphibious operating area must take its place. The requirement for tactical air support does not diminish once the Marine landing forces are established ashore. Marine combat doctrine calls for maximum application of the tremendous combat power generated by closely integrated air-ground operations. Thus, the need for tactical air support is not limited to the assault phase of the amphibious operation, rather it continues into subsequent land combat operations in order to maintain the momentum of the offensive. Nor is it diminished during defensive operations where tactical air support is required to reinforce the defensive capability of Marine landing forces.

Herein lies the true cost effectiveness of Marine air: its ability to operate either from sea or shore, and once ashore it can rely on existing airfields or can construct expeditionary

fields itself. This ability to rapidly deploy and operate from naval ships or from austere expeditionary fields gives the nation a unique military capability and efficiency unmatched anywhere in the world. The forward presence of Marine air is a force multiplier; it requires fewer resources to generate a greater number of sorties. The concept which was reinforced in Korea is still valid today. Aircraft positioned near the battle can generate more sorties and provide more ordnance for delivery than the same number positioned far to the rear at an established airfield. Additionally, mobile sea-based air power offers efficiencies that most observers do not recognize. For example, the elaborate infrastructure in Saudia Arabia, utilized in Desert Shield/Desert Storm, was built over an extended period at significant cost. Now that the conflict is over those fixed resources cannot sail away to the next crisis. Such reliance on host nation support in the future will be tenuous. The capability resident in Naval forces is very costly, but at the same time it is very efficient and very effective.

Because commonality is so pervasive, the economies which accrue from Marine air being a part of Naval aviation are hard to quantify. Suffice it to say that the relationship which exists within Naval aviation is one of the most effective, economical robust and sensible relationships in the U.S. military. Marine air is taking further steps to reduce aircraft inventory types to streamline procurement, training and supportability of the force.

As the Marines reduce the diversity of their aviation inventory, they will retain all the capability in fewer aircraft types. The orientation remains to train, organize and equip an aviation force dedicated to integrated air-ground operations.

Were President Clinton to be called upon to exercise his constitutional powers as commander-in-chief, his first choice would undoubtedly be the Navy-Marine team, much as his predecessors have done. As President, he will preside over the ultimate decision on the future of our armed forces. The force that offers the greatest capability, mobility, and power is resident in the Naval forces. Suppose the question were posed to the Army on which service they would like to rely ~~on~~ for their tactical air support. Which one would they chose, the one that has not provided the service nor understood the need for the service, or the service that has made close air support their life blood and mission? This excursion through the historical examples and philosophical basis has proven which one they would choose.

Douhet followers still espouse his philosophy. Yet critics have raised some basic fundamental questions, best summarized by Thomas X. Hammes, in reviewing the claims that air power won the war in the Persian Gulf War where the favorable conditions of geography, time, infrastructure and the opponents lack of a will to fight made a significant contribution:

Given that air power could not win under these virtually ideal conditions, how can air power proponents say it will win unassisted

when either some or all of these conditions change significantly in the next fight.⁷⁵

The time has come to make some difficult choices. The nation can ill afford the luxury of maintaining a branch of a service that is reluctant to provide a service that is required by doctrine. The nation can be best served by giving the tactical air support mission for the Army to the Naval forces. The Air Force has developed a significant and unrivaled capability in strategic power projection. The nation would be best served if they were allowed to concentrate their efforts in that area. By transferring the tactical air support to Naval forces the nation would realize tremendous cost savings in aircraft procurement, base closings, training, personnel, maintenance and operating costs. If America is to maintain its preeminent position as a world leader, then it must maintain its ability to project power worldwide. The key to this power projection is to field a joint force capable of winning against any opponent. The suggestions offered will aid in ensuring the dominance of America's military into the next century.

ENDNOTES

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¹²Edward H. Littlejohn III, Close Air Support: Battle in the Fourth Dimension (U.S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, PA, 1990), p. 9.

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²⁸Hobbs, Ibid., p. 78.

²⁹Hobbs, Ibid., p. 86.

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³¹Hobbs, Ibid., p. 85.

³²Hobbs, Ibid., p. 87.

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